

Engaging the African Academic Diaspora: How Ready Are Universities in Africa?

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Abstract

While academic discussions on the negative effects of intellectual brain drain have been widely documented in the literature, the recourse to the academic diaspora as a resource to revitalise higher education institutions in Africa is recent. This recent positive consideration of the academic diaspora has largely been driven by academics in the African Diaspora, a reaction to the increased visibility of the African Diaspora generally as an economic resource to develop Africa, as attested by the African Union's recognition of the Diaspora as its 6th region. The persisting challenges to fully benefit from diaspora intellectual resources seem to lie on the lack of clear policy and thought from the African political and university leadership to embrace this alternative more sustainably. Equally lacking are detailed studies mapping the terrain of academic cultures within universities in Africa, and the readiness of African institutions to embrace the academic diaspora. This article attempts to provide such a perspective. The article reports data from a background study in which the author participated, regarding engagements between African Diaspora academics and African universities. The data is complemented by information gleaned from policy documents of universities in East Africa, to unravel their readiness to embrace the academic diaspora in terms of their strategies.

Alors que les discussions académiques sur les conséquences néfastes de la fuite des cerveaux ont été largement documentées dans la littérature, le sujet du recours à la diaspora académique pour revitaliser l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique n'est apparu que récemment. Ce sont les universitaires de la diaspora africaine qui sont à l'origine de cette vision positive de la diaspora académique, une réaction à la reconnaissance croissante de la diaspora comme ressource économique pour le développement de l'Afrique. Ceci a été notamment attesté par l'Union Africaine qui a reconnu la diaspora comme sa sixième région.

Le manque de politiques claires de la part des autorités politiques et académiques pour profiter plus durablement des ressources intellectuelles de la diaspora empêche cependant de bénéficier pleinement de cette possibilité. On manque également d'études détaillées sur la culture académique des universités africaines et sur leur volonté d'inclure la diaspora académique. Cet article propose une telle perspective. Il présente les données d'une étude de fond, à laquelle l'auteur a participé, sur les interactions entre les universitaires de la diaspora africaine et les universités africaines. Ces données sont complétées par des informations glanées dans les documents stratégiques d'universités de l'est africain, pour déterminer leur volonté d'inclure la diaspora académique dans leur stratégie.

Introduction

After about two decades of neglect, evidence shows that universities in Africa are rebounding from the crisis mood caused by the adoption of structural adjustments in higher education in the 1990s. All over Africa, physical expansion is underway as enrolments increase. Data on enrolment trends vary from one projection to the other, but show clearly that enrolments in universities in Africa have grown faster than in any other region. UNESCO (2010) records that between 2000 and 2010, enrolments in universities in Africa more than doubled, increasing from 2.344 million to 5.228 million. Based on this threshold, projections of the recent trends in individual countries suggest that the entire continent would have between 18 million and 20 million students by 2015 (World Bank, 2010: 28). At country level, there is increasing evidence that governments are designing favourable financing and growth policies for the university sector, convinced that without such investments, it would be challenging for African countries to benefit from the 'knowledge economy' dividend. This new spirit (one may say, a post neo-liberal focus on higher education) is driven by continental, regional and national higher education policy initiatives.

Despite these developments, African higher education still faces old challenges revolving around lack of resources and poor governance, and emerging ones that can be termed as the forces of 'internationalisation'. Loosely, internationalisation is perceived in two ways: as a process through which universities in Africa have to be receptive and accommodative to ideas and influences from outside as a strategy for their renewal; and as a developmental process through which the institutions can stake their claim to the international intellectual market place by making contributions to global knowledge and innovations, and the extent to which such ideas from Africa find accommodation (Oanda,

2009; 2010; Zeleza, 2012). Oddly, much of the literature on internationalisation presents the process as one that stands to provide net gains to universities in Africa—gauged from the pressures on African universities and leadership to embrace it, or occasional lamentations on what the international higher education community can do, to help African universities benefit from internationalisation. In this scenario, the contribution of African universities and countries is limited to providing 'raw material' for the process (mobility trends, academic brain drain, or space for cross-border provision), while the surge of universities and research programmes from developed countries to Africa is interpreted in the lines of a 'civilising mission' to globalise higher education for the sake of the continent ("The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education," 2008; Oyewole, 2009; Marmolejo, 2011). Three trends associated with internationalisation, compound the challenge of resources and personnel for universities in Africa, thus hindering the rebounding process. These are the promotion of GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) as a legitimate component of internationalisation (Pillay, Maassen, Cloete, 2003); the increasing establishment of private universities and franchise campuses in most parts of Africa, without corresponding investments to train a new generation of academics; and the lack of adequate funding for postgraduate studies in universities in Africa, resulting in a decline in quality of postgraduate training. The net effect of these developments has been to compound the historical challenge of brain drain, leaving struggling universities in Africa with academics incapacitated by lack of time and resources to respond to the intellectual challenges of internationalisation⁵. The potential for these trends to erode the capacity of African higher education to rebound is enormous and has been signaled time and again. In particular, the Association of African Universities' "Accra Declaration on GATS and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa" (AAU, 2004) roused the African academic community to the perils of internationalisation and the need for an African intellectual response⁶.

Given the threats and the erosion of human capacity, universities in Africa cannot just give up. Instead, alternatives have to be explored to increase the number of qualified academics, invest in locally relevant knowledge generation and dissemination processes, and stake Africa's

5. The increased establishment of private universities in Africa has had to depend on already overworked and poorly paid academics in public universities, since private universities do not have programmes for staff development. These engagements rarely leave staff from the public universities adequate time for research and scholarly engagement, and opportunities to influence the process of 'Africanising' internationalization.

6. See Accra Declaration on GATS and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa (29 April 2004, Accra, Ghana).

claim in the global intellectual market space. Luckily, the African academic Diaspora is increasing its visibility as an important resource to help in rejuvenating the institutions and internationalising African universities and knowledge. Whatever the various vagaries and fortunes that compelled its members to stay abroad (either as political or economic refugees, or as ‘non-returnees’ after further studies), the academic diaspora seems united in its resolve to bridge the intellectual and economic gaps that afflict most universities in Africa (Teferra, 2010; Zeleza, 2013). It is remarkable that most multipronged approaches for African institutions to benefit from intellectual migration are largely initiated by the diaspora academics themselves, with few imaginative policies coming out of African political leadership or the leadership of African universities (Teferra, 2015).

