

Organising scholarly exchange: the Rhodes Scholarships, 1903-1913

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Introduction

Recent years have witnessed the publication – by national, regional, and international bodies - of a succession of policy reports and the adoption of legislation on student, scholarly and researcher mobility that promotes the value-added of academic exchange. In these documents, European policymakers and academic administrators argue that academic mobility fosters intellectual exchange and growth as a result of scholars being exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world.

The mobility of scholars is, however, an idea that has a long history. Since the end of the nineteenth century, as new forms of technology and communication linked people across the world, academics, politicians and philanthropists, saw in scholarly mobility an opportunity for international exchange, knowledge development and the exercise of political, social and cultural power – and they sought to foster it by instituting organised schemes. At the same time, while knowledge mobility has been strongly promoted throughout history, and again more recently, the efficacy and long-term consequences of these programmes remain largely unexamined.

Combining historical and public policy approaches, we investigate the relationship between the organisation of scholarly programmes and their socio-political impacts over time by paying particular attention to a case study – the Rhodes Scholarships. Established in 1903, the Rhodes scholarship scheme is one of the longest running programmes of scholarly exchange still in existence and it has formed the model for many that have followed. As such it offers an ideal context for examining scholarly exchange across the twentieth century. This paper will pay particular attention to the after-careers of Rhodes Scholars, and their mobility (within and without the academic community) and engagement in various employment sectors.

Literature Review Summary

The history of scholarly exchange and the role of public policy instruments in organising such exchanges is a significantly under-researched area. There is a long established body of historical work on the ‘wandering scholars’ of the Renaissance, and this is supplemented by material on the Grand Tour, and migration to and around the 18th century European Americas. But most historical studies focus on the 20th century, examining the foundation of scholarship programmes as a form of internationalism, soft diplomacy and in the context of development economics – particularly during the Cold War. The political science literature echoes this latter trend. The earliest studies of scholarly mobility have appeared largely in the literature examining state-to-state relations (international relations). For instance, the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* published several special issues at the height of the Cold War on the impacts of international exchange

of persons. The special issues we identified have been, in the main, dedicated to examining established programmes (e.g. Fulbright, SCANCOR) and their impacts on the participating academic communities and the overall relations between the sending and receiving host countries. The more recent political science literatures indicate a shift in focus. Emerging largely in the 2000s, the current literatures on scholarly mobility reflect the growing policy interests in knowledge mobility as the engine of economic growth and the foundation of knowledge-based society.

However, we do not yet have an understanding of the development of the idea of scholarly exchange, of its long-term intellectual and policy consequences or of its multiple benefits (societal, political, intellectual and so on). While some studies on the efficacy of academic mobility are beginning to emerge (Jöns, 2008; Ackers and Gill, 2008; Corbett, 2010; Pietsch, 2010, 2013), the literature is currently fragmented across different disciplines and national constituencies, and comparative and longitudinal studies are wanting.

Rhodes Scholarships: Origins and Aims

In 1901, the Cape Town politician and mining magnate, Cecil John Rhodes, left his considerable fortune to the establishment of a scheme of travelling scholarships. Bringing the most promising young men from across the English-speaking world to Oxford, Rhodes hoped to 'instil into their minds the advantage to the Colonies as well as to the United Kingdom of the retention of the Unity of the Empire' and effect 'the union of the English-speaking peoples throughout the world'. At the heart of Rhodes' scheme was his belief that the experience of living and studying together in a residential university would 'broaden [the] views' of his scholars, 'instruct them in life and manners' and in the process foster ties of mutual understanding that would serve to 'render war impossible'; for it was, wrote Rhodes, 'educational relations [that] make the strongest tie.'¹ The paper will describe in greater details how the Rhodes scholarship has evolved from a programme targeting initially at the British colonies of white settlement to its current emphasis on the creation of 'global citizens'.

Structuring the case study

Despite internal analyses of more recent cohorts of scholars, a longitudinal assessment of the Rhodes programme is wanting. Who has benefited from the scheme and who has been excluded from it? Where did Rhodes scholars go after their studies, what careers did they pursue and how did it effect their mobility? While some of these questions are easy to track, we do not have a systematic understanding of the after-careers of Rhodes scholars beyond the most prominent individuals such as Bill Clinton, Bob Hawke, Wasim Sahhad, John Turner and Norman

1 Rhodes Will, quoted in Philip Zeigler, *Legacy: Cecil Rhodes, the Rhodes Trust, and the Rhodes Scholarships* (New Haven: Yale, 2008), Appendix 1.

Manley. We believe this understanding is needed for policy discussions promoting large scale scholarly exchange.

We are addressing these questions by working with information provided by the Rhodes Trust, to create a database of Rhodes scholars and their after-careers from 1902 to 2001. While at the time of writing we have not yet completed our analysis, it seems already evident that the geographic and professional destination of scholars reflects wider trends in the global economy, while at the same time certain professions (law, medicine, public service, and academia) remain consistent career-choices for awardees. Tracking the intergenerational consequences of scholarly mobility remains a much more difficult task, but databases such as the one we are creating will go a long way to helping answer those questions.