

CHANGING MIGRATION REALITIES: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Africa has often been seen as a place of mass displacement and migration, as a result of poverty, bad governance, job insecurities, and unemployment, amongst others. Consequently, Africa has recorded irregular migration of people, specifically from one African territory to the advanced countries, solely on the search for 'El Dorado'. However, in recent times, South Africa has witnessed an increasingly enrollment of international students, following the provided engagements, policies, educational access for both indigenes and international students. On the contrary, Nigeria seems not to be on the same train.

Purpose: This study sought to examine the changing migration realities of international students seeking new horizons in South African universities, with the interest of highlighting possible measures that would accelerate the potentialities of various African universities, using South Africa and Nigeria as a case study. Push and pull theory of migration was employed to further the trend, migration as a global phenomenon.

Methodology: The approach utilized in this study was to review and sourced for data from a few number of independent studies, from which the major objectives of the study were accomplished.

Discussion of Findings/Results: South Africa and Nigeria was considered as a case study. This paper identified various underlying factors that limit and prompt the movement of people across various milieus.

Recommendations: The study recommended collaboration and human capital development among African scholars and strongly argued for de-emphasis of existing curriculum and theories.

Keywords: African Universities, Conviviality Scholarship, Human Capital Development, Migration



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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The paper was aimed at examining the changing migration realities of international students, both intra and inter in Africa, using South Africa and Nigeria as a bone of contention. The paper proffered possible way forward to African universities and communities, in areas of methodologies, contents, environments, policies and so on. It is believed that, if the review of this paper is considered rightly, it could bring about a paradigm shift to African communities, attract both international students and donors and make Africa a place of satisfaction for all.

INTRODUCTION

Africa has often been defined as a place of mass displacement and migration, usually caused by poverty, violent conflicts, unemployment, and misuse of power, amongst others. Consequently, Africa has recorded irregular migration of people, specifically from one African territory to another, or to the extension, the advanced countries, solely on the search for 'El Dorado' – as conceived as a place of happiness or satisfaction. However, South Africa, amongst other African countries has witnessed an increasingly enrollment of international students, following her provided engagements, policies, educational access for both indigenes and international students. On the contrary, Nigeria seems to be on the decrease of enrollment rate in institutions of learning, rather concerned with issues of corruption, insurgencies and such like.

In an era where expanding global collaborations and transnational social networks are emerging, it would be agreed that the appeal for internationally educated professionals has dramatically increased in the last decades, and universities in the same manner are not left behind. Universities strive to create an enabling milieu, where creativity, innovation, adaptability and change are highly encouraged, for the purpose of meeting global and local demands, maintaining cultural identities, and possibly, attracting students from neighbouring (intra) and foreign (inter) countries. For instance, 1970s witnessed a great expansion in higher education enrollment across the world. Over 165 million students participated in higher education in 2009; a five-fold increase since 1970 and a three-fold increase since 1980 (Chiao-Ling & Kot, 2011). In addition to that, there have been recent news of cross-border higher education, characterized by movement of people (students, teachers, researchers, experts and consultants), programmes (courses, academic programmes), and providers (institutions, consortia and companies) from one border to another.

Increasingly, there have been records of students, academic staff, with the aim to pursue higher education or academic activities in another country, as a result of the policy put in place by the

World Trade Organization (WTO) – General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), in 1995, which included education as one of the 12 service sectors and recognized it as a tradable service. With due emphasis, South African higher education has suffered from academic and cultural boycotts as a result of the apartheid system that was in place before 1994 (Bjandari, Belyavina & Gutierrez, 2011). With the demise of apartheid in 1994 and the acceptability of globalization policies in South Africa, in the mid-1990s, the country became a destination of choice especially for African scholars and students who wanted to pursue their careers and further their studies. For instance, in 2008, South Africa emerged as the 8th popular destination for international students worldwide (Bjandari, Belyavina & Gutierrez, 2011). Similarly, South African hosted nearly 70,000 international students in 2011, and nearly 43,000 foreign students in 2014.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Pull and Push Theory of (Human) Migration

