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# Editorial: The Role of the African Intellectual Diaspora in Advancing Higher Education

*Damtew Teferra*

Writing on the topic of this issue in 2004, I observed that the effort to return African immigrant intellectuals to their homelands has been an uphill struggle—and also a disappointment. As a consequence, a new discourse and approach to mobilise intellectual diaspora communities to enhance the continent’s social, economic, and intellectual progress without necessarily relocating them physically is gathering momentum (Teferra, 2004). Fast forward, in 2021, as we read in this special issue, that momentum has gathered more steam with intensified efforts to deploy the intellectual diaspora in higher education.

The potential of scholastic benefits from the diaspora community can be gauged by the staggering statistics on the size and quality of this community abroad, many of whose members pursue academic and scholarly professions as university professors, researchers, engineers, medical doctors, and high-level technicians. For instance, in the US alone, one in two African diaspora has a university degree. The need to mobilise this potentially powerful force goes beyond the oft-cited economic benefits as it plays a considerable role in stimulating and catalysing home-based academic and scholarly institutions (Teferra, 2003, 2018).

The diaspora is widely acknowledged as a critical resource for the development and revitalisation of higher education in Africa. However, tapping that resource, and forging mutually beneficial academic relationships with diasporans and Africa-based scholars and institutions, remains tricky (Dell, 2020) and fraught with challenges (Teferra, 2003).

The dominant discourse around the African academic diaspora follows a distinct pattern of deficit: the wide-ranging costs of losing some of the continent’s best and brightest intellectuals. However, this clouds the expansive and often innovative relationships that African academic diasporans have forged with scholars and institutions across the continent—relationships that build and reinforce both scholarly and personal engagements (Foulds and Zeleza, 2014).

According to the Societe Francaise de Realisation D'etudes et de Conseil (SOFRECO) (2007), issues of migration and development have been at the centre of various joint African-European initiatives. Yet, the role of academic migrants and diasporas has not been addressed in a systematic way, despite a couple of important interventions and academic contributions. Given the increasing importance of internationalisation of higher education and research cooperation in the world, there has been growing interest in the role of diaspora not only with regard to Africa but also for other regions. As a consequence, many international development partners are planning to draw on the assistance of the African diaspora in higher education. For instance, the Africa-EU Summit held in Lisbon in December 2007 adopted the Joint Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, with one of its priorities being to build the capacity of higher education in Africa by facilitating mutually beneficial cooperation in higher education systems between Europe and Africa.

In the United States (US), the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program responds to this new approach by tapping the African intellectual diaspora through a fellowship programme for educational projects at African higher education institutions. Its five-year impact report indicates that faculty exchanges between diaspora academics in the US and Canada, and African higher education institutions lead to sustained linkages and research development in the form of grant collaboration, teaching and mentoring, improved programme offerings in African institutions, and community impacts (Carnegie, 2019).

The African Union (AU), which recognises the African diaspora as the 6th region of the continent, defines it as “Consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union.” Its constitutive act declares that it shall “invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our continent, in the building of the African Union.” (AU). This definition and provision clearly indicate the Union’s strong intent to involve and engage the diaspora in the continent’s development agenda.

### **The Diaspora Conference**

This special issue is an outcome of a major conference, “Continental Forum on the Role of the Diaspora in Higher Education, Research, and Innovation in Africa” organised in November 2019 by the Institute of African Studies, Carleton University, Canada with the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) of the AU through funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York at the Union’s headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The overall

intent and anticipated outcome of this event was well captured by the AU Commission in the context of its strategic objectives (AUC, 2019).

The Forum attracted participants from a range of relevant stakeholders including the AU Commission, AU member states’ focal agencies for the diaspora and education, government ministries and officials, African diaspora programme administrators, educational leaders, including professional associations and think tanks such as the Association of African Universities (AAU), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), and the Pan-African Doctoral Academy (PADA). It drew more than 80 participants from numerous countries including Algeria, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia, as well as Australia, Canada, China, Germany, India, the United Kingdom and the US.

The Forum explored the perspectives of government ministers and vice-chancellors on the role of the academic diaspora in African higher education. Officials provided their views on the potential of the academic diaspora to contribute to teaching and research across disciplines in higher education institutions. University leaders discussed what can and cannot be achieved through engagements with diaspora academics and what they see as the drivers of, and constraints to, success.

The session also discussed government-led academic diaspora engagement programmes and explored outcomes and effective practices. Panellists drawn from the University of Ottawa, Canada, Peking University, China, and the National Institute of Education Planning and Administration, India presented comparative contexts and incentives of government-led academic diaspora initiatives in Europe, Asia, and Latin America; experiences and results of government programmes in China; and outcomes of a decade of academic diaspora initiatives in India, respectively.

In the session on regional policy and practice of academic diaspora engagement, a number of Africa-based panellists discussed either existing policies or those that are required, to ensure that diaspora engagement programmes achieve their objectives. Other panellists discussed the rationale for and distinguishing features of various programme approaches to diaspora engagement and what they have and have not achieved.

The panel also highlighted the status of the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), one of the derivatives of the AU’s Agenda 2063, in terms of activities and programmes planned or completed thus far, and discussed the development of concrete and actionable measures by which the various stakeholders would contribute, in the short to medium term, with particular emphasis on higher education

through partnership and synergies between diaspora partners and Africa-based counterparts.

The Forum further discussed harmonising existing and new interventions with CESA. The purpose was to align the numerous diaspora-led interventions in higher education within the framework and objectives of the CESA Higher Education cluster and to formulate a set of recommendations for the AU on how to integrate regional and global best practices within the ongoing execution of the CESA.

In exploring intercultural competencies in diaspora engagement, different mechanisms to address the working relationship between academic diaspora and host institutions in politically and culturally sensitive environments were a particular focus. The purpose was to contribute to the development of an operational toolkit for academic partnerships between diaspora higher educators and host institutions on the continent.

The conference also discussed government-led academic diaspora engagement programmes, their outcomes and effective practices. It heard testimonials and experiences of diaspora initiatives and came up with recommendations from diaspora academics and hosting academics on a way forward for policy frameworks to enable effective action at the regional, national, and institutional levels.

In advancing and enhancing national policy frameworks, mechanisms for integrating academic diaspora programmes within member states' existing diaspora engagement policies were discussed. The outcomes were intended to contribute to the development of a roadmap to support member states to translate policy into implementation.

The Forum was enriched by a number of commissioned papers presented at the event, two of which by Gueye and Boatemaa and colleagues are part of this special issue. Two articles are contributed by Forum participants—Varghese and Woldegiyorgis—who benefitted from the dialogue. A further two—by Oanda and Obonyo, and Wapmuk—were solicited to broaden the context and perspectives for a viable special issue.

#### **Articles in this Special Issue**

A total of six articles on intellectual diaspora are included in this issue covering Africa, and also specific countries including Ethiopia, Ghana and Nigeria. A comparative perspective from India, that has one of the largest intellectual diasporas in the world, is also included.

Based on data from 102 Africa-based academics, Gueye explored the level and forms of their relationships with diaspora academics to establish the scale of the diaspora's intervention in higher education in Africa. He focused on actors based in Africa who could testify on the diaspora's intervention on the continent; in so doing, he targeted others reporting

what the diaspora claims for themselves. He organised his observations into nine different roles, including co-authorship of articles and research proposals; co-hosting of conventions; peer reviewing; academic visitation; co-teaching and co-supervision of students; among others. Gueye argues that while diaspora scholars are urged to contribute in Africa, they also have to contend with the challenges and expectations in their host institutions and the global academic discourse in general. In addition to the plethora of such expectations, he observes that the diaspora is expected to meet all these requirements in a particular historical context constrained by the dearth of time—which he describes as a core resource for all academics seeking to make a difference in their profession—with implications for the nature and scope of their contributions and engagement.

Setrana, Arhin-Sam, Mensah, and Kyei used Ghana as a case study to explore the extent of the nation's interest and readiness to engage its academic diaspora through the setting up of programmes, institutions and policy guidelines for the development of the higher education sector in the country. They conceptualise academic diaspora policy engagement as capacity building and extending rights and privileges to academic diaspora for the purposes of establishing the appropriate atmosphere for skills to be transferred to the home country for development. Using Gamlen's typologies on the policy approaches employed by countries to engage their diaspora, they extend the argument that for the extraction of obligation to function optimally, the institutions, programmes and policies should be workable and flexible to accommodate transfer of skills into Ghana's high education sector. Recounting a number of diaspora activities under the wider umbrella of institution building, they note the creation of consular and consultative bodies; transnational networks and ministerial agencies to manage diaspora engagements including academic diaspora. The authors conclude that capacity building efforts and extending rights and privileges to the diaspora are important elements that need to be instituted by the government of Ghana to motivate the extraction or contribution of the skills of experienced and highly skilled academics.

Based on in-depth interviews with 16 Ethiopian diaspora academics based in the US, Woldegiyorgis interrogated the professional, personal, familial and other individual attributes that are known to shape the trajectories of diaspora engagements. This study, which was informed by a phenomenological research design, explored how Ethiopian academic diaspora in the US engage with universities in Ethiopia, and more specifically how this engagement is framed by factors in their personal spaces, from their own conception of the process and experiences. While acknowledging the importance of examining broader institutional, policy and other environmental forces' effect on diaspora engagement, this article advances

that the backgrounds, experiences and personal attributes of the individual diaspora academic are worthy of equal consideration as they determine decisions to get engaged, and shape the interaction with various aspects of the broader environment. Woldegiyorgis advocates for a holistic approach to studying diaspora engagement in higher education that pays as much attention to the personal and microenvironmental as it does to the institutional, legal and political.

Writing on the Indian diaspora, Varghese points out that, the country accounted for the largest share of global migration in 2019, with more than 17.5 million of 272 million. He observes that expansion of the diaspora takes place through migration of highly educated migrants seeking employment and through cross-border student mobility in search of higher education. He stresses that, as far as professional migration is concerned, it is not the poor who migrate from India; rather, those from better-off families, who have employment opportunities at home, migrate for better employment opportunities in the developed world. He notes that the US attracts the largest number of educated migrants from India, with around two million migrants living in the US. He attributes this to the migrants' low wages and high productivity, which increase employers' willingness to engage them. He points out that in 2018, India received the highest amount of remittances at USD 79 billion, followed by China (\$67 billion), Mexico (\$36 billion) and the Philippines (\$34 billion) with remittances accounting for 2.7% of India's GDP. Raising the hypothetical question of whether the professionals would have obtained better opportunities had they stayed in their own countries, Varghese does not offer a conclusive statement, but makes the point that, if well managed, migration becomes mutually beneficial to both the countries of origin and destination. In conclusion, he highlights the country's shift from articulating mobility in a deficit mode of brain drain to brain gain and the role Indian professionals have played in enhancing the country's intellectual and professional prowess and in improving India's global image.

Wapmuk examines the Nigerian diaspora's contribution to the development of higher education. He holds that the country's past engagements with its diaspora focused more on inflow of investment and remittances than on academic and skills transfer. Interestingly this observation agrees with those from many other countries. Quoting the International Organisation for Migration, he notes that Nigerians, who are also highly educated, constitute the largest population of African migrants in industrialised countries in Europe, the US and elsewhere (IOM, 2012). Prompted by a key question that interrogates the extent to which the Nigerian diaspora has been engaged in the country's higher education sector, he raises several other relevant issues with implications for higher education. He

observes that since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999, it has responded positively—including committing resources—to enhance diaspora initiatives and engagements for national development in general, and development of higher education in particular. Noting the list of real and potential activities, Wapmuk also cites several challenges that constrain the tapping of the diaspora's full potential, including insecurity, inaccurate data, the lack of an enabling environment, and the government's slow response to distress calls from the diaspora.

Describing the phenomenon of African diaspora migration in waves, Oanda and Obonyo envisage three such forms driven by different global developments: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War and globalisation, and provide an extensive analysis of each. They observe that interest in seeking support from the African academic diaspora to enhance and sustain capacity in African universities has grown following the African diaspora summit organised by the AU in 2012, which subsequently led to the creation of the Diaspora Division within the Union. They observe that, while several countries have designed diaspora policies and/or created diaspora desks in their ministries of Foreign Affairs, these initiatives fall far short of creating the right incentives for diaspora engagement, especially in higher education. As do others in this special issue, Oanda and Obonyo note that countries have focused on monetary remittances and setting up business schemes and have rarely designed incentives to attract the diaspora to engage in the higher education sector. This leaves little room to recoup 'intellectual remittances', which could oil democratic institutions and accountable political systems, especially when this relates to enabling the diaspora to participate in political processes.

### Conclusion

The role and contribution of the intellectual diaspora in advancing higher education in Africa are now well established. Countries are actively seeking to tap them in a more enhanced way through duly established offices at ministries, typically foreign/home affairs, and international offices at institutional level.

It appears that the world has now been conditioned to transition from the deficit laden and emotive ridden discourse in the form of 'brain drain' that dominated the dialogue on human mobility for a long time, to a trendy, rewarding and pragmatic form in 'brain circulation'. This growing trend is robustly manifesting itself at the centre of the interchange between the intellectual diaspora and higher education in developing and emerging countries.

COVID-19 has pushed teaching and learning from the margins to the mainstream as higher education became totally dependent on technology.



Online teaching, learning, seminars and conferences have become an everyday reality of both regular and, of course, distance-based institutions. This has opened up an opportunity for diaspora communities to actively engage even more in the business of higher education. In a number of topical issues, most notably COVID-19 related ones, the diaspora has visibly engaged with home based institutions in research, consultancy, joint publications, workshops and conferences. The COVID-19 mishap has shattered more barriers—and created more opportunities—and these developments are anticipated to deepen the intellectual diaspora's engagement even more.

Damtew Teferra

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teferra@ukzn.ac.za | teferra@bc.edu

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# The Multiple Waves of the African Academic Diaspora's Engagement with African Universities

*Ibrahim O Oanda and Mark M Obonyo*

## **Abstract**

This article analyses the various historical phases in the evolution of the African academic diaspora's engagement to support the development of higher education in Africa. It examines the drivers and motivation for such engagement and its implications for higher education development on the continent. The data were derived from a critical review of secondary sources, supplemented by primary observations by one of the authors who is engaged in a programme that supports diaspora academics to travel to African universities for engagement, as part of the third wave. The analysis of the secondary material shows that while the first wave of engagement was driven by a strong sense of Pan-Africanism at the global level and laid the foundation for the establishment of universities across the continent, the second wave became trapped in Cold War rivalries that limited engagement and drove more academics from African universities into exile, mainly in Europe and North America, thus swelling the ranks of diaspora academics. The third wave has been caught up in a similar situation. While the forces of globalisation and internationalisation that are driving this wave of diaspora engagement have the potential to support African universities to achieve international standards, they can equally undermine and mute the desire for higher education decolonisation. The article recommends that African countries and higher education institutions should play a central role in designing the broad policy context that drives engagement and that the activities undertaken by African diaspora academics should align with national higher education priorities.

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS:** IBRAHIM O OANDA, CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal. Email: [ibrahimoanda@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimoanda@gmail.com). MARK M OBONYO, Kenyatta University, Kenya. Email: [markobonyo@gmail.com](mailto:markobonyo@gmail.com)

**Key words:** African, Africanisation, higher education, African academic diaspora, engagement, internationalisation, decolonisation

Cet article analyse les différentes phases historiques de l'évolution des engagements de la diaspora académique africaine pour soutenir le développement de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique. Il examine les raisons motrices et la motivation d'un tel engagement et ses implications pour le développement de l'enseignement supérieur sur le continent. Les données ont été dérivées d'un examen critique de matériel obtenu de sources secondaires, complété par les observations primaires de l'un des auteurs qui est engagé dans un programme qui aide les universitaires de la diaspora à se rendre, dans le cadre de la troisième vague, dans les universités africaines pour s'engager dans leurs activités. L'analyse du matériel secondaire montre que si la première vague d'engagement a été motivée par un fort sentiment de panafricanisme au niveau mondial et a jeté les bases de la création d'universités à travers le continent, la deuxième vague s'est retrouvée piégée dans les rivalités de la guerre froide lesquelles rivalités ont limité ces engagement et conduit plus d'universitaires des universités africaines à l'exil, principalement en Europe et en Amérique du Nord, gonflant ainsi les rangs des universitaires de la diaspora. La troisième vague a été prise dans une situation similaire. Les forces de la mondialisation et de l'internationalisation qui sont à l'origine de cette vague d'engagement de la diaspora ont sans doute le potentiel d'aider les universités africaines à atteindre les normes internationales, mais il faut noter qu'elles peuvent saper et étouffer le désir de décolonisation de l'enseignement supérieur. L'article recommande que les pays africains et les établissements d'enseignement supérieur jouent un rôle central dans la conception du contexte politique général qui motive l'engagement et que les activités entreprises par les universitaires de la diaspora africaine doivent s'aligner sur les priorités nationales de l'enseignement supérieur.

**Mots clés:** Afrique, africanisation, enseignement supérieur, diaspora académique africaine, engagement, internationalisation, décolonisation

### Introduction

Interest in soliciting support from the African academic diaspora to enhance and sustain African universities' capacities has grown since the African Union's (AU) African Diaspora Summit in 2012, and the subsequent creation of the Diaspora Division within the AU Commission. However, these efforts are not new. During the colonial period the African diaspora committed itself to the quest to establish higher education institutions (HEIs) on the continent. This relationship has evolved over time,

often reflecting individual and institutional interests on the part of both Africa and countries hosting the African diaspora. Incentives for the African academic diaspora to organise as individuals or groups to connect to institutions on the continent have been enabled and sustained through different dynamics. This article traces the African academic diaspora's engagement with higher education in Africa through three waves. While the first and second waves were driven by the African academic diaspora's strong sense of identity with the continent through higher education, the third wave is emerging in a more complex context. Internationalisation, which has blurred the boundaries between global and national higher education contexts often means that the academic diaspora navigates a thin line between engagement in promoting the interests of higher education institutions in Africa, as expressed through demands for decolonisation and Africanisation of higher education, and those that potentially erode the capacity of African institutions to achieve these aspirations.

### The African Academic Diaspora and African Higher Education: The First Wave

The first wave of the African academic diaspora's support for higher education in Africa spanned the period from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (1840s) to the inter-war period of the 1920s and 1930s. The players were descendants of the original African diaspora of slavery who affiliated with missionary groups in Britain and the United States (US), especially the Protestant Episcopal Church of the US and the Church Missionary Society (Sherman, 1990). While African HEIs and policymakers' consciousness of the African academic diaspora's potential to capacitate African universities is recent, during the first wave, this diaspora played a major role in efforts to establish universities on the continent and influenced the shape they took. Against the backdrop of colonial governments' reluctance to establish HEIs for Africans (Adick, 1989), African diaspora intellectuals such as Edward Blyden and James Africanus Beate Horton pioneered the idea of a secular West African university managed by Africans to anchor the consolidation of African cultural nationalism, echoing current demands for higher education decolonisation across the continent (Frenkel, 1974; Hargreaves, 1973; Lynch, 1965). Blyden and Horton's efforts were motivated by two imperatives. The first was to show that Africans could achieve equal standards in educational and cultural endeavours, thus challenging European paternalistic and racist supremacy. Secondly, the establishment of African universities was regarded as a strategy to modernise Africa technologically, economically and socio-culturally (Adick, 1989; Lynch 1965).

In a sense, Blyden and Horton helped to expose the contradiction in European colonial policy that promised Africans 'civilization' while at the

same time denying them institutions such as universities that would be critical to attaining such (Adick, 1989). Colonial governments were not open to demands for public HEIs for Africans, preferring to encourage initiatives supported by missionaries and local intellectuals. However, these efforts fell short of the type of HEI envisaged by Blyden and Horton (Lynch, 1965). Hayford, a close friend of Blyden, recommended the establishment of a secular West African university that would be a “seat of learning so renowned and attractive that students from the United States, the West Indies, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, as well as from Lagos and the Bambia, would flock to it” (Hayford, 1969, pp. 196-197). Minimal but catalytic success was achieved in 1876 when the British colonial government allowed the affiliation of Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1827, with the English University of Durham (Frenkel, 1976; Adick, 1989). Arguably, the African intellectual diaspora's most important contribution during this period was that their involvement was part of a broad programme of decolonisation, Pan-Africanism and nationalism. As Zeleza (2006) notes, their initial efforts were crucial in the reconstruction of Africa as an idea and object of study, Africans as academics, and Pan-Africanism as a project.

The historical African diaspora also helped shape the future of higher education in Africa in two other respects. In the first instance, as African demands for higher education grew, especially the ambition for the establishment of a university along the lines of that called for by the National Congress of West Africa, the historical diaspora in the US influenced the direction of higher education. The promotion of the Hampton-Tuskegee experiment in Africa by Booker T. Washington and Aggrey James Emman Kwegyir did much to influence British colonial policy on higher education in its African colonies (Steiner-Khamsi and Quist, 2000). It was due to their influence that Achimota College, in the then Gold Coast (Ghana) was established as the first secular British educational institution in colonial Africa to implement the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial education (Steiner-Khamsi and Quest, 2000). Aggrey would later serve on the Phelps-Stokes Commission on Education to Africa, that among other recommendations, led to increased colonial investment in African education and laid the foundation for the expansion of educational opportunities for girls and higher education more generally. Beyond the push for Hampton-Tuskegee type higher education for Africans in Africa, a position strongly articulated by Aggrey, the commission led to greater British involvement in the provision of education for Africans for fear of the emerging American influence in providing higher education, especially in West Africa, as articulated in the Phelps-Stokes Educational Report of 1924 (Nwauwa, 1993). The subsequent establishment of colleges at Achimota, the Yaba Higher College

in Nigeria and Makerere in Uganda thus had as much to do with this fear as with the African quest for higher education which was partly influenced by the African historical diaspora's involvement, especially in West Africa. With respect to Makerere College, the report was clear that it might be the seed from which a future university would emerge.

A significant number of African student movements emerged in Europe and North America, especially during the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. While they largely focused on student welfare, a number pursued broad political objectives similar to the nationalist movements of the time, advocating for cultural nationalism in Africa through education (Boahen, 1994). One of the most prominent was the West African Students' Union (WASU), which was founded in London in 1924. It maintained pressure on the Colonial Office, making use of its contacts to argue for education in West Africa to standards recognised beyond the region (Boahen, 1994). Pressure from these student movements added impetus to the growth in higher education facilities in Africa, though with much reluctance on the part of colonial governments.

Assessing the imprints left by this first generation of diaspora engagement provides a better starting point to capture the contribution of the African diaspora to higher education in Africa. The historical diaspora's participation was self-driven by the need to identify with the continent of their origin and to contribute to its development in ways that would elevate African culture in counter-opposition to European culture. Besides putting pressure on colonial governments to establish university level institutions for Africans, they drew attention to the kind of higher education that Africans needed to develop in the spirit of Pan-Africanism. For example, Edward Blyden advocated for a liberal kind of higher education rooted in an African cultural and intellectual climate, with content that reflected African achievements in order to free the African from despotic Europeanising influences (Frankel, 1974; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). On the other hand, Booker T. Washington and those aligned to his thinking, such as Aggrey James Emman Kwegyir advocated for a “transplanted” kind of higher education along the lines of what had been offered to Negroes in America. Blyden's advocacy for a liberal education was seen in the emergence of university colleges such as Makerere in East Africa, which started as a technical college, but went on to embrace a liberal curriculum. The Booker T. Washington-Aggrey line of thinking that advocated for education at all levels along the lines of adaptation, resulted in the establishment of colleges such as Achimota, and later, following the first World War, the Royal Technical College (now the University of Nairobi) in East Africa.

