directed specifically toward supporting infrastructure development and research capacity in universities. Examples are the Ghana Education Trust Fund and Nigeria’s Education Tax Fund.

Remuneration and Benefits
Dissatisfaction with salaries is a key factor undermining the commitment of academics to their institutions and careers and, consequently, their decision or intent to leave. Some institutions offer various allowances that supplement staff members’ base salaries. Other creative ways of rewarding academic staff include salary “top-ups,” which come from income generated through students enrolled in fee-paying programs. While highly commendable, these efforts should not be seen as a substitute for providing academics with “livable” salaries.

While salaries feature prominently in responses, staff are clearly willing to subordinate higher salaries to very good benefit packages that will enable them to live relatively comfortably during their working lives as well as after retirement. They, therefore, put a high premium on good health care coverage, car and housing loan schemes, support for children’s education, and a reasonable pension. The idea of merit pay and market supplements for academics has met with a lot of controversy and resistance in various universities around the world. Because of the politically charged reaction that they evoke, all of the case study universities shy away from them, certainly in explicit ways.

Dissatisfaction with salaries is a key factor undermining the commitment of academics to their institutions and careers and, consequently, their decision or intent to leave.

Conclusion
The situation described above is not peculiar to African universities, but has resonance, albeit at different degrees of resolution, across tertiary educational institutions around the world. African universities should take the initiative in addressing some of the problems identified above, which are within their ability to solve. These include decentralizing authority, promoting communication among different groups, fostering transparency in decision making, and rewarding excellence. They must adopt creative ideas to mobilize resources from the public and private sectors, as well as international partners, to enhance their core mandate. However, the responsibility for revitalizing higher education, in general, and promoting recruitment and retention, in particular, does not lie exclusively with universities. African governments have an obligation to support these institutions with the investment needed to shore up their human resources and other capacities—so do the private sector and the international community, because they all stand to gain from a solid research infrastructure and an adequate complement of excellent teachers and researchers within in African institutions of higher education.

Beyond Brain Drain: Possibilities and Challenges of Remitting Migrant Taxes

Damtew Teferra

Damtew Teferra is assistant research professor and founding editor-in-chief of the Journal of Higher Education in Africa at the Center for International Higher Education, Campion Hall, Boston College, Chestnut Hill MA 02467, USA. E-mail: teferra@bc.edu.

African migrants around the world contribute to economic, social, political, and educational development of their home countries, albeit largely in an unorganized manner. Currently, both the migrant communities and their respective home governments—which largely failed to contain their massive flow—are making efforts to maximize their impact. Governments of host countries, however, are yet to play a visible role in mobilizing the resources of migrant communities for the socioeconomic development of host countries. This article explores a new frontier to help revitalize higher education in Africa by proposing the channeling of a certain portion of taxes paid by migrants to their home countries.

Channeling Migrant Taxes
Numerous well-thought-out and poorly conceived initiatives have been taken to address the challenges of excessive flow of high-level experts—widely known as brain drain. While the effort to stem the tide of expert migrants continues, albeit with limited success, the interest to tap their resources is gathering momentum. Some countries, especially in Asia, are doing a good job of tapping and channeling the financial, technical, and intellectual resources of their migrant communities for the development of their universities and research institutions.

In a large number of countries, especially in Africa, a more coordinated and efficient way of tapping resources is woefully lacking. And yet, most African intellectual migrants in the North, who are graduates of public institutions at home, are keen to give back to their communities and play an important role in the socioeconomic development of their native countries.

Mobilization of resources from diverse sources is central to maintain the growing needs of higher education development. African institutions, which face chronic financial problems, are currently grappling with a variety of resource mobilization mechanisms. It should be cautioned that exploring the mobilization of diverse “nonpublic” resources should never be con-
strued as either shifting or diminishing the responsibility of
governments as the sole providers for the higher education
sector. To reiterate, it must be unambiguously clear that gov-
ernment support to the higher education sector is critical and
should never be diminished.

Massive brain drain has posed serious challenges to African
socioeconomic development in general and higher education
in particular. Virtually all views on brain drain dwell on the
magnitude of the problem with limited perspectives on how to
contain it. It has always been the case that the burden of
addressing the challenge of brain drain has fallen on the losing
countries.

Channeling to their home countries a certain portion of
taxes already being paid by migrants, for the explicit purpose of
higher education and research development, is a new frontier.
This uncharted territory is, of course, predicated on the politi-
cal goodwill of host governments.

Channeling tax monies of migrants, if implemented, has a
tremendous potential benefit for many African universities.
This proposal advocates the channeling to home countries (a
percentage of) the host-country tax money *already* being paid
by migrants.

**Relevant Precedence?**
The success of this initiative depends heavily on a strong polit-
ical will and a sympathetic leadership. A major lesson can be
drawn from a relevant initiative undertaken recently by France.
In a laudable measure, which has around 70 supporters,
France is imposing taxes on regional and international flights
that will be channeled directly to international development
aid. This became a reality, despite some resistance, due to
strong backing of the top leadership in government.
Thus similar initiatives, as “ground breaking” as the one pro-
posed here, could succeed if they have the full backing of those
in power.

**The Actions**
What, therefore, are the underlying measures that need to be
taken to implement this idea? Migrants need to actively lobby
their host governments to participate in such an initiative.
Their role in pushing the agenda, as taxpayers and members of
the host communities, is critical. The role of organizations in
host countries—such as the Africa-America Institute,
TransAfrica Forum, and the UK-based African Foundation for
Development—is paramount.