Equally exciting is an emerging trend, where the African academic Diaspora is moving beyond purely academic engagements, to taking up leadership positions in institutions and academic centres. This is now happening on a small scale, but would be singularly transformative in terms of engaging the diaspora in transforming higher education in Africa. This is because of management and governance related challenges that institutions continue to face, which in the first instance continue to be a hindrance to the full utilisation of the diaspora. Hopefully, this new trend may result in strong academic centres and well-governed institutions, which may set the pace for the emergence and institutionalisation of academically oriented governance cultures currently lacking in most institutions. African academic Diaspora members operate here with some comparative advantage, as they do not have linkages to local political networks that have often compromised good governance at the institutions. This article argues that while recourse to the African academic Diaspora may present a viable alternative to renewing universities in Africa, it is equally important to establish under which conditions—both political and institutional—it can operate optimally. The article draws from a study entitled ‘East African Dimension of Engagements between African Diaspora Academics in the U.S. and Canada and East African Institutions of Higher Education’.

Study Methods

For the purposes of the study which forms the basis of this article,

East Africa has been defined as the whole of the Eastern Africa region, encompassing Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda. Information related to the level of existing engagements and enabling national and institutional contexts in Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Somalia was obtained from review of secondary data and literature. For Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, information from literature review was complemented by key informant interviews conducted either face-to-face or through e-mail. The bulk of interviews informing this study here were however face-to-face. At the institutional level, individuals perceived as best placed to provide information on institutional policies related to engagement with the academic diaspora were purposively selected for the interview. Though this purposive selection narrowed the sample to a small cohort in the institutions, it helped in the sense that the interviews were in-depth and most information provided was of a specific nature, avoiding generalities. Specifically, the sample for the study included the following individuals:

- a) University policymakers, who within the university are privy to institutional policies on certain issues or are themselves in charge of departments dealing with such policies. This group included deputy vice-chancellors/registrars in charge of academics, faculty deans, directors in charge of linkage programmes.
- b) Senior academics/professors who have had some form of engagement with universities in North America, or engaged in research or partnerships funded by major foundations from North America.
- c) Middle-level academics who undertook their postgraduate studies in North America, or are currently engaged in some form of partnerships with scholars from that region.

A total of 60 respondents were involved in the study: Kenya: 35 face-to-face interviews and 16 e-mail interviews; Tanzania (University of Dar es Salaam), two face-to-face interviews and five e-mail interviews; and Uganda: one face-to-face interview and one e-mail interview.

The Context

Two main reasons help explain the interest in the African Diaspora generally, and in the African academic Diaspora in particular, as a recourse to addressing Africa’s marginalisation in the global intellectual space. One is the evidence provided by statistics on the intellectual cost of brain drain on the African continent; the second is the threat caused by trends in internationalisation of higher education to the very existence of African universities, as institutions with a public mandate to produce knowledge relevant to Africa. The problem of brain drain from Africa is historical, and reaches alarming levels as higher education systems

7. This was part of a Carnegie commissioned study focusing on ‘Engagements between African Academic Diaspora and African Universities’. The grant to conduct the East African aspect was through a sub-contract from Paul Zeleza of Loyola Marymount University, USA.

in Africa expand. Recent data shows that the emigration rate of highly educated professionals from sub-Saharan Africa continues to be higher than the total emigration rate, reflecting the higher mobility of people with educational attainment (United Nations, 2013). According to some, if internationalisation of higher education had to be measured by brain drain and associated processes, then African universities would be the most internationalised. De Wit (2012) argues that as a region, Africa has the most internationalised higher education system in terms of numbers of academics with a foreign degree, numbers of graduates with a study-abroad experience, and the amount of knowledge and concepts from abroad it has imported. This has however not been positive to higher education in Africa, as it has not contributed to the development of Africa's own position in the global knowledge society. The reality is that African academics that have undertaken graduate studies abroad constitute the highest percentage of diaspora academics.

The rationale behind the use of the diaspora to renew African universities lies in the fact that the emigration rate of African academics and other professionals is on the rise, while increasing enrolments and the expansion of institutions require highly trained academics. There is also an acknowledgement that past policies that have been pursued to bring back the academics to African universities have not worked. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), since 1990, Africa has lost one third of its skilled personnel annually, mostly doctors, university teachers, engineers, and other professionals, to this wave of migration. Estimates for 2009 show that there were over 300,000 highly qualified Africans in the Diaspora, 30,000 of whom had PhDs (Shinn, 2008; Onsando, 2009). According to Akinkugbe and Yinusa (2010), about 70,000 highly qualified professionals and experts are recorded to leave the continent every year.

In Kenya, and indeed the whole of East Africa, recent interest to use the academic diaspora to address the increasing shortage of teaching and research staff is due to the recent expansion witnessed at the universities. Studies continue to document the lack of qualified professors in Kenya's expanding universities, as a result of the erosion of capacity occasioned by an aging professoriate and a lack of investments in staff development (Tettey, 2006). Obviously, this poses a challenge to building human resource capacity in science, technology and innovation. The scope of this challenge is compounded by the projected increase of the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in Kenyan universities from 3 percent in 2011 to 5 percent by 2015, with undergraduate enrolment leaping from 130,000 students in 2011 to 450,000 students by 2015 (Kenya; National Strategy for University Education, 2011).

Brain drain in higher education also has a multiplier effect on the operations of other social sectors, such as health, that are linked to university education. Studies from Eastern Africa document the cost implications of brain drain to training new medical personnel in the universities. According to Kirigia, Gbary, Muthur, Nyoni and Seddoh (2006), the average cost for training a nurse in Kenya for a five-year training programme is US\$16,901. This figure rises to US\$25,352 when associated costs for accommodation and living expenses are added. The educational costs for physicians are US\$38,028 and US\$48,169 respectively. These costs do not include associated expenses for primary and secondary schooling. In total, therefore, brain drain does not only have a direct cost in terms of intellectual and social capital loss at the universities, but also an even more serious economic one, given the huge economic investments that countries have to incur to produce these professionals. In Uganda, 2010 data shows that the annual emigration rate of tertiary-educated population is 35.6 percent, while that of physicians trained in the country stands at 36.4 percent (Bhargava, Docquier & Moullan, 2010). In Ethiopia, Bishaw (2010) estimates that over the last three decades, 75 percent of medical professionals have emigrated from Ethiopia annually, the highest loss of medical professionals in Africa.