The divergent positions taken by the historical diaspora in their support for higher education in Africa continue, with arguments for liberal human-

ities and social science higher education and one tending more towards science and technology as a solution to Africa's problems, such as relevance and employability. As the African academic diaspora re-emerges as a force to build capacity in African higher education, the following sections discuss how their engagement mirrors these original concerns and contradictions.

The importance of the first wave of African diaspora engagement is that it laid the foundation for the shape of HEIs established on the continent in the period after the second World War. The first wave of engagement was instrumental in the setting up of various committees during the inter-war period to explore the possibility of establishing universities in the colonies. For example, the Asquith Commission, which was appointed in 1943, and whose report was published in 1945, became the blueprint for the establishment of universities in British colonies (Sherman, 1990).

### **The Second Wave: Establishment of National Universities and the Era of Developmentalism**

The second wave of African diaspora engagement was led by descendants of the first wave and Africans who had studied in Europe and the US during the inter-war period. This wave covered the period from the 1950s, when Ghana gained independence, until 1980 and was characterised by African nationalism and Pan-Africanism, coupled with the euphoria of independence and the imperative of decolonising knowledge (Zezeza, 2009). Two forces drove the second wave. The first was Pan-Africanism that motivated intellectuals from the African diaspora to return to the continent and to lay the foundations for the intellectual decolonisation of higher education in the nascent universities. African academics associated with the diaspora of slavery in the US, the UK and the Caribbean made up most of the expatriate faculty in the nascent universities and research centres between 1960 and 1980 (Court and Mbalibulha, 2013). The pervasiveness of the Pan-African spirit during this period also saw various African governments awarding scholarships to students from other African countries to attend their newly established universities, a trend that contributed to the creation and circulation of an academic diaspora within the continent (Marah, 1987).

Some of these academics, such as Walter Rodney, were ideologically driven to return to Africa by the inspiration they drew from their participation in the Fifth Pan-African Conference of 1945 (Bly, 1985). This diaspora became part of efforts to decolonise the curriculum in the nascent African universities and to establish renowned centres of teaching and research excellence in these institutions. For example, Rodney was among the progressive academics at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania that aimed to build East African institutions of higher learning that would

create a new cadre of African academics to anchor the spirit of African liberation which was still in process (Campbell, 1986). Besides his groundbreaking work on, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa," he contributed to the establishment of a particular intellectual orientation which came to be associated with the Dar es Salaam School of African History (Campbell, 1986; Bly, 1985). Most of Rodney's intellectual efforts were expended towards decolonising African and diaspora societies and confronting ideological narratives of African history and political economy.

In Uganda, the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) benefitted from the scholarship of diaspora academics such as Archie Mafeje whose work contributed to a shift in the discourse on African people by African scholars by rejecting the western disciplinary canon of 'tribe' as the ultimate African condition, shaping social science debates for decades (Mbalibulha, 2013). In Nigeria, diaspora academics were instrumental in breathing life into the Ibadan School of History, where they worked on an even footing with their British counterparts (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2013). The School made an immense contribution to the renewal of scholarship in African historiography.

Equally significant were the African academic diaspora's efforts during the period before and immediately after independence to decolonise the production of knowledge about Africa. In so doing, they contributed to the deconstruction of colonial misrepresentations of Africa in the metropolitan countries. Since knowledge on and about Africa was closely linked to the colonial project with its Eurocentric assumptions and prejudices, African diaspora academics were critical in confronting the intellectual balkanisation of Africa and intellectual dependence in the production of social knowledge on Africa (Ogot, 2011.; Zezeza, 2009). Mention should also be made of the contribution of African diaspora academics in Europe and the Caribbean to the establishment of infrastructure for the dissemination of knowledge about Africa in Europe. For example, the periodical, *Présence Africaine* was founded in Paris in 1947 by a dedicated African-Caribbean team under the leadership of the Senegalese Alioune Diop (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2013) and served as an important avenue for African diaspora academics to publish their works in literature and history.

Thus, the second wave of African diaspora academics who returned to Africa were self-driven and were especially influenced by the 'back to Africa' message of the Fifth Pan-African Congress. Furthermore, whereas the first wave of African diaspora engagement was dominated by Afro-Americans, the second was dominated by black intellectuals from Europe and the Caribbean. Pan-African ideals also shaped the nature of their engagement, as they regarded decolonisation (at the time broadly expressed as Africanisation) of higher education as part of the political Pan-African project.

Furthermore, since a number of higher education institutions were already established on the continent, the second wave of African diaspora academics engaged more with the question of curriculum content with the aim of promoting decolonisation of knowledge. The focus was on formulating a new philosophy of higher education informed by African histories, cultures, ideas, and aspirations as well as a fundamental redefinition of the role of the university (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). In their quest for Africanisation of and through higher education, the African intellectual diaspora took on prominent roles as advisors to the African political leadership. Of note is the Caribbean intellectual diaspora's role in this regard; for example, George Padmore and Ras Makonnen who served as advisors to Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, respectively (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). The radical Pan-African movement that emanated from the Caribbean intellectual diaspora through the writings of people like Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Walter Rodney influenced intellectual debates on decolonisation and Africanisation of HEIs as academics contested the development paths the new nations were pursuing in the 1960s and 1970s (Austin, 2010). The importance of the intellectual diaspora, especially from the Caribbean, during this period was therefore to provide some ideological grounding to the quest for Africanisation of higher education and politics. It became critical in boosting the process of knowledge decolonisation in the new universities and establishing infrastructure for similar purposes in the metropolitan countries.

However, the second wave of academic diaspora engagement was not fully accommodated in the continent's nascent universities. During the 1950s, the emergence of the Cold War and the Americans and Soviets' attempts to use higher education to spread their political and socio-economic models opened access to higher education opportunities for African students beyond the metropole countries. African students who gained access to these new destinations and came to constitute the second wave of diaspora academics were caught up in the new western scramble to control African elites that defined the Cold War (Burton, 2020). This was also witnessed in attempts to control curriculum content and development in the nascent universities in the name of "developmentalism" (Burton, 2020). Academic freedom and institutional autonomy were sacrificed at the altar of what the new African states and their western allies saw as the correct paths to development and modernisation, while academics who tended to align with the Soviet bloc were silenced (Mkandawire, 2001). The fate of Walter Rodney at the University of Dar es Salaam was a manifestation of Cold War rivalries. In a number of African countries, diaspora academics were denied entry into their countries and universities due to their intellectual persuasion. This situation persisted until the end of the Cold War in 1990.

### **The Third Wave: The Era of Internationalisation and the On-going Quest for Decolonisation**

The third wave of diaspora engagement is different from the first and second in the sense that engagements have been shaped more by the demands of African institutions than the African diaspora's desire to engage in self-motivated efforts. The third wave has been bogged down by debate on how best to engage and extract value from the diaspora, how best to establish mutually beneficial academic relationships between diaspora academics and African-based scholars and institutions, and how such initiatives should be funded (Dell, 2020). One of the reasons for this lack of clarity on how engagements can be sustained is the nature of the diaspora academics who account for the third wave. A number of these academics were driven out of African universities by a combination of poor conditions and remuneration starting from the 1980s, and political repression which constrained academic freedom. More recently, externally funded programmes have emerged that recruit and offer scholarships to the best performing high school graduates to undertake their bachelors and graduate degrees overseas. Most of these students will likely not return but will swell the ranks of the third wave of the African academic diaspora. As historical evidence shows, overseas scholarship programmes that aim to build capacity have had mixed results, as some beneficiaries do not return or return briefly and then relocate overseas.

The third wave is, however, similar to the preceding two in terms of the forces of globalisation, internationalisation and the quest for decolonisation of higher education in Africa that are still driving the nature of engagement. Globalisation-driven internationalisation is presented in the literature as a phenomenon that would help African HEIs to achieve 'international' standards while at the same time, manifesting all the features of historical patterns of dependency and deepening of the colonial architecture of higher education on the continent (Zezeza, 2012a; Oanda, 2013). Certain imperatives of internationalisation, such as the desire by universities in Europe and North America to have an overseas presence and internationalise their curricula end up deepening and reproducing existing hierarchies in knowledge production and marginalising knowledge produced by institutions in less developed countries (Heilbron and Gingras, 2018). Often, African diaspora academics coming to African universities do so as part of their home (Europe and North America) institutions' internationalisation policies and most likely on terms set by their home institutions. Consequently, some African diaspora academics wishing to engage with universities in Africa are likely to confront these contradictions, especially given African institutions' need to 'decolonise', while also aspiring to international status. As actors whose home institutions are based in developed countries, African

diaspora academics in the third wave have to choose between academic interventions that erode local capacity and deepen the interests of foreign universities in African institutions, and those that lead to real autonomous capacity on the part of the latter.

Four drivers have tended to shape the nature and quality of the third wave African academic diaspora's engagements with scholars and academic institutions in Africa. These are the constitution of the academic diaspora, international and national support networks, sending institutions' internationalisation policies and the incentive structures in African host institutions.

In terms of the constitution of the academic diaspora, there is a tendency on both sides (within the diaspora community and African institutions) to individualise or collectivise the reasons for academics' relocation to constitute the diaspora. Those who relocated in search of better institutional infrastructure and remuneration are often seen by their counterparts in African institutions as individualistic and lacking the ability to fight on. Equally, such diaspora academics lament the lack of suitable conditions in African institutions to enable their meaningful engagement. Commonly cited issues include resource constraints, a lack of research and technology infrastructure, a shortage of well-trained faculty, inadequate facilities and equipment, and a lack of financial capital to support and sustain research (Ferede, n.d.). Ironically, these are the very constraints that African institutions look to the diaspora to help them overcome. However, this should not be a prerequisite for engagement. Setting conditions for sustainable engagement obviously reduces the vibrancy of such from institutional to individual level agreements between the diaspora scholar and a counterpart in the African host institution based on shared interests and academic engagement. Some studies have established that diaspora academics face homeland and institutional level challenges in their attempt to participate in knowledge transfer with African universities, including institutional bureaucracy, hierarchical structures, and inadequate facilities (Mohamoud, 2005).

On the other hand, the emergence of an African academic diaspora due to political repression at home has often led to the formation of organised diaspora groups. This has been true of the Ethiopian academic diaspora in the US and Europe that has formed various organisations to address economic and political marginalisation back home through specific interventions in the education sector (Ong'ayo, 2014).

Hence, while it is true that the lack of sustainable efforts on the part of African institutions is partly due to poor institutional management and governance, individual level engagements between diaspora scholars and their counterparts in African host institutions remain apolitical and rarely

endeavour to engage with systematic university reform. Thus, while the first and second wave diaspora engagements took it as their challenge to establish academic and political structures that would elevate higher education in Africa to international standards, the third wave perceives the poor quality of infrastructure in African universities as a challenge that limits the degree and quality of their engagement (AU/ Carleton University and Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2019). First generation universities in Africa with better infrastructure than more recently established institutions often receive more support from African academic diaspora engagement programmes (AU/Carleton University and Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2019).

In terms of support networks, unlike the first and second waves of academic diaspora engagement, the third wave has been made possible by international and national support networks. These may have little to do with existing national policies but with international ones relating to efforts by international organisations to support capacity building in developing countries. For example, emanating from the 1962 UNESCO Conference in Madagascar on staffing and financing higher education in Africa, commitments were made by organisations from the former colonial powers, and US foundations, to support capacity building efforts in African higher education. Scholarships were awarded to African students to pursue higher degrees overseas, accompanied by funded schemes to ensure a higher rate of return of African academics. Between 1999 and 2007, the US Fulbright Fellowship Programme sent 279 scholars of African origin from the US to African universities in 32 countries (Mihyo, 2008). The UNDP established the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) in 1983 with the aim of replacing expatriate workers in African countries with nationals with similar or better qualifications (Mihyo, 2008). However, similar schemes on the part of African governments and HEIs have been few and far between and unsustainable. Most have included short-term tax breaks and air tickets for returning academics that do not guarantee their long-term academic involvement in their home country.

Heavy reliance on external support as a strategy to sustain academic diaspora engagements with African institutions has limitations. It is uncertain if such support is availed at precisely the time that African institutions require it. For example, most diaspora academics who are funded to travel to African universities for short periods can only do so during their summer breaks. This also happens to be the period when most students in African universities are on vacation. The activities of the academic diaspora therefore only benefit students that are not bound to regular semesters. Furthermore, the amount of time that diaspora academics spend in African host institutions is likely to be determined by the funding available rather

than the enormity of the tasks that need to be accomplished in the host institutions. The situation would be different were African institutions, through their governments to secure sustainable funding to target diaspora academics for specific periods of time. Engagements that are largely funded by external partners are also likely to lead to unsustainable relationships of dependency.

The third driver of the nature and quality of the African academic diaspora's engagements with scholars and academic institutions in Africa is the internationalisation policies of sending institutions. While such policies are portrayed as altruistic and focused on developing equal, mutually beneficial partnerships with African universities, the process remains ideologically driven and its benefits to African universities are subject to debate (International Association of Universities (IAU), 2012; Zeleza, 2012; Upenyu and Susanne, 2020). While internationalisation policies focus on supporting research collaboration and enhance research infrastructure in African universities (Maassen, 2020), these objectives are unlikely to be fully realised if African diaspora academics coming to African institutions are motivated more by the internationalisation policy imperatives of the sending institutions than the needs of African universities. This privilege the needs of the former over those of the latter. An African diaspora academic hosted in an African institution will, for example, have to contend with rising demands for decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum in African institutions while the ideological driving force for such engagement from the sending institutions' perspective is to reinforce the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives in curriculum design and delivery. Once they constitute the diaspora, African academics are associated with the scientific community of their host countries, possibly including the ideological perspectives of such communities, and are imbued with the norms and values of those academic communities (Altbach, 1989). While they emerge as a force of the new higher education internationalism (Altbach, 1989), such internationalism is often one-sided and may not accommodate the passion for decolonisation of higher education emanating from Africa. Rather, the engagement may reinforce prevailing academic structures and hierarchies. For example, the 2010 study on alumni and the diaspora's contribution to the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (SOFRECO, 2010) was undertaken during a period when the extension of the 'Bologna process' to Africa was being contested by African academics (Charlier and Croché, 2012). One would therefore argue that the study was not singularly focused on designing strategies for the European Union to better support the African diaspora to engage but was part of an exploratory study on how such engagements, if supported would facilitate the extension of the Bologna process to African higher education.

Analysing the third wave of the African academic diaspora's engagement in the context of internationalisation raises the question of what vision for and of higher education this diaspora seeks to realise in Africa. Undertaking this project in an ideologically blind manner based on notions of capacity building without questioning whose capacity is being built and whose is being eroded in Africa, would only deepen the crisis of higher education on the continent. This is not to say that the African academic diaspora is not aware of such power dynamics. Over the years, such academics have demonstrated consciousness of such conditions and have often worked to subvert the neo-colonial knowledge project in the global South, despite African institutions' limitations (Nesbit, 2003; Zeleza, 2005, 2013). However, some studies suggest that the African academic diaspora, that works within the constrained policies of sending institutions, and in the context of North-South knowledge networks has become central to the creation of global knowledge networks that promote the interests of their (sending) universities. These institutions are seeking to expand their research remit in the context of increasingly resource constrained environments, international and national funding bodies that are increasingly focused on research relating to 'grand challenges', and the aspirations of individual researchers for whom global networks are increasingly important to successful careers (Larner, 2014). Hence, while it is true that the African academic diaspora has become an important player in global knowledge networks, there is no clarity on which side it plays for.

The final driver of the nature and quality of the African academic diaspora's engagements with scholars and academic institutions in Africa is the incentive structure at both the national and institutional levels. At national level, the incentive structure remains the nature of politics and institutional leadership in Africa. The constitution of the African diaspora, in both its historical and contemporary sense, has been a consequence of the failure of political and higher education institutional leadership on the continent. Whether seen in terms of the historical diaspora of slavery, the immediate post-independence diaspora borne of political intolerance on the part of the leadership or on-going emigration borne of the failure of economic and educational institutions, politics explains the nature of the constitution and subsequent responses of African diaspora communities to their continent. These present two challenges. In seeking to engage with African institutions, the diaspora would opt to remain apolitical, leaving intact the political dysfunction at the national and institutional levels that created the diaspora in the first place. On the other hand, the diaspora would build strategies that go beyond academic engagement to include national and institutional governance reform. In other words, the kind of political architecture on the continent that can allow for fruitful diaspora



engagement in the long term should be a priority for African diaspora academics, beyond academic engagement.

While several countries have designed diaspora policies and/or established diaspora desks at their Ministries of Foreign Affairs, these initiatives fall far short of creating the right incentives for diaspora engagement, especially in higher education. Firstly, a review of some country level diaspora policies reveals a redefinition of country level engagements of the diaspora to mean 'citizens' of a particular country, whereas the AU Commission sees the African diaspora as one community of 'all people of African origin' living outside the continent irrespective of citizenship, nationality and historical constitution. The country level focus is likely to limit circulation of the totality of the African academic diaspora, including the historical diaspora, in engaging. It also means that were an incentive structure to be designed, it would focus on attracting citizens of a particular country. In the recent past, the itineraries of many African heads of states travelling overseas have included meeting the country's citizens, especially academics in the diaspora, only for the diaspora to turn out to be a group of academics from the president's ethnic group. Instances where the diaspora, including the academic diaspora, mobilises along narrow ethnic or national level nationalisms may reproduce the dysfunctional nature of ethnic states which in the first instance contributed to the emergence of the diaspora (Elise and Bruno, 2019).

The second issue relates to the focus of county level 'excitement' with the diaspora. In several countries, the focus has been monetary remittances and setting up schemes through which the diaspora would be enabled to establish businesses in their countries of origin or elsewhere on the continent. Rarely have incentives focused on attracting the diaspora to engage in the higher education sector. While the African political leadership has an appetite for the diaspora's economic remittances and potential investment, it pays little attention to recouping 'intellectual remittances' from the diaspora, the values that fuel democratic institutions and accountable political systems, especially when this relates to enabling the diaspora to participate in political processes. Even when dual citizenship has been legislated, allowing the diaspora to vote or have a political voice remains a no-go territory in several countries. In a few countries, the same parliaments that have legislated dual citizenship have at the same time tried to pass parallel laws that bar diaspora citizens from serving in the public service of their countries, including being appointed to management positions in HEIs. It is important for the academic diaspora to engage in the politics of changing the institutional and academic leadership of African universities. Like African politicians, there are instances where the leadership of African universities has made it difficult for diaspora academics to undertake academic activities. The

reasons for such resistance have to do with fear of the diaspora influencing change in the culture of leadership which, unfortunately, has contributed to the collapse of a quality academic culture and infrastructure in a number of African institutions. As in national politics, the impact of the academic interventions undertaken by the academic diaspora in several universities across the continent is unlikely to be maximised in the context of weak institutional and academic programme leadership. Beyond the short-term interventions that are currently being promoted, senior African diaspora academics who have been exposed to sound institutional and academic programme leadership positions could serve as vice-chancellors, deans and heads of academic programmes or even as members of the governing councils of universities in Africa for longer periods. This will assist in reforming the institutional and academic cultures of these institutions, and also contribute to the internationalisation of academic programmes through partnerships.

The third limitation relates to legal recognition of the diasporic status of citizens of African origin outside the continent. Numerous African professionals are circulating within Africa outside their countries of birth. The diaspora within Africa connects to the diaspora beyond the continent and practical measures should be adopted to connect all diasporas.

The lack of incentives at the national and institutional levels has implications for institutions' capacity to host diaspora academics. Diaspora academics are attracted to first generation universities with better facilities. These also happen to be the institutions the academics left to join the diaspora. Existing networks therefore serve as an incentive at the institutional level to forge such engagements. However, first generation institutions may not necessarily be more deserving of such interventions than their second and third generation counterparts.

### Conclusion

The difference between the first, second and third waves of academic diaspora engagements is that whereas the first and second waves contributed to establishing higher education institutions where none existed and conditions at the nascent institutions left much to be desired, third wave diaspora engagements seem to be constrained by the lack of adequate incentives on the part of African institutions. A lack of infrastructure for teaching and research have been cited in the literature as limiting engagement and academic collaboration between the diaspora and their colleagues at African universities. However, African countries and universities are of the view that the diaspora can access resources that could help to alleviate some of these challenges. Furthermore, the third wave of academic diaspora engagements is taking place in a context of ideological tension between the

forces of globalisation and internationalisation, and those of decolonisation and Africanisation.

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## Looking Towards the Motherland The Roles of the African Academic Diaspora in Knowledge Production in Africa

*Abdoulaye Gueye*

### Abstract

In the past 20 or so years, the African diaspora's engagement in universities in Africa has inspired numerous studies. This article contributes to this literature both empirically and theoretically. Questioning the nationalism paradigm, which chiefly attributes African diaspora academics' interventions in African higher education institutions to patriotism, it argues that any explanation of the privileged forms of this engagement ought to consider two major factors. The first is that African diaspora scholars have been socialised in a strong colonial-era ideological imperative, which values engagement in Africa; their socio-professional relevance on their continent of origin should thus be assessed in this light. The second factor is that African diaspora academics are integrated into professional foreign academic institutions with their own rules and high stakes. While they are urged to serve in Africa, they are also required to excel in their local institution and at the global academic level. Given the time constraints this imposes, diaspora academics' engagement in Africa is confined to roles that are compatible with the expectations imposed by Western academia.

**Key Words:** diaspora, African academics, higher education, engagement, Africa

Au cours des vingt et quelques dernières années, la question de l'investissement des universitaires africains de la diaspora dans l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique a inspiré une abondante littérature. Cet article enrichit cette littérature tant sur le plan empirique que sur le plan théorique. Interrogeant le paradigme du nationalisme, qui attribue essen-

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** ABDOULAYE GUEYE, University of Ottawa, Canada. Email: agueye@uottawa.ca

tiellement au patriotisme l'engagement des universitaires de la diaspora dans les universités d'Afrique, cet article développe l'argument selon lequel l'explication des formes privilégiées de l'engagement de cette diaspora doit tenir en compte deux facteurs principalement. Le premier facteur est que les chercheurs en diaspora ont été socialisés dans un puissant impératif idéologique de l'ère coloniale, qui valorise le service de l'Afrique, à l'aune duquel est évaluée leur utilité socioprofessionnelle sur le continent. Le second est que les universitaires en question sont intégrés dans des institutions académiques étrangères ayant leurs propres règles et enjeux. Pendant qu'ils sont appelés à servir l'Afrique, ils sont aussi contraints d'exceller dans leur institution locale et aussi à l'échelle universitaire mondiale. En même temps que toutes ces attentes pèsent sur eux, ces chercheurs ont aussi besoin d'y satisfaire dans un contexte historique particulier caractérisé par le déficit de temps. Ils sont ainsi tenus de s'investir dans l'enseignement supérieur africain en choisissant et en jouant un ensemble de rôles qui sont compatibles avec les attentes de performance vis-à-vis d'eux au sein leur institution de rattachement.