As potent internal forces, migrant communities need to
inspire their host governments and their legislatures. They
also need to publicize the idea through major public and aca-
ademic media outlets. Working hand-in-hand with respective
host governments, regional bodies, and home governments,
the migrant communities can play a catalytic role in promoting
the agenda from within and build constituency around it.

Home-country governments should work closely with their
migrant communities on many fronts. They should put in
place conducive policies to intensify the contributions of their
migrants. Dual citizenship, for example, is the major one
being considered in some African countries.

Regional and international organizations could also play an
important role to help realize this initiative. Organizations
such as the African Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority
on Development, and the United Nations Economic
Commission for Africa need to lobby, negotiate, and create
awareness in mobilizing resources of migrant communities
for development.

**The Concerns**
Countries that have been draining talent and skills on a mas-
Sive scale will find redirecting migrant resources very attrac-
tive. It should, however, be cautioned that migrant communi-
ties themselves may resist such arrangements for fear of pos-
sible conflict with their own interests, employability, or sta-
tus—directly or indirectly.

It is possible that some nationals may worry that employ-
ers—be it government or business—might discriminate
against them, when and if they realize that their tax money
would not be flowing to the national treasury. It is conceivable
that some critical entities in host countries may thwart the ini-
tiative by, among other means, overblowing or even misrepre-
senting the initiative and causing some resistance from the
migrants themselves.

**The Issues**
Such new ideas and proposals raise many questions. How sig-
nificant is the migrant community (from potential beneficiary
nations) to warrant such a policy initiative? What is the nature
of political will in respective host countries to push such an
agenda forward? Who might be potential political power bro-
kers to help realize this concept? What existing forms of
employment, tax, and other issues may pose a hurdle or foster
the initiative? How should the matrix of the tax remittance be
developed for the diverse nations from which migrants origi-
nate? What other forms of existing tax incentives need to be
activated? Who should manage, govern, and oversee the funds
and resources that may be generated? Who should monitor the
flow of funds for their intended objectives? How should the
funds be channeled: through existing or new forms of organi-
zations? Which guarantees should be put in place to safeguard
the resources from possible embezzlement and mismanage-
Cambodian Higher Education—Growing Pains

David Ford

David Ford advises curriculum development in the Chemistry Department at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. E-mail: dford@online.com.kh.

Cambodian higher education has recently been described by different experts in education as “vibrant and lively,” “a cause for concern,” “plagued with difficulties,” and “in a ferment of reform.” Like the six blind scientists describing an elephant, the truth is probably that all are accurate. It just depends on which parts of the sector you are describing and your point of view.

The private sector in general is certainly experiencing “lively” growth, diversification, and expansion to provincial centers, while the government institutions are certainly “plagued with difficulties” such as strangulation by government control and increasing politicization. The quality of many institutions throughout the sector is still “cause for concern,” considering the high unemployment among graduates and the fact that there are still some “universities” that occupy only a single building. But recent moves by the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) are stirring up a “ferment of reform” throughout the sector.

Cambodian higher education is still in a phase of rapid, largely unregulated, expansion with an estimated 60,000 students in just over 50 institutions, of which 80 percent are private. Most growth is in the private sector. Until recently, almost all higher education institutions were located in the capital Phnom Penh, but increasing competition and huge unmet demand have resulted in rapid expansion of the private sector into provincial centers. Competition has resulted in a lowering of fees and also at least one bankruptcy. An apparent reluctance to apply the regulations outlined in the law for establishment of universities has meant that a number of these institutions are extremely weak, as indicated by unemployment data. Accurate figures are notoriously difficult to obtain in Cambodia, but estimates at present put unemployment among graduates from public universities, one year after graduating, at about 30 percent and as high as 90 percent from the private universities, in spite of the relatively small proportion of students in higher education. Many graduates only get employment in fields unrelated to their study, indicating a mismatch between higher education provision and labor force needs.

Public institutions remain handicapped by centralized ministry control, underfunding, and the fundamental weakness—given that lecturers’ base salaries (US$75 per month) are still not liveable wages. But they are enrolling increasing numbers of students in courses for which fees are charged, to supplement teachers’ salaries and provide much-needed funds for capital works—blurring the distinction between public and private. In fact, all public institutions are expected to become quasi-government institutions, called public administrative institutions (PAI). But the expectations of greater transparency in governance and management that go with PAI status has led to some resistance to change.

An encouraging sign in the system is the recent activity of the ACC, which is charged with providing an accreditation process for higher education institutions in Cambodia. Formed in 2003, its position within the government, answerable to the Council of Ministers and not as an independent statutory body, was initially problematic—as was the selection of its members, chosen along party lines, and although highly qualified lacking the necessary experience. But with the help of some foreign technical assistance, the ACC has made some positive first steps. The terms “university” and “institute” have been defined, which caused some smaller institutions to change their names to “schools” or “centres.” Minimum standards for a foundation (first) year of broad liberal education have been defined and disseminated. External assessors have been recruited and are being trained by foreign experts from India and Australia. Credit transfer mechanisms have been established. Minimum standards for all higher education institutions are being defined, which will begin to provide a much-needed framework on which more orderly development can proceed.

Analysis

Opinions vary widely, perhaps as a result of the lack of accurate published information about higher education in Cambodia. Pessimists tend to see how far from international standards the present situation is, and the numerous obstacles in the way of ever achieving them. They tend to evaluate the present situation very poorly and give little recognition of the fact that reconstruction of higher education after the disastrous Pol Pot regime only began in 1980, and the oldest private institution is less than 10 years old. They see the increasing politicization of the sector, which threatens to undermine efforts to introduce a more rule-based regulatory environment. For example, recent