
The movement of african teachers and researchers

Controversies, practices and policies

Les circulations des enseignants et chercheurs africains. Controverses, pratiques et politiques

La circulación de los docentes e investigadores africanos. Controversias, prácticas y políticas

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- 1 This report aims to fill a gap in studies undertaken on academic mobility. Indeed, continued interest in the migration of African students to other regions of the world has evolved since most of the states on the continent gained international sovereignty. This work has highlighted the commitment of an educated élite towards the elaboration of economic, cultural and social emancipation policies in their countries of origin (Ndiaye, 1962; Dieng, 2011). This research has also made it possible to show the dynamics of change within this distinct sector of youth who are always in search of further education overseas, notably by highlighting: the development of sociological, demographic and economic characteristics of the profiles of which it is composed; its contrasting trajectories; the plural investments that are revealed both in the home countries and those of study; the difficulties some may face in promoting their diplomas, qualifications or skills; and the relationships of inequality that are experienced in the spheres where their studies are pursued, often university institutions in major European cities (Niane, 1992; Guimont, 1997; Renaudat, 1998; Amougou, 1998). More recently, new research has updated the multi-polar dynamics of African students' pursuit of overseas learning; destinations that have never been part of mainstream research, such as Arab countries or those of the former Soviet Union, are now sparking researchers' interest (Sall, 2009; Dia, 2014; Leclerc-Olive and Hily 2016; Touré, 2014; Yengo and Saint-Martin, 2017). Other researchers are questioning the new dynamics caused by movement between countries in the South, particularly in Africa, as a result of the development and changes in higher education over the last

decade including, amongst others: the renewal and expansion of the university map; the structuring of regional university institutions; the emergence and development of private academic institutions; and the implementation of partnerships with higher education institutions in the North operating internationally (Lebeau, 2006; Mazella, 2009; Eyebihi, 2011a; Sall, 2012; Gomis, 2013; Eyebihi and Mazella, 2014; Sy, 2015). Current developments are historic in the sense that they are opening up new opportunities that traverse organisations, student movement and socio-political situations/events on the continent, for example cases of mobilization, protests and armed struggles (Blum, 2016; Katsakioris, 2016; Van Walrawen, 2016).

- 2 This special report therefore not only looks at the African and/or Afro-diaspora (that is to say, Africans not living on the continent) graduates, whether or not they hold the nationality of the countries where they reside or between which they circulate, but at the same time considers the teachers and established or young researchers (graduate or post-graduate level academics). Why? Firstly, apart from some pioneering research, there is a distinct lack of research with regard to this sector of the population (Guèye, 2001; Dedieu, 2003; Teferra, 1997; Zeleza, 2013). Secondly, a global marketplace for scientific skills is now widely accepted; highly qualified people, for example “those who meet the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) Level 5 or above, corresponding to a postgraduate degree or higher” (Waast and Gaillard, 2018), are able to move between different teaching and research systems, between different continents, thanks to an increasing openness in the recruitment of international professionals in certain academic contexts both in Africa (this is the case for example in South Africa) or elsewhere (North America is the reference in this field). At the same time, when it comes to the field of science, the majority of these academics come from ‘non-hegemonic countries’ (Losego and Arvanitis, 2008), that is to say, they are overshadowed in the international division of scientific work and do not have the necessary financial instruments available to enable them to act on the major worldwide trends in knowledge production. However, these countries do have room to manoeuvre at the national level: they can act on their own knowledge production, choose their own subject matter and select appropriate working partners. In the case of Africa, the situation has just been objectified, based on a sole indicator, namely the number of scientific articles included in the Web of Science (WoS) database per annum. Waast and Gaillard claim that Africa only produces approximately 1.8% of the world’s scientific output (Waast and Gaillard, 2018).¹ This situation, which is linked to the low level of resources allocated by the majority of states to research - somewhere in the range of 0.2 to 0.3% of their national wealth - or in other words, ten times less than that of developed countries, is therefore not conducive to the reversal or even a questioning of the current order of things. However, it is accepted that the economic, political, social and cultural situation of contemporary Africa requires the production of information and knowledge not only to be understood, but also necessary for the construction of a different future: this is reflected in the expression ‘African Renaissance’ which has already had some success on the continent:

[...] if ‘African Renaissance’ is understood, summarily, as Africa’s potential, rooted in its own history and with strength in its historical memory, to adapt to the challenges of present times, to be part of the concert of civilizations and, ultimately, overcome underdevelopment, there is no doubt that it must revert back to being a knowledge-based society, which it was during many episodes of its regional history, from Ancient Egypt at the heart of the Songhai Empire, through to Bornu (Samb, 2010, p. 73).