**Key words:** Diaspora, Universitaires africains, Enseignement supérieur, Engagement, Afrique

### Introduction

This article examines the roles of the African diaspora in knowledge production in post-colonial Africa. Such a project may seem irrelevant in light of the popular view of the academic community as a global one. Indeed, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of the national or ethnic boundedness of both the scholar and scholarship has been called into question. Scholars are considered free from national allegiance and as dedicating their time and energy to the development of a commonwealth of ideas. In turn, scholarship represents this commonwealth of ideas, which no particular nation or continent can lay specific claim to as it is supposed to benefit humanity as a whole. Upholding this view of the national unboundedness of the scholar, the German philosopher Leibniz stated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: "The country where it [science] thrives will always be the dearest to me because the whole human species will take advantage of it" (quoted in Gaillard and Gaillard, 1999). About a century later, the French biologist, Louis Pasteur, echoed this view when he asserted that "science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity" (Lerch, 1999).

As this universalist view of the scholar and scholarship has gained traction, many other standpoints have competed with it. Two examples are of interest. First, countries and continents are still used as units of analysis. Their share in the total wealth of publications is still publicly recorded

and presented as a measurement of their scientific worth and rank. Many recent studies thus point to Africa's low ranking in global research output and its marginal contribution to research. According to Fonn et al., in 2012, Africa contributed only 0.72% of global research output. In 2008, the total number of papers published on the continent amounted to 27,000, "the same number as the Netherlands" (Fonn, Ayiro, Cotton, Habib, Mbithi, Mtenje, Nawangwe, Ogunbodede, Golooba-Mutebi, and Ezeh, 2018, p. 1163). Second, reflections on brain drain, which emerged in the late 1960s and remains an issue in some academic circles, are grounded in a nationalistic approach, with studies explicitly claiming that a scholar is the product and citizen of a given country – often associated with his/her country of birth – and that rightful ownership of his/her expertise belongs to his/her country of birth. In line with this assumption, the Indian-born economist Jagdish Bhagwati advocated for the taxation of receiving countries and compensation for sending countries for the loss of their most skilled citizens. This unorthodox idea constitutes a paradigmatic expression of the national boundedness of the scholar and scholarship.<sup>1</sup> However, since the 1990s, a new perspective has emerged, under the name 'diaspora option'. This theoretical approach develops an analysis of scholars as actors of multiple national allegiances who are mindful of their ties with their countries of origin while still being well-grounded in their country of adoption. In so doing, the 'diaspora option' challenges the Manichean nationalist assumption, which likens scholars' mobility to the principle of communicating vessels, with a sending country losing all to a receiving country. It also distances itself from the utopian assumption of the universalist approach, which considers scholarship and the scholar as free of national ties.

The 'diaspora option', also rendered by the term 'brain circulation', is based on two major arguments. The first is that the technological revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, embodied by the invention of the Internet, has significantly reduced the distance between these highly educated migrants in particular and their country of origin. Countries thus have many opportunities to tap into the expertise of their dislocated citizens (Meyer, Brown, and Kaplan, 2000; Teferra, 2003). The second argument is that these social actors have preserved an organic attachment to their country of birth simply by virtue of originating from there (Gaillard and Gaillard, 1997; Gueye, 2001). The ultimate implication of these two arguments is that circulation of the ideas and know-how of diaspora scholars from their current location to the African continent has become a tangible outcome. Maximisation of its outcome then depends on African states' willingness to develop the appropriate tools to enable them to tap into this expertise.

1. Bhagwati first advanced this proposition in his article, *The United States in the Nixon Era: The End of Innocence* (1972). He elaborated on it in subsequent articles and books, including, *Taxing the Brain Drain* (1976).

For example, Damtew Teferra (2005) highlights these states' responsibility to guarantee a democratic environment in which the diaspora could freely express their thoughts and deploy their ideas, and to create reliable communication infrastructure for them to channel their ideas to Africa.

Building critically on this literature, this article examines the African academic diaspora's participation in knowledge production in post-colonial Africa. The questions it addresses are: What roles do diaspora academics assume in this process? Which criteria determine the choice of these specific roles rather than others? What logic(s) preside(s) over the selection of the direct beneficiaries of their intervention in knowledge production in Africa?

### Arguments and Contentions

The exploration of this line of inquiry is justified by two factors. The first is that the existing literature has largely overlooked the conceptualisation of the expression 'knowledge production' while discussing the engagement of this diaspora. Knowledge production has often been narrowly synonymised with research output. Yet, as will be discussed below, the former concept is more extensive and complex than the latter. The second issue is that the diaspora's roles have been reductively attributed to patriotism (Zezeza, 2013; Ouédraogo and Maïté, 2011). A major problem with this line of thought is that patriotism is often naturalised, or taken-for-granted, as if one was born a patriot. Yet one's patriotism is always a process, and this needs to be explored. More importantly, patriotism cannot suffice as a chief analytical element of the diaspora's intervention in knowledge production in Africa as such intervention emerges from their interactions with real actors, rather than an abstract continent. Given that their roles are partly defined through these interactions, the analysis should focus not on patriotism, but on the origins and meanings of such interactions.

My first argument is that the African diaspora's roles in knowledge production in post-colonial Africa proceed from their negotiation of the orders and rules set in two separate spheres of socialisation, namely, the African academic sphere, and the Western academic sphere in which these scholars are integrated. Prescriptive rules and norms constrain highly educated Africans from engaging on the African continent. During the colonial era, the African intellectual and political elites prescribed that highly educated Africans should contribute to the development of the continent.<sup>2</sup> The Western academic sphere has its own set of norms, principles, and rules, as well as professional stakes, including competition for local and global academic visibility and distinction, and scholars' gratuitous contribution to the preservation and reproduction of their academic institution. Partici-

pation in peer-reviews of submissions, and in various teaching or research committees, or professional boards are examples of such contributions. Such participation is formally philanthropic, although scholars do not hesitate to turn it into a resource to promote themselves in their own institution, and even sometimes in the global academic field.

The second argument is that the African academic diaspora translates engagement in Africa into a myriad of roles that fit with the set of norms and stakes in force within the Western academic world. Analysing the roles of this diaspora in knowledge production in post-colonial Africa thus necessitates acknowledgement of their double inscription in two spheres, each with its specific constraints, rules, and stakes. It also calls for a critical analysis of the meaning of knowledge production. Instead of approaching it as an end-product, its double characteristic as a process on the one hand, and a system on the other, needs to be taken into account.

I assess the value of these arguments by culling from a large set of data collected among African academics. The analysis is based on a survey of 102 researchers based in African universities. The rationale for this methodological strategy is to assess what actors based in Africa testify about the diaspora's intervention on the continent rather than reporting what the diaspora claims for themselves.

### The Multiple Stages of Knowledge Production

As philosopher Jean-Godefroy Bidima (1995) reminds us, definition always evokes delimitation. Whether it generates consensus or opposition, the act of definition implies one of delimitation of the boundaries of a concept, mainly for the purpose of creating shared meaning between authors and their readership. Most scholars in the social sciences, in particular, are familiar with the term knowledge production. However, this does not guarantee that they share the same understanding of the term; hence, the need to pinpoint from the onset what is meant by this term in this article. I conceive knowledge production firstly as an (intellectual) process. As such, it is more than an end-result – which the publication of a body of thought such as a journal article or a book signifies. The production of knowledge integrates an undetermined number of stages, including identification of the pertinent literature to engage with, (re)interpretation of this literature, and arrangement of the arguments or ideas composing one's novel contribution to the existing sum of knowledge. Thus, as an (intellectual) process, knowledge production is a fundamentally social dynamic as each of these stages expose authors of the body of thought to interaction with real scholars from whom, or in contention with whom, they either learn how to identify the relevant literature or arrange their own arguments and ideas.

2. See Jean-Pierre Ndiaye (1962), and Sékou Traoré (1973).

Not only is knowledge production a process, but it is also a system in the classical sense of this term. Ludwig Von Bertalanffy conceives a system as a set of interdependent elements; that is, they are related to one another in such a way that the modification of one element would result in the modification of the whole set (1968). In post-colonial Africa, which is the reference period for this article, the university has claimed the hegemonic function of a space of elaboration, preservation, and dissemination of the legitimate form of knowledge. To the extent that African academics subscribe to such a claim, the question of knowledge production is unavoidably a reflection on the existence and the state of academic spaces where research and teaching take place; the existence and quality of the individuals assigned to these activities; the presence of active learners; the existence and value of publication outlets (journals and publishing houses); on the availability of material resources that are indispensable to the elaboration of novel and original thought (libraries, laboratories with relevant equipment); and even on the mode of organisation and governance of the university as an institution.

As a system, knowledge production is also undeniably and fundamentally social. To begin with, authors in any particular discipline or school of thought depend on a number of crucial resources in order to efficiently perform their intellectual activities. University infrastructure, a well-furnished and up-to-date library or laboratory, and sufficient time to devote to thinking and writing are just some examples of these resources. Access to such resources is all but universal, democratic, and automatic. On the contrary, some are relatively scarce and are therefore extended only to a small number of privileged or fortunate academics, and in many cases their access implies the deployment of individual strategies and negotiation with other academic agents who presumably control the distribution of these resources. As a system, the production of knowledge is also contingent upon the rule of mutual judgment by peers, known as peer-review. The ideas sketched by scholars before they are turned into a final product such as a book or an article are (often anonymously) submitted for validation to other scholars who act in the capacity of referees. Referees often work in the same field of expertise as the authors of these ideas and are in principle the ultimate judges of the worth of the ideas. Cognisant of the peer-review rule, scholars who seek the most desirable outcome during this validation rarely submit their ideas for publication before running them by other colleagues that are accessible to them. These colleagues are expected to be relatively knowledgeable about the topic and likely to foresee the weaknesses and strengths of the paper before the ultimate referees identify them. Through this offer and demand for intellectual services, scholars contribute to sustaining the knowledge production system, as

they maintain themselves in relations of inter-dependence with other scholars. As academics seek global circulation of their ideas, and as they value face-to-face exchanges, which the multiplicity of international conferences, congresses, and symposia offer, they are able to run their ideas by scholars in other countries that are affiliated to foreign institutions. The latter scholars whose preliminary judgment (known as ‘friendly review’) authors seek are therefore not necessarily immediate colleagues and they can manifest any national identity, including a black African one.

This conception of knowledge production as a complex process and a system theoretically suggests that it is possible for African diaspora scholars to engage in the intellectual dynamics taking place in Africa. While this diaspora is usually absent from the continent, the technological revolution means that physical distance is no longer an impediment to their involvement in knowledge production in Africa should they choose to abide by the ideological imperative of the colonial era African intellectual elite highlighted by Jean-Pierre Ndiaye and Sékou Traoré. Provided that they are eager to contribute to the production of knowledge in Africa, the African academic diaspora’s dilemma is to abide by this ideology while complying with the norms, rules, and stakes of the Western academic world in which they operate.

### **Mechanisms to Participate in Knowledge Production**

My research in Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Ethiopia between 2012 and 2017, which I resumed recently, shows that African academics are significantly engaged in knowledge production in Africa. The data collected thus far from 102 Africa-based academics to assess the level and forms of their relationships with diaspora academics reveal the significant scale of the latter’s intervention in higher education on the continent. Indeed, only 18 of these academics reported no connection with scholars based in the diaspora. Two conclusions can be drawn from this scale of diaspora involvement. The first is that it dispels the assertion of some late 20<sup>th</sup> century African thinkers that African intellectuals who chose to settle outside Africa are disinterested in the various dynamics taking place on the continent (Traoré, 1973, 1985; Diané, 1990). Secondly, it validates the intuition of most students of the African academic diaspora who have concluded, often on the basis of anecdotal evidence, that the diaspora has extensive engagement in Africa (Brown, 2003; Teferra, 2003; Zeleza, 2013).

The diaspora’s intervention in African higher education institutions translates into a myriad of roles. The data reveal nine different roles, including co-writing articles or research proposals with Africa-based colleagues; co-organisation of conferences or colloquia in Africa; contribution of articles in volumes published by Africa-based colleagues; friendly review

of work by colleagues in Africa; invitations to Africa-based colleagues to visit foreign universities; granting research or conference funding to Africa-based colleagues; co-teaching or supervision of students with Africa-based colleagues; donating academic material (computer, books, etc.) to colleagues in Africa; and transmission of information relevant to the academic promotion of Africa-based colleagues.

While these activities involve different levels of engagement, they all benefit Africa-based academics, and therefore knowledge production in Africa. For instance, co-organising a conference is a step forward in the production of knowledge. Papers presented at conferences sometimes lay the ground for more complete texts, thanks to the criticisms and suggestions received from conference attendees. Revised conference papers thus become published articles or book chapters that increase Africa's contribution to global academic research and boost the publication record of Africa-based academics.

Furthermore, some of these roles are more common than others. Of the exchanges mentioned by Africa-based researchers with their diaspora colleagues, 120 out of 132 fell into one of the roles described above. They were distributed as follows:

- 35% of these exchanges fell under co-writing of articles or research proposals;
- 0.83% were co-organisation of a conference;
- 5.8% were contribution of an article to a volume;
- 15% were friendly reviews;
- 13.3% were invitations to visit a diaspora scholar's university;
- 10% were co-teaching;
- 15% fell under gifts of academic material; and
- 5% were sharing of relevant information.

Co-authorship of articles or research proposals represent the lion's share, while co-organising conferences is rare. Gifts of academic material and friendly review (both at 15%) were the two other roles most favoured by the diaspora. These findings raise the question of the reasons and therefore the rationale for the diaspora's choices of the roles they assume.

The reasons behind the diaspora's decision to favour certain roles have not been problematised by scholars of the African diaspora, or, indeed, other diasporas. In his report to the Carnegie Corporation, historian Zeleza noted the diversity of the diaspora's roles in African higher education, but did not classify them, let alone analyse their hierarchy (Zeleza, 2013). Many other studies on the diaspora have failed to address this question,

mainly because they were not grounded in empirical research (Charum, Granes, and Meyer, 1996; Meyer, 2003; Meyer, Brown, Kaplan, and Meyer, 2002; Brown, 2003; Teferra, 2017). However, the diaspora's preference for specific roles and by implication, rejection of others largely follows the rules and stakes informing the academic world. It also results from individual factors, including the strength of the diaspora's embeddedness in the African academic setting. This strength is measured by the series of relationships that a diaspora scholar initially develops with researchers affiliated to an Africa-based institution. Examples of strong embeddedness include being a former colleague of a researcher based in Africa; a former graduate mentee of a colleague working in Africa; and being a former supervisor of a colleague based in Africa.

### Academic Rules and Stakes

Contemporary academics have two chief concerns. The first is to perform roles that would enhance their position in local and global academic systems, while the second is to develop strategies to devote most of their time to activities that sustain their scholarly advancement. These concerns proceed from the organisation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century academic world. While modern academia values most of the roles listed above, it accords them unequal prestige and consideration.<sup>3</sup> For instance, co-authorship of a book or article carries more weight than co-teaching a class. Distinguished authors of publications receive international awards, while teaching excellence is mainly recognised at university level or at best, national level. As modern academia embraces the logic of productivity and diversification of services, contemporary academics struggle with time constraints within their own institution. While they are under pressure to perform academically, their tasks constantly multiply, eating into the time they should devote to research and publications. The multiplicity of these tasks largely results from the growth of the student population, the increase in the number of committees, and many other factors.

Every role performed by academics has an academic value and implies the expenditure of a specific amount of time. It is on the basis of these two factors (the value of the role, and the time expenditure it presupposes) that diaspora academics decide on the roles they favour in their engagement in Africa. Co-writing an article is more likely to enhance the status of a diaspora academic in Western and global academia than co-teaching a course in Africa. The significant amount of time spent in performance of the former role thus seems more rewarding than the almost equal amount

3. Several studies on the organisation of modern academia mention the division of labour within the academic system. However, they rarely incorporate a systematic analysis of the hierarchy of the tasks involved in their professional activities. In her book, *How Professors Think*, Michèle Lamont (2009) hints at this hierarchy. Other studies include Beaver and Rosen (1978), and Babchuck, Keith, and Peters (1999).

of time spent on the latter. This hierarchy is the result of the imperative to publish that is in force in most Western universities; the injunction to 'publish or perish' as coined by Robert Merton (1957). The particularity of this role is to reconcile a diaspora scholar's engagement in knowledge production in Africa with the duty to perform intellectually in the Western academic world.

Faced with constraining academic rules, the African academic diaspora opts for roles which are less costly in terms of time (such as donating academic material), unless a more time-consuming role produces an outcome that sustains their academic status in the Western or global academic sphere. To a certain extent, this need to balance the imperatives of productivity and of serving the community explain the relatively significant level of preference for donating academic material whereas co-organising conferences in Africa is hardly an option, and co-teaching classes on the continent is even less frequent. Instrumental in the production of knowledge for scholars located in Africa, these gifts enable the diaspora to fulfil the need to serve Africa while using the precious time at their disposal to advance their own academic status.

#### **Reaching Out to Those who are Close**

Whatever role the African diaspora assumes, benefits, both large and small, accrue to knowledge production on the African continent. A good example is the increase in academic publications authored or co-authored by academics based at African universities. However, in reality, the diaspora engages with Africa through the mediation of real individuals, namely, scholars affiliated to African universities. It is thus important to take these individual scholars, as well as their characteristics into consideration in understanding the criteria used by the diaspora to select the roles they choose to perform. Indeed, while the institutional elements discussed above (time expenditure and the outcome of the role) certainly determine the diaspora's selection of roles, the identity of the Africa-based scholars and their relationships with diaspora academics inform this selection.

Like any individual, diaspora scholars are enmeshed in what Paul Ricoeur (2005) called an "infinite mutual indebtedness". This notion refers to a raft of duties or obligations; it posits that individuals always (partially) owe their personal achievements to other individuals or organisations that supported them. By receiving, they are expected to give to either the same or other actors who could benefit from their support. The diaspora scholars' professional trajectory and their evolution would not have been possible without the contribution of scholars based in Africa. For example, the latter could have served as mentors, supervisors, or colleagues. This has instilled a sense of duty among the diaspora to scholars who are involved in various

activities in Africa. Such relationships contribute to determining the choice of roles. The survey conducted among 102 Africa-based academics sought to assess the link between the diaspora's embeddedness in African research institutions and their roles in knowledge production. Africa-based scholars were asked to recount the original terms of their relationships with the diaspora academics with whom they have co-published, co-organised a conference, co-taught a class or from whom they have received an invitation to visit a foreign university, have received academic material, etc.

A list of six items was presented:

- The diaspora scholar was a former colleague in the same institution;
- S/he was a classmate during graduate studies;
- S/he was a professor or supervisor;
- S/he is a colleague met at a conference;
- S/he is a colleague met via a third party; and
- S/he is a colleague met virtually.

In terms of co-writing an article or book, 16 of the 35 diaspora scholars and Africa-based scholars were former colleagues in the same institution; nine involved Africa-based researchers and diaspora academics who were their former professor or supervisor; four concerned scholars from the two groups who were classmate during graduate studies; five involved academics from the two groups who met at a conference, and one involved academics who met virtually. Co-teaching, which was only cited twice, involved diaspora academics and Africa-based scholars who were colleagues at the same institution. With respect to friendly review, which was mentioned 18 times, in eight cases it was performed to the benefit of Africa-based scholars by diaspora scholars who were their former supervisors; four times by diaspora scholars who were classmates of the former in graduate studies; five times by diaspora scholars who were colleagues that the Africa-based scholars met at a conference; and once by a diaspora scholar who was met virtually.

These results suggest that diaspora scholars' engagement in knowledge production in Africa is also partly determined by the strength of the ties they have built with colleagues appointed to African universities. The fact that some diaspora academics co-write and co-teach with, or offer friendly reviews to colleagues in Africa is evidence of the usefulness of embeddedness. It suggests that engaging in knowledge production in Africa requires that diaspora scholars build on previously meaningful relationships with Africa-based colleagues through whom they relate to the African higher education system.



## Conclusion

Questions about the roles of the African academic diaspora in knowledge production in Africa appear to be at odds with pervasive talk of globalisation and the national unboundedness of scholars in the current century. At the same time, several other discourses point to the relevance of national or continental boundaries, and therefore to the legitimacy of asking such questions. Although African diaspora scholars have been socialised in a strong colonial-era ideological imperative, which values engagement in Africa, at the same time, they are integrated into a professional foreign academic institution with its own rules and high stakes. While these diaspora scholars are urged to serve in Africa, they are also expected to excel in their local institution and at the global academic level. Furthermore, the diaspora need to meet all these requirements in a specific historical context characterised by time constraints – a core resource for all academics that seek to make a difference in their profession. In order to engage in Africa, diaspora academics must choose and assume roles that are compatible with the expectations imposed by Western academia. These roles are hierarchised according to the amount of time required to perform them, and their effects on the diaspora scholars' professional career on the Western or global academic stage. For example, co-teaching classes and organising conferences in Africa imply substantial expenditure of time. Furthermore, their impact on the position of those who engage in them in the Western or global academic sphere is marginal in comparison with co-authoring an article or a book. Due to this inequality of effect, diaspora academics select the roles they are willing to assume. Those that are relatively time-consuming and less likely to enhance their local and global academic status are outnumbered by those that are time-consuming but have a positive impact on such status.

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## Transnational Diaspora Engagements in Higher Education: A Case of Ethiopian-born Academics in the US

*Ayenachew Aseffa Woldegiyorgis*

### Abstract

The literature on diaspora engagement in higher education focuses on broad environmental, policy and institutional issues as critical determinants of the scope and efficiency of engagement. Using data from interviews with 16 Ethiopian diaspora academics in the United States, this article undertakes a micro-examination of factors in their personal spaces and immediate environment that influence such engagement. Using a phenomenological approach, it examines how professional, personal, familial and other individual attributes shape the trajectories of diaspora engagement. It demonstrates how nuances in personal and micro-environmental factors shape motivation for, and sustenance of, engagement, while they maintain a complex and interdependent relationship. The article concludes by highlighting the importance of a holistic approach to the study of diaspora engagement in higher education that pays attention to personal and micro-environmental factors as well as institutional, legal and political issues.

**Key words:** Ethiopia, Ethiopian diaspora, diaspora engagement, higher education, transnational engagement

La littérature sur l'engagement de la diaspora dans l'enseignement supérieur se concentre sur les grandes questions environnementales, politiques et institutionnelles en tant que déterminants critiques de la portée et de l'efficacité de l'engagement. En utilisant les données d'entretiens avec 16 universitaires de la diaspora éthiopienne aux États-Unis, cet article entreprend un micro-examen des facteurs dans leurs espaces personnels et dans leur environnement immédiat qui influencent un tel engagement.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** AYENACHEW ASEFFA WOLDEGIYORGIS, Boston College Center for International Higher Education, US. Email: woldegiy@bc.edu

A l'aide d'une approche phénoménologique, il examine comment les attributs professionnels, personnels, familiaux et autres façonnent les trajectoires de l'engagement de la diaspora. Il montre comment les nuances des facteurs personnels et micro-environnementaux façonnent la motivation et le maintien de l'engagement, tout en maintenant une relation complexe et interdépendante. L'article conclut en soulignant l'importance d'une approche holistique de l'étude de l'engagement de la diaspora dans l'enseignement supérieur qui prête attention aux facteurs personnels et micro-environnementaux ainsi qu'aux questions institutionnelles, juridiques et politiques.