This study rightly considered the pull and push theory of migration, amongst various theories of human migration because of its utmost relevance to the subject matter at hand. For Ravenstein, the coiner of the term, the most elementary way of explaining international migration is by identifying 'push' and 'pull' factors (Wijitapure, 2017). Considering the foundation or the framework, international migration exists due to reasons that can incite an individual, student, professional to leave their territory for another country of origin (push factors), and on the other hand, reasons that draw such individual, student or professional to a particular destination country (pull factors). In other words, there exists two submissions, push and the other, pull. While 'push' can include factors as violent conflict, natural disasters, unemployment, possession of economic and cultural capital, dissatisfaction or family break up with one's own life and surroundings, 'pull' encompasses polar opposites of push factors as, security, employment, exciting or good standard of living. However, some pull factors are not in tandem with push factors. A sample can be seen in the context of geographical

proximity or the presence of family (or community) members in the destination country. It is noteworthy to bear in mind that, the concept of migration is far more complex, and this could encompass social, economic and historical contexts in which the process takes place.

The theory of push and pull theory of migration has been argued as never the same for everyone, as every individual is limited and delimited to their decisions. There are variations in gender, social class, age, ethnicity, physical ability and so on. It is quite necessary to establish that this theory could operate both on individual and structural level. At an individual level, push factors may consider a migrant who has lost their livelihood through drought or through redundancy; it may include the possession of capital needed for migration, and it may also include the subjective aspect(s) of the subject's character, that is, the character of the concerned person. For instance, the fact that one has the courage to leave their country of origin. However, it is quite different at a structural level, as this could include reasons ranging from institutional reforms, urban development, variations in national labour markets and the like. Pertinently, it is true that push and pull factors existing between regions and countries over time can be dynamic with respect to various factors. For instance, Nigerians, in recent times would prefer going outside their country for the purpose of academic degrees and activities. South Africans on the other hand, are enjoying the dividends of their input in human capital and resource, unlike the case of the former. Bringing to the fore, a student who has sufficient reasons for their migration in 2005 can totally have different perspectives or reasons for their migration in 2020. Presumably, this can be as a result of strengthened co-national networks, policy change, employment opportunities and change in government policies, amongst others.

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The main objectives of this study are to:

1. Discuss the changing international students' migration realities, using the case of South Africa and Nigeria.

2. Examine push and pull theory of migration and how it contributes to students' migration.
3. Identify possible factors for and against the movement of international students from one region or country to another.
4. Introduce conviviality scholarship and human capital development (HCD) as panacea to African universities.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' MIGRATION IN SOUTH AFRICA AND NIGERIA

It is quintessential to understand the concept of migration, bearing in mind variations of scholars over the concept of migration, specifically, education migration or international student migration. There are various concepts used interchangeably to mean education migration; some of these synonyms include international student migration, transnational education, internationalization, cross-border education, international education, international student mobility, international mobile student, student migrant, foreign student education or foreign student mobility (Umar, 2014). Knight (2003) submitted that, all these concepts are fundamentally the same and virtually all of them are addressing the same subject matter. Therefore, concepts as international student migration and education migration shall be employed interchangeably. For UNESCO (2011), international students are those human subjects who are presently enrolled in various educational programmes outside their country of origin. These ones could also be seen as those who undertake part or all of their higher education activities and experience in a country outside their country of origin (Project Atlas, 2004). Agreeing to the afore-stated definitions, one would agree that, international students are more responsible for some forms of documentation different from other foreign nationals, as asylums, refugee or citizen documentation, rather use or hold what could be termed as study permit and other necessary documentations.

The issue of international students being enrolled in various universities in the world is not a recent phenomenon, as the

issue of human migration has been an erstwhile and a subject matter in the world of academia. While some advanced or developed countries like the United States, the United Kingdom enjoy the dividends due to proper implementation of policies, many of the African countries seem striving hard to hit the nail on the head. With exception, South Africa as a developing country is known among the African countries that cater and have at her disposal many international students, though with many Africans than those from the outland. For Khumalo (2017), South to South migration is prevalent in Africa with a total estimate of 14.5 million migrant originating in the sub-Saharan Africa, within that estimate, about 10 million of those migrants moved within the region. Corroboratively, there has been a significant number of people moving from South African Developing Countries (SADC) to South Africa, from approximately 550 000 to 4 million between 1990 to 2000.