- 3 Therefore, the natural question that arises from the awareness of such a situation is the following: In a context of the internationalisation of higher education and research, what kind of commitment to the continent do the Afro-diasporic, knowledge-producing, professionals have towards the global labour market, and consequently what is their contribution to the science and academic contexts in which they are positioned?
- 4 Three elements (a low level of interest from researchers regarding the movement of African teachers and researchers, the structuring of a global skills market and Africa's unique situation concerning knowledge combined with the need to build a future for Africa in the world,² and making science a truly global science, that is to say, mindful of the contributions of all to the intelligibility of all humanity), enable the construction of a combination that goes beyond the terms in which debates on the mobility of African teachers and/or researchers have often been raised. Indeed, since the early 1960s, there has been a discourse within the academic sphere implying that scientists moving away from the continent cause a huge loss for the individual countries: highly qualified staff, who would have been useful for their overall development, are lost; and this loss would have helped create the conditions for a continuous decline, jeopardising the living conditions in Africa a bit more every day. Furthermore, those who leave are considered fugitives, individuals having deserted their historical responsibilities (Adams, 1968; Traoré, 1973). In scientific literature this kind of situation has become known as 'brain drain', defined by the United Nations as: "[...] a one way movement, or an exodus, that only covered migratory flows, from developing to developed countries and only of benefit to industrialised countries" (United Nations, 1968). This stance is due to 'developmentalist ideology', which is enshrined in power relationships and diligences the nature of relations (development cooperation), as well as the direction of movement: the latter referring only to movements in a North-South direction, because the need for assistance, help or collaboration is only apparent this way round.
- 5 One of the main expectations of this intellectual positioning was the expectation and the requirement of those concerned to go back to square one: academics should remain at home or at least return should they go overseas to study, since countries will only be able to get themselves out of their state with, *a minima*, the mobilization of these highly qualified people.
- 6 This thesis experienced changes in the late '80s and early '90s thanks to the return of scientific diaspora to their countries. They became involved in teaching and research systems and in the structuring of networks linking foreign-based academics and researchers with their peers who had remained at home (Gaillard, Gaillard and Krishna, 2015).
- 7 The other major theme that structures exchanges and debates around academic mobility refers to the capacity of highly qualified people to fully invest in specialized professional communities and economic sectors in which they are involved whilst remaining linked to their country of origin through multiple initiatives both in their field of activity (here scientific), but also those related to political, religious, social and economic issues; in short, it concerns the *diaspora option*: it is accepted that science is globalized, but at the same time that researchers can feel connected to national communities and issues, regardless of where they practice their profession, whether in the North or South (Meyer, 2003; Guèye, 2011; Guèye, 2016). In this case, it would be important to focus on the effectiveness of new information and communication

technologies. Indeed, the states of departure could expect benefits, in terms of technology transfer, remittances, and the structuring of political networks. Thus countries would go from *brain drain* to *brain gain*, the outcome of which a specialist in migration studies calls *social remittance*: “*Social remittances are the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from host to sending-country communities*” (Levitt, 1999, pp. 926-949). However, this *diaspora option* is itself highly debated; it appears to be the bearer of a contradiction between two seemingly conflicting moorings (science on the one hand and origin or nationality on the other):

[...] The S & T diaspora option is based on a concept with an internal contradiction: the universality of science versus the expatriate scientists’ feeling of allegiance. Studies show that more the ‘scientific’ researchers feel, the more they tend to prefer contact with professional peers, rather than with colleagues who are fellow citizens (Gaillard, Gaillard and Krishna, 2015, p. 276).