**Mots clés:** Éthiopie, diaspora éthiopienne, engagement de la diaspora, enseignement supérieur, engagement transnational

### Introduction

Previous studies (e.g., Amagoh and Rahman, 2016; Foulds and Zeleza, 2014; Ogachi, 2016; Teferra, 2003, 2010; Zeleza, 2004, 2013) have examined the potential and benefits of diaspora engagement in African higher education and advocated for African scholars based outside the continent to step up such involvement. However, much of the literature focuses on broad policy issues and challenges to the realisation of the academic diaspora's potential. There has been little exploration of the actual experiences of diaspora academics.

This article investigates factors in diaspora academics' personal spaces that shape their transnational engagement, and how. While acknowledging the importance of broader institutional, policy and other environmental forces, it argues that these academics' background, experiences and personal attributes are worthy of equal consideration as they determine decisions to become engaged as well as their interaction with various aspects of the broader environment. Due to differences in their personal attitudes and resources, individuals that are engaged in the same environment forge different relationships with that environment. They thus derive different experiences from their engagement, which, in turn, inform their motivation and persistence. Drawing on data from Ethiopian academic diaspora in the United States (US), the article aims to better understand the anatomy of diaspora engagement in higher education by exploring these factors.

The article begins with a discussion on the Ethiopian academic diaspora in the US. This is followed by the methodological approach employed; the research participants' characteristics; and the various factors that shape their engagement experiences. A summary and discussion of the findings is followed by conclusions.

### Ethiopian Academic Diaspora in the US

Different sources estimate the size of the Ethiopian diaspora in the US at between a quarter and two million. Numbers aside, in 2014, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) reported that this diaspora community is on par with the general US population in terms of educational attainment. About 20% of the Ethiopians in the US, aged 25 or above, have a bachelor's degree, with 12% holding a master's degree, PhD, or an advanced professional degree (MPI, 2014). Although accurate data is not available, it is believed that a significant number of Ethiopian-born academics work in various US universities and colleges.

In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported that, at a conservative estimate, there were about 1,600 PhD holders among the Ethiopian diaspora in the US and Canada. It can be assumed that: (a) a significant number of these would likely be employed by universities; (b) given Ethiopians' emigration patterns, a significant majority are likely to be based in the US; and (c) considering that the emigration of educated Ethiopians increased in the past few years and that the return rate of Ethiopians who study in foreign universities is generally low, it is reasonable to expect a sharp increase in this number since the publication of the report.

For the purposes of this article, the term Ethiopian academic diaspora (or Ethiopian and Ethiopian born academics) in the US is understood to constitute Ethiopians and naturalised US citizens who were born and raised in Ethiopia and currently hold academic positions in US institutions. The important denominator is that they have been socialised as Ethiopians to the socio-cultural norms which foreground the relationship between the individual research participant and Ethiopian higher education. By academic, I mean anyone who holds a teaching or research position in any higher education institution regardless of rank, status of employment or the type of institution.

### Methodology

Given that the study sought to understand how the Ethiopian academic diaspora in the US engages with universities in Ethiopia, and how that engagement is framed by factors in their personal spaces, their own conception of the process and experiences with engagement were central to the inquiry. A phenomenological research design was appropriate as it enabled the study participants to describe, interpret and critically self-reflect on their own engagement (Rossman and Rallis, 2012; Vagle, 2018). Phenomenological research enables understanding of a phenomenon through the eyes of those who have direct experience of it. Its epistemological pursuit tends to focus on meaning and understanding, rather than

developing abstractions and theory (Flood, 2010; Van Manen, 1990).

Data was collected through in-depth phenomenological interviews with 16 participants, who were selected using snowball sampling and the criterion of having robust experience of engagement with Ethiopian higher education institutions. Following Seidman (2006) the interviews consisted of three components, focusing first on the context of the experience, then reconstructing the experience itself, and finally allowing participants to reflect and explore the meaning of their experience. Multi-step thematic data analysis was employed, supported by a qualitative data analysis tool, NVivo 12.

### Migration Trajectories

The research participants (RP) arrived in the US over a long period of time (the earliest in 1971 and the latest in 2008) under different circumstances. This has a strong relevance to their transnational engagement. Not only is it indicative of their career stability and family situations, but, as Kebede (2012) notes, it also reflects on generational differences that affect the decision to move to and/or stay in the US, and ultimately their socialisation in the host country and relationship with the home country. During this period, the circumstances under which transnational engagement took place changed considerably in both the US and Ethiopia. For example, US immigration laws and racial dynamics in academia changed, while the political atmosphere and the size and development of higher education evolved in Ethiopia.

While not mutually exclusive, Arthur (2000) identifies four reasons why Africans migrate to the US, namely, educational pursuits, economic reasons, to join family, and fleeing political repression. Thirteen of the research participants came to the US to pursue further studies, while two came through family connections and one won the Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery.

**Table 1.** Patterns of Arrival in the US (n=16)

	Time of Arrival				Type of Entry			To the US	
	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Study	Family	DV	After Europe	Direct
No.	4	6	3	3	13	2	1	6	10

Those who arrived in the US in the early 1970s, share similar stories. They came through US government scholarship programmes with the permission and support of the Ethiopian government. However, before they completed their (master's level) studies, the 1974 revolution changed the political environment, forcing them to stay longer despite their strong

desire to return. Political developments also affected their academic and career trajectories. As RP10 jokingly remarked, he was almost 'forced' into doing his PhD. They decided to continue their studies while they were waiting for things back home to improve. Those who arrived in the US in the 1980s and later also wanted to return home. During those years, only a small number of Ethiopians pursued higher education abroad. Having been accorded this privilege, they had a strong sense of responsibility to return home and serve their country.

In contrast, most of the participants that came to the US in the 1990s and 2000s were attracted by the academic and career opportunities it offered. Four of the six participants that fell into this category lived and studied in Europe before moving to the US. They agreed that it is fair to say that they came to the US having considered the possibility of staying on a long-term basis.

Over time, the participants who moved to the US for educational purposes made a deliberate decision to remain in the country after completing their studies. Besides socio-political circumstances, this could reflect academics' increased global mobility enabled by technological changes and advanced communication that are the hallmarks of globalisation (Alexander, 2017; Butler, 2001).

### Why Engage with Ethiopia?

Given the challenges they confront in both their engagement with Ethiopian universities and in their careers and personal lives in the US, I asked the participants what motivated their initial and on-going commitment to Ethiopia.

#### Professional Reasons

Passion for one's profession, and the desire for it to develop across different geographic areas, was identified as a strong driver. RP14 said: "Generally, I am interested in engineering and science education. And especially I'm passionate about providing good undergraduate education, irrespective of where. That is one reason I am involved in all of this." When RP04 visited Ethiopia, he noted that students were following an "outdated" curriculum. He remarked:

When I saw what they were teaching them I noticed that it is the same thing I studied a long time ago when I was a student there. But that is no longer taught elsewhere; it is outdated... Students learn only theories and they graduate without getting any practice...I was concerned about that.

On the other hand, transnational engagement positively impacts one's professional development. An assistant professor on a tenure track, RP09

noted that. “Evaluation for tenure is based on teaching, research and service. I can consider this [his engagement with Ethiopian institutions] as service.” Senior professors concurred. RP15 noted that transnational activities, especially through prestigious and competitive scholarships like the Fulbright, are important for promotion, although by the time he received a Fulbright he was already tenured and a full professor.

Consistent with the literature (Leask, 2013; Proctor, 2015; Rumbley and De Wit, 2019), RP10 said that his international engagement enriches his teaching: “It is also very useful for your teaching and for your students. You will be able to bring them your diverse experiences, not just what you read, but also what you know practically. That makes the class more interesting.”

Two points can be noted. Firstly, professional development is not always the priority, as most of the research participants were tenured professors. For those that were not yet tenured, this was also not the only goal. After acknowledging that he could use his engagement with Ethiopia to secure promotion, RP09 remarked that this was not his main motivation. Secondly, professional factors are not necessarily tied to one’s country of birth, and therefore do not explain the specific focus on Ethiopia. Several participants noted that they occasionally engaged with countries other than Ethiopia. However, Ethiopia was their priority with far more intensive, persistent and deliberate engagement.

#### Social and Cultural Connections

The possibility of combining social and professional activities in one trip was a clear reason for the Ethiopian academic diaspora to prefer Ethiopia for international engagement. Several participants confirmed that they planned professional engagements when they travelled to Ethiopia for social or personal reasons, or vice versa. Although it was not successful, RP06’s application for a Fulbright scholarship is a good example:

Back in 2005/06 I was hoping to spend my sabbatical in Ethiopia. I waited for seven years since becoming a fulltime faculty to apply for Fulbright. I was in contact with Addis Ababa University (AAU) to be my host. But Fulbright called me and told me that they did not get a strong response from AAU. They asked me if I wanted to go to other African countries. I said I only wanted to go to Ethiopia. You know, that was the plan, to take my wife and my sons. I wanted my sons to spend one school year in Ethiopia, to learn the language and the culture of their parents. So that was where I wanted to go, not anywhere else. But it did not work out.

RP13, who had worked with institutions in a few countries in Africa, noted that her social and cultural capital made it easier to work with Ethiopian

institutions. She said that she used her personal contacts in the country to make connections and get things going. Other participants noted that their uncomfortable social and professional life in the US made them appreciate their acceptance in Ethiopia. RP12 remarked:

Over here in the US you are always being questioned; you are always ‘the other’; you are always the foreigner. Making a bigger impact is limited by those deficiencies... My name alone will generate questions...

So, you are always being second guessed. In Ethiopia, you do it in full.

The lack of social and cultural belonging in the US reinforces attachment to the home country. One way of strengthening this attachment, is through professional engagement. Given the many unfulfilled needs in Ethiopia, engagement with institutions in the home country is also often more productive, giving rise to enhanced professional satisfaction.

#### Love of Country

Expressed in different ways, love of country was a common theme in all my conversations with the research participants. Many said that love for their country and commitment to serving society were values they grew up with. RP03 recalled how his childhood conversations with his father about patriotism and love of country shaped him while RP11 said that, as the oldest of 11 siblings, she learned the importance of service from helping her mother do chores. Furthermore, at a time when prevailing norms did not attach value to girls having a career, her progressive father encouraged her to take her education seriously, telling her that she could use it to help her country.

Other participants reported being inspired by reading and hearing stories from teachers, community elders and family members. Many recognised that their success is the product of the people who helped them along the way.

#### If Not Me, Then Who?

Given that they received free education in Ethiopia from kindergarten to college, ten of the research participants said that they feel ‘indebted’. This speaks to the debate on free higher education, particularly whether it should be considered a public or private good (Hensley et al., 2013; Marginson, 2007, 2011). Provision of free higher education is commonly considered as grounded in its public nature. This implies that whoever receives free higher education is expected to pay back by, among other means, serving and paying tax. This is reflected in the views of the research participants. As RP14 commented: “Wherever I am now, I spent my formative years in Ethiopia, I was educated at no cost and I still identify myself as an Ethiopian. I feel like I am indebted, and I need to pay back”. RP05 said:

We had free education at the expense of the taxpayers, most of whom were very poor. Even today more than 85% of the Ethiopian population lives in rural areas, mostly uneducated, and barely making a living. But they pay taxes with which they offer us free education. You would realise the importance of this especially when you come here and see how much people pay for education, when you see the burden of debt graduates come out of college with... Well, if we have received such generosity from the older generation, we should also pass it on to the next one with all the knowledge and the expertise we have.

Some participants added that, even if they had paid for their education, their sense of duty to serve would remain unchanged as education is only one aspect of a person's formation. For instance, RP11 stressed that many people make sacrifices for a few to succeed.

Some of the research participants drew a connection between their sense of duty and personal experiences. RP07 remembered that, in high school, he had to get to the school library as early as 5:00 am to queue for a two hours to use a text book. Going to Europe and seeing the abundance of books and other resources motivated him "to be in service of others". Having experienced a resource constrained learning environment, these diaspora academics were driven to try and make it easier for others.

On a broader scale, some participants said that they were motivated by political issues in Ethiopia. RP11 shared:

Everything is ethnicised these days, even the universities. It is becoming a source of so much violence. I never knew such a thing growing up... I hate it, it is terrible... So, I thought to myself: what can I do about it? I know what I can do might not change a lot, but it is better than simply sitting and being unhappy about it forever.

RP09 noted the decline in the quality of education in Ethiopia: "If we, those who are educated, do not do anything about it, then there is no point in complaining." RP10 concurred: "When we were in university, we marched for the causes of the public. That was what the student movement was all about... There is no reason we should stop so far as those problems persist... but maybe not in the same way." The underlying idea is that as the educated elite of the country, diaspora academics could leverage their position to engage with the country – through universities and beyond – to contribute to addressing its major problems.

While, in general, the participants felt a duty to give back, the question of where to focus one's efforts is determined by personal, social, cultural, intellectual, and political factors. This question is, however, philosophical as much as it is practical. For instance, does it make more sense to devote one's efforts to a country with which one has some connection, or one that is most in need? RP13 grappled with this dilemma as follows:

Because so many people contribute to the country that is close to them and not necessarily the one that is the neediest, if Ethiopians in the diaspora don't contribute to Ethiopia, then no one else will. And therefore, it will be left out. Because, you know, the Mexican Americans are going to be contributing to Mexico and the Nigerians in Germany are going to be contributing to Nigeria... because there is that nationalism sort of ingrained throughout the world, then in a way one has no choice but to also be somewhat nationalistic. Otherwise, your country of origin will be left out... The other thing is that I can speak Amharic and I can travel the countryside with reasonable ease. I can get doors open to me in Ethiopia, in a way that I could not if I tried to contribute to other countries, right? So, I might as well leverage what I have by contributing to Ethiopia... Philosophically I am of the view that we should contribute ... to the neediest country. But I also see that my effectiveness is going to be highest in Ethiopia., and if people like me do not contribute to Ethiopia, because other people do not have the same view of the world as I do, then Ethiopia would get left behind.

Inherent in this dilemma is the tension between the diaspora's strong ties with and commitment to the home country (Cohen, 2008; Safran, 1991), and the notion of borderless knowledge. While diasporic nationalism can be articulated within the global knowledge diaspora who engage in cross-cultural and cross-national interactions (Kim, 2011), it is becoming a strong theme in the global arena. This is exacerbated by the growing sense of populism – with nativism at its core – which is challenging the global knowledge economy (Roberts, 2009) by creating barriers to free mobility of knowledge and people, including students and academics (Altbach and De Wit, 2017; Hammond, 2016; Mathies and Weimer, 2018). However, it can be argued that this tension is not entirely negative as it can generate stronger ties between (developing) countries and their knowledge diaspora, ultimately leading to better engagement outcomes.

#### Outcomes of Engagement

The anticipated and realised outcomes of engagement efforts constitute a further set of incentives that shape motivation for engagement. Several participants noted that the outcomes of their engagement, such as the number of graduate students they advised, the number of people they trained, the classes they taught, the resources they mobilised, and successful conferences and seminars that they organised, motivated them to continue. They added that what they achieved in Ethiopia was more attractive and meaningful than what they could do in the US. RP01 remarked:

This country has all the expertise you can think of, so unless you have a uniquely new idea, a groundbreaking one, you have little to no

chance of making recognisable impact with what you do. In Ethiopia, everything is new, there is a lot to be done. You can really make a huge impact with small effort.

RP12's statement that, "there is no greater joy in life than impacting somebody else's life" points to the emotional satisfaction gained by the Ethiopian diaspora's transnational engagement. However, such engagement also has emotional and financial costs and can be a source of frustration, dissatisfaction and embarrassment. RP01 said:

Sometimes you have to scale down your ambition because the reception you get from the other side does not match your aspiration. I have tried to work with several faculty members in Ethiopia and I noticed that their priorities do not match my motivation to engage with them. It is hard to find someone who goes beyond what is expected of them... And it is important that you go in their pace, you don't want to stretch things too much...I feel very bad that I could not have contributed as much as I want due to this and other reasons.

It is also not uncommon for diaspora academics to be accused of pursuing personal gain. RP12 recalled that he was accused of squandering public money when he invited 15 professors from different countries to participate in a conference which included the launching of a PhD programme they had helped develop for an Ethiopian institution. He recalled "I literally cried. But when the conference started and they saw what has been done they came and apologised to me".

Some research participants went out of their way to convince their American colleagues to support academic initiatives in Ethiopia, but sometimes there was no satisfactory response from the Ethiopian side. In addition to the emotional cost, this damages the social capital and professional credibility of those involved.

#### Brain Drain, What Brain Drain?

Given that brain drain is deemed a serious problem in many developing countries, including Ethiopia (Docquier et al., 2007), I asked the research participants if they regarded themselves as part of it. This question was asked in the context of discussions on their motivations to engage. The responses can be categorised into three groups. The first group acknowledged that brain drain is a real problem and considered themselves as part of the phenomenon. RP02 said:

I teach about brain drain in class. I give these ... examples about China, India, Greece, and about the impact of the European free trade agreement on smaller East European countries etc. and I feel too self-conscious not to mention myself. So, I give an example of myself as a product of brain drain... It is not a good feeling, but you know...

He then listed personal and economic reasons why he found it difficult to return home and noted that this was one of the reasons he tried to contribute from afar. Others shared similar thoughts. Three respondents used phrases equivalent to 'living in regret' to describe their situation. RP09 noted that most of his classmates had left Ethiopia and that those who remained were often in non-government jobs that were not directly related to their training. He remarked that, from a cohort of 63, "maybe seven or eight of them are still doing what they are supposed to do."

The second group of respondents acknowledged brain drain, but added that it is a global reality, not necessarily a problem. RP06 noted:

When I study physics, I do not necessarily think of a particular country, I think of contributing to the whole world to the betterment of humanity. Through physics research, we can discover new science that will be implemented into technology sooner or later for the betterment of society as a whole. Your phone for example has some components of the invention from my research or that of my colleagues. What we do is put into use in improving health, communication, agriculture, etc. across the globe. So, there is that international aspect. But there are also ways of helping one's own country while you are within or outside ... I do feel that I have to contribute to the country which gave me free education.

When I pointed out that the US will be the primary owner of the technology and inventions that emanate from his research, he responded: "But I am doing the research here. I wouldn't have been able to do this kind of research if I were in Ethiopia. I simply could not have the resources". This, and the fact that they try to give back to Ethiopia, was a common argument. Some of the participants in this group maintained that they are making significant contributions to Ethiopia, and that to regard them as 'drained brain' is unfair.

The third group consisted of participants that either fell somewhere in the middle, or did not see the relevance of the question. RP01 said that, while he recognised brain drain as a serious problem and that he was part of it, he embraced his circumstances because he was compensating for what Ethiopia has lost: "The fact that I am here is not necessarily a brain drain as long as I am connected to my country and I am doing what I can to help others."

RP13 said that she was always asked when she would return to Ethiopia, but she considered this a "nonissue":

There is much going on in the current era, I mean, people have now started to use this term brain circulation as opposed to brain drain. Communications are easier, travel is easier... So, it doesn't even make sense to talk about someone as being here or there. You know, we're all

in the quantum state of two places at the same time...So I would just really hope that the people on the other side could think of other ways of engagement than me, you know, living in Addis Ababa where I can't do any of the things that I can do here.

Overall, the research participants felt that they would not have been where they were in their career had they not come to the US and decided to stay. Furthermore, their current position enabled them to engage with Ethiopian universities. It is worth noting that most of those that acknowledged brain drain as a problem were from the social sciences. This could be because research in the natural sciences is facility and technology dependent and the participants in these fields were able to access such in the US. In contrast, social science fields are context heavy and in most cases practice and research in the US have limited relevance in addressing problems in Ethiopia.

#### Personal Circumstances

Personal circumstances also played a part in shaping, enabling or challenging the success of the participants' engagement initiatives. These include children's education and the need to be involved in their lives. Younger participants said that their children's education had been a factor in their decision to travel to Ethiopia. On two occasions, RP06 wanted to spend his sabbatical in Ethiopia at times that were conducive to his children's education, although neither worked out. The first time his sons were in kindergarten and he wanted them to spend a year in Ethiopia learning their parents' language and culture. The second time he applied his children were in middle school. He said: "that was a transitional time, so it wouldn't have been a problem to take them. Now they are in high school and I want them to stay stable until they finish". Similarly, RP01 and RP02 emphasised that they had a well-established routine that revolved around the education of their children, which significantly reduces their flexibility to travel.

This became more complicated when the participants had administrative responsibilities. RP03 took up the chair of his department while raising two small children and also traveling to Ethiopia to teach courses. He said: "I could not refuse the chair, so I had to pause my travels to Ethiopia". RP02 reported a similar experience.

The more senior research participants stated that, given that their children had gone to, or completed, college, they had more time and flexibility to travel. RP10 explained that he was so focused on his career that he married and started a family late in life. "So, until the kids went to college, I really had very limited options of traveling".

Some of the participants that could not travel due to family circumstances turned to forms of engagement that harnessed technology. For instance,

RP01 said that supervising graduate students, as opposed to teaching courses, suited his circumstances:

My younger daughter is 13 and she spends a lot of time with me. I want to spend as much time with her as I can. So, traveling is really difficult. But advising students is flexible; I manage my time so I will spare some hours for reading and commenting on the papers. Of course, it competes with my research time and it is a lot of work given the poor writing and research skills of the students. But I have managed to take two students every year for the last seven or eight years.

Appropriate technology can enable engagement, including teaching courses without having to travel to Ethiopia. One of the aims of the STEM Network (a network of diaspora academics in the US and elsewhere) is to build an online resource where members can create content in the form of videos, notes, exercises, etc., and to livestream lectures. However, this plan has not materialised due to different reasons, not least of which is poor technological infrastructure in Ethiopia.

Financial constraints also hamper engagement. These include the opportunity cost of time that could have been spent on income generating activities, and covering one's own expenses when funding is not forthcoming. Most participants agreed that, on completing one's studies, the primary focus is securing one's career and economic stability, which go together.

Conducive family circumstances and financial stability often converge in the later years of one's career, and more so after retirement. Three of the research participants indicated that they were considering resettling and working with universities in Ethiopia after their retirement. With their children having completed college, and having secured their pensions, they could set up base in Ethiopia and travel to the US when necessary.

#### Race Relations in the Home Institution

The overall environment of the institution in which the research participants were employed also impacted on their transnational engagement. While the institutional environment covers many factors, the participants' experience of race relations was a common theme. Research shows that racism has always been a negative force in the American higher education environment (Harper, 2012; Hutchison, 2016). Whether it takes the form of blatant discriminatory practices or micro-aggression, it negatively affects the quality of experiences and the success of both students and faculty (Kim and Kim, 2010).

A common experience among the research participants was that their abilities were constantly questioned. They were simply assumed to be incapable of doing their jobs properly. RP01, whose first faculty position was in a Southern institution, recalled how he struggled to fit in. Having studied



in the Northern US, his difficulty in understanding the Southern accent contributed to his challenges. He added:

Despite having publications and years of experience as a teacher back in Ethiopia, and research skills perhaps better than my colleagues at the same career stage, just because I look and speak different no one asked me to be on their committee, let alone be their chair. The next year as students slowly come to me for advice, they started to see how I support them and that I actually can do it... Then people start to line up... But it was different when I came to the DC area. This is diverse, it is a cosmopolitan area and people have a much better awareness on racial relations.