The attractiveness of South African universities as a study destination for African students in recent times can be attributed to numerous factors, according to a survey by the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA), adopted by this study. Some of these factors include affordable higher education, short proximity for sub-Saharan Africa, great range of research opportunities, reasonable cost of living, recognized academic qualifications, average standard of living, admission requirements, and available courses of study, scholarship opportunities, minimal visa requirements, and possibly, country's culture. Similarly to that is the agreement with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) that reserves 5% of her education for students from member states. Having submitted the afore-mentioned points, it is pertinent to note that South Africa is faced with few contending problems, such as the issue of well publicized skills gap, diversity, Xenophobia attacks, amongst all, that limit the rate of international students' migration in the country.

Nigerian higher education on the other hand cannot be undermined due to her low immigration and emigration rates. Higher education in Nigeria, unlike South Africa suffers from various problems

confronting the sector, and these problems have been rightly classified into two categories, political and socio-economic factors (Umar, 2014). Firstly, the political factor is concerned with poor governance, unstable political administration, uninformed leadership, which has highly contributed to the underdevelopment of many Nigerian institutions, specifically educational institutions from the primary to the tertiary. Nigeria is yet to wake up and learn from her past and present experience of military and civilian regimes, setting no priority to the educational sector. The socio-economic concern of under-funding of education by successive regimes had adversely affected the sector in all its spheres. To buttress this a bit, hardly has any of the past and present governments in Nigeria met the budgetary allocation of twenty six (26) percent (%) of the UNESCO's recommendation to education, and consequently, this has brought about problems in the contemporary educational institutions. Other considered factors could include inadequate teaching and learning facilities, non-commitment by academics. Due to this foundational problem, many Nigerians and professionals with inherent skills, capacities and capabilities are compelled to travel outside their milieu for greener pastures (pull factors), and this has brought about higher records of students leaving their country due to the unfavourable push factors.

SEEKING A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

The inadequacy of African higher education could be traced to the period of colonialism. These were times when various colonial authorities in Africa embarked upon sending few people to their metropolises for acquisition of knowledge, neglecting the establishment of higher education in African countries. The emphasis of this section is not to capitalize on the existing problem, but rather seek a paradigm shift on how African universities could become an 'El Dorado' for all and sundry. This paper thus seeks the introduction of conviviality scholarship, human capital development and the like for the posterity of African community.

Conviviality originally means 'the art and practice of living together'. It is best

synonymous to the Spanish term '*convivencia*'. To its extension, conviviality scholarship preaches incompleteness (never as a ploy to becoming complete, rather open-ended and open-minded and efficacious in our relationships, sociality and reality of relation) among various groups, individuals and societies. It is that attainable state that discourages a single version of one's life, in a world where many possibilities exist, but encourages social cultivation through practice, performance and experience, specifically in research, teachings, methodologies, lifestyles amongst others. In this regard, it is demanded of African countries to remain united and stand their ground on the vision and mission of promoting multi- and transdisciplinary research, informed by and relevant to the experience of Africans.

Similarly, is the appreciation of African cultures and values, deconstruction of conventional theories, methodologies, and research, without totally neglecting, but reaching out to a balanced and all-embracing curriculum that accommodates each and every one, without leaving anyone behind. Nyamjoh (2019) argues that if consistent and systematic, such deconstruction of existing concepts, rules of engagement, procedures and processes of scholarship would promote among African universities, the research networks funded, and forge awareness of the risks of intellectual *bandwagonism* that result from Africans unquestioningly participating in research and debates on themes already determined and conceptualized by others outside their cultural, political, historical, social and geographical contexts. Senayon (2010, 2019) once argued that, it is impossible to adopt a totalist criticism of globalization by putting all the blame on the acceleration of western imperialism, but rather advocated for the abstractions of time and place, and the utilization as resources for the apprehension of the present. He further argued for the relevance of localization amidst globalization, and stressed in one of his guest lectures in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan on the importance of localization before globalization. Ultimately, there is a dire need for African researchers and scholars to be conscious of the hierarchies and power relations at play, at

both the micro and macros levels of being and becoming, and further seek innovation for better appreciation in the global community.