As a consequence of increased liberalisation and the influence of donors in restructuring curriculum at universities in Africa, a large body of academics has been fostered within the universities, who are not engaged in any intellectual work related to the mission of the university. This growing body of academics constitutes some form of brain waste. Restructuring and curricular reform has entailed the creation of new academic units and directorates, to make the institutions fashionable within the context of internationalisation. Hence, most of the institutions have new offices dealing with varied issues: strategic planning; international linkages and internationalisation; intellectual property; grant writing and consultancy; gender and affirmative action; university enhancement; and the like. All are staffed by senior academics who, as a result of these administrative appointments, neither carry full teaching loads nor engage in research. Coupled with the traditional teaching departments and management offices, this means that most academics are increasingly engaged in non-core university activities at a time of increased staff shortages. Among the remaining academics, there is a singular focus on teaching due to expanding enrolments, and to the establishment of private universities that do not have full-time staff (Oanda, Fatuma & Wesonga, 2008). Increasingly therefore, besides the traditional brain drain characterized by the academic diaspora, practices associated with internationalisation are occasioning much brain waste

within the institutions, in a manner that systems of academic production and engagement are no longer tenable. The nature of academics in these institutions, especially as a result of increased administrative and teaching responsibilities, is approaching Macfarlane's characterization of *de facto* para-academics: "These are academics, which while formally employed to perform the core academic functions in the institution (teaching, research and service), are inactive in all of these core functions, or active in only one function to the exclusion of the rest" (2010, pp.464-465). This is increasingly becoming true of many academics appointed to management positions in the universities, and the fact that the number of such management positions has increased has meant an increase in the number of *de facto* para-academics.

With respect to issues of internationalisation and the African academic Diaspora alternative, there is common cause to worry about the increasing presence of *de facto* para-academics in the universities. First, emerging literature from Africa, without over-generalising, has tended to argue that most academics who resort to administrative work, or who are attracted to it, are those who are unsuccessful as academics and who do not appreciate the academic enterprise and its values (Pantazis, n.d.). As administrators, they are unlikely to create conditions for *de jure* academics to thrive, while through manipulated promotions and appointments they can be the source of both internal and external brain drain from the universities. The same *de facto* para-academics, while in management, are unlikely to design policies for the institutions to engage with the African academic Diaspora, maybe out of fear of the kind of effect an intellectually powerful constituency would have on local management dynamics. These views are expressed by various respondents to this study, explaining the lack of specific institutional policies focusing on engagement with the African academic Diaspora⁸

Enabling National Conditions for the Diaspora to Engage

Increasingly, at continental and country levels, there is acknowledgement that the academic diaspora can be an alternative to building Africa's higher education infrastructures, especially following the African Union (AU)'s admission of the Diaspora as its sixth region, and the consequent adoption of the 'African Union Diaspora Initiative' during

8. Various respondents pointed out institutional unwillingness to engage with the academic Diaspora citing feelings of patronage and control of resources as sources of contention. Individual academics based in African universities pointed out at the feeling of superiority in terms of skills and quality of training exhibited by the African academic Diaspora. Most respondents in the sample were middle level administrators.

the 15th Ordinary session of heads of state, held in Kampala in July 2010. At the first Global Africa Diaspora Summit held in Johannesburg on May 25, 2012, five legacy projects were suggested through which the AU would engage with the diaspora, including the academic diaspora. Some of the legacy projects include the creation of an African Diaspora Volunteers Corps through which the diaspora can participate directly in the continent's development, including academic engagements; a Diaspora Investment Fund; and a Development Market Place for the Diaspora as a framework for facilitating innovation and entrepreneurship, among others.

The initial interest of African governments to design diaspora policies has not, however, originated in a need to tap into the academic diaspora, but rather a realisation that the diaspora, through remittances, has a positive impact on pro-poor finance and poverty alleviation. If well structured, such remittances would have an impact on economic development, savings mobilisation, and productive investments in Africa (Mohamoud, 2003). Diaspora remittances would however also have an indirect impact in the growth and expansion of higher education in Africa, as diaspora networks and remittances are being channelled to pay tuition fees in the continent's fast privatising public universities⁹. The impact that remittances are having on the growth of university enrolments creates an interesting intersection between the forces of internationalisation and the expansion of universities. Within the context of the contributions of the African academic Diaspora, it would be interesting to estimate the percentage of students in universities in Africa whose tuition is paid through diaspora remittances. One of the features of contemporary economic globalisation and academic internationalisation is the increase in migration and mobility around the world, leading to the emergence of a large diaspora from the South in the affluent countries of the North. This increased mobility may therefore have a positive impact on the expansion of higher education institutions in a manner that has not been acknowledged or understood.

Three policy trends at the continental level have catalysed the development of national diaspora policies within the Eastern African region. These are the African Union's recognition of the Diaspora as an important region; efforts to harmonise higher education institutions in Africa to create a larger higher education area demanding skills held by dias-

9. The increasing number of students of Somali extraction from Northern Kenya, who have historically been underrepresented in Kenya's public universities, has been explained in terms of remittances from the Somali Diaspora that has created funding networks to have more of their students access higher education. Their representation in professional courses such as medicine is also increasing (personal interview with students from northern Kenya in public universities).

pora academics; and the evolution of dual citizenship policies. Under Article III (a) of the African Diaspora Summit held in Johannesburg on May 25, 2012, a commitment was made to design and develop platforms for African and diaspora educators and scholars, to address the developmental agenda of the continent and the Diaspora. These would include, among others, the establishment of African-centred institutions and programmes, and increased collaboration efforts between academic and research institutions in Africa and the Diaspora regions (AU, 2012). These continental commitments have led to national-level policy developments to tap into the diaspora generally, and the academic diaspora specifically, as pressure to expand universities increases and enrolments surge, while resources to train new academics have been on the decline in the last two decades. There is evidence that in a majority of East African countries, the policy and institutional framework that should allow and facilitate fruitful engagement between universities and African Diaspora academics is emerging. In terms of policies countries have designed or are in the process of designing, there are more diaspora-friendly policies that do not require diaspora academics to permanently relocate, but make it possible for them to offer their services to local institutions under conditions convenient to both parties.

