

Chapter 2

African Diaspora Academics: A Proposal for Internationalizing Higher Education and Reversing Africa’s “Brain-Drain”

Tibelius Amutuhair
Makerere University, Uganda

ABSTRACT

Internationalization of higher education is not new to Africa. It helped in the establishment of several African universities in the continent’s post-colonial period. In addition, thousands of African students had the opportunity to study in foreign universities through various exchange programs. However, internationalization has also led to African academics migrating into the diaspora in the West and other parts of the world, leading to the phenomenon of Africa’s brain drain. This chapter examined the negative consequences of the brain drain and advocates its reversal by suggesting that African diaspora academics can be mobilized to help expand capacities in African universities and education in totality. It urges African governments and university administrators to provide leadership in this regard, especially by offering sufficient incentives to African diaspora academics to help revitalize and strengthen the continent’s education sector.

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INTRODUCTION

The advent of globalization created a global village and an accompanying increase on the level of interdependence between countries in the mobility of goods, services and people. This measure of interdependence is associated with and facilitated by the availability and use of information and communication technologies across the globe (International Association of Universities, 2012). The higher education (HE) landscape has also been impacted by globalization to an extent that no higher education institution (HEI) acts independently of similar institutions worldwide. In this interconnected social milieu, various institutions find themselves in a global village where they exchange resources and information amongst themselves.

Also, the 1998 World Conference organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the theme, *Higher Education in the 21st Century: Vision and Action-2000*, prescribed the internationalization of higher education (IHE) to be incorporated within university missions and academic systems worldwide (Gacel-Avila, 2005). It is for this reason that higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide, especially universities, have incorporated an international dimension in the way they perform their functions. Consequently, this has impacted heavily on the operations of HE; its opportunities and challenges are experienced by all national HEIs and systems. Unfortunately, considering the nature of the African continent and her past history of colonialism, coupled with the present-day mismanagement of resources by various governments in the region, the challenges brought by internationalization and globalization have become enormous, intimidating and worse for her higher education institutions (Alemu, 2014).

Colonialism left a number of apparently indelible footprints on Africa. One of them is that the first HEIs were fashioned after those of the colonizers (Sehoole & de Wit, 2015). This encouraged the first African academics to be trained in European universities through exchange programs (Mohamedbhai, 2013). This was eased by the fact that the curricula and program structures of the degrees offered in the foreign universities were similar to those in their African counterparts. With such background, most universities in Africa still use foreign languages (especially European languages) for instruction. These are some of the factors that increased outward mobility of African academics into foreign HEIs (Zereza, 2004).

IHE facilitates migration and mobility of individuals around the world (Teichler, 2017). This form of internationalization led to the emergence of large communities of African academics in the diaspora and continues to facilitate their sustenance. Within such communities are academics whose positive contributions towards the

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