The formation and relevance of human capital on economic growth could be described as the crux of aid by international agencies and developed countries. Literature from developed countries reveals that human capital effectively contributes to any developmental process. Equally, OECD (2014) has defined human capital to mean the skills, knowledge, competencies and other attributes found in humans during their life, and equally used for the production of goods, services and ideas. This includes both individual and group human capital – these are skills and abilities possessed by each individual and group, and in returns, human capital economy, which will be determined by national educational standards. For the emphasis, Nigeria, amongst other African countries is immensely endowed both in natural and human resources. Going by the recent trend, Nigeria was announced as one with the biggest economy in Africa, but the state of such elation without a quantifiable result seems to be a joke to her citizenry. Hence, high level of human capital development holds the key to African's socioeconomic development, as argued in the course of this review. In the same manner, human capital development remains one of the greatest catalysts for a sustainable development and improvement of the standard of living of the population. In essence, this paper calls for the priority of human capital development for the essential growth of Africa.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative to bear in mind that the subject of international student migration or education migration has duo benefits – that is, both to the sending and receiving parties involved. For Gribble (2008) and Umar (2014), the contributions that foreign students make to the host nation economies, both culturally and financially, have encouraged and precipitated major players to implement further initiatives to facilitate the arrival and integration of overseas' students, including substantial amendments to

immigration, visa policies and procedures. For the emphasis, most of the students reaching out for advancement or progression in other advanced countries after earning their degrees or academic activities rarely consider returning to their former country. This could be linked to different factors, which this review leaves open for further studies. However, as observed, while some feel the lacuna in their origin is yet to be filled, others feel interested in working in a society that works. On the other hand, the potential benefits for the international students can be linked to acquisition of right skills, improved standard of living, job security, and others.

This review has examined the realities of international students' migration, using South Africa and Nigeria as bone of contention. It concludes that, Africa can only reach out to an improved standard of living, or be seen as a place of priority in the global space if and only if, there are emphases on human capital development, African culture, curriculum and theories, and conviviality scholarship among researchers, scholars in various African countries.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Having signaled and examined some factors that could limit African universities and communities from achieving their acme, it will be expedient of this research to highlight some recommendations in the same manner.

This paper argues for collaboration among various scholars and researchers in the academia. It also advocates for an effective relationship between the ivory tower and the outside community.

1. It is believed that African universities can be open-ended, open-minded and efficacious in relationships, sociality and reality of relations, especially among various groups, individuals and societies.
2. There is a dire need for social cultivation in practice, performance and experience, considering cogent areas like research, teachings, theories, methodologies and so on.
3. As argued, the mini review frowns on a single version of one's life, in a

world where many possibilities exist – knowledge economies.

4. Promotion of multi- and transdisciplinary research are of critical interest to the findings of this mini-review.
5. There must be appreciation of African cultures and values, deconstruction of conventional theories, methodologies and research, without totally neglecting, but reaching out to a balanced and all-embracing curriculum.
6. The foci of every research in African universities must be centered on themes and research interests that are critical to our cultural, political, historical, social and geographical contexts. It was in this vein that Senayon (2010) argued that, Africans must learn to see the relevance of localization before globalization. Hence, African universities and communities must firstly strive to produce and create contents that are of necessity to their milieu before any external relevance to the outside world.
7. The interests and themes of researchers, scholars and academics in African universities in contemporary times must be centered on creativity and innovation. Hence, African researchers and scholars must be conscious of the hierarchies and power relations at play, at both the micro and macro levels of being and becoming, and further seek innovation for better appreciation in the global community.
8. Human capital development (HCD) effectively contributes to any developmental process. In the same vein, Africa among other continents must begin to see how the inherent natural and human resources could be of great asset to both local and global relevance.
9. If HCD is well harnessed as established in the preceding recommendation, there could be a positive record in Africa's socioeconomic development. And also, harnessing this could bring about a sustainable development

and improvement in the standard of living of the people.

Conflicts of Interest:

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Disclaimer Statement

The work is not part of any thesis submitted to a college, institute or university for award of any certificate or degree. The mini-review was carried out by the author from the inception to the end.

Notes on Author

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