



Introduction

Reclaiming the African Diaspora to Support African Higher Education

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This special issue (SI) of the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa (JHEA)*, entitled 'Scholars on the Move: Reclaiming the African Diaspora to Support African Higher Education', is a product of the programme – coordinated by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The programme supports African diaspora academics to travel to universities in Africa for specific durations to undertake academic interventions related to enhancing capacities in teaching and research of the social sciences and humanities. It is hoped that this initial support will result to enduring relationships and networks of academic collaboration between universities in Africa and African academics in the diaspora for mutual benefits. The CODESRIA programme was launched in a workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2015. Some of the articles in this SI arose from presentations at the launch workshop while others have resulted from interventions implemented by some of the diaspora academics supported under the programme.

The aim of this SI is to stimulate debate on how to develop a positive culture of collaboration between African diaspora academics and African universities, beyond the usual criticism of the implications of the brain drain. Without neglecting the implications of the brain drain, the SI. Literature on brain drain, its impacts and the strategies that have been adopted both by receiving and losing countries is extensive. Concepts such as 'brain gain' and 'brain circulation' are understood as ways to address a country's loss of highly skilled human capital (Gaillard and Gaillard 1997; Saxenian 2005 a, b; Schiff 2006).

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There is also extensive literature on strategies adopted by countries such as India and China to curb and increase brain drain through promoting transnational circulation and reverse/returnee migration (Dai and Liu 2009; Saxenian 2002, 2005a, b; Bajpai and Dasgupta 2004). Chinese- and Indian-born engineers are accelerating the development of information technology industries in their home countries, initially by tapping low-cost skills in their respective countries, and over time by contributing to highly localised processes of entrepreneurial experimentation and upgrading, while maintaining close ties with technology and markets in Silicon Valley in the USA. However, these successful models also raise questions about the broader relevance of brain circulation outside of several key countries, especially, within the global South. The articles in this SI urge for alternative policies to tap into the African academic diaspora and the creation of an intellectual space where students, academics, theorists, researchers and practitioners of education, amongst others, can come together to engage on the experiences and potential roles of the African diaspora in strengthening African universities. The authors are scholars of African descent in the diaspora as well as academics based in African universities, but with frequent interaction with those academics in the diaspora. They share their theoretical, empirical and personal experiences of collaboration from different universities in Africa and in the diaspora.

Promoting mutual collaboration between African universities and African academics in the diaspora emerged just over the last three decades (Zezeza 2013). The initial catalyst for this interest was the need for fast expansion of African universities in the early 1990s as a response to the externally imposed contraction that had been imposed by the implementation of structural adjustment policies, and the subsequent crisis of quality that unplanned expansion occasioned. A strong argument for African academic diaspora's contribution to go beyond remittances has been advanced (African Union 2011; Bodomo 2013; Espinosa 2016; Qayyum, Din and Haider 2014; Newland and Patrick 2004), boosting bilateral trade, facilitating foreign direct investment (Plaza and Ratha 2011), reducing poverty (Newland and Patrick 2004) and promoting civil rights (Adams 2013).

Additionally, there is acknowledgement that the key to Africa's development lies in knowledge production besides natural resources (Cloete, Maassen and Bailey 2015; Mkandawire 2011). The African academic diaspora is seen as critical to this knowledge production development alternative as they constitute skilled capital that can be tapped into producing relevant knowledge for the continent's development in the medium term, while at the

same time contributing to producing individuals and the networks to sustain the process in the long-term (Ogachi 2015; Zeleza 2013). However, there is no consensus in the literature regarding who should be considered part of the African academic diaspora and who should be targeted for diaspora engagement (Bakewell 2009, 2011).

In this special issue (SI) of the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, the African academic diaspora primarily refers to academics and intellectuals who are African-born and of African descent, working in foreign (mostly Western) research institutes and higher education institutions. Our definition includes both those who temporarily live outside of their homeland as well as those who have already acquired citizenship of their country of residence (host country) but remain strongly attached to their country of origin. The African Union (AU) Commission considers the Diaspora as Africa's sixth region and defines the African diaspora as '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'.¹ In 2012, the estimated number of Africans living in the diaspora, by region, was as follows: North America, 39.16 million; Latin America, 112.65 million; Caribbean, 13.56 million; and Europe, 3.51 million. China, India, Israel, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Taiwan are examples of countries that have relied on the expertise of their academics living in the diaspora. This is contrary to conclusions drawn in some early studies on immigration policy that migrants sever ties with their country of origin (Choi 2003; Plaza and Ratha 2011; Van Cour, Gerybadze and Pyka 2017; Zhu 2007; Kalicki 2009).

A number of African governments are also reaching out to the African academic diaspora (Plaza and Ratha 2011) in terms of conceptualizing and seeking solutions to their development needs. Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa, for example, have launched plans to incorporate their diaspora communities as partners in development projects (AHEAD 2007; African Development Bank 2011; Pitamber, Wahome and Afele 2011; Woldetensae 2007).