- 8 The scientific potential of a diasporic network would be reduced if the latter were confined to national identity. That is to say, the science and technology (S & T) diaspora would have a poor impact on international scientific collaborations (Gaillard *et al.*, 2013 ; Gaillard, Gaillard and Arvanitis, 2013): major research projects and research partnership programmes, particularly with the countries of the South do not necessarily come from the diaspora.
- 9 Nevertheless, these two assumptions continually crop up against each other in various case studies, the departure of researchers from one country to another, from one region of the world to another, and still continue to be perceived, in certain aspects, as problematic. For example, there is evidence in India that the development of quality higher education locally is necessary but it will not be sufficient enough to avoid brain drain. The Indian Institute of Technology trained engineers in the 1980s who were forced to emigrate to find jobs in line with their qualifications (Gaillard, Gaillard and Krishna, 2015). One observation however, is now quite common: “the paradigm of movement succeeds that of the brain drain” (Meyer, 2012) for at least three reasons: Research is becoming more commonplace due to the emergence of an increasingly complex scientific space that is shaking up the hegemony of the Europe – North America – Japan triad and has led to a levelling of the playing field not only between countries but also between cities of the same nation; secondly, powerful national and international scientific and technological collaborations have developed – these activities are characterized by trans-nationalisation and privatisation (that is to say, they can result from the initiatives of researchers who are not necessarily mandated by their home institutions) – to the point that some have thought of developing ‘new invisible colleges’ in the form of large international networks (Wagner, 2008); Finally, powerful education and research systems are developing policies for both the return and attraction of high-level professionals – for example, the United States has been known for decades for its ability to cash in on these resources and since 2013 South Africa has been offering seven-year work permits and recruits locally-trained foreign students.
- 10 This special report provides new insights into these scientific controversies in light of new studies rooted in the Afro-diasporic universe. One of its main aspects is to highlight the commitment of African researchers and teachers located elsewhere in the continent’s academic and research institutions. Through various initiatives (co-design of research projects and programmes, co-publications, co-organisation of major scientific events, co-training, provision of information, etc.) researchers and teachers

contribute to local academic life. Colleagues based in Africa attest this fact and their stories constitute the bulk of the material analyzed and put into perspective by Abdoulaye Guèye. Through a study of four African countries (South Africa, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria), Abdoulaye Guèye shows that such interventions have effects on careers and local institutional dynamics and deeply questions the assertion of a net loss for the continent that would be caused by the involvement of African professionals in Western academic spheres. According to Abdoulaye Guèye, this commitment is based on an “ethical-ideological injunction” theorized and practiced by a section of African intelligentsia since colonial times. Therefore, it is far from being a case of intellectual and political desertion; mobilization is no longer defined by the need for a permanent or long-term presence on site.

- 11 However, Africans who move in different academic contexts are not a homogeneous group, a compact group with components of the same characteristics and driven by identical motives. On the contrary, the repertoires of action towards Africa reveal hierarchies, selection phenomena, and even inequalities little highlighted in well-known works. The article by Abdoulaye Guèye shows how, in many contexts and situations, one only provides for the rich; African academics in northern countries choose to collaborate with colleagues who remain on the continent who are high-ranking by academic standards, or who have certain administrative responsibilities. Such inequalities in the differential access to mobility are also apparent between disciplines. Hilaire Pokam explains that in Cameroon, it is scholars in the natural sciences sector who have a tendency to move more within the international scene than their colleagues in humanities and social sciences. Similarly, in the case of Algeria, analyzed by Tristan Leperlier, sociologists are more successful than literary scholars due to a greater involvement in international collaborative projects and a better working knowledge of English, which opens them up to more opportunities.
- 12 The movement of African teachers and researchers in the globalised academic context is shaking up well-established divisions. Lionel and Beverley Thaver provide interesting statistical information on the composition of African students, from elsewhere, in South Africa. Accounting for some 8% of the 50,000 teachers and researchers in the country in 2014, most of them, i.e. 3440/4214 (81.6%), were nationals of English-speaking African countries, whilst the proportion of Francophone scholars was 13% (554 professionals). Beyond statistics, it is the emergence of mobility hubs for African teachers and researchers, aside from the North, as well as the disintegration of linguistic and political spaces that should be highlighted here; a situation that extends Hilaire Pokam’s analysis to the teachers of Dschang University in Cameroon.
- 13 The conditions affecting the movement of African teachers and researchers can also be found in the struggles related to other specific academic fields which stem from a countries’ own unique background, as the observation of a Young Researchers Conference in African Studies (JCEA) by Hélène Quashie shows. In the field of African studies in France, and even in the institutions that train many African researchers and teachers, certain knowledge has become invisible or is simply ignored and overlooked by their French counterparts. Such practices are quite widespread, even at certain levels of academic maturity, as shown by studies of other fields, such as science and social studies (Science et Technologie dans la Société, or STS, in French): “the relative indifference of STS for the South in the ‘80s and ‘90s did not however, mean the absence of social sciences studies in the South”.