RP09, who completed his PhD in northern Europe before moving to the US for post-doctoral studies, said that he realised the subtle nature of racism after he came to the US. He acknowledged that Europe is not perfect, but said that it was more visible in the US:

It took me quite some time to prove myself as a researcher. My boss was a smart guy with a lot of international exposure. He has had several international students and post docs. I did not have any problem with him. But the colleagues I worked with in the lab were condescending.

It took me some time to prove that I am equally qualified to be there.

Racism has different layers. Being a foreigner adds to the challenge of being a person of colour. Language skills, accent, limited understanding of cultural norms, etc., add to the conundrum. Being a woman makes things even more complicated. RP13's case illustrates this complexity:

I think it's well known that there's biases against people of color, biases against women, and for me in particular, I look young too...When I go to conferences it is not unusual that people simply assume I am some grad student interning with the organisers...So when someone looks down on me or behaves in a certain bad way, I don't know which bias is at play. Maybe all at a time. But I have given up trying to figure out.

It is fair to point out that the situation is not all doom and gloom. For instance, RP15 was hired by a department chaired by a foreign-born faculty, who protected him in many ways in his early career. Similarly, RP14 belongs to a field that has a significant proportion of foreigners. He noted that in his current team of nine engineers, only two were born in the US. "The rest of us are either on H1B visa, Green Card or naturalised citizens".

For others institutional diversity initiatives helped to ease their experience. RP03 remarked that a lot had changed since his undergraduate years in the 1970s. Acknowledging "the ultimate price paid by our African American brothers", he noted that diversity initiatives helped to change the overall atmosphere of the institution he had been with for more than 30 years. RP05 himself was at the centre of his institution's diversity initia-

tive. Among other colleagues, he not only fought to establish it, but also served as a leader for several years and helped to increase the proportion of minoritised populations among students, faculty and staff. However, RP11 recounted a different experience with diversity initiatives in her former institution:

As I was the only black person, who also happens to be female, I was called upon to be in every committee, because that is how they thought they would show diversity. After a while I woke up and I said to myself, 'this is not good for me, I'm not benefiting from this, I am not going to get my career anywhere with this much time for committee responsibilities'. Then I started to look for some other opportunities.

Two of the research participants who worked at Historically Black Institutions indicated that racism also persists in these types of institutions. One moved from a white-dominated institution, hoping that they would not face similar challenges. However, besides the language and cultural differences, the same sentiment that "we are here to take what is theirs" was evident.

While people have different mechanisms to cope with racism, two emerged as common among the research participants. The first is the level of immunity that comes from being from Ethiopia – a country with no history of colonial control and as such no experience of racism. The participants recounted that they were not aware of racism in the first few years after their arrival. Even today, they miss subtle cues and micro-aggression until it is too late or until someone else reacts to them. This could possibly make them inadvertent contributors to the problem. Most said that racism did not affect them as they ignored it. Others invoked their Ethiopian identity and pride to enable them to not personalise racist incidents, RP13 juxtaposed her experience as an Ethiopian with that of African American colleagues:

My experience [of growing up with Ethiopian values] certainly gave me that internal strength to overcome racism that I don't think I would have had had I been born here. I think it's much harder for African Americans who were born here than it is for Ethiopian Americans, because we've had the luxury of seeing a country run by you know, people of colour, whereas here that is hardly a common experience.

There was a consensus that, as RP01 put it, "as an immigrant you know that you start from [a] less privileged background, and to balance for that you must work maybe twice as hard". RP16 stressed:

You have to show results, and that takes a lot of work. You cannot be good at everything, and everything does not equally matter for your career. Therefore, you need to set your goals, identify what is important to get you there and stay focused on what is important. You might have

to work two or three times more than the others, but you can make it count if you are strategic.

Many of the research participants gave examples of how hard work and commitment produced results that were hard to ignore. However, a few also acknowledged that this had taken a toll on their personal life, leaving them less time to spend with their families and to work with Ethiopian universities.

In contrast, for some participants, the alienating environment in the US pushed them to seek emotional refuge in their connection with Ethiopia as ‘home’. This encouraged them to strengthen their ties with Ethiopian institutions where they not only do not have to justify themselves, but their work often produces better results and is more appreciated.

Institutional race relations thus emerged as one of the major factors that influence transnational engagement with the home country, either positively by encouraging more attachment, or negatively by work overload and taking up too much time and emotional capital. The possibility of a much higher return on the time and effort invested in Ethiopia encourages diaspora academics to strengthen their engagement and is hence a pull factor. Moreover, their experience of racism pushes them to search for more rewarding affiliations elsewhere.

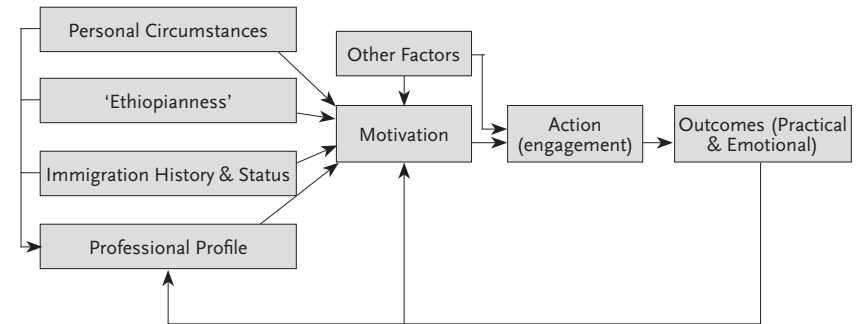
### Summary and Discussion

These reflections demonstrate that diaspora academics’ motivation to engage with Ethiopian universities is influenced by different personal factors. Besides professional reasons, which to some extent might be shared among those in a particular discipline, individual aspirations and drive determine their engagement. Values such as love of one’s country, linguistic and cultural connections with Ethiopia (or a particular part of the country), and the sense of obligation emanating from having studied in Ethiopia at the public expense, all contribute to the decision to engage. The emotional dividends accruing from their investment of time and effort in engagement, reinforce the desire to continue, and perhaps to strengthen engagement initiatives.

The article has also shown that ‘Ethiopian identity’ or ‘Ethiopianness’ which denotes a range of attributes such as race, colour, language, cultural values, etc., plays an important role in shaping the way Ethiopian diaspora academics interact and integrate with the environment in their home institutions in the US, as well as with Ethiopian institutions. On the other hand, the racial environment of US higher education not only influences the professional trajectories of diaspora academics, which in turn influences their engagement, but also determines the time and emotional resources they can spare to work with Ethiopian institutions. The family

situation and financial stability which are often more favourable in the later stages of one’s career, constitute the other major components of the personal environment.

Figure 1. The Formation of Motivation for Engagement



As shown in the figure, these different variables not only reinforce one another to shape what determines one’s experience, but also continuously evolve to adjust to changing circumstances to influence further action and experience. The outcomes of action are in turn inputs to determine motivation and resources. It is important to note that this illustration is not a complete presentation of everything that is relevant, nor do these factors necessarily produce engagement.

By highlighting the multiplicity and interdependence of factors within the personal space and immediate environment of the individual diaspora academic, this article has demonstrated the complex nature of transnational diaspora engagement in the field of higher education. It thus argues that a holistic view of transnational diaspora engagement calls for a closer examination of personal factors, as well as broader environmental circumstances.

This line of argument departs from, and contributes to the existing literature on the challenges that emanate from the free flow of skills across borders, particularly in respect of higher education. Commonly cited approaches in this regard, including ‘reverse brain drain’ (e.g., Chacko, 2007; Song, 1997; Tharenou and Seet, 2014; Wadhwa, 2009; Yoon, 1992) and ‘brain circulation’ (e.g., Robertson, 2006; Saxenian, 2002, 2005; Teferra, 2005; Zweig et al., 2008), are conceptually predicated on the notion of brain drain. While reverse brain drain is a self-explanatory concept that suggests returning emigrants to their home countries, as Saxenian (2005, p. 36) puts it, brain circulation also emphasises the need for “individuals

who left their home countries ...[to] return home ...while maintaining their social and professional ties to [their country of residence]”.

These two approaches not only presume brain drain as the starting point for the measures they suggest; they also largely emphasise what may be done from the perspective of institutional arrangements and policy incentives. Views that are predicated on brain drain are inadequate for at least three reasons. Firstly, having been educated in one’s home country (whether at one’s own cost or for free) and living in another country (by choice or due to coercion), as encapsulated in the notion of brain drain, is far too simplistic an explanation of the rationale for engagement with one’s home country. Contributing to one’s home country is not an automatic reaction to brain drain. Secondly, a slew of factors is at play that are both distinct to the individual (e.g., experiences of immigration, a sense of belonging, identity, nationalism, etc.) and to their immediate environment (e.g., family, work environment, etc.) as situated in the broader national and global contexts, and as pursued by the individual towards personal, familial or professional ends. By focusing on broader measures that could re-attract emigrants, the two approaches downplay the role of personal factors, effectively undermining the agency of the individual. Third, by focusing on brain drain, both reverse brain drain and brain circulation only consider first generation diaspora that emigrated from their home countries, excluding those born in their country of residence.

On the other hand, the broader emphasis on issues such as policies and institutions in relation to diaspora engagement overlooks the critical role of personal and micro-environmental factors. Policies and institutions are indeed major enablers, but not necessarily the ultimate driving force of engagement decisions. Personal circumstances, intrinsic values, experiences, and the practical and emotional outcomes of engagement have been shown to have significant impact. This is perhaps especially true in the field of higher education where engagement initiatives are often produced by and result in attributes of a personal nature. In other areas – such as investment – more straightforward decision-making tools and mechanisms, such as cost benefit analysis, are deployed.

### Conclusion

Institutional and policy perspectives are critically important but not sufficient to explain, analyse and identify ways to bolster diaspora engagement in the field of higher education. By embracing a broader view that takes account of personal, familial, professional, and environmental factors – along with their dynamic interplay – transnational diasporic engagement offers a comprehensive approach that captures the nuances and intricacies therein. Thus, acknowledging the diversity and the complexity of individual

attributes and preferences offers an improved frame of conceptualising the process of transnational diaspora engagement, and also creates a pathway for further inquiries into details, and reform agendas in institutional and policy settings.

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## An Assessment of Ghana's Policies and Institutional Framework to Promote State-led Academic Diaspora Engagement

Mary Boatemaa Setrana, Kwaku Arhin-Sam,  
Joseph Mensah, and Justice Richard Kwabena Owusu Kyei

### Abstract

Despite African governments' increased interest in tapping the development potential of their diaspora, the transfer of skills by professors and researchers in higher education institutions abroad has received limited attention. Known as the academic diaspora, these groups are recognised as reliable mediators for African universities in the midst of unending globalisation, transnationalism and internationalisation of higher education. This article explores Ghana's policy environment and institutional framework to tap the development potential of its academic diaspora for higher education. We conclude that capacity building and the extension of rights and privileges are important elements that need to be embraced by the government to motivate experienced and highly skilled academics to contribute to the country's higher education sector.

**Key words:** academic diaspora, Ghana, diaspora engagement, higher education, skills transfer, brain gain

Malgré l'intérêt accru des gouvernements africains pour exploiter le potentiel de développement de leur diaspora, le transfert de compétences par les professeurs et les chercheurs des établissements d'enseignement

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS:** MARY BOATEMAA SETRANA, University of Ghana. Email: mbsetrana@ug.edu.gh. KWAKU ARHIN-SAM, Friedensau Institute for Evaluation, Germany. Email: kwaku.arhin-sam@ffe.institute. JOSEPH MENSAH, York University, Canada. Email: jmensah@yorku.ca. JUSTICE RICHARD KWABENA OWUSU KYEI, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. Email: rokyei@hotmail.com

supérieur à l'étranger a reçu une attention limitée. Connus sous le nom de diaspora universitaire, ces groupes sont reconnus comme des médiateurs fiables pour les universités africaines au milieu d'une mondialisation sans fin, du transnationalisme et de l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur. Cet article explore l'environnement politique créé et le cadre institutionnel mis en œuvre par le Ghana pour exploiter le potentiel de développement de sa diaspora universitaire au profit de l'enseignement supérieur. Nous concluons que le renforcement des capacités et l'extension des droits et privilèges sont des éléments importants que le gouvernement doit adopter pour motiver des universitaires expérimentés et hautement qualifiés à contribuer au secteur de l'enseignement supérieur du pays.

Mots clés: diaspora universitaire, Ghana, engagement de la diaspora, enseignement supérieur, transfert de compétences, gain de cerveaux

### Introduction

Over the years, the impact of migration in the broader context of development has been studied in relation to the gaps (for example, brain drain) that it creates in the home country (Mangala, 2017; Tonah and Setrana, 2017). However, the past few years have witnessed increased interest in the African diaspora in general and in the African academic diaspora (hereinafter AAD) in particular, as a recourse to address Africa's marginalisation in the global intellectual space (Ogachi, 2016). Members of the AAD are recognised as reliable mediators for African universities in the midst of unending globalisation, transnationalism and internationalisation of higher education (Ogachi, 2016; Foulds and Zeleza, 2014).

There are limited statistical data on the AAD (Ogachi, 2016; Zeleza, 2004). Mensah explains that although the potential benefit of engaging academic diaspora is enormous, it is

hard to estimate accurately, as there is no reliable database. ... for a long time now, most of the top students from African universities have sought and gained admissions, normally with scholarships, grants and teaching assistantships, to Western universities to pursue their graduate studies; and many have chosen not to return. These diasporans tend to be the proverbial cream of the crop. Of course, some excellent students choose to stay behind, but the size of the latter is nowhere near that of the former. The World Bank has made a number of attempts to develop a database of African diaspora, but, to date, no comprehensive database exists (cited in Dell, University World News, 2020<sup>1</sup>).

It is estimated that there were more than 300,000 Africans in the diaspora with higher education qualifications in 2009, of which 30,000 had

doctoral degrees (Ogachi, 2016, citing Shinn, 2008). Other estimates record between 20,000 and 25,000 African faculty in American universities and colleges (Ogachi, 2016). A number of African countries have designed or are in the process of designing more diaspora-friendly policies that do not require the AAD to relocate permanently, but enable them to engage with institutions in their home countries under conditions convenient to both parties (Ogachi, 2016). At the continental level, the African Union (AU) Executive Council meetings in 2005 and 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria and Khartoum, Sudan, respectively recognised the important role of the African scientific diaspora in improving Science and Technology on the continent. A decade later, African governments' interest in academic diasporas was revived through the Continental Forum convened at the Headquarters of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from November 13-14, 2019, with the aim of unravelling *The Role of the Diaspora in Higher Education, Research, and Innovation in Africa*. The Forum was organised by the Institute of African Studies, Carleton University, Canada in conjunction with the AU's Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Setrana, 2019). At the national level, countries such as Nigeria and Ghana have demonstrated interest in engaging their AAD to address the increasing shortage of teaching and research staff due to the recent expansion of their universities (Teye, Alhassan and Setrana, 2017).

These positive developments notwithstanding, there is little evidence of African governments' proactive engagement with the academic diaspora (Zeleza, 2012, p. 36). Many AAD programmes are individual voluntary contributions or projects spearheaded by international organisations to support skills transfer for the development of education (Mensah et al., 2018; Setrana, 2019). Examples include the International Organization of Migration's (IOM) Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA); the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals; and the Carnegie Corporation's Next Generation of Academics in Africa Project.

It is against this background that we use Ghana as a case study to explore the extent of the nation's interest and readiness to engage its academic diaspora through the setting up of programmes, institutions and policy guidelines for the development of the higher education sector. We argue that, in order for the government to benefit from its academic diaspora, there is a need for initiatives that nurture their sense of belonging. Current programmes include the annual homecoming summit and the year of return by the Diaspora Office, Office of the President.

The article relies heavily on the policy approaches used by different countries that were identified by Gamlen (2006). The different approaches were mapped to analyse Ghana's capacity and readiness in extending rights

1. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200212080543756>

to and extracting obligations from its diaspora. We conceptualise academic diaspora policy engagement as capacity building and extending rights and privileges to the academic diaspora for the purposes of establishing an appropriate atmosphere for skills transfer to the home country for development. Rather than focusing on the three categories identified by Gamlen, we argue that, in order for the extraction of obligations to function effectively, institutions, programmes and policies should be sufficiently practical and flexible. We use the typologies he identified to explore the extent to which migration/diaspora policies and institutions in Ghana promote academic diaspora engagement. The article's contribution is to demonstrate that, in order for academic diaspora to transfer their skills in support of the higher education sector in Ghana, the government needs to develop concrete institutions, programmes and policies.

The term academic diaspora is derived from the broad definition of diaspora - the Greek word *diasperien*, which is derived from *dia* -, 'across', and *seperien*, 'to sow or scatter seeds' as well as the African definition of diaspora. For the purposes of this article, it is defined as highly skilled/qualified Ghanaians working in universities and research centres in destination areas who have migrated and are resident outside Ghana, those born to Ghanaian parents living outside Ghana described as the second and third generations, the youth (who migrated from Ghana or were born abroad), descendants of enslaved Africans and all persons of African descent who have historical and cultural ties with Ghana and an interest in the country's development.

The data for this article were sourced from Ghana's academic and policy databases and triangulated from various organisations, including the Ministries of Education, and Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Diaspora Affairs Offices, and selected universities. Interviews were conducted with five key stakeholders from Diaspora Affairs, Office of the President (DAOOP), the Diaspora Affairs Unit (DAU) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the Ministry of Education, and two public universities. Descriptive and prescriptive analysis were used to analyse the policies and institutions.

The first section of this article discusses the conceptual approach to diaspora engagement policies developed by Gamlen (2006). Section two provides a historical account of academic diaspora engagement in Ghana, while the third section details the policies and institutions relevant to the government's academic diaspora programmes. The final section critically analyses the country's readiness to engage the academic diaspora and presents conclusions.

### Conceptual Approach: A Review of the Literature

This article relies on Gamlen's (2006) classification of the policy approaches to diaspora engagement used by different countries, to analyse Ghana's capacity and readiness to extend rights as well as extract obligations from its diaspora. Gamlen (2006) categorises diaspora engagement policies into three broad areas; however, only two are used in relation to programmes aimed at extracting obligations from the diaspora. Gamlen's mapping revealed that one of the key elements running through diaspora engagement policies was capacity building which includes symbolic nation and institution building (Gamlen, 2006). In relation to the former, home country governments establish a relationship with diasporas that is based on state-centred national identities (Gamlen, 2006, Gonzalez Gutierrez, 1999; Foucault, 1982). The objective is to enhance the diaspora's sense of attachment to home. Symbolic nation building activities include conferences, symbols, cultural programmes and homecoming summits, among others. In the case of Ghana, they include Emancipation Day, the Joseph Project, and the Pan African Historical Theatre Project (also called the Pan African Festival (PANAFEST)). However, these projects aimed to enhance the relationship with the diaspora in general. On the other hand, institution building involves the creation of consular and consultative bodies; transnational networks and ministerial agencies to manage diaspora engagements, including with academic diaspora. Ghanaian examples include the creation of the Diaspora Affairs Unit under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI) and the DAOOP as well as the establishment of the Diaspora Desk for missions abroad. Such institutions usually aim to encourage investment in the country rather than encouraging academic diaspora to transfer their knowledge and skills to support Ghana's overburdened and weak higher education sector.

The second feature of diaspora engagement policies is countries' extension of rights to their diaspora through political incorporation, provision of civil and social services and protection of their rights (Gamlen, 2006). While most countries desire to protect their emigrants, only a few have adopted practical measures to achieve this. Such rights include citizenship rights, voting rights, and the portability of pensions and other social benefits from destination countries. While Ghana's constitution allows for dual citizenship and some categories of diaspora have voting rights, it is not clear whether these provisions were aimed at motivating academic diaspora to transfer their skills back home.

The third type of diaspora programmes are those that aim to extract obligations from the diaspora. Thus, the government liaises with emigrants with the aim of regaining lost skills and resources. Measures in this regard

include remittances, bonds, investment and skills transfer. Among the various engagement policies and programmes, governments have adopted measures to formalise, enhance and coordinate the flows of investment and remittances for national development.

We argue that, in order for the government to extract the academic diaspora's skills and knowledge, there is a need for existing and future institutions and programmes to focus specifically on this group. Firstly, the government needs to recognise the gaps in university education in Ghana; and secondly, it should establish state-led programmes and activities aimed at motivating the engagement of highly skilled Ghanaians working in credible universities in destination countries.

### Historical Antecedents of State-led Academic Diaspora Interventions in Ghana

In Ghana, state-led diaspora engagements have existed since the country gained independence in 1957. Its first president, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, and subsequent governments sought to engage Ghana's diaspora through programmes such as Emancipation Day, the Joseph Project, and PANAFEST, etc. (Alhassan, 2010). The first state diaspora-led engagement in Ghana was the All African People's Conference in 1958 (Manuh and Asante, 2005) that aimed to unite Africa and its diaspora for the development of the continent. However, following the overthrow of Dr Nkrumah, enthusiasm for this project waned until the year 2000 when President John Agyekum Kuffour took up the reins of government (Teye et al., 2017). In 2001, he organised a homecoming summit in Accra around the theme, "Harnessing the Global Ghanaian Resource Potential for Accelerated National Development", with the aim of motivating the diaspora to transfer their skills and resources to Ghana (Manuh and Asante, 2005). Following the summit, a number of Ghanaians returned to the country to take up ministerial positions. Furthermore, in collaboration with the academic diaspora, the University of Ghana published a book on migration and development titled "At Home in the World? International Migration and Development in Contemporary Ghana and West Africa (ibid)". The state-diaspora-led engagement facilitated by these initiatives led to the establishment of the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of Ghana in 2006 with the support of the Netherlands government and the UNDP. The Centre aims to build capacity on migration and diaspora issues. Its core mandate is teaching, research, and policy development and assessment. Since 2000, subsequent government administrations have maintained engagement with the Ghanaian diaspora.

In 2012, the Diaspora Affairs Unit was established under the auspices of the MFARI through a joint effort of the IOM, Ghana, the Deutsche Gesell-

schaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the CMS (Teye et al., 2017). In 2014, the Unit organised a Diaspora Capital workshop in Accra that was funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) through the Migration EU eXpertise (MIEUX) initiative (*ibid*). The purpose of the workshop was to initiate the drafting of a diaspora engagement policy to solidify and formalise dialogue between the state and its diaspora. Among other objectives, the draft policy seeks to encourage the short-term return of professionals and academics to support teaching and research at university level. The CMS was tasked with leading the development of a national migration policy with support from the technical committee, which was made up of all relevant ministries (including Education, Health, the Interior and Foreign Affairs) and international organisations such as the IOM, EU and GIZ. The policy was drafted during the Mahama-led administration and the current administration of President Akufo Addo is seeking to finalise and launch it through the DAOOP, with the CMS at the University of Ghana, Legon, as the consultants.

In 2017, President Akufo Addo's administration set up the DAOOP in addition to the existing Diaspora Affairs Unit in the MFARI (DAU, MFARI, 2019). It seeks to promote dialogue and harness diaspora resources, both tangible and intangible, for the development of Ghana's economy. This has created opportunities for the diaspora with higher education and practical experience to be involved in their home country. For instance, the president has appointed more than 40 members of the Ghanaian diaspora to various national positions including those who previously held full-time academic and research positions in the diaspora (Representative of DAOOP, 2019). In July 2019, the DAOOP organised the Diaspora Homecoming Summit, which provided a platform for diaspora academics to engage academic institutions in Ghana for possible collaboration, return, readmission and reintegration.