In 2010, Kenya adopted a new constitution, which has statutory provisions for dual citizenship. This will enable Kenyans of the Diaspora to access rights, privileges and obligations of citizenship in both their host country and Kenya. Kenyans who will not be able to enjoy dual citizenship due to non-acceptance of such arrangements may be granted an 'Overseas Citizenship Card', which will guarantee them a 'visa for life' to come visit Kenya as often as they wish. This will address difficulties of permanent relocation, which has not been attractive to diaspora academics. From 2010, government policy has also encouraged its embassies in the United States and Canada to host events for members of the diaspora, to sensitise them on the new opportunities and avenues to participate in the country's development. These events include workshops that focus on issues such as opportunities for the diaspora in promoting research and development, as well as harnessing technological and innovative skills (Kenya Diaspora Conference in the United States, 2011). Through these arrangements, Kenya is hoping to tap into the expertise of the diaspora as a means of producing brain gain rather than brain drain, and to enhance brain circulation (exchange of expertise). As a follow-up to the constitutional provision of dual citizenship, the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed a 'Kenya Diaspora Policy' and is awaiting legislation (Republic of Kenya, 2011). The Diaspora Policy of Kenya focuses on strategies of tapping into dias-

pora talents to reverse brain drain, and designing a system of collection of data on diaspora profiles.

The Kenyan Ministry of Education has in place a 'Policy Framework for Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I)', which among other aspects commits the government to develop a mechanism to retain highly talented scientists in the country, as well as attract Kenyan scientists of the Diaspora (Republic of Kenya, 2012). This will be achieved through identifying, nurturing and protecting intellectual property rights of scientists, researchers and innovators. The policy also establishes a 'National Research Foundation' that will raise funds for research across public universities in Kenya. These funds will address the local availability of infrastructure for research, one of the bottlenecks cited by Kenyan Diaspora academics as hindering their return. The policy also seeks to make it convenient for diaspora academics to patent their inventions, thus addressing some of the concerns related to intellectual property rights of diaspora academics for inventions developed in the country. These policy developments are an acknowledgement that for diaspora members to effectively contribute to the development of tertiary education in Kenya, there must be a national programme to guide their efforts. Therefore, the policy targets the upgrading of the Kenyan tertiary institutions, especially their research components, to make them attractive to the diaspora.

With regard to Uganda, Bulwaka (2009) documents that the country has a Diaspora division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to act as the coordinating unit of the different stakeholders. The Diaspora Social and Professional Associations and groups in the host countries are the main points of contact and communication between the diaspora community and the Ugandan government. In partnership with UNDP, the Ugandan government is in the process of setting up a database of Ugandans in Diaspora. This database will enable the gathering of information on the diaspora community by region and skills they possess. This will help the Ugandan government to know where its diaspora communities are and what skills they possess, and hence develop appropriate policies for supporting and working in partnership with them. The government is also in the process of reviewing its laws to allow Ugandans to hold dual citizenship. The current law does not allow Ugandan citizens to have dual nationality. This means that Ugandans in Diaspora who have acquired the nationality of their host states, automatically renounce their Ugandan citizenship and right to own property in Uganda.

Despite the above policy commitments from government, there is not much tangible evidence of the Ugandan government's proactive

engagement with the academic diaspora. What one gleans from the literature, especially from Bulwaka's study (2009), are individual initiatives and contributions from the Ugandan academic Diaspora to the development of education, outside any government process. Besides, the study argues, Ugandans in the Diaspora enrolled at various universities and institutions of higher learning abroad provide an opportunity for accessing modern inventions and innovations that are vital in transforming the economy of their country of origin. In addition to encouraging more nationals to pursue higher education abroad, a strategy needs to be put in place to encourage them to return and apply their acquired knowledge back home. In terms of practice, Bulwaka suggests that the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) needs to broaden its outreach and engage the diaspora in the area of science and technology research. For example, the Millennium Science Initiative (MSI) Project for Uganda provides a vital opportunity to engage diaspora scientists in making a contribution to research, technological innovation, and development in their country of origin. UNCST also hosts the annual Presidential Scientific Awards ceremony, to recognise scientists for outstanding achievements and contributions in various fields of science and technology. This is an important initiative aimed at promoting and encouraging scientific research and technological innovation in Uganda.

The Ugandan scenario is replicated in Ethiopia, where government policy declarations give a false picture of the extent to which the academic diaspora is welcome, while at the same time the political climate limits their engagement. Three different government agencies deal with diaspora issues. These are the General Directorate for Ethiopian Expatriates Affairs (Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, FMOFA); the Diaspora Coordinating Office; and the Transfer of Knowledge and Skills Programme. The General Directorate for Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs was established in 2002 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of its four objectives is to encourage the active involvement of Ethiopians in Diaspora in socioeconomic activities of the country. The Diaspora Coordinating Office, in the former Ministry of Capacity Building, was tasked with strategising how to fully mobilise and utilise diaspora resources, and facilitate optimal brain gain and capacity building. This was to be achieved through developing a database on diaspora skills and skills needed in Ethiopia, and coordinating knowledge transfer programmes for capacity building. These tasks continue to be performed through decentralised Regional State Diaspora Offices. A specific policy targeting the academic diaspora is the Transfer of Knowledge and Skills Program implemented by the International Organization for Migra-

tion (IOM) and funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (Kuschminder, 2010). The programme provides for skilled members of the diaspora to temporarily return to Ethiopia for a period of six months or more, to provide capacity building to ministries and public institutions (see also Belai, 2007)¹⁰.

The Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs General Directorate has developed the 'Person of Origin' card for Ethiopians who hold foreign citizenship, and, more generally, leads the country's efforts as regards diaspora engagement. The card is a response to growing demands and developments in the region for the development of dual-citizenship policies. In the case of Ethiopia, the government has argued that granting dual nationality is problematic due to issues concerning border populations. Hence, the issuance of a 'Person of Ethiopian Origin' identity card—also known as the 'Yellow Card'—has been found a convenient way of granting Ethiopians that hold foreign citizenship practically the same rights and privileges as Ethiopian citizens. Ethiopia has yet to develop a broad-based diaspora policy, and this remains a gap in its readiness to engage with the diaspora (Belai, 2007; Woldetensae, 2007; Bishaw, 2010). There are also feelings that official engagement with the diaspora has focused more on remittances than on the academic and skill dimensions. In 'Brain drain and capacity building in Africa', Tebeje argues that policies need to focus on how virtual participation can enhance the engagement of African universities with the academic diaspora. Individuals of the diaspora can contribute through virtual networks, as visiting scholars, by investing in companies, and by assisting in joint ventures between hosts and sending countries.

Despite the need for diaspora skills in Ethiopia, it is not until June 2013 that a diaspora policy was published. The policy aimed to bring together hitherto discrete government policies regarding the diaspora into one uniform coherent policy framework, an institutional arrangement and a broad strategy for engaging with the Ethiopian Diaspora. But it is in the area of higher education expansion, on which Ethiopia has embarked recently, that the policy may prove critical if it creates conditions for the academic diaspora to engage. By 2014, Ethiopia had 32 public universities. This has increased undergraduate enrolment

10. The study by Belai (2007) 'Enabling Diaspora Engagement in Africa: Resources, Mechanisms and Gaps; Case Study of Ethiopia', The Association for Higher Education and Development (AHEAD), Ottawa, documents these developments in Ethiopia. The study analysed Diaspora policy evolution in Ethiopia and Canada. Data was gathered from key governmental agencies in both countries, as well as intergovernmental organisations, representatives of educational institutions and professional associations in Ethiopia and Canada. The aim of the study was to gain insight into the Diaspora's experiences as they participated in activities in Ethiopia, and to assess the opportunities and challenges they face in their engagement.

from 98,444 in 2003-04 to 491,871 in 2011-12. (FMOE, 2013). However, the lack of adequate workforce does not support the expansion in enrolment. For example, during the 2010-2011 academic year, only 979 (6.4 percent) of the 15,192 lecturers serving the country's 22 universities held PhD degrees, and half of them worked at Addis Ababa University (UNCTAD, 2012). In contrast, about 1,600 academics in the Ethiopian Diaspora in the United States and Canada had doctorate degrees in 2009, a number higher than the number of lecturers and researchers in Ethiopia with the same level of qualifications in 2009 (UNCTAD, 2012). This fact, perhaps more than any other, demonstrates how critical the Ethiopian academic Diaspora would be if well engaged.

Despite the policies, divergences exist in Ethiopia between expressed aspirations in the policies to embrace the diaspora and the political will to put these into practice. The political and policy environment in the country of origin determines whether diaspora organisations can return and contribute to local development. The creation of institutions is a positive step, but political will and the government's attitude to the diaspora is crucial for the enhancement of institutional capacities and effective diaspora engagement (Ong'ayo, 2014). In the case of Ethiopia, it would seem from available literature that lack of freedom of expression, assembly and association, harassment, detention, suspicious killings of activists, arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment (Human Rights Watch, 2013), which push people out into the diaspora, still continue to limit the spaces that are available for diaspora academics to engage back home, as their creativity, innovation and enterprise are not allowed to thrive (Ong'ayo, 2014). On the side of the Ethiopian academic Diaspora, the limiting political space has meant that its initiatives remain largely fragmented and ad-hoc. Often initiatives are unilateral actions undertaken between diaspora individuals or associations, and a home institution such as a hospital or a university. In many instances, initiatives are confronted with a mismatch of expectations between the diaspora and home institutions, including some resentment by home-based professionals due to differential treatment of diaspora returnees (Tesfaye, 2013).

Establishing a reliable database on the profile of the African Diaspora is also critical if virtual participation is to work. Availability of reliable data is central to the successful engagement of the diaspora in home country development. The establishment of databases on brain drain is crucial to promote networking and collaboration between African Diaspora and institutions in the country of origin. It would help to identify local needs and programmes targeting diaspora engagement. Carrington & Detragiache (1999) suggested that census data from large

immigrant receiving countries, such as the United States, Australia, and Canada, could be used to generate detailed information about the occupational categories of highly skilled migrants, in order to assess whether the brain drain from a given country concerns particular professional groups.

Even in the absence of concrete national policies promoting the academic diaspora option in Ethiopia, individuals and groups have come together, both at home and in the diaspora, to pursue this option. These developments have come in response to the rapid expansion of the country's university education system and demand for academics in the institutions. Since 2000, Ethiopia's higher education sector has grown from two public universities to 35 to date, with more due to open soon. The need for qualified academics to sustain this expansion has seen the emergence of groups such as the 'Alliance For Brain Gain and Innovative Development' (ABIDE). (Bishaw, 2010). For example, in order to tap into diaspora intellectual resources, ABIDE and Addis Ababa University have drawn a joint action plan for the effective and systematic mobilisation and engagement of Ethiopian professionals, academics and researchers in the Diaspora and Friends of Ethiopia.

What the Ethiopian case demonstrates is that despite the political rhetoric embracing the Diaspora, political space for diaspora engagement is limited, with the amount of space depending on individual and group affiliation to the political establishment. Individuals and groups that are correctly affiliated have more space, while those that are not have to struggle to find space for engagement.

Institutional Policies and Responses

How ready are universities to tap into the intellectual resources of the diaspora? Sometimes what happens at the national level finds its way into how universities are governed and the attendant cultures that develop. In situations where national political leadership influences the constitution of leadership at the universities, the cue on how universities leaders have to behave in certain situations is picked from the behaviour of national political leaders. University leaders will hesitate to embrace certain academics or business people from the diaspora if it is felt they do not have favourable traction with the national political leadership. On the other hand, where national political leadership has retracted from influencing the day-to-day management of the institutions, as is currently the case in Tanzania and Kenya, much of what happens in designing policies of engagement with the academic diaspora depends on the values of institutional leaders. It is at this level that individual, disciplinary and project considerations come into play in determining

what level of diaspora academic support to accept. In some instances where departmental and school/faculty heads have some latitude to clear projects or individuals for engagement, they may be reluctant to give quick endorsement to these initiatives, depending on how they perceive the outcomes of engagement with the diaspora, relative to their academic and administrative hierarchy.