- 14 The movement of African researchers and teachers in other academic contexts may offer an opportunity for the renewal of the subjects, epistemologies and ideas that prevail within them. Such is the hypothesis made by Lionel and Beverley Thaver when they argue that the arrival of professionals (English, French or Portuguese) in South Africa from postcolonial training courses in Africa has a certain heuristic potential, given the necessary contextualisation of knowledge and the specific nature character of the latter. Openness is fertile ground for comparatism. H  l  ne Quashie shows the interest that young Africans and the Afro-diaspora have in participating in the organisation of the Third Edition of the Young Researchers Conference in African Studies. Open to non-conformist knowledge produced elsewhere, or outside dominant Africanist mainstream theories, they fight against conventional wisdom on the depiction of African studies, figures related to this subfield, the financing of scientific events for Africa, barriers to the mobility of African researchers, and prejudices related to the relationship of African academics with France. H  l  ne Quashie draws attention to one reality: "Obstacles are based on perceptions rather than facts".
- 15 Powerful transformations are taking place with regard to the organisation of university education and research systems: nationality is becoming less significant under the effect of large-scale economic activities: this has resulted in a gradual standardisation of governance practices, the definition of objectives and careers, meaning that the operating rules of the market – notably the principles of return on investment, profitability or performance – are increasingly permeating the academic world (Leclerc Olive, Scarfo Ghellab and Wagner, 2011). A type of global science market is emerging, dominated by the countries of the North; hence it is difficult not to mix the question of mobility with that of the dependence of African countries. Indeed, it is recognised that such movements do not destroy the asymmetry that sometimes governs the relationships between colleagues of the South and those of the North. Tristan Leperlier recalls that Algerians must go through France and French to gain access to the international, despite a policy of ‘Arabisation’ and openness to other language barriers, especially those of Europe. Hilaire Pokam shows that transnational scientific activity has a positive affect on the influence of Cameroonian universities and academics, enabling greater recognition in professional circles, thanks to a step up the academic ladder, as well as an improved social standing. The issue of dependency is not addressed in epistemic terms; for example, some Algerians prefer to focus on the political and national role of their research, rather than on visibility within the foreign scientific and political communities. They are not looking to develop global activities or develop scientific cooperation at any cost. It is therefore necessary to recognize that international relations vary and depend on institutional, political, generational, linguistic and gender factors. However, without falling into the trap of differentialism, the North’s predominance in defining global scientific subjects calls for the need for autonomous research and development both in terms of the organisation of research and teaching systems and the development of scientific agendas backed by internal realities but at the same time have a need to reflect the global concerns of professionals and institutions on the African continent: reflections can be made internationally and globally from all four corners of the world.
- 16 In light of the scientific controversies and major conclusions in this special report, it is possible to propose new lines of research to further the questioning around the movement of teachers and researchers, particularly from Africa.