These examples demonstrate the extent to which successive governments in Ghana have shown an interest in engaging the diaspora for national development. However, the place of the academic diaspora in these discourses remains unclear; this motivated the research on which this article has been developed.

### Towards a State-led Academic Diaspora Programme for Higher Education and Research

#### Gaps in Existing Educational and Migration Policies in Ghana

This section evaluates the extent to which existing education and migration policies acknowledge the potential contribution of the academic diaspora. Ghana's Education Strategic Plan, 2018-2030 guides all levels of educa-



tional engagement. In 2016, the country adopted a national migration policy, which serves as a national framework to manage diverse types of migration and diaspora. Diaspora and labour migration policies have also been developed, but are yet to be launched. This section discusses some of these policies, which are underpinned by historical and contemporary national policy guidelines.

Ghanaian tertiary institutions are largely self-regulated with some oversight by the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB) (Ministry of Education, 2018, pp. 10-13). While the Education Strategic Plan, 2018-2030 includes sections on how to enhance the quality of tertiary education, it makes no mention of diaspora involvement. Based on the policy approaches used by different countries that are identified by Gamlen (2006), such approaches might include activities and programmes for Ghana's academic diaspora to transfer their knowledge and skills through supervision, teaching and mentoring. Highly skilled Ghanaians with experience in recognised universities in destination areas who are willing to support the growth of Ghana's higher education sector, should be given the opportunity to do so through the Education Strategic Plan.

Under the sub-heading, 'Diaspora Resources and Development', the National Migration Policy (Ministry of Interior, 2016, pp. 69-72) identifies the critical role played by diaspora skills and knowledge transfer in Ghana's development. The policy also sets out strategies for the implementation of its objectives, including, "mainstream diaspora investments, skills, and knowledge transfer into development planning; create incentives for diaspora investment, trade, and technology transfer and facilitate citizenship and residency rights." The mainstreaming strategy demands that the government, through the Ministry of Education, institutes state- and diaspora-led programmes to engage academic diaspora in the broad strategies of the Education Strategic Plan for 2020 and beyond. The third and fourth strategies are incentives to motivate the academic diaspora who volunteer to be part of these programmes and to sustain the operations of the diaspora programme. As noted in the policy approaches identified by Gamlen (2006), such measures may also include strengthening and expanding relationships with universities and research institutions in destination areas. Joseph Mensah observes that:

An approach that might work is for institutions to rely or expand upon their existing partnership agreements in such a way that a diaspora scholar can choose to teach 'here' (overseas) or 'there' (Africa), depending on need and circumstances, with the overseas institution supporting or sharing the cost involved as part of the partnership agreement, or in exchange for their own students' engagements in

Africa – per field trips to Africa, for instance (cited in Dell, University World News, 2020<sup>3</sup>).

The draft<sup>3</sup> diaspora policy seeks to promote transnational networks and skills transfer for sustainable development. It recognises the transnationality of the Ghanaian diaspora and recommends that the ideas, knowledge and social capital acquired abroad are institutionalised at the level of national or international organisations (for example, the IOM and UNDP) (DAOOP, 2019, p. 10). At present, Ghanaian diaspora professionals and academics mainly transfer their skills through individual initiatives. The policy suggests that they should be engaged through short-term consultancies such as sabbatical leave in Ghana. The main strategies outlined in the draft policy to engage academic diaspora in state-diaspora led programmes for higher education and research (MFARI, 2019, p. 10) are:

- Map and regularly update a database of the skills of the Ghanaian diaspora;
- Provide clear and concise information, preferably through the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre and the Diaspora Affairs Bureau on the steps in initiating business/development ventures in Ghana;
- Promote collaboration between diaspora professionals/associations and those in Ghana to strengthen knowledge transfer and support by providing up-to-date data on Ghana's human resource needs;
- Assist local institutions to improve their efficiency in accessing available intellectual and technical resources from the diaspora and peoples of African descent; and
- Collaborate with development partners such as the IOM, GIZ, JICA, and UNDP to fund short-term knowledge exchanges and consultancies.

These strategies involve mechanisms such as the creation of academic transnational networks, an up-to-date database and institutionalising information strategies to keep academic diaspora abreast with the situation in Ghana. They could also include capacity building and extending rights to the academic diaspora.

The labour migration policy<sup>4</sup> seeks to strengthen the labour migration governance system and promote policy coherence, collection and analysis of reliable data, and protection of the rights of migrants and their families.

2. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200212080543756>

3. Prepared by a consortium for the DAOOP, the DAU, and the MFARI led by Delali Badasu, Stephen Kwankye, Yaw Benneh, Joseph Teye, Osman Alhassan, Leander Kandilige and Mary Setrana from the CMS, University of Ghana, 2020

4. Prepared by Joseph Teye, Director, CMS, University of Ghana for the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, 2019

Once implemented, it will streamline labour migration for greater impact on Ghana's development. The policy adopts a triple win-win approach for the migrant, and the receiving and sending countries. Through the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, the government would develop the framework for the creation, recruitment, operationalisation and sustenance of academic local/state-diaspora led programmes for higher education and research.

The policies presented above are broad national policies that address different national interests and issues. Using the typologies identified by Gamlen as a guide, we argue that a combination of such typologies would ensure that the academic diaspora is included in the design of higher education programmes. When expanded, these typologies offer policy guidelines for the implementation of such an academic programme. Their content is relevant and important in making the case for the need to integrate the academic diaspora in higher education in the country.

#### Key Actors and Institutions

This section discusses institution building which involves the creation of consular and consultative bodies; transnational networks and a ministerial agency to manage diaspora engagements, including academic diaspora.

No concrete state-led academic diaspora interventions currently exist in Ghana. However, key policies like the National Migration Policy and the two yet to be launched policies (diaspora engagements and labour migration) discussed above suggest that an enabling policy environment exists for the establishment of such a programme. A key contribution of these policies is their identification and assignment of roles and coordination responsibilities among national actors. The various government agencies, institutions and departments that are discussed below fall under the capacity building category within the framework for mapping diaspora engagement policies; and the media through which the academic diaspora can express their concerns to the government.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for all levels of Ghana's educational system. It has the capacity to collaborate closely with other relevant ministries to ensure the implementation of a state-led academic diaspora programme. The Ministry could improve teaching and learning conditions in tertiary institutions and simplify complex bureaucratic processes to attract Ghana's academic diaspora and, in turn, improve research and innovation in teaching and learning. A specific desk could be created to liaise with academic diaspora who are interested in transferring their skills to Ghana.

The MFARI is mandated to provide for the social and economic welfare needs of Ghanaian migrants abroad (MFARI, 2019). It operates through

Ghana's missions abroad and the Diaspora Affairs Unit to protect Ghanaian emigrants within the country's policy and legal structures. The Ministry has established offices and units that connect with all diaspora.

The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations is mandated to promote the creation of productive employment in all economic sectors including tertiary education (Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, Retrieved on 21 June, 2019). One of the ways of achieving this and addressing the skills gap in the education sector is to engage the Ghanaian academic diaspora. Instead of employing expatriates to provide technical skills, the Labour Department within the ministry should lobby for the launch and implementation of a labour migration policy that could support short-term voluntary services by the diaspora.

In terms of the National Migration Policy, the Ministry of Interior has the responsibility to formulate policies and strategic plans in accordance with the country's broad legal and policy framework to manage migration (MoI, 2016). Its Migration Unit collaborates with the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) to manage entry into and exit from Ghana. The GIS issues visas on arrival to some countries while the MoI issues dual citizenship for Ghanaians and naturalisation for the diaspora. These issues are very important for the smooth sojourn of members of the academic diaspora who may need such assistance for many reasons.

The DAOOP was set up in February 2017 to coordinate all national engagements with the Ghanaian diaspora (DAOOP, 2021). It operates from the Office of the President and is headed by a Director, assisted by a Deputy Director, an Administrator, a Legal and Research Officer, and a Youth Ambassador (*ibid*). It is also responsible for leading the implementation of the Ghana diaspora engagement policy to promote sustainable development. The office adopts a multi-stakeholder approach and engages all groups and institutions such as government ministries, academia, Ghanaian associations abroad, the private sector, and non-profit and international organisations to ensure that the Ghanaian diaspora is informed about Ghana. The office also "explores the most attractive and cost-effective means to encourage investments and capital inflow from the diaspora and transform remittances into sustainable development finance" (DAOOP website, Retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2019). It engages academics in various institutions to support universities in Ghana and has initiated the Ghana Graduate International Service and the Diaspora National Service for the academic diaspora with higher education qualifications to volunteer their services in the country. The DAOOP maintains a database of academic diaspora programmes and their needs for dissemination to Ghana's missions abroad (Representative of DAOOP, 2019).

The Diaspora Affairs Unit (DAU) operates as a support unit to the

DAOOP, but works under the MFARI (Agyemang and Setrana, 2014). It also collaborates with the National Migration Commission (made up of relevant ministries, departments and agencies) to coordinate the implementation of the Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP) within the MFARI. A state-led programme could be facilitated, established and implemented within this framework. Both outfits could work to expedite engagement with academic Ghanaian diaspora either individually or through bilateral agreements with universities and networks in major destination countries – the UK, US and Germany - for Ghanaian emigrants to create an enabling environment for the transfer of skills and knowledge in the tertiary education sector.

Ghana's missions abroad serve as the point of contact for Ghanaian emigrants in their host countries (*ibid*). They liaise between these emigrants and the government to provide information on the state-led academic diaspora programme and could create a diaspora desk for this purpose.

The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) advises the Minister on measures to improve the provision of tertiary education in the country. It is mandated

to enquire into the financial needs of the institutions of tertiary education and advise the Minister accordingly; to recommend to the Minister, for the purposes of the preparation of the annual national education budget, block allocations of funds towards running costs; and grants towards capital expenditure of each institution of tertiary education, indicating how the allocations are to be disbursed; to advise governing councils of institutions of tertiary education on suitable measures for generating additional funds for their institutions (NCTE, Retrieved on 22 June, 2019 ).

The Council is supported by the Finance/Audit Committee, Academic Committee; and the Infrastructure and Promotion Committees (*ibid*). The strategic positioning of this council enables it to advise the minister on the need to support quality tertiary education by institutions and policy guidelines to attract Ghanaian academics.

Despite the significance of these institutions, the main gap is that they do not target the academic diaspora per se. Even if specific institutions cannot be created to manage the academic diaspora, their developmental contribution to higher education must be acknowledged and harnessed. The creation of special desks in these offices would enhance their ability to liaise with the academic diaspora for the purposes of developing the tertiary education sector.

#### **Discussion and Conclusion: Policy Guidelines and Institutional Frameworks for a State-led Academic Diaspora Programme**

The data suggests that the Ghanaian government does not have state-led

academic diaspora programmes for higher education, although several projects have been launched to engage the diaspora since the country's independence. Our analysis shows that the policy and institutional environment has the potential to encourage the academic diaspora's involvement in higher education development. However, policy and institutional challenges remain.

While the Education Strategic Plan makes no mention of academic diaspora engagement; the National Migration Policy, which was launched in 2016, is still in its initial implementation stages. The DEP and the labour migration policies have yet to be launched. Furthermore, while the DAOOP has launched some initiatives, it lacks funds to implement them. A key informant from an international organisation stated:

The worry is that it is expensive to manage economic diaspora compared to other professionals, or have academic diaspora programmes. For the academic diaspora, we will have to provide accommodation, stipend, basic insurance among others, which are usually not the case when it comes to funding other professionals such as entrepreneurs (Representative of the IOM, 2019).

However, such arguments pertain to the academic diaspora's physical presence on their home soil, neglecting other less expensive options such as online/tele teaching, curriculum co-development and graduate student mentoring (Foulds and Zeleza, 2014).

Other informants identified the lack of coordination and collaboration among institutions as a major challenge. They noted that information is not shared with other ministries, departments and agencies. In addition, the data collected by the GIS is not user friendly, limiting its capacity to inform planning in other economic sectors. It was noted that, through the National Migration Commission, the National Migration Policy, once implemented, could address some of these challenges.

Continuity and coherence remain a challenge when it comes to policy implementation and institutional operations (see Notermans, 1998), sometimes resulting in the stalling of government projects. Resources initially invested in such projects are thus wasted. In this regard, some informants described the current government's decision to pursue the diaspora engagement policy initiated by the former administration as a positive development.

It should be noted that diaspora activities in Ghana generate significant economic resources. For example, in 2019, total personal remittances received amounted to 3,521 billion dollars, representing 5.26% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank, 2019).

Social remittances such as academic knowledge transfer could swell the contributions of the Ghanaian diaspora. However, the diaspora's investment

in this area is not as intense as in areas such as business and investment. Ghana focuses on all kinds of professional diaspora engagement for the benefit of the country. While some universities encourage academic engagement, there is currently no comprehensive national diaspora programme and engagements are negotiated and funded at the university rather than the national level.

The discussion on Ghana's enabling environment is linked to the policy approach identified by Gamlen's (2006) mapping of diaspora engagement across different countries. Three broad themes emerged as components to harness the full potential of the academic diaspora for national development. We argue that while Ghana has been actively pursuing the first two, the third, which is equally important, has received less attention and lacks coordinated effort.

The first theme is capacity building that involves programmes that will produce state-centred diaspora communities through celebrations of national days, conferences, home coming summits and other symbolic events. As we have shown, programmes such as the national home coming summits, PANAFEST, and the year of return fall under the Ghanaian government's efforts in this regard. These activities contribute to a form of symbolic nation building and reinforce the shared national identity (see also Panossian, 2003; One Eyed Cat, 2006). However, state institutions that coordinate the activities of the newly created diaspora communities are required if these efforts are to be sustainable. Examples in Ghana include the DAOOP and the Diaspora Affairs Unit. However, the country has yet to create diaspora desks in all major destination countries for mobilising academic diaspora in particular. Such desks could host annual conferences or summits aimed at senior researchers and professors abroad.

The second concept of the typologies is strategies that extend rights to a country's diaspora. Examples include dual citizenship, voting rights, social security services, and labour rights, among others. Dual citizenship enables the academic diaspora to participate in higher education in their home country on a permanent or temporary basis. However, while dual citizenship is technically accommodating, access and usage can be complicated. For example, for a member of the academic diaspora to occupy certain high-level national positions in Ghana, s/he will need to denounce her/his foreign citizenship. Article 8 (2) of the Constitution as well as Act 591 of 2000 disallow dual citizens from occupying certain public positions or offices. Examples of such positions include Ambassadors or High Commissioners, Secretary to the Cabinet, Chief Justice and Justices of the Supreme Court.

Also on the issue of rights, the Representation of the Peoples Amendment Act (ROPAL) (Act 699 of 2016) allows Ghanaians in the diaspora to

vote in general elections in the country. However, full implementation of this Act has not been possible due to the Ghana Electoral Commission's logistical constraints.

The final broad theme includes programmes aimed at extracting obligations from the academic diaspora. These include diverting some diaspora funds for academic engagement, and advertising positions for short- and long-term transfer of knowledge to home institutions. Ghana has yet to strategically position itself at the national level in this regard. Compared to the first two dimensions, Ghana's national efforts to attract the academic diaspora leave much to be desired. This does not mean that such transfers and extractions from the Ghanaian academic diaspora do not exist, but that they are largely informal or organised by international organisations and are often left to the country's higher education institutions to initiate.

To conclude, we argue for a national academic diaspora programme for Ghana which aims to optimise the potential contribution of the academic diaspora and minimise the risks. Such a policy should recognise the challenges academics face in their home country by advancing the socio-economic and academic wellbeing of all those involved in higher education, research and innovation for national development. It would reduce the risk of creating an upper middle class of diasporas within and among academics as well as prevent further brain drain.

This article has shown that policies have been drafted to provide a policy framework for a state-led academic diaspora programme in Ghana. We also identified the state actors and institutions that could coordinate and implement such a project. Having identified several obstacles to implementing an academic diaspora programme, we argue that these challenges are not specific to the proposed programme but are inherent in the national policy and coordination framework; and that they can be addressed when the policies are rolled out and implemented. In conclusion, we recommend that the state-led academic diaspora programme be woven into already existing and yet to be implemented policies to ensure its smooth implementation. Given that strategically important migration policies are slowly being implemented, the timing has never been better.

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# The Nigerian Diaspora's Contributions to the Development of Higher Education

*Sharkdam Wapmuk*

## **Abstract**

While engagement with the Nigerian diaspora has focused on attracting investment and remittances, recently, attention has also shifted to its contribution to the development of higher education. The descriptive and qualitative study on which this article is based drew on secondary data that was analysed through content analysis. The findings revealed that a combination of factors motivated Nigerians, including intellectuals, to emigrate, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. This compounded existing problems in Nigeria's higher education sector. Since 1999, successive governments have engaged the diaspora in national development, including higher education. The study found that through the Linkages with Experts and Academics in the Diaspora Scheme, the United Nations Development Programme's Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals, and the World Bank assisted Nelson Mandela Institution, known as the African University of Science and Technology, as well as alumni associations in the diaspora, Nigerian diaspora academics have been returning home to transfer knowledge in universities. Other contributions include projects, donations, and programmes. However, several challenges constrain the tapping of their full potential. The article recommends that, the Nigerian government should create an enabling environment, ensure clarity of expectations, provide adequate funding and adopt long-term approaches to engage with the Nigerian academic diaspora.

**Key Words:** Nigerian diaspora, higher education, brain-drain, brain-gain, knowledge transfer

L'engagement avec la diaspora nigériane s'est concentré sur l'attraction des investissements et des envois de fonds, mais récemment, l'attention s'est également tournée vers sa contribution au développement de l'enseignement

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** SHARKDAM WAPMUK, Nigerian Defence Academy, Nigeria.  
Email: swapmuk@nda.edu.ng

supérieur. L'étude descriptive et qualitative sur laquelle se fonde cet article s'est appuyée sur des données secondaires qui ont été analysées par analyse de contenu. Les résultats des analyses ont révélé qu'une combinaison de facteurs a motivé les Nigériens, y compris les intellectuels, à émigrer, en particulier dans les années 80 et 90. Cela a aggravé les problèmes existants dans l'enseignement supérieur au Nigéria. Depuis 1999, les gouvernements successifs ont engagé la diaspora dans le développement national, y compris l'enseignement supérieur. L'étude a révélé que, grâce à l'apport du *Linkages with Experts and Academics in the Diaspora Scheme* (Programme de la diaspora sur le lien avec les experts et les universitaires), du *Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals* (Initiative de transfert des connaissances par l'intermédiaire des expatriés) du Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement, et de l'*African University of Science and Technology* (Université africaine des sciences et de la technologie) parrainée par la Banque mondiale, ainsi qu'au soutien des associations d'anciens étudiants Nigériens dans la diaspora, les universitaires de la diaspora sont rentrés chez eux pour transférer leurs connaissances dans les universités. Il y a eu d'autres contributions qui comprennent des projets, des dons et des programmes. Cependant, l'exploitation de leur plein potentiel se heurte à plusieurs défis. L'article recommande que le gouvernement nigérien crée un environnement propice, assure la clarté des attentes, fournit un financement adéquat et adopte des approches à long terme pour s'engager avec la diaspora universitaire nigérienne.

**Mots clés:** diaspora nigérienne, enseignement supérieur, fuite des cerveaux, gain de cerveaux, transfert de connaissances

### Introduction

This article examines the contemporary interventions and contributions of the Nigerian diaspora to the development of higher education in their homeland. It argues that Nigeria's past engagements with its diaspora focused on attracting the diaspora for national development, conceived as the inflow of investment and remittances, rather than on academic and skills transfer. The discourse on diaspora and development in general, and specific national contexts has received increasing attention in scientific and political debates in recent years (Bréant, 2013; Lampert, 2010; Mercer, Page, and Evans, 2008; Marchand, Langley and Siegel, 2015; Oyebade and Falola, 2017). This article focuses on the discourse on reclaiming the African diaspora to support higher education and African countries' development (Langa and Fongwa, 2018; Zeleza, 2013). It has been argued that Nigerian emigration is characterised by a diversity of flows, including cross-border movement (Adepoju, 2005). Highly-skilled Nigerians' migration to several

destination countries occurred in different phases (de Haas, 2006). Slavery, colonial labour policies, military authoritarianism, post-colonial conflict, including the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, and economic hardship occasioned by Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and neoliberalism have all propelled Nigerians into the diaspora (Wapmuk, Akinkuotu and Ibonye, 2014). Highly-trained Nigerians' migration to more developed and economically advanced countries has been described as 'brain drain'. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) notes that Nigerians constitute the largest population of migrants from developing countries in Africa to industrialised countries in Europe, the United States (US) and elsewhere (IOM, 2012).

Nigeria's returned to democratic government in 1999 after almost three decades of military authoritarian rule, opening up a new vista in terms of government-diaspora relations. This is evident in increased efforts by successive administrations to attract the Nigerian diaspora, not only to identify with the country as their homeland, but also to contribute to its development in general, and higher education in particular. The philosophy behind Nigeria's current efforts to engage the diaspora to revamp higher education is driven by the fact that education constitutes the bedrock of national development (Kulild, 2014; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013). Accordingly, as opposed to the brain-drain that characterised the 1980s and 1990s, attracting Nigerians to the home-front is seen as a form of 'brain-gain' (Gueye, 2019) or what Theroux (2019) referred to as "brain circulation". Aikins and White (2011) argue that education is one of the strategies through which states can draw from their diaspora. An important issue is how to facilitate collaboration and tap resources from the diaspora for higher education in Africa (Zeleza, 2013, 2004).

The major question that this article addresses is: to what extent has the Nigerian diaspora keyed into the country's higher education sector? It also seeks answers to related questions. What is the general understanding of the diaspora, and more specifically, what constitutes the Nigerian diaspora? What is the state of higher education in Nigeria? How has the Nigerian government engaged the Nigerian diaspora to contribute to higher education in the country? What constitutes the nature of Nigerian diaspora interventions and contributions to higher education? What challenges militate against the diaspora's engagement for the development of higher education in Nigeria and what is the way forward? A descriptive and qualitative approach was adopted to answer these questions. Data was gathered from secondary sources including books, monographs, journal articles, government reports and the websites of government institutions and international organisations, and was analysed through content analysis.



The article commences with an introduction, followed by a conceptual clarification of the diaspora and the Nigerian diaspora. The third section examines the state of higher education in Nigeria, while section four discusses Nigerian government-diaspora relations and engagement of the Nigerian diaspora. Section five focuses on the Nigerian diaspora's interventions and contributions to higher education. Section six discusses the challenges confronting diaspora engagement in the development of higher education in Nigeria and offers suggestions on the way forward, before concluding.

