GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN THE TIME OF BREXIT: A CASE STUDY OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP WITHIN UK HIGHER EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This case study focuses on the London School of Economics, an elite, London-based, UK Russell Group university. Through a series of interviews, the study examines how one-year master's students in the Social Policy Department engage with the ideology of "global citizen" during a time of growing nationalism.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN UK HIGHER EDUCATION

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Any discussion of global citizenship must come with the caveat that the term is ill-defined and contested (Oxley and Morris, 2013). Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study **global citizenship is an ideology which frames issues on a global scale.** Global citizenship refers to both citizenship's legal "rights and duties" and "identity and act-in-the-world agency" (Killick, 2012 p. 382; Oxfam Education, n.d.).

UK HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education in the UK has been a status symbol for middle and high-income families from around the globe since the British Empire (Ball and Nikita, 2014; Gerrard, 2015). By 2006 the recruitment of higher education students was a £5 billion industry (Findlay, 2011). In the 2017-2018 school year, 2.3 million international students were enrolled in UK universities (Bolton, 2019). Of full-time international students, the greatest portion were taught international master's students (UKCISA, 2019). Large numbers of international students in UK universities make questions of global citizenship especially pertinent within UK higher education - even as anti-migration and nationalist forces seek to roll back legislation that makes Britain's diverse international campuses possible (Caruana, 2014; Gardner, 2017; Highman, 2018; Killick, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

This case study draws from a series of interviews conducted as part of the Change Makers Grant and dissertation work "Global Citizenship: An LSE Example", exploring community and identity at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The concept of global citizen emerged as a key theme and was further examined using Braun and Clarke's six-step method of qualitative thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The case study results explore how Social Policy master's students understand and mediate the reproduction of global citizenship within their higher education experience during the 2019 Brexit negotiation period.

Exploratory Survey | 25 Interviews | *Targeting Social Policy Staff, Faculty and Students* | *Focusing on Social Policy Master's Students* | From Asia, Europe, South America, North America, and Oceania

FINDINGS

- There exists an implicit and explicit understanding of LSE students as global citizens. These conceptualizations fall into the common academic categories of cosmopolitan, neoliberal, and social justice global citizenship.
- Students, faculty, and staff identify multiple factors as impacting the development of ideologies in line with global citizenship. In particular this impacts the type of global citizenship expressed.
- ***The location of LSE during the Brexit negotiation period was found to be a prominent factor in how students understood and identified with global citizenship themes.*** London was commonly seen as a metropolitan and multicultural global community, consistently juxtaposed with a wider conceptualization of Britain and Brexit. These findings may suggest that global citizenship draws strength and definition from the comparison of what it is not - here UK nationalism and the Brexit movement (Barrett et al., 2011; Anderson, 2008). In doing so, they display a cosmpolitan form of global citizenship which relies on a sense of the local to frame the global. Further scholarly work may be of interest.

"I think London is a reflection of multiculturalism, a lot of tolerance, a lot of coexisting between different realities, communities, ethnic groups, languages. [...] LSE has been a really London experience, but I don't think you can extend up to all the UK. If we think about Brexit and those things for sure. I don't think that London is a reflection of all the UK, and I don't think LSE is a reflection of all the UK
- Master's Student

"With all this Brexit and this greater nationalism, I think there's been a backlash at LSE and they've said no, we want to remain global. We want to remain a global institution. They want to keep getting international students in which I think is great and the right way to go." - Staff Member