- 17 It seems important to discuss the global reconfiguration of knowledge production both in terms of Africa and the world as a result of economic transformations within the continent, the increasing internationalization of education and research systems, and the expansion of academic mobility. Outside Europe and North America, other knowledge-building frameworks are emerging in Eastern Europe, Asia and South America, whilst in Africa of new generations of researchers and teachers are being trained according to so-called international professional principles. Additionally, top research centres, similar to those in South Africa, Tunisia or Egypt, and flourishing and more and more elaborate mechanisms of structuring networks of knowledge are emerging, such as the 'Ateliers de la pensée' workshops, the first edition of which was held in Dakar and in Saint-Louis, Senegal from 28-31 October 2016:
- [...] This therefore implies [...] resuming the theoretical initiative and taking a wider look at the realities of the African continent and future perspectives, from one specific standpoint: Africa (Mbembe and Sarr, 2017).
- 18 It is becoming important to take stock of the actual capacities as they exist on the ground and elsewhere such as: teaching and research institutions, statistics from committed professionals, research activities undertaken with public and private funding, professional organisations, publishing, promotional and communication material, new methods of professionalisation, openness and interest in other parts of the world, connections between on-site and diaspora-fuelled resources, research subjects and knowledge and know-how that unfurl.
- 19 In an expanding context of internationalization, taking into account academic mobility, particularly in Africa, makes it possible to question both education, research and emigration/immigration policies. States in the North seem to have taken a lead in this area by facilitating, to a certain extent, the movement of students and foreign researchers; apart from South Africa, few countries on the continent are aware of this issue. Indeed, training-teaching-research and migration policies should be considered together, as they have mutually reinforcing components. To train their academics and researchers, structure and strengthen their scientific communities, and to foster scientific exchanges between countries, and between educational and research institutions, African countries can afford to think boldly about which movements should be developed, not only between themselves, but between the continent and other regions of the world (in the North as in the South). This can be achieved through mobility incentives, facilitation mechanisms for training, research or even installation as witnessed by the various initiatives that have been made in South Africa.
- 20 The drive to gain a better grasp of this matter should tackle the overall question of financing for research and education and training systems, because the dynamics caused by academic mobility, for example the emergence of a diasporic African academic elite, are not sufficient for the development of a strictly comprehensive reflection or self-sufficient scientific practice in Africa. States allocate little resources to universities or to the rare institutions that are solely dedicated to research; one of the results of such a state of affairs is that the continent has suffered greatly from the effects caused by the amplification of what has been called 'Mode 2' of scientific production on Africa and its numerous diasporic connections (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994): that is to say that professional practice is guided by demand and opportunity; research is often undertaken within the framework of projects with combined funding, in particular from private donors. These are solid international collaborations backed by

substantial resources raised within the framework of large calls for proposals such as those of the European Union which funds research, first-hand, in several African countries; the results of this kind of research are often of immediate application because they respond to specific requests from actors established in other spheres. This special report therefore calls for the development of a research agenda around these questions.

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NOTES

1. However, it would appear to be pertinent to broaden the scope of quantification methods, for better contextualisation, by integrating other factors: Firstly, these counts only concern journals related to natural sciences in the WoS 'SCI-Extended' file and do not take into account social sciences and humanities journals; Secondly, difficulties in accessing certain journals that are closely linked to specific networks or even a total lack of contact with certain publishing houses, (meaning the interference of certain members with publishing authority in journals or at the head of certain collections: or relationships with such individuals may pave the way to publication). It is also useful to take into account the value given to a particular type of medium in a given space; for example, colleagues in French-speaking Africa mostly use books (as evidenced by numerous publications published by L'Harmattan, which has subsidiaries in several

countries). Theses have also not been included: the Association for Research on Education and Knowledge (ARES) published a study in 2015 that shows that the majority of 448 theses on education in southern countries supported by France between 1990 and 2013, were conducted by students from developing countries: 67% of these theses concerned Africa (ARES, 2015). In a work in progress, for a WoS publication, R. Arvanitis (personal communication) reports that African countries account for only 2.03% of the world's production.

2. Despite considerable work breaking down many Africanist works, images associated with Africa remain steadfast, because “[...] in many modern regimes of discourse and knowledge, the term ‘Africa’ evokes another world, almost automatically. [...] Because, at the end of the day, in their opinion, life in Africa is not a real life. [...] At the foundation of modern knowledge regimes, there is therefore an implication that humanity does not do not share a common world. With hardly anything in common, world politics (and knowledge policy on a global scale) can hardly be a policy of the like. It could only ever be a policy of difference” (Mbembe, 2017).

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