### Conceptual and Analytical Framework

The term diaspora is not only contested and dynamic, but its usage also varies among groups over time, depending on their ideological standpoint. Etymologically, it is derived from the ancient Greek word διασπορά - *diaspeirein* 'disperse', from *dia* 'across' + *speirein* 'scatter', which referred to spreading or scattering of seeds. Over the years, scholars have sought to clarify the concept of diaspora in general and specific contexts (Clifford, 1994; Pasura, 2010; Safran, 1991; Tololyan, 1996). At the level of general theoretical discourse, the most commonly cited work is that of Safran (1991), Clifford (1994) and Cohen (1997). In *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return*, Safran (1991) argues that the degree of force that initiates a population's dispersal tends to establish what counts as a diaspora, semi-diaspora or non-diaspora. He adds that only when a population faces a destroyed homeland and/or its own expulsion, and collectively experiences trauma as a result, can one talk of a diaspora. Cohen (1997) identified five types of diaspora, including victim, labour, trade, imperial and cultural. However, not all the diaspora was forced. Voluntary migrations in the post-colonial era also account for the volume of the African diaspora in developed and economically advanced countries. This is reflected in the IOM's (2012) migration policy that defined the diaspora as "emigrants and their descendants, who live outside the country of their birth or ancestry, either on a temporary or permanent basis, yet still maintain affective and material ties to their countries of origin" (Agunias and Newland 2012, p. 15). Scholars have recognised the conceptual challenges and lack of theoretical clarity in relation to the term diaspora (Pasura, 2010; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013). Tololyan (1996, p. 5) notes that the concept, which was used to describe Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion, "now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes terms like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic communities". Dirlik (2004) asserts that the concept is sometimes taken for granted and makes a strong case for a more complicated understanding. There is no doubt that this concept can be

appropriated for various purposes and agendas including ideology, nationalism, and to serve certain interests, including propaganda.

To avoid the conceptual ambiguity arising from multiple interpretations, for the purposes of this article, we adopt the definition advanced by the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM). It defines the Nigerian diaspora as any Nigerian who lives and works abroad and has an interest in contributing to Nigeria's socio-economic, political, technological and industrial development. This definition draws on the African Union's (AU) definition of the African diaspora. According to the AU, "The African Diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union" (AU, n.d.). It is important to note that the Nigerian diaspora does not present as a single homogenous ethnic group, but a number of ethnic groups, whose identities are underpinned and shaped by their country of origin. Accordingly, the Nigerian diaspora establishes ethnic and religious organisations side by side with umbrella bodies such as the Nigerians in the Diaspora Organization (NIDO), and various branches such as NIDO in the US, Europe, Russia and Asia, as well as the Central Association of Nigerians in the United Kingdom (CANUK), Nigerian Peoples' Forum USA and the Organisation for the Advancement of Nigerians USA, amongst others. These organisations serve a dual purpose. Firstly, they support members and connections of the Nigerian diaspora within host countries, and, secondly, they connect members with their mother land.

This article adopts as its framework of analysis the diaspora-development nexus and typology proposed by Mohan (2002) who divided diaspora development into three categories. According to Mohan (2002), while development 'in' the diaspora refers to the use of diasporic connections in the immediate locality to ensure the social and economic well-being of members of the diaspora; development 'through' the diaspora expands on development 'in' the diaspora by engaging global as well as local networks; and development 'by' the diaspora refers to the economic, political, socio-cultural, and educational diasporic flows that facilitate development of homelands (Mohan, 2002, p. 123). Of concern to this article is the diaspora's contribution to the development of higher education in the home country. The article also draws theoretical insights from Arif Dirlik's *Global Modernity: Modernity in an Age of Global Capitalism*, and Intimate others: [private] nations and Diasporas in an age of globalization, as well as Arjun Appadurai's *Disjunction and Differences in Global Cultural Economy*. These scholarly works help to shed light on the complex notion of diaspora in the age of globalisation and transnationalism. Globalisation, that is reflected in contemporary global flows of people, ideas and capital, has

led to profound changes in transnational interactions, affinities, forms of connectivity and understanding of the whole notion of diaspora. Transnationalism is related to identity and belonging, both of which have tendency to evolve through the generations. It is therefore not surprising that, unlike the first or second generation, third or fourth generation diaspora may have no memory of home. Dirlik and Appadurai link the formation of the African diaspora to the evolution of a globalised and racialised capitalism. Slavery, colonial labour policies, post-colonial conflict and economic hardship have all propelled Africans into the diaspora that is becoming ever more diffuse. Dirlik (2004) argues that contemporary cultural analysis of diaspora or diasporic identities focuses on the problematic of national identity and/or the necessity of accommodating migrant cultures. The concept of diaspora or diasporic identity is useful in deconstructing claims of national cultural homogeneity. It is also important in expanding the horizon of cultural differences and challenging cultural hegemony at a time when the accommodation of cultural differences may be more urgent than ever in the face of the globalising world. Appadurai (1990, p. 297) also notes that, for the diaspora community, there is often tension between “cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization”. Appadurai adds that it is necessary to understand these ‘diasporas’ and movement of cultural products in order to achieve global competitiveness. The movement of monies and knowledge back home could be positively or negatively deployed in the home country, even as state governments continue to promote national development.

#### **Nigerian Government-Diaspora Relations and Engagement in National Development**

Nigerians can be found in many countries of the world. However, the exact extent of this diaspora remains unknown. The Pew Research Center (2019) estimates that the Nigerian diaspora ranges from two to fifteen million people. The IOM puts the number of Nigerians living in the US at roughly 3.4 million, making them one of the country’s largest African immigrant groups. The UK, South Africa, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other European and Asian countries also have large populations of Nigerians. As noted earlier, several factors propelled Nigerians into the diaspora. These include but are not limited to slavery, colonial labour policies, military authoritarianism, post-colonial conflict, including the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, and economic hardship occasioned by SAP and neoliberalism. In addition, the prospect of greener pastures, attraction of foreign universities, and the crisis in the Nigerian education system characterised by recurrent strikes and insecurity have contributed to the emergence of the academic diaspora. The emergence of this diaspora

hinges on Nigerians’ pursuit of academic excellence abroad. According to the IOM (2012, p. 14), Nigerians are “highly educated with approximately 62 per cent possessing a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree or a doctorate. Approximately 78 per cent are employed, with a significant segment in skilled professions, such as health or education”. Furthermore, the IOM’s mapping of Nigerian health and education professionals in the US found that, of “the professional fields in the education sector, respondents were most interested in higher education, curriculum development and education policy” IOM (2012, p. 21). The Nigerian diaspora thus includes a high proportion of educated persons that are willing to contribute to higher education in the country.

The Nigerian government signed the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission Establishment Bill in 2017, following which a Diaspora Commission (DC) was established. The DC liaises with Nigerians in and from the diaspora to contribute human capital and material resources, including expertise, for national development. In addition, the Federal Republic of Nigeria produced a Draft National Policy on Diaspora Matters in 2016, which received input from Nigerians in the diaspora. While this document does not expressly define the academic diaspora, it states that, “The NUC [National Universities Commission] shall have the responsibilities of designing and implementing programmes aimed at linking experts and academics in the Diaspora to the development of university education in Nigeria.” In collaboration with the IOM, the government produced the National Migration Policy 2015, which addresses issues relating to migration, including safe labour migration. In terms of engagement, while the government has sought to engage its diaspora in the past, this was intensified following Nigeria’s return to civilian democratic rule in May 1999 (Alli, 2010).

During President Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration (1999-2007), Nigerians living abroad were officially recognised as valuable stakeholders and partners in the country’s development. Apart from interacting with the Nigerian diaspora community during his trips abroad, Obasanjo introduced novel initiatives aimed at bringing home Nigerian professionals and experts living and working abroad. According to Akinrinade and Ogen (2011), discussions between the president and the diaspora community centred on maximising the latter’s contribution of human resources towards Nigeria’s development. This paved the way for the establishment of a global umbrella organisation for all Nigerian diaspora in 2001 known as the Nigerians in the Diaspora Organisation (NIDO). Branches were established in the US, Europe, Russia, and Asia. Other diaspora organisations include the Central Association of Nigerians in the United Kingdom (CANUK), the Nigerian Peoples’ Forum USA, the Organisation for the Advancement of Nigerians USA, and other pan-ethnic groupings. Also in

2001, the Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA) was formed to attract professionals of Nigerian and African descent to invest their knowledge, skills and expertise in African economies.

Tangible outcomes from the government-diaspora interactions that followed include the government's decision in 2002 to allow Nigerians to acquire foreign citizenship without forfeiting their Nigerian citizenship; and the establishment of the Nigerian National Volunteer Service (NNVS) as an additional institution for diaspora engagement in 2003 (Mberu and Pongou, 2010). The NNVS initiated the first annual Science and Technology Conference between Nigerians at home and abroad in 2005, in Abuja. The success of this event led to the first Diaspora Day celebrations, alongside the second Science and Technology Conference in 2006. While 76 members of the diaspora attended the 2005 conference, 200 were present the following year (Akwani, 2013). In 2005, the president declared July 25<sup>th</sup> as Nigeria Diaspora Day to recognise and celebrate the individual and collective success of Nigerians abroad as well as their contribution to national development. In 2008, former President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua opened the second Diaspora Day celebrations and the third Science and Technology Conference under the theme, Connecting Nigeria with its Diaspora, that attracted around 400 Nigerians living abroad (Akinrinade and Ogen, 2011, p. 82). Since then, the annual forum has brought together a broad spectrum of Nigerian professionals, entrepreneurs, and investors to engage with Nigerians and the government. The discussions during Diaspora Day 2019, held from July 24-25<sup>th</sup>, centred on the power of the Nigerian diaspora for national development; integrating the diaspora into the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), and the Nigerian diaspora's return to serve the country (*African Courier*, July 24 2019). The National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) has pledged to provide legislative support to the Nigerian diaspora through debates on the diaspora policy, and support and voting rights for Nigerians abroad (Akwani, 2013). The latter remains a challenge given issues relating to managing elections and counting votes even within Nigeria.

### **The Nigerian Diaspora's Interventions and Contributions to Higher Education**

Nigeria's engagement with its diaspora previously focused more on remittances than academic and skills transfer (Binaisa, 2013). The reason behind the decision to harness the diaspora to renew Nigerian higher education lies in the fact that Nigerian academics and other professionals' emigration constitutes a brain-drain. This is occurring at a time when Nigerian higher education institutions are confronted by demands for increased access and enrolment, as well as the expansion of the higher education

sector, which requires more highly-trained academics. Despite the ethnic diversity in the country, it has been argued that the Nigerian academic diaspora seems united in its resolve to intervene and bridge the intellectual and economic gaps that afflict higher education in Nigeria (Oloruntoba, 2020). It is against this backdrop that we examined the Nigerian diaspora's contributions to higher education.

The Nigerian diaspora's contributions to higher education in Nigeria can be gleaned from the perspectives of knowledge transfer and other interventions. Knowledge transfer aims to develop science, technology, and tertiary academic programmes, and to promote human capacity building. According to Ogen (2017), it has promoted linkages with academics and professionals abroad. Some have responded to the call to relocate to Nigeria on a short-term basis in order to contribute to national development through engagement in teaching, research, and community service in the Nigerian university system (Ogen, 2017). The knowledge exchange programme in Nigerian universities is facilitated by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Nigerian National Volunteer Service (NNVS).

In 2007, the NUC established the Linkages with Experts and Academics in the Diaspora Scheme (LEADS), a programme which began as the Nigerian Experts and Academics in Diaspora Scheme (NEADS). The major objective of LEADS is to attract experts and academics of Nigerian extraction in the diaspora on a short-term basis, usually between three and nine months, to contribute to the enhancement of education in the country's universities. The Nigerian government calls for applications for short-term teaching appointments, especially in the areas of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), management science and business administration, mathematics, medicine and dentistry, mining engineering, natural sciences, and oil and gas engineering (NUC, 2020). Incentives comprise a monthly stipend of US\$2,500, a return economy class air ticket, and accommodation and local travel expenses relating to the programme, with the latter two provided by the host university (NUC, 2020).

According to the NUC (2020), a total of 62 LEADS scholars (34 from the US, 16 from the UK, three from Canada, two from Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, the Netherlands and the West Indies, respectively, and one from Russia) rendered services in various Nigerian universities before the program came to an end in 2017. Sixteen served the NUC as consultants and 46 worked at universities. The Universities of Ibadan; Calabar; Ilorin; Abuja; Maiduguri, Nigeria Nsukka; Lagos; Benin; and Jos have benefitted from the services of LEADS scholars, as have the Federal University of Technology Owerri, Bayero University Kano, Federal University Otuoke, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Efe, and the National Open University of Nigeria. State universities in Uli, Ekpoma, Kaduna, Osun and Nassarawa,

and Covenant University also welcomed these academics (NUC, 2020; Ogen, 2017). The scheme has been credited with converting brain-drain to brain-gain; enhancing skills acquisition in rare areas of expertise such as the installation of digital X-ray machines for panoramic and cephalometric radiographs in clinics; encouraging industry experts to participate in teaching, research and cross-fertilisation of ideas in Nigerian universities; enrichment of the Nigerian curriculum review process with modern, high tech and new trends in relevant disciplines; and enhancing reintegration of experts into their heritage and community life (NUC, 2020).

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) was established in 1977 (Meyer and Brown, 1999) to tap into the expertise of highly skilled expatriates by assisting them to return to their home country for visits of between three weeks and three months. These expatriates engage in various development projects or undertake teaching assignments at local universities (Ogen, 2017). In 2011, the TOKTEN scheme attracted some 900 Nigerian professionals living abroad to return home to provide technical assistance in critical economic sectors, including higher education (Mayah and Yusuf, 2011). The UNDP has provided US\$1 million (equivalent to N150 million) to cover participants' travel and living expenses. Nigerian professionals from Asia, France, the US, Russia, Britain, Canada, Israel, Japan, Cuba, and other countries have offered their services.

Alumni abroad have also made significant contributions to the development of the country's higher education system. Several Nigerian universities have established diaspora alumni associations, which offer donations or facilitate academic exchange programmes. Ogen (2017) notes that these alumni have facilitated personnel training, library development, and access to research grants, among other things. For example, between 2003 and 2007, alumni of the Faculty of Arts in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife who are based in South Africa, the UK and the US donated books and cash to the faculty. Many junior academics in the faculty also benefitted from research and training abroad through the linkages provided by alumni in various institutions in Europe and America (Ogen 2017).

The Nigerian government is promoting the development of science and technology through a World Bank assisted Nelson Mandela Institution, the African University of Science and Technology (AUST) that was established in Abuja in 2007. The AUST offers graduate education programmes with a focus on the development needs of African countries, particularly in the areas of petroleum engineering, theoretical physics, materials science and engineering, pure and applied mathematics, and computer science and engineering (Ogen, 2017; AUST, 2015). The university, which hosts visiting scholars from the Nigerian and other African diaspora, partners

with local and international institutions dedicated to science and technology research. These include the University of Ibadan; African Institute of Science and Mathematical Sciences, South Africa; IIT Bombay, University of Aizu, Japan; and Kennesaw State University and the Science Initiative Group (SIGA) in the US (Ogen, 2017; AUST, 2015).

While many of the development and cultural organisations established by the Nigerian diaspora as well as individual members have shown an interest in the development of Nigeria's higher education system, not as many have made direct contributions (Marchand, Langley and Siegel, 2015). According to Cuevas-Mohr (2019), their contributions mainly consist of remittances to family members and/or households in need of support. In terms of education, members of the Nigerian diaspora and their organisations have participated in projects, and advocacy and support activities. Some work to increase Nigerian children's access to education (Marchand, Langley and Siegel, 2015) in addition to improving the quality of education back home. For example, the Nigeria Vater Abraham Foundation (VAF), a diaspora organisation in Germany, supports widows by donating money for their children's school fees, books, and other forms of support, from primary and secondary school, to tertiary education. Developmental and cultural organisations in Germany also support occupational training for older children such as a computer courses and facilitate German/Nigerian exchange programmes for Nigerian university students. The Engineering Forum of Nigerians (EFN) that was established by UK-based Nigerian engineers in 2002 to promote engineering education and development in Nigeria (Lampert, 2010) has advocated that the "teaching of engineering in the Nigerian university system should move away from its overbearing focus on theory towards better preparing graduates for the practical and commercial aspects of the profession" (Lampert, 2010, p. 174). The association launched the Higher Education Engineering Challenge (HEEC) at the National Engineering Centre (NEC) in Lagos in 2006 (Lampert, 2010). This annual competition requires undergraduate engineering and technology students to design an innovative and marketable engineering product, device, or system relevant to an issue "considered of vital importance to national development" (Lampert, 2010, p. 175). Through this programme, the EFN identifies and supports engineering and technology undergraduates in higher education institutions in the country.

#### **Challenges confronting Diaspora Engagement in the Development of Higher Education in Nigeria**

While Ogen (2017) argues that Nigerians are eager to come home and contribute to national development, several challenges hamper the full realisation of the Nigerian diaspora's potential to promote the development

of higher education and science in the country. Firstly, there is no reliable data on Nigerians abroad. This is partly due to poor documentation by the Nigerian immigration authorities, and host countries' failure to consider naturalised and second-generation Nigerians in their statistics. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) estimates that around 20 million Nigerians are living in the diaspora (Edobor, 2017). The lack of accurate data poses a challenge to planning and engagement of Nigerians in strategic interventions in higher education. The second challenge is the lack of an enabling environment arising from inadequate infrastructure such as electricity, functional roads, and educational structures.

Thirdly, insecurity poses a huge challenge to the Nigerian diaspora. Since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, there have been recurrent reports of violence and criminality in various parts of the country. These include, but are not limited to, militancy in the Niger Delta, ethno-religious conflicts, farmers-herders' clashes, cybercrime, armed robberies, armed banditry, kidnappings, and cattle rustling. The multiple security challenges confronting the country have become overlapping and pose very serious challenges to public policy (Mofolorunsho, Idah and Abu-Saeed, 2019; Egwu, 2015, p. 14; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). The Nigerian state's failure to secure citizens' lives and property is a major hindrance to the diaspora's engagement in the development of higher education. Fourthly, Nigerians living abroad confront difficulties in sending remittances home to support the higher education sector. Given that formal transfer channels are expensive, some Nigerian diaspora resort to informal channels (Cuevas-Mohr, 2019). The government thus lacks accurate information on how best to plan and harness diaspora resources for the development of this sector.

Fifth, the lack of a framework to integrate returning Nigerians constrains the diaspora's engagement in higher education. The country has yet to settle the question of how returning members of the diaspora, particularly the older generations, will be reintegrated. The National Policy on Diaspora Matters, which should address these concerns, including issues such as the diaspora's right to vote, has remained in draft form since 2016.

Finally, the Nigerian government's poor response to emergency situations confronted by the diaspora (Edobor, 2017) such as disasters, wars, xenophobic attacks, and pandemics has discouraged them from contributing to their country's development. A case in point is Nigerians trapped abroad as a result of the shutdown of borders of countries due to COVID-19. These included 2,000 Nigerians in the US, UK, UAE and China, and 200 in Sudan, as well as students, who want to return home (Ukwu, 2020). While the US and other countries have evacuated their citizens from Nigeria, the Nigerian government has been slow in offering a like response.

### Concluding Remarks

This article examined the Nigerian diaspora's contributions to the development of higher education in Nigeria. The country's higher education sector suffers a number of weaknesses that result from a complex web of factors that have their roots in the colonial and post-colonial eras. Neglect of public higher education, coupled with economic hardship due to the collapse in oil prices, the adoption of the SAP regime, and military regimes that clamped down on academia, propelled Nigerian intellectuals to migrate during the 1980s and 1990s. Africa is among the regions that are most seriously affected by the outflow of skilled citizens. Since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, it has established and funded various initiatives to encourage the diaspora's engagement in the country's higher education system.

Our examination of the diaspora's contributions to higher education and science in Nigeria revealed that the focus has been on knowledge transfer as well as direct interventions through projects, advocacy and the organisation of programmes in tertiary institutions. Through the LEADS, TOKTEN, AUST, and Nigerian alumni associations in the diaspora, experts and academics of Nigerian extraction have returned home to transfer knowledge in universities, and have also facilitated academic linkages and collaborations with academics and institutions in other parts of the world. However, several challenges, including insecurity, inaccurate data, the lack of an enabling environment, and the Nigerian government's slow response when members of the diaspora find themselves in emergency situations, hamper the tapping of the diaspora's full potential in developing higher education in the country.

The Nigerian government should strengthen and support the NIDO to mobilise and leverage the expertise, skills and experience of Nigerians living overseas. The Diaspora Commission, in collaboration with the NIDO and its branches worldwide should undertake a census of Nigerians in the diaspora in order to gather accurate data to inform planning. The government also needs to create a conducive environment, including security, for Nigerians at home and in the diaspora. Section 14 (1) (b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that, "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" (Nigerian Constitution, 1999 as amended). The government should facilitate and ease the transfer of remittances and clearly identify areas in which the diaspora can contribute. Finally, the government should fast-track the completion of the National Policy on Diaspora Matters which has been in draft form since 2016.

In conclusion, in order to maximise the benefits of academic diaspora engagement, there is a need for clarity on what can be expected of them,

and to ensure adequate funding. The current short-term approach to such engagement should be replaced by well-planned, institutional long-term approaches.

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## Education and Migration: A Study of the Indian Diaspora

N. V. Varghese

### Abstract

The Indian diaspora consists of low- and semi-skilled migrants mainly to the Middle-East; migration of the highly-skilled to developed countries; and cross-border students who seek employment and remain in their host countries. India initially viewed the migration of the best educated from its prestigious institutions as 'brain drain'. However, with the reverse flow of these professionals the diaspora came to be seen as 'brain gain'. The highly-skilled Indian diaspora assumed positions of responsibility in the corporate world, in academia (including Nobel laureates), and in the political and social spheres in some host countries, thereby enhancing India's image abroad.

**Key words:** India, skilled migration, human aspirations, brain drain, brain gain

La diaspora indienne se compose de migrants peu et semi-qualifiés, principalement vers le Moyen-Orient, de migrations de personnes hautement qualifiées vers les pays développés, et d'étudiants transfrontaliers qui cherchent un emploi et restent dans leur pays d'accueil. L'Inde a initialement considéré la migration des plus instruits de ses prestigieuses institutions comme une «fuite des cerveaux». Cependant, avec le flux inversé de ces professionnels, la diaspora a fini par être considérée comme un «gain de cerveaux». La diaspora indienne hautement qualifiée a assumé des postes de responsabilité dans le monde des entreprises, dans les universitaires (y compris les lauréats du prix Nobel) et dans les sphères politique et sociale de certains pays d'accueil, renforçant ainsi l'image de marque de l'Inde à l'étranger.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** N. V. VARGHESE, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, India. Email: nv.varghese@niepa.ac.in



**Mots clés:** Inde, diaspora indienne, migration qualifiée, aspirations humaines, fuite des cerveaux, gain de cerveaux s

### Introduction

A growing number of people no longer live in their place of birth, but move within their country or to another country. Nearly 12% of the global population falls within the former category and 3.3% in the latter (UNESCO, 2018). With more than a billion people living outside their place of birth, migration has become an integral part of the development process.

“Migration is an expression of human aspirations for safety, dignity and better future” (UNESCO, 2018, p. 2). In general, people move from resource-poor locations to resource-rich areas. Such movement can be voluntary or involuntary and can be driven by political, ethnic and/or religious factors. A large scale influx of refugees and asylum seekers is the result of forced movement. Involuntary migration and displacements have traditionally been referred to by the term diaspora (UN, 2000). However, given that a fair share of cross-border movement has not been associated with traumatic events or disasters (Reis, 2004) and is voluntary in nature, the meaning of the term was expanded to signify all forms of cross-border movement, leading to people living outside their homeland.

Nearly 98 million people have migrated in this century, mainly from developing to developed countries (UN, 2019). India has experienced largescale internal and international migration. The former is mostly from rural to urban areas. It is estimated that nearly nine million Indian people migrated annually from one of the country’s states (regions) to another during the period 2011 to 2016 (UNESCO, 2018). International migration from India is mainly to developed countries and Middle Eastern countries that promise employment opportunities, and better wages and working conditions. India accounted for the largest proportion of total global migration of 272 million as at 2019, with more than 17.5 million migrants (UN, 2019).