Universities in East Africa, just like elsewhere in the continent, have always had linkages and partnerships, especially with higher education institutions and foundations in the United States and Canada. These linkages were specifically tailored towards staff development and institutional strengthening. For example, in most of the 1970s and 1980s, the Rockefeller Foundation provided scholarships to support staff development programmes of the University of Nairobi and the University of Dar es Salaam (Court, 1979). Data from literature reviewed shows that the operations of the programmes were then fairly successful, at least measured in terms of the return rates (58 percent for the University of Nairobi and 53 percent for the University of Dar es Salaam). Coupled with those who took up positions in government, the percentage rose to 74 percent for Kenya and 84 percent for Tanzania (Court, 1979). The universities still retain some of these partnerships, often in modified forms. An example of recent linkages has been the Partnerships for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA) arrangement¹¹. A detailed analysis of the partnership reports on accomplishments does not show any projects that were undertaken to engage with the African academic Diaspora or to strengthen the institutional capacities of the institutions to tap into the African academic Diaspora.

Given this background, and the long crisis that the institutions have faced, specific policies at the university level focusing on how the institutions need to engage with the African academic Diaspora are missing. Also markedly missing at the university level, as established from this study, is the lack of any concerted consciousness from the university management that the African academic Diaspora can be engaged through well-developed institutional policies, to help in the renewal of the institutions. A survey of university policy documents for this study did reveal enthusiasm from the institutions to establish

partnerships with overseas universities for research, project support and funding. The policy orientations from institutions here have been to establish international linkages offices or directorates for internationalisation and institutional advancement. These kinds of partnerships rarely go beyond the traditional partnerships and do not have any novel articulation of strategies to tap into the academic diaspora. Rather, and in some sense, they seem to privilege academics from North America and Europe seeking to meet their home institutions' internationalisation requirements. Take the example of a university in Kenya, which had partnerships with several U.S. universities in the AMPATH (Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare) programme. The partnership brought together a consortium of 21 U.S. universities to partner in research, capacity building and academic exchanges. But the Kenyan university, despite having an institutional linkages office, did not have specific policies targeting African academics in the diaspora. This policy, according to respondents, needs to be developed to be in line with national level developments. Another university, which had just opened a foundation in the United States with much publicity, ended up turning down requests from a number of diaspora academics (one of them an alumnus), to serve at the institution as part of the 'Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP)'.

A respondent from the University of Dar es Salaam illustrated vividly the unwelcome gestures from universities in Africa to African academic Diaspora initiatives. The respondent indicated that he had formal contacts with the State University of New York at Buffalo—through his PhD advisor—and Boston University—through the director of Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program—and reported that the university encourages academics to initiate personal contacts even with diaspora academics so long as they do not have financial implications for the university. But even when this is the case, academics engaged in such initiatives are usually faced with the slow pace of approval of memorandums and low moral support from management, for example in the form of seed financing. Hence, even for such individual initiatives to succeed and be sustained, a reconsideration of the nature of university leadership in Africa—to create enabling conditions for academic diaspora engagement—is important. The respondent from Dar es Salaam, however, expressed optimism that it was now possible for the institution to engage with diaspora academics as a result of growing positive political will. Until recently, African governments had expressed little concern about the loss of skilled people, while development lending agencies often compounded the problem by obliging recipient coun-

11. The Partnerships for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA) was a decade long partnership, 2000-2010, a joint project of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Williams and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Kresge Foundations, that sought to provide assistance to the renaissance of higher education in Africa. The project's activities and accomplishments have been published in two reports; 'Accomplishments of the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, 2000-2010'; Report on a decade of collaborative foundation investment (2010)'; and 'A Case Study of the Partnerships for Higher Education in Africa: Lessons from a Ten-year Funder Collaborative (2010)'.

tries to hire foreign expatriates as part of the conditions attached to the loans. Moreover, politicians often portrayed countrymen who opted to live and work abroad as unpatriotic. But the sharp rise in skilled emigration and the serious human resource constraints facing the continent have forced the political establishment to rethink their views.

The lack of overall institutional initiatives to engage the academic diaspora was underscored by another respondent from a university in Kenya, who noted that ‘the university did not have a specific policy to engage with the African academic Diaspora.’ Any such request coming from individual academics in the diaspora or those at the institution who wished to create linkages, had to be channelled through the university’s Centre for Linkages & International Programmes (CLIP). The centre’s main focus, though, was on staff exchanges generally, and did not have any specific focus on the diaspora. Staff exchange opportunities cleared through the centre ranged from short-term visits to longer stays such as a semester or an academic year. The exchanges included teaching, research and post-doctoral opportunities.

Individual academic considerations and attitudes also determined the openness of the universities to embrace the academic diaspora alternative, with some academics showing ambivalence towards African Diaspora academics, beyond general policies on internationalisation. When asked how, at a personal level, they considered initiatives to engage with the African academic Diaspora, some academics expressed reservations with such phrases as: ‘Diaspora academics come with a patronizing attitude’; ‘Diaspora academics will want to be treated better by the institutions compared to some of us who have been struggling here’; ‘Short-term engagements may not be adequate to create an impact’; ‘Some diaspora academics are not as highly qualified compared to some of us, but they want to portray an impression that they are more qualified, and those of us who remained here are less qualified and therefore the source of poor standards in our universities’; ‘What our universities need is money to improve infrastructure, not importation of human resources who may be more expensive to maintain...’ (Various respondents to the study, University of Dar es Salaam, University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University, June 2012).

Despite the lack of clear official institutional policies to engage the African academic Diaspora, various respondents indicated that they had initiated individual engagements, which had sometimes turned out to benefit the institutions. For example, one respondent from Kenyatta University indicated that he had established links, and was engaged with diaspora academics on a project proposal with a Ugandan PhD Fulbright Fellow at a US-based university. Another respondent from

the same university indicated a sabbatical leave at home on his own initiative.

