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ACADEMIC

After Brexit, snowflake professors need to grow up

12 DECEMBER 2016

Stupid, racist and uneducated – many academics I know think that these three words characterise the 17.4million people who voted for Brexit.

After the referendum, many of these same academics spent time publicly crying and ranting about the vote. Once the hysteria had passed, there was a period of agonising self-blame: ‘We’ve failed as teachers!’ ‘What more could we have done?’

But this lament wasn’t about education, it wasn’t about academics’ failure to teach English, history, maths, physics and all the other disciplines that constitute the university. No, these academics felt that they had failed to instil students with particular behaviours, beliefs and attitudes. These academics see higher education as having aims beyond the pursuit of knowledge within the disciplines. They believe that the university is ultimately concerned with ‘social justice’.

In other words, these academics have politicised higher education. The fact that the UK voted to leave the EU, against the advice of many academics and other so-called experts, has left many academics feeling depressed. Their political project appears to be over.

So devastated are some lecturers and professors, that some universities are offering Brexit therapy, for the disaffected don. The University of Nottingham has provided a half-day ‘wellbeing workshop’ to help academics cope with ‘uncertainty, grief and anger’. They will receive resilience training, including ‘mindfulness’ sessions, to help them cope with the referendum result.

Similarly, the University of Leeds is giving staff members advice on how to cope with their grief, shock, denial, depression and anger post-Brexit. They are advised to curb their ‘news addiction’ and avoid reading Brexit-related articles, especially in the middle of the night.

These ‘**dons in distress**’ have, as part of their ‘social justice’ perspective, always seen students as vulnerable and in need of wellbeing workshops, puppy rooms or petting zoos to deal with exam stress, and Safe Spaces when lectures are too traumatising. They believe that students can’t cope with academic or real-world stress.

School teachers and academics have helped to create what has been called a ‘snowflake generation’ of students. Now, we are seeing the rise of snowflake professors. Academics should get a grip. Brexit is exciting. The vote was an expression of a desire for a real kind of politics, unlike the vague concern with the poor and needy peddled by so many liberal academics. Brexit has shown us a real, adult desire for change.

People have rejected the EU controlling them and treating them like children. Academics should get back to teaching their subjects and stay off the therapist’s couch. It’s time to start acting like adults.

Dennis Hayes is a professor of education at the University of Derby.

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