This article discusses the transformation of the Indian diaspora from illiterate plantation labourers to highly educated and skilled knowledge workers that are highly valued in economically advanced countries. The expansion of the Indian diaspora takes place through two channels, namely, migration of the highly educated for employment, and cross-border student mobility to seek higher education in the host countries. The article shows that the diaspora’s recognition and professional respectability in their host countries has enhanced their status with the Indian government which has acknowledged their role in promoting India as a global force.

The article is presented in eight sections. Section two discusses some of the issues relating to migration and development, while the third section

traces the evolution of diaspora policies in India. Section four elaborates on the changing composition of the Indian diaspora and sections five and six analyse the linkage between education and the growing size of the Indian diaspora. Section seven discusses the diaspora’s contributions to India and the final section draws conclusions.

### Migration and Development

Migration has become an integral part of the development process and has been influenced by various factors in different regions and at different points in time. The slave trade marked the beginning of the largest labour migration in history. The flow of slaves was mainly from Africa to America, Europe and the Caribbean. The abolition of the slave trade in Britain (1807) and the US (1865) gave rise to slave breeding. The next stage in migration was the system of indentured labour and the source countries were mainly China and India. While the favoured destination for Chinese migrants was the US to work on the gold mines and railways, most Indian migrants worked on plantations in the British, Dutch, French and Portuguese colonies. Job losses due to industrialisation, and the potato famine encouraged large scale migration from Europe to the US, Canada, Latin American countries, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (UN, 1997). In all these instances, the economic benefits accruing to the host countries defined the rationale for and the direction of the flow of migration.

Family reunion, asylum seeking, employment and studying are important reasons for migration (UN, 1998). It can be argued that the economic rationale remained the driving force behind voluntary migration in most instances. During the colonial period, the economic needs of the imperial powers determined the direction of the flow of migrants. The movement of people during the post-colonial period has been influenced by the economic benefits accruing to both migrants and their hosts in the country of destination.

Employment is a major factor influencing voluntary migration, with wage differentials and currency exchange rates promoting this phenomenon. Wage differentials between the migrant’s country of origin and destination motivate migration (Harris and Todaro, 1970). This is true even when migrant workers’ wages are relatively low compared to those of native workers in host countries (Todaro, 1976). Furthermore, the currency exchange rate between their country of origin and country of destination means that, even at relatively low wage levels, remittances converted into home country currencies are substantially more than what they could have earned in their own countries.

Migration due to wage differentials has two elements. Firstly, it is used by households to diversify sources of income and to minimise the risk

of poverty (Stark, 1991). This is particularly true of poor households and low-skilled migrants. The large-scale migration of unskilled and semi-skilled Indian workers to West Asia (mainly from Kerala) is a case in point (Prakash, 1998). However, skilled workers generally come from better-off families. While they enjoy employment opportunities at home, they migrate, especially to the developed world, for better jobs. The US attracts the largest number of educated migrants from India, with around two million Indian migrants living in that country.

Migrants were welcomed by developed countries as they met the demand for unskilled temporary labour at the bottom of the employment hierarchy. Studies have shown that most low-skilled migrants occupy 3-D jobs – Dirty, Dangerous and Demanding – which natives avoid (UN, 2000). Declining fertility rates and the native youth's reluctance to enter the low paying secondary labour market enabled the continued flow of migrants to the developed world and the Middle East. Furthermore, in many instances employing natives is more expensive than engaging migrant workers. Migrants' low wages and high productivity increased employers' willingness to engage them. These factors have led to an influx of migrant workers in the secondary labour market in developed countries.

Skilled migration has more serious economic implications. Recipient countries benefit from migration of skilled workers. A UN study (UN, 1973) conducted in the 1970s showed that international migration enabled developed countries to reduce the cost of educating their native population in specialised areas. Migrants are better educated, their productivity is higher, salaries are relatively lower and they make substantial contributions to research. It is against this background that the UNCTAD III conference in Santiago in 1972 referred to brain drain as reverse transfer of technology (Mundende, 1989).

Countries of origin benefit from migration in various ways. Remittances are a major incentive for source countries to encourage migration and they have become the single largest source of external financing in many least-developed countries. The World Bank notes that annual remittance flows increased to USD 689 billion in 2018. Low- and middle-income countries account for more than 75% of global remittances and they exceed FDI flows (World Bank, 2019).

In 2018, India received the highest level of remittances at USD 79 billion, followed by China (\$67 billion), Mexico (\$36 billion), the Philippines (\$34 billion), and Egypt (\$29 billion). While they accounted for 2.7% of India's GDP, the percentage is much higher in some smaller countries. For example, in 2018 remittances accounted for nearly 36% of GDP in Tonga, 34% in Kirgizstan, 32% in Tajikistan and 28% in Nepal (World Bank, 2019).

The economic rationale became a mutual and more prominent factor in

migration in the later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly with regard to the migration of highly skilled people from developing to developed countries. Most migrants were of working-age and became a positive asset for their host countries. In 2019 more than 74% of the global migrant population was between the ages of 20 and 64 (UN, 2019). Young migrants are well educated and contribute to the depleting stock of human capital and the technological base in the country of destination. Indeed, the migrant population helped many greying economies to grow in recent decades. It is estimated that migrants accounted for nearly half of the increase in the workforce in the US and nearly 70% in Europe in the current century (OECD, 2012). Europe hosts the largest number of international migrants (82 million), while North America is home to 59 million (UN, 2019). These two regions together hosted more than half (52%) of the global diaspora in 2019.

It was previously believed that, the brain that migrates is a brain lost for the country of origin. Given subsidisation of the education system, professionals represent a form of national wealth and human capital whose returns to the national economy would have been higher had they stayed in their own countries. However, recent trends in the diaspora's contributions indicate that many economies have gained from them. A related question is: would these professionals have had better opportunities for their growth and development had they stayed in their own countries? It is difficult to make a conclusive statement on this issue. It may be more realistic to argue that the host country benefits from the higher educational levels and the resultant increased productivity of migrant workers and professionals, while their countries of origin benefit from the remittances and technology transfer facilitated by the diaspora. In other words, if managed well, migration becomes mutually beneficial to the countries of both origin and destination.

### **Diaspora Policies in India**

While Indian migration during the colonial period was involuntary, it became voluntary following independence. The Indian government was a dormant player rather than an active agent of change in migration policies until the 1990s. However, a major shift has occurred, from the government regarding the Indian diaspora as a source of brain drain to seeing it as an asset that needs to be capitalised on. Three factors seem to have influenced this change in approach. First, the economic liberalisation policies of the 1990s saw the diaspora as a reliable source to promote trade, investment and technology transfer. Secondly, remittances by the Indian diaspora increased dramatically, with the country currently receiving the highest level of such, exceeding foreign direct investment (FDI).

Third, members of the Indian diaspora have taken up positions of power and prestige abroad and are regarded as informal channels to exercise soft power and diplomatic relations to enhance India's global presence and strengthen 'Brand India'. Examples include the prime ministers of Ireland (Leo Varadkar) and Portugal (Antonio Costa), and the vice president of Suriname (Ashwin Adhin). Moreover, Indian IT professionals, biotechnologists, financial managers, scientists, architects, lawyers, and teachers and professors have become successful figures in all the countries where they have settled. The German Green Card, the American H-1B visa, the British work permit, the Canadian investment visa, the Australian student visa, and New Zealand citizenship all attracted Indian talent in the form of employees as well as students.

The Indian government's new approach and positive attitude to the Indian diaspora is reflected in many of its recent initiatives. In 1999, India introduced the Person of Indian Origin Card (PIO card) for Indian citizens and their non-Indian-born descendants up to four generations. In 2005 the government introduced Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) for those whose parents or grandparents were citizens as at January 26, 1950. These cards grant parity with nationals in terms of their right to own property and operate businesses. However, they do not extend electoral rights to members of the diaspora.

In 2003, the government organised the first diaspora conference (*Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*) to serve as a platform for interaction among the diaspora, the government and the corporate sector. This not only became an annual feature, but many state governments started organising similar events. The events include the bestowing of awards on members of the diaspora for their contributions to India's development.

India established a Ministry of Non-Resident Indians' Affairs in May 2004 (renamed the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in September 2004). Its main objective is to connect the Indian diaspora community to India. The Ministry launched several programmes in this regard, including the 'Know India Programme' (KIP) which aims to familiarise Indian diaspora youth with their ancestors. Thousands of young people in the diaspora aged 18 to 26 have visited India under this programme.

In 2007, the government established the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre to promote investment in India by Indian diaspora. A scholarship programme for diaspora students to study in India was started in 2007. Another programme, 'Tracing the Roots', was launched in 2008 to help PIOs to trace their roots in India.

In 2015, the PIO and OCI cards were merged under the OCI. Furthermore, from 2015 onwards, the government decided to treat NRI/OCI holders' investment as domestic investment rather than FDI. These mea-

asures confer more rights on the diaspora in India. In 2016 the MOIA merged with the Ministry of External Affairs.

The attitude of the diaspora towards India also changed and they became eager to establish on-going relationships with their homeland for various reasons. Some seek economic relations to strengthen their business interests, while others are interested in social and cultural relations. For example, the Indian diaspora in the developed countries focus on investment opportunities, those in the Gulf countries look to welfare measures and the descendants of those that migrated to colonies as plantation workers are keen to reconnect with India for cultural reasons.

The Indian diaspora promotes technology and knowledge transfer through trade and FDI and also by means of informal networks that are interested in promoting scientific and economic development in their home country. Skilled migrants also facilitate the adoption of foreign technologies in their home country. Many governments are keen to exploit these opportunities provided by the diaspora. The government of India launched the Global Initiative for Academic Network (GIAN) in 2017/18 to attract foreign faculty members, including Indian diaspora to teach for short periods in Indian universities. It attracted around 1,800 scholars from 56 countries to offer courses from 2017/18 to 2018/19. The Scheme for Promotion of Academic Research and Collaboration (SPARC) was launched in 2018 to promote research collaboration between reputed institutions abroad and Indian institutions. This programme also attracts members of the Indian diaspora who help to enhance the academic credibility of domestic institutions, and to increase Indian faculty's academic publications in international journals.

### **The Changing Skills Composition of the Indian Diaspora**

When migration from India began in the 1830s, it took place within the context of the indentured labour system, mainly in the British, Dutch, French, and Portuguese colonies. The first shipment of Indian workers left India's shores in 1834 bound for Mauritius. Others were sent to East Africa and South Africa, the Caribbean Islands (Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago), to Asian countries (Burma and Malaya) and to Fiji in the Pacific. Most Indian migrant workers were illiterate and were employed on plantations. Around 30 million people left India during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from migration to the colonies, migrants, mainly from Punjab, worked in agriculture in the US state of California in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Khadaria, 1999).

The next stage of mass migration occurred between India and Pakistan during partition. It is estimated that between 12 and 18 million people crossed borders from 1947 to 1950. About half the migrants (mainly

Muslims) moved from India to Pakistan, while the remainder (mainly Hindus and Sikhs) moved from Pakistan to India (UN, 1973). Similarly, during the war in East Pakistan in 1971 which led to the formation of Bangladesh, around 10 million refugees crossed the border to India. All these were instances of involuntary migration.

There were two forms of Indian migration during the 1950s and 1960s. First, a large number of workers migrated to the UK to meet the demand for low-skilled labour. Second, a large number of Indians migrated from the countries they had settled in as migrants during the colonial period. For example, the 'Africanisation' policy in the post-colonial period drove many Indians from Africa to Britain. Similarly, a large number of Indian diaspora from Surinam migrated to the Netherlands; from Indo-China, Madagascar and Mauritius to France; and from Angola and Mozambique to Portugal (GOI, 2002). A good part of these migrations was involuntary.

By the 1970s, Indian migration had become largely voluntary and involved migration to developed countries and the Middle East in search of better job opportunities and higher wages. Semi-skilled and skilled labourers mainly migrated to the Middle East to take advantage of the booming oil industry (Rajan and Zacharia, 2020). By the 1980s, Indian migration to Middle East countries accounted for more than 90% of the Indian diaspora (Prakash, 1998).

Most of those that left for the Middle East were from poor households and were motivated by wage differentials which helped households to diversify their sources and level of income (Stark, 1991). The largescale migration of unskilled and semi-skilled Indian workers to the Middle East (mainly from the state of Kerala) is an example of this category of migration (Sasikumar, 2019). The Middle East countries encouraged large scale migration, with non-nationals exceeding nationals in some countries. For example, 76% of the population in Qatar, 65% in Kuwait and 73% in United Arab Emirates (UAE) were non-nationals by the turn of the century (UN, 2000).

The professionals that migrated from India came from better-off families and most migrated to the developed world – mainly to English-speaking countries. Their favoured destinations have been the US, UK, Australia and Canada. Such migration increased in the 1990s, when it is estimated that nearly 0.65 million Indian professionals migrated to the US. These migrants consisted of graduates from the most prestigious institutions. It is estimated that more than 30% of graduates from all subject areas and 80% of those in Computer Sciences from the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) migrated to the US during the 1990s (GOI, 2002).

In 2019 India had the largest number of nationals living abroad – a total of 31.5 million. Of this 14 million are non-residents who still hold Indian passports. The UN (2019) notes that India has the largest diaspora with

around 17.5 million people spread over 146 countries, accounting for 6.4% of the total global migrant population. Four countries are home to more than half of the Indian diaspora, namely, UAE, the US, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

### **Education and the Diaspora: Highly Skilled Migration**

The better educated are more likely to opt for voluntary migration since it offers opportunities to maximise the return on education. There is a positive association between the propensity to migrate and the level of education. Accordingly, people with no education migrate the least; those with primary education migrate twice as much as those with no education; those with secondary schooling migrate three times, and those with tertiary education migrate four times more than those with no education (UNESCO, 2018). In many instances, the migrant's mean education level is higher than that of those in the country of origin and in the country of destination.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) created a National Register of Scientific and Technical Personnel in the late 1940s and included a section on 'Indians Abroad' in 1957. This register maintained a database of Indians living abroad and holding postgraduate degrees in science, engineering, medicine, agriculture and social sciences. Highly educated Indians' main destination has been the US, followed by OECD countries. According to a UN estimate (UNDP, 2001), about 100,000 Indian professionals applied for American work visas every year.

It can be argued that the migration of skilled Indians reflects the growing gap between the products of higher education and domestic industry's requirements. In the early decades of independence India established prestigious institutions of technology (IITs) and Indian institutes of management (IIMs). However, industrial development lagged behind and failed to absorb highly qualified graduates from these institutions (Blaug et al., 1969). Apart from migrants' economic incentives, this was one of the reasons for the migration of skilled workers. This situation changed with the acceleration of economic development in the country. The emergence of business process outsourcing (BPO) in the 1990s saw many multinational corporations moving to India and many Indians that had settled abroad returned to the country. The movement of the highly skilled between countries changed perceptions of the diaspora from a source of 'brain drain' (in the 1960s and 1970s) to 'brain gain' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

India has emerged as the most sought-after country for the supply of knowledge workers in developed countries and those like Singapore and Malaysia in South-East Asia. The Indian diaspora's success in the domains of science and technology has prompted many countries to offer easy visa facilities to Indian professionals. The German Green Card, the American

H1-B visa, the British work permit, the Canadian investment visa, the Australian student visa and New Zealand citizenship are examples.

In 2007 Indian professionals received the largest number (158,000) of total H-1B visas. Mass migration of Indian IT professionals is an indication of this trend. An analysis of Indian persons naturalised in the US indicated that 73% were in computer related professions, followed by 9% in engineering related occupations and 4% in administrative positions (Saxena and Banerjee, 2008). The concentrated settlement of the Indian diaspora reaffirms their professional accomplishments, with more than half of those in the US residing in five states - California (20%), New Jersey (11%), Texas (9%), and New York and Illinois (7% each) (Zong and Batalova, 2017).

In general, the mean educational level of the Indian diaspora in the US exceeds that of native white Americans. In 2015, 77% of Indian adults (aged 25 and over) had a bachelor's degree or above compared to 29% of all immigrants and 31% of native-born adults. More than half of the first university degree holders from India had an advanced degree. Another reason for preferring Indian migrants is that highly educated Indians are more likely to be proficient in English than other foreign-born populations (Zong and Batalova, 2017).

Indian migrants' high educational levels are also due to the two channels they commonly rely on to enter the US. Many enter through the H-1B visa, which requires a university degree. As noted previously, Indians constitute the largest group of recipients of H-1B visas annually. Nearly 75% of the 345,000 petitions (initial and for continuing employment) approved by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in 2016 were university graduates from India. The other route taken by Indians is to seek opportunities for higher education in US; this is discussed in the following section.

### **Education and the Diaspora: Migration for Education**

The new generation of young migrants is generally better educated than older settlers. The number of immigrants with tertiary qualifications in OECD countries increased by 70%, reaching a total of almost 30 million in 2010/11. This trend is mainly driven by Asian migration, with more than two million migrants with such qualifications originating from the Asian region having arrived in the OECD in the first decade of the current century (OECD, 2012). These migrants have become part of the highly educated workforce in Canada, the US and Europe (OECD, 2014), especially in the health-care sector and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-based occupations.

In the recent past, study abroad programmes have been an important route for migration of professionals. One of the characteristics of Indian students abroad is that they prefer to work in the host country after gradu-

ation. The return plans of doctoral graduates from US universities revealed that nearly 90% of Indian students would prefer to stay in the US (Kapur and McHale, 2005). A more recent survey by the US National Science Foundation revealed that about 80% of students from India and other Asian countries choose to remain in America after completing their graduate and doctoral studies. Furthermore, students from India accounted for 14% of all temporary visa holders earning doctorates at US colleges and universities in 2015 (Zong and Batalova, 2017). These surveys reinforce earlier findings that cross-border education, especially student mobility, has become fertile ground to recruit the highly skilled workers of the future in many developed countries (Tremblay, 2002).

In 2017 nearly 44% of Indian cross-border students studied in the US and they accounted for 16% of international students in the country. Nearly 80% of Indian immigrant students are enrolled in STEM disciplines. Employment is one of the top reasons why Indian students pursue a degree abroad (Varghese, 2013). Countries like the US and Canada offer attractive job prospects for the postgraduates and their flexible immigration policies allow them to seek employment on completion of their studies. Admission to India's top-ranking institutes is highly competitive given the large number of prospective students and few places. Study abroad programmes are safety valves for students from well to do families who may not be admitted to these prestigious Indian institutions (Choudaha, 2019).

Globally the number of students pursuing study programmes in other countries has increased tremendously in this century (Varghese, 2017). While cross-border student enrolment increased from 0.30 to 1.9 million from the 1960s to the year 2000; by 2017, this figure had increased to 5.09 million (UIS, 2018), an annual average increase of 0.19 million. Similar to skilled migration, the most common direction of cross-border student flow is from developing to developed countries. A group of nine countries in North America and Western Europe hosts nearly 60% of cross-border students (UIS, 2018). The US hosts the largest share at nearly a million cross-border students, followed by the UK, Australia, France and Germany. The most important sending countries are China, India, Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Korea.

Nearly 305,000 Indian students were pursuing higher education abroad in 2018, with the country's share of international students increasing from 2.3% in the year 2000 to 6% in 2015. The US, Australia, Canada, the UK, UAE and New Zealand host more than 70% of Indian students abroad (Varghese, 2017).

Post-study visa facilities and employment opportunities are the main factors influencing students' decisions in choosing a destination country (Varghese, 2013). This is evident from the decline in the student flow to UK

when the post-study visa rules changed and the fact that the flow increased dramatically when the country revised these rules in 2019 (Varghese, 2019). A foreign degree enhances employment opportunities and returns on investment when the student is employed in the host country.

### The Diaspora's Contributions to India

The diaspora makes significant contributions to India's development in many respects. The most visible form is remittances. Global remittances reached USD 689 billion in 2018, with India accounting for USD 79.0 billion (World Bank, 2019). Although India accounts for only 6% of the global diaspora population, it receives nearly 11.5% of global remittances. On average, remittances by the Indian diaspora increased by nearly USD 2.9 billion annually in the past three decades. This reflects the high levels of income of the skilled Indian diaspora.

In 2017, three states accounted for 65% of remittances to India. Kerala received 40%, Punjab 12.7% and Tamil Nadu 12.4% (World Bank, 2019). The state of Kerala, which has the largest migrant population in India experienced an increase in remittances in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even though the number of people migrating declined, especially to the Gulf countries (Rajan and Zacharia, 2020). Once again, this is due to the high remuneration received by highly skilled migrants.

Technology transfer is another major aspect of the Indian diaspora's contributions. The majority of IT professionals who migrate come from India. While this benefits their host countries, at a later stage, many contribute to the advancement of the knowledge based economic sectors in India. The development of hubs such as Bangalore, Gurgaon and Hyderabad would not have been possible without the Indian diaspora's technological contributions and investment.

The Indian diaspora has also boosted India's image abroad. The success of Indian IT professionals globally and in the US in particular, created credibility and trust in India's intellectual abilities. Indian IT professionals, biotechnologists, financial managers, scientists, architects, lawyers and professors have helped to create an image which brands Indians as well-educated, hard-working professionals with a global outlook. This has also enabled Indian graduates to take up leadership positions in renowned companies and outsource to companies located in India.

The Indian diaspora has also boosted India's social and political image. As noted earlier, members of this diaspora have become Prime Ministers, Presidents and Vice Presidents in some of their host countries, and occupy high positions in the corporate world.

The contribution of these 'social remittances' (Levitt, 1998) has been substantial. The diaspora has influenced political decision making in India,

with the introduction of market-friendly reforms in the 1990s in India reflecting such influence. The Indian diaspora's socialisation in mature market economies influenced pro-market economic policies in their home country, including in the education sector. India started establishing private universities from the year 2000 and the private sector currently accounts for nearly 78% of higher education institutions and nearly two-thirds of student enrolment. Many private universities in India collaborate with institutions abroad.

### Concluding Observations

The Indian diaspora has a long history. It includes involuntary migration during the colonial period and voluntary migration in post-colonial times. Post-independence, there were three major channels of migration, namely, low- and semi-skilled migration, mainly to the Middle East; migration of the highly skilled to developed countries, especially to the US; and cross-border student mobility to seek higher education and to remain in the host countries to become part of the Indian diaspora.

India initially regarded the diaspora from the perspective of 'brain drain' since the best educated from prestigious public higher education institutions were the first to migrate to developed countries. However, it now regards this phenomenon as an asset that is part of 'brain gain'. Highly skilled Indian diaspora have assumed positions of responsibility in the corporate world, in academia (including Nobel laureates) and in the political and social spheres in some of their host countries. They have also promoted technology transfer and invested in many sectors of the Indian economy.

India receives the highest share of remittances, which have increased substantially in the past decades, reflecting the high levels of income of skilled Indian diaspora. Such migration is dominated by IT professionals that have contributed to the development of technology based economic sectors. The technological hubs in Bangalore, Gurgaon and Hyderabad are visible examples of the diaspora's contributions.

Indian professionals' success at the global level has created a new image of India and enhanced trust in the country's intellectual abilities and professional competencies. The social and political roles played by the Indian diaspora have also helped to improve India's global image.

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