Since strengthening relations between African academics in the diaspora and African universities may impact on African higher education, it is imperative to study and better comprehend the African academic diaspora, the nature of its collaborations with African-based academics and the implications for tertiary education on the continent.

Organisation of the Special Issue

The papers in this SI highlight the positive impacts that can result from collaborations between African-based scholars and the African academic diaspora.

Patrício V. Langa and Nelson Zavale's paper presents a historical overview of African diaspora academics. Unpacking the concepts 'diaspora' and 'academic freedom', they make a case on how the diaspora serves as a safe haven that allows African diaspora academics to perform their 'extramural' activities in Africa. The authors argue that the African academic diaspora's engagement in political and social affairs is vital to protect African societies against biased knowledge, powerful ideologies and dogmas. They conclude by theorising that the African academic diaspora's tendency to engage in 'extramural' academic freedom is influenced by academics' disciplinary background, the political and economic situation of the country of origin, the reasons for migrating (whether politically or economically motivated), and by other variables such as the duration of exile, the nature of the host country and institutional affiliation.

Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga discusses the kind of education suitable to drive Africa's development. His paper highlights the defects of the education currently offered in Africa and suggests the kinds of educational ingredients and tools needed to facilitate Africa's development. Concentrating on engineering education and its relationship to entrepreneurial education, vocational education, and the social sciences and humanities, Mavhunga advocates for an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and anticipative curriculum that emphasises research, problematising and problem-solving. He discusses this under five sections: research capacity; funding; partnership with the informal sector; an entrepreneurial university; and an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and anticipative university.

Patrício Langa explores multiple academic appointments as one way to curb the effects of brain drain. He argues that although the concepts of 'brain gain' and 'brain circulation' already allude to forms of academic mobility and exchange that address the effects of the brain drain, multiple academic appointments have not been extensively explored and examined as an effective way to reverse the effects of the brain drain. Langa proposes the concept of translocal brain-sharing as a new form of international academic exchange and engagement, which might or might not include physical mobility (circulation) from one geographical location to another, allowing for an exchange and sharing of knowledge. He concludes by arguing that multiple academic appointments can be an enabling factor in translocal brain-sharing, particularly in the age of the internet and digital technology, since they broaden the scope

and possibilities for a win-win academic exchange between higher education institutions in developed and developing countries.

John Kwame Boateng and Raymond Asare Tutu discuss the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in educational research collaboration and partnership. Specifically, their paper covers the nature of their own collaboration, the main collaboration stimuli, the anticipated costs and benefits of the collaboration, and the role ICT played in this endeavour. Drawing on their experience, they demonstrate how social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Skype, Google Hangouts and phone calls and SMS messages helped them to attain four milestones in their research collaboration: planning, revising and submitting a research proposal to CODESRIA; preparing for a methodology workshop organised by CODESRIA in Nairobi, Kenya, and incorporating suggested revisions prior to the workshop; a post-Nairobi methodology workshop preceding the network project launch in Accra, Ghana; and events after project kick-off.

Nelson Nkhoma highlights the importance of ethics in collaborations between African-based scholars and African academics living in the diaspora. He argues that the ethics of collaboration must be able to address truth and the normative venture of improving the production of knowledge projects aimed at the common good of humanity. Considering two major obstacles – the politics of identity and difference and the common view of ethics as power – that impact on collaboration, he proposes an African humanistic ethic as a solution to enable African scholars and those in the diaspora to deal with the problems facing African societies today. Nkhoma claims that although institutions that promote collaboration in Africa do exist, promoting effective collaboration among African-based scholars and the African academic diaspora requires establishing a new institution mandated for this purpose; he sees CODESRIA performing this role.

In his paper, Samuel Fongwa discusses the diaspora's diverse contribution to Africa's development, including remittances, the promotion of democratic values, and collaboration between diaspora-based and African-based academics. Focusing on the latter, he suggests that the quantity and quality of knowledge production in Africa can be enhanced through fostering this collaboration. He argues that although funding opportunities and research collaborations are on the rise, this hardly translates into a win-win situation for stakeholders in Africa. Drawing on his personal experience of research collaboration with the African academic diaspora, he highlights three caveats to maximise the gains of diaspora collaborations in knowledge production. He concludes that careful introspection is vital in ensuring a win-win relationship in diaspora collaborations.

Finally, in the Addendum, Patrick Swanzy and Pedro Uetela draw from the experience of four influential African scholars, experts in the domains of social sciences and humanities, engineering and education, to explore the range of motives that accounted for their emigration in the circles of the continental academy. Through exploring their reasons, the paper investigates the importance of the academic diaspora in terms of contributing to teaching and research in both the West and in Africa based on the premise that African diaspora scholars and African-based scholars are interdependent when it comes to empowering global science.

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