

are from low-income families, the law additionally stipulates that half of the reserved places must be for students from families with a per-capita income of less than 1.5 minimum wage. In addition, the law also stipulates that black, brown, and indigenous people, as well as people with disabilities, should be included in the quota in a proportion at least equal to that existing in the state where the university is located.

Unfortunately, the economic and political conditions of Brazil may prevent this process of expansion of the public higher education sector from continuing further. Indeed, the opposite may occur, as indicated by recent economic measures, such as the freezing of expenses incurred by the federal government for a period of 20 years. Furthermore, official discourses and the media are claiming again that public universities spend a lot, are expensive, and, therefore, that a country like Brazil cannot afford them. Public resources are not seen as investments to build a sovereign country, able to produce solutions for the problems faced by the different regions. This is an extremely delicate moment, because prospects are pointing to stagnation or the continuation of low-quality massification, which will bring little benefit to the socioeconomic development of the country.■

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Student Mobility and Employability: The Ethiopian Experience

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Conversations are currently abuzz with concerns about employability, as institutional, national, regional, and international organizations frantically gear up to respond to the ominous realities of youth bulge, “mass” enrollment, and graduate unemployment. Everywhere, the explosive growth of the number of graduates is resulting in massive challenges, with implications for their academic preparation.

For those who can afford or get the opportunity to do so, studying in another country is perceived as a mechanism to improve one’s employability. This has become one of the major pull factors in student mobility. In addition to its positive impact on academic development, international study offers enhanced opportunities for employability, providing a variety of advantages, including linguistic improvement, personal development, cultural experience, global awareness, and marketable skills.

While student mobility has received much attention as a dimension of internationalization, studies related to the link between internationalization and employability, particularly on the perceptions and expectations of international students, remain inconclusive. This is specifically true in the context of Africa. This article reports the findings of a larger study conducted on international students from Ethiopia to gauge their views on the impact of their training on employability.

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Despite the lack of reliable statistical data on the subject, thousands of Ethiopian students are believed to be studying outside the country. Mobility through government scholarships, or arranged with the help of family or individually appears to be on the rise. Yet, there is little information on mobility patterns, purpose, and possible plans.

In addition to featuring their educational profiles, the study aimed at exploring the perspectives of Ethiopian students on the link between study abroad and employability by examining such factors as motivations for studying abroad, employability attributes and their mastery, and students’ plans after graduation.

PARTICIPANTS’ PROFILES AND MAIN OBSERVATIONS

Out of 124 international students contacted for the study, just over 50 percent responded to the questionnaire administered online; six participants volunteered for a Skype interview. The majority of the students, 80 percent, were between 18 and 29 years old. Only 11 percent were older than 30, and 59 percent were women. In terms of educational background, 88 percent had completed their secondary education in Ethiopia, while the remaining 8 percent had attended high school elsewhere in Africa; 4 percent studied outside the continent. Fifty seven percent of the students had attended private high schools; 21.5 percent, international community schools; and 16.9 percent had graduated from public and religious schools.

At the time of this study, the students were attending 39 postsecondary institutions on four continents: North America (50.8 percent), Asia (21.5 percent), Europe (18.5 percent), and other parts of Africa (9.2 percent). The main strategies the students used to select their respective host universities

included their own reading, sources on institutional rankings, followed by university websites and prospectuses. The influence of family, education agents, and friends appeared to be limited, indicating the direct and active engagement of the students in choosing their institutional destination.

Notwithstanding the impressive list of institutions that students were attending—including Ivy League universities—only a fraction of them paid for their studies: 72.3 percent were on full scholarships while 10.8 percent were on partial scholarships; 6.2 percent were supported by family. Less than 2 percent paid for their studies themselves.

Employment stands out as an overriding motivation for studying abroad, strongly suggesting a possible link between training and perceived future outcome. Students believed that their studies abroad would give them a competitive advantage by exposing them to a rich variety of skills and opportunities, as demonstrated by their choice of universities and study programs. In identifying attributes and

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skills considered critical for employability, students highlighted willingness to question one's own and others' ideas, ability to clearly express one's opinion, ability to write and speak in a foreign language, ability to rapidly acquire new knowledge, and ability to perform under pressure. Students appeared to be overwhelmingly confident in their degree of preparation for the labor market—particularly in their ability to use time efficiently, work productively with others, and master their field of study. The only areas where respondents showed limited confidence were knowledge/understanding of cultural and societal differences and ability to write and speak in a foreign language. Students also highlighted peculiar features of studying at foreign universities that provide them with special advantages. These included low student–faculty ratio, committed faculty, system of accountability, attention to skills-based training, and continuous assessment, which are ostensibly lacking in Ethiopia.

In terms of plans after graduation, this study shows the students' overwhelming interest in returning home. Given the strong evidence of poor return rate and widespread brain drain of Ethiopian students, this observation deserves further study and analysis. In a similar vein, the students also exhibited strong interest in contributing to the coun-

try's development after graduation, though this was tempered by a general lack of awareness regarding skills demand back home. This is due to the absence of information sharing mechanisms between students, the government, and potential employers in the Ethiopian context.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the connection between internationalization and employability through an exploration of factors such as motivations for studying abroad and the identification of key skills and attributes considered critical for employability—based on the opinions of international students from Ethiopia. The awareness of Ethiopian international students regarding the advantages of studying abroad—as critical in enhancing their employability opportunities—is evident and demonstrated by their selection of host universities and study programs, expected to provide competitive advantages upon graduation. The types of attributes and skills acquired, as well as the quality of the learning experience, were identified as key features for selecting foreign institutions. This may hold some implications for local institutions in terms of how curricula and their delivery can be structured.

Further, the lack of knowledge and information on Ethiopian students abroad justifies the need for systematic documentation and analysis supporting human capital planning and deployment—for government, businesses, NGOs, and think tanks. Such efforts would provide an opportunity to tap into the huge potential of the Ethiopian intelligentsia outside the borders of the country. This would also enable an in-depth insight into aspects of internationalization and study abroad. ■

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Quality Assurance in Ghana: Accomplishments and Challenges

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