Existing partnerships between public universities in Eastern Africa and universities in the United States and Canada also provide various avenues of entry for African Diaspora academics willing to engage. Indeed, the study established that African Diaspora academics that are alumni of universities in East Africa have been instrumental in initiating partnerships. For example, the Kenyatta University foundation established in the United States in 2011 is an initiative of a former student of Kenyatta University now working in the United States. The foundation targets raising endowment funds to assist the university in attracting and retaining world-class faculty, establishing eminent scholars and professorial chairs and engaging leading academics to come to the university for short-term engagements. It is also possible that instead of contributing to the endowment fund, willing academics can participate in kind by giving their time for short-term lecturer assignments at the university.

Beyond the above general institutional responses and policies, respondents proffered certain strategies they thought should be considered by universities in Africa, to specifically engage with the African academic Diaspora. These strategies can be grouped into four broad categories; a) Strategies for funding and managing engagements; b) Strategies for creating a policy environment for sustainable engagements; c) Deciding who is to be engaged; d) Critical areas of engagement.

a) Strategies for Funding and Managing Engagements

Funding and managing partnerships between universities in Africa and donors have always been a tricky affair. Situations where donors want to control the funding and the activities that the funding should be used for, create a sense of patronage and resentment within African institutions and among higher education managers. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the institutions, if given control, will spend the funding as budgeted, given other areas of institutional operations that are underfunded. The preferred strategy by most respondents was for funding to be mobilised and managed by a distinct entity, other than the funders or the recipient institutions. The funding would then be used to organise various forms of engagement between African Diaspora academics and African universities.

The responses here resonate with a proposal that had been made to create academic chairs for African universities in ‘Global Knowledge and Global Health Building Africa’s Capacity (2010), developed by David Strangway, former president, Toronto University and president

and chancellor emeritus, Quest University Canada, for presentation and discussion at the G8 meeting in June 2010. The proposal entailed a strategy to create and fund 1,000 chairs at universities in Africa, as a strategy to strengthen faculty, increase their competitiveness, and reduce brain drain. The proposal provided various modalities. First, the chair appointed would be required to have a cross appointment with a university in a developed country and be expected to spend about one month each year at that institution. It would be expected that chair holders would be citizens of the receiving country, either residing there, or in the diaspora. Second, funding for the chairs would come from a fund created by the G8 to fund 1,000 chairs at US\$100,000 per year for five years. But the management of the funds and the whole programme would be left to a different foundation created for that purpose. This would insulate the programme from undue influence from the funders, and ensure a very high level of accountability. Each incumbent and each university would provide regular progress reports to the foundation and these would be published and widely disseminated. Financial accountability would be ensured by the use of a competent accounting firm. Third, chair holders would be expected to train PhD candidates and mentor young academics and postdoctoral fellows; produce research results of many kinds, including, but not limited to, publications; contribute to the innovative capacity of their country; ensure that research is put into use in both the national interest and the community interest; and assist the institutions in seeking funding from other sources, both national and international, to ensure adequate support for their work as well as building a longer-term base beyond the five years of initial support.

The proposal, if implemented, may holistically address issues that have constrained engagements of the diaspora with African universities. These issues have to do with funding, the organisation of partnerships, and the fact that the proposal identifies the African academic Diaspora as the pool from where such chairs would be recruited. The strategy, for example, sets clear targets for what the chair is required to accomplish during the tenure, and focuses specifically on PhD training of young academics in critical disciplines. The strategy also places the management of the funding with a different entity specifically created for that purpose, as a solution to the challenges mentioned above. What universities would be expected to do is to select academics from the diaspora whom they are interested in, with funding provided through a separate channel. African academics in the Diaspora could also directly approach the universities with whom they want to get engaged, and the modalities would then be streamlined

between the funding coordinators and recipient institutions. Lastly, it would be important that African universities and the diaspora also contribute to the fund. Since it is likely that most of the engagements would be geared towards staff development, African universities should set aside some percentage of their revenue to this common fund. Besides, local universities and African Diaspora academics should pool together a fund to be managed jointly, which can then be used to support the activities of diaspora academics. Lack of funding to support collaborations is still a major hindrance.

b) Designing Diaspora Engagement and Research Policies

Even when there are African Diaspora academics that are willing to engage, the lack of institutional policies in African universities limits these initiatives. The universities need to take a cue from what national governments have done to design policies targeting remittances as sources of social policy provision and investment. The policies should clearly state obligations and expectations on the part of both the receiving institutions and the scholars engaged. Besides diaspora policies, institutions need to design long-term research policies and programmes on issues relevant to long-term national development. They must also increase transparency in programmes and resources accruing from research and technical advisory services. Often, universities in Africa engage in research because that is what the donors have prioritised to fund, but this is not necessarily knowledge in the interest of the universities and their communities. It would encourage, for example, diaspora academics that are scouting for opportunities for research engagement if the research policies and research programmes of the institutions were readily available on the institutions' websites.

At the national level, most countries in Africa now fund competitive research grants through national councils of science and technology (NCST). It would be beneficial to extend these grants to diaspora academics and networks, on condition that such academics get attached to a university institution in Africa and undertake research collaboratively with locally based academics. This would be an attractive condition for return, or for establishing long-lasting beneficial engagements with the African academic Diaspora. Local universities are likely to benefit immensely from these arrangements in terms of diaspora intellectual resources and networks, post-degree networking, mentoring, access to global scientific literature, sabbatical leave, and participation in national and regional workshops on development policy, management and research. Private research institutions are already taking a lead in testing these kinds of arrangements. For example, in Kenya, such

grants are offered by the Consortium for National Health Research (CNHR), an international partnership composed of leading Kenyan universities (both public and private), research institutes, health service providing institutions, government agencies (including the Ministry of Health), and non-governmental organizations focusing on health. CNHR contributes to building vibrant research institution networks in the form of Communities or Centres of Research Excellence (CoReS) which offer an environment to share resources (such as research mentors and expensive but vital pieces of research equipment). The provisions are open to young researchers in the Diaspora who wish to return to Kenya to establish viable independent research careers in universities or research institutions.

c) Creating a Database on African Diaspora Academics, Diaspora Networks and Skills

Even if diaspora and research policies are designed, the universities need to map out who the diaspora and diaspora networks are, where they are located and what skills are on offer. As one respondent noted, for most universities in Africa, 'even having a readily available database of peer reviewers and external examiners is problematic... hence reviews for promotions sometimes take long, as institutions try to locate who the reviewer can be and external examiners stay for such a long time because of the practical difficulties of locating a replacement'. East African universities should first and foremost trace their own staff that have left and become part of the diaspora, try to connect with them, and discuss different ways through which they can develop both the universities and the local knowledge agendas. Fortunately, with the current positive national policies, institutions can use embassies to get such information. Diaspora academics can also do well to register at the various embassies, indicating areas of specialisation and their willingness to engage. Countries such as Kenya have developed university governance rules that accommodate alumni of the institutions as part of the governance structure. Universities should establish or strengthen links with alumni within and outside the country and establish databases on their areas of specialisation; identify areas where the diaspora can add value; and develop joint programmes with diaspora organisations for funding and support for diaspora involvement in selected areas. Diaspora members who are alumni of the institutions can exploit this both to fundraise and influence the direction of management and governance. The diaspora can also form a lobby to ensure the bill retains this provision when finally passed—as they did in the case of dual citizenship and voting. With policies on the

ground, all these avenues can be exploited to 'capture' the academic diaspora for universities in Africa.

But databases do not need to focus only on nationals or Africans. Once a country or an institution has attractive diaspora policies, the strategy is to work to attract the broad diaspora networks, not just national or regional members. Hence, as part of the institutional diaspora policies, there should be offices designated to collect databases of diaspora networks for possible engagement. Miho (2007) argues for example that to be beneficial, institutions need to link with global and regional networks in more structured ways, preferably through existing African knowledge networks such as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the Association of African Universities (AAU) and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

d) Critical Areas of Engagement

Engaging the African academic Diaspora was the most popular suggestion from academics in East African universities, on critical areas where they would wish their institutions to engage. The institutions face serious challenges in postgraduate training, a fact that limits the quality of responses from the universities to the processes of internationalisation. PhD programmes also take long periods to complete because of lack of supervisors. Respondents for this study reported a lack of senior academics to supervise PhD students on staff training. Two explanations can be given for this disturbing situation. On the one hand, the first and second generations of academics who received their doctoral training overseas in the 1970s and 1980s have either retired, left the university to do consultancies, are engaged in university administration or are just too old to cope with the growing demands of supervision. On the other hand, most mid-career academics received their PhD training locally during the late 1980s and the 1990s, when donors abandoned higher education in Africa and scholarships for overseas training were not forthcoming. Most of these academics, despite being PhD holders, lack scholarly exposure as they rarely have opportunity and time for research, given the lack of research funds and the obligation to focus on teaching.

Besides the lack of personnel, another challenge is how to develop the capacity of academics based in Africa to offer quality teaching and PhD supervision. Engaging the diaspora can address this twofold. First, through joint supervisions, PhD students in African universities can benefit through exposure to literature, critical guidance, seminar attendance, and publications outlets. Arrangements can also be made

to expose local academic staff to such literature and publication outlets through capacity development fellowships offered at the African academic Diaspora's universities. Virtual communication can also be used to facilitate supervision and mentoring of graduate students. Diaspora academics can be allocated a group of graduate students to mentor and supervise. Face-to-face meetings in this context can be minimal. Even uploading and sending relevant and up-to-date materials for graduate students, and discussing online issues of research methodology and approach, can be rewarding. Joint supervision can also be accompanied with joint degree programmes between African universities, as well as between African universities and universities in the North. Secondly, sandwich approaches where both the student and the supervisor spend short periods at the foreign institution where the diaspora academics are based were also suggested. Diaspora academics can assist academic staff from local universities to access opportunities such as sabbaticals and visiting scholar programmes, as a strategy for institutional strengthening. Also, academics at local universities can be assisted by their diaspora counterparts to access specialised facilities such as laboratories and equipment for research at the universities of their diaspora colleagues.

Beyond building academic capacities through research, teaching, and post-graduate supervision, it is important that the academic diaspora be engaged at different levels, including taking up institutional leadership in order to improve the governance of universities in the African continent. African Diaspora academics that have proven to be excellent drivers of institutions and innovations should be engaged to join governance boards of local universities, or even be considered as vice-chancellors. At the national level, a system should be put in place to track such diaspora academics and highlight their work. This culture of honouring academics both at home and in the diaspora can create informal platforms whereby partnerships and networks with academics within Africa and in the diaspora are enhanced. These partnerships can bring a wealth of knowledge, infuse fresh thinking, and revitalise scholarship and research. Diaspora academics should also be invited to provide their thinking on some particular intellectual or national debate or issue, through commissioned papers or inaugural lectures.

Conclusion

The members of the African academic Diaspora remain by far one of the most dependable 'academic ambassadors' for universities in Africa and African countries, in the face of economic globalisation and higher education internationalisation. The African academic Diaspora is broad

in terms of academic skills and influence within global knowledge networks. Two constraints, however, will have to be overcome if engagement between African universities and the African academic Diaspora is to be realised. The first is internal and relates to the responsibility of African countries and universities to put in place concrete structures and modalities for engagement. Politics in Africa, despite the rhetoric on tapping into the economic fortunes of the diaspora, still remains suspicious of the academic diaspora's intellectual inclinations.

At the institutional level, limitations such as bureaucratic red tape, hierarchical structures, and poor infrastructure and facilities, and a general institutional governance culture that is not open to the African academic Diaspora, continue to impede engagements and knowledge transfer back to Africa. The second challenge is external and intellectual: inviting African Diaspora academics to be more focused on Africa in their intellectual practice and to embrace (in terms of intellectual paradigms) an indigenous, socio-cultural, and epistemological framework that promotes African intellectual trails within the international higher education space. If these constraints are overcome, diaspora academics will likely help build the capacity of universities in Africa while at the same time internationalising intellectual trails emanating from Africa.

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