One World, Many Knowledges

Tar Halvorsen, Peter Vale

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The migration of African students to South Africa: motivations, integration and prospects for return

Gabriel Tati

I N T H I S C H A P T E R M Y F O C U S is on the migration of young people from West and Central Africa to South Africa, with particular emphasis on migration driven by the desire to access higher education and on migrants who self-finance their studies with a view to improving their prospects for future employment.

Throughout the chapter the term 'young' (or 'youth') refers to any person between the ages of 18 and 30 years. This is in line with the definition conventionally adopted, including by the United Nations. Therefore, such terms as 'young migrant', 'young-age migrant' and 'youth migration' are used interchangeably to refer to migrants who are, technically and in terms of the definition, between the ages stated. At the same time, this terminology appreciates that actual experiences of 'youth age' vary across space and time, and that being of 'young age' does not necessarily mean that the young people concerned are regarded as 'young' in particular contexts and situations, or see themselves as young, for that matter. On the subject of definitions, the term 'francophone Africa' refers to countries in sub-Saharan Africa that use French as an official language; that is, countries in West and Central Africa that were colonised by France and Belgium.

Why study educational migration among youth from West and Central Africa? For one thing, in recent years considerable numbers of young people have migrated from francophone sub-Saharan Africa in search of better quality higher education in South Africa. Further, student migration is an increasingly important phenomenon worldwide, although this has received scant attention from either policy-makers or researchers (Anthias 2006; Baas 2007; Balaz and Williams 2004; Castles and Miller 2003). South Africa,

along with many other comparatively 'rich' countries, is among the most popular and highly regarded study destinations, and this form of migration is likely to increase, given the deterioration or collapse of educational systems in many parts of francophone Africa and the restriction of traditional migratory gateways into Europe.

Students come to South Africa from different geographical regions, social trajectories and educational backgrounds. This chapter provides a critical assessment of some of the challenges of adaptation and adjustment that face students in South Africa in general, and in the country's higher education system in particular. The chapter is based on a combination of primary and secondary sources. The literature on student migration was used to build up a theoretical framework and a broader context for understanding student migration from francophone Africa to South Africa. A range of secondary statistical sources was used to probe patterns of foreign-student migration to South Africa as well as the most sought after academic institutions, fields, courses and provinces. The primary data source was a 2009 survey of 207 students from francophone Africa who had migrated to South Africa and were based in the Western Cape province (Tati 2010). Respondents completed the questionnaire via face-to-face interviews or in writing.

Some intersecting issues emerged. While some respondents expressed satisfaction with their experiences of study in South Africa, others expressed the opposite. On the positive side, many students found that the educational programmes offered were suitable for improving their prospects for future employment, and many considered it much easier to study successfully in South Africa than in their countries of origin. Yet, for some, there were hurdles on the path to success. Besides frequently mentioned problems related to language barriers and official documentation, some students considered the level of responsiveness to their specific problems from university authorities to be inadequate. Further, many academic institutions provide little space for foreign students to contribute to the transformation process or to become integral agents of change in the post-apartheid higher education system. Meanwhile, most of the students interviewed had to find ways of sponsoring their studies – usually through self-employment or taking jobs in exploitative working conditions. The research found that migrant students employ various strategies to avoid interrupting their studies or staying in the country illegally. Such strategies range from, for example, working casually to pay tuition fees, to trying to obtain refugee status, or even marrying someone who has citizenship or a residence permit.

The research went beyond student experiences, to gauge the extent to which their return to the home country was planned, after their studies were completed. It transpired that migration for study to South Africa often forms part of a project of staying longer for employment purposes. In this sense, migration might be seen as contributing to brain gain from the South African perspective, and to brain drain from that of the sending country. Skeldon (2005) states that, in most cases, students who migrate to developed countries stay and work in those countries as skilled professionals. However, other analysts challenge the ideas of brain gain and brain drain, arguing that student migration does not necessarily constitute a loss for the sending country. Asian countries, for example, provide telling examples of migrant students who have returned to their countries with skills and contributed significantly to the region's continued economic development.

Young people as migrant students have emerged as a 'newly' discovered social constituency in intra-African migration. But a similar trend is being observed around the globe (see, for example, Baas 2007; Balaz and Williams 2004; Shen 2007). From the perspective of the host country, specific forms of youth and educational migration tend to be discussed in terms that are disconnected from migrants' rights to education. In other words, these migrants tend to be referred to as 'international students', 'young asylum seekers' and 'foreign students', which blurs the actual *labour migration* element. This disconnection 'others' forms of youth migration, with some problematic consequences. For example, isolating the migration of young people from other forms of migration risks losing sight of the structural relations, and the ways in which migrant students as social actors engage with, resist or negotiate the structural relations embedded in the societal contexts where they live and interact with the locals – yet from an often-vulnerable position. While studying abroad may be seen as relatively positive and something to be encouraged, meeting the costs of study through self-employment or casual work in a host country may entail considerations and experiences for migrant students that are less benign.

As I argue in this chapter, these two forms of migration – educational and labour – are often connected. This is of interest because this issue has thus far received no explicit attention in the context of reduced levels of international assistance to African countries in the training of young people. In the past, African students were sent to Europe, especially to the former Soviet Union and other socialist republics, to obtain advanced tertiary education or specialised training. Since the end of the Cold War, however, this practice has almost disappeared. Rather, the migration of young people

to South Africa takes place in the context of drastic cuts in public spending on bursaries to study at home or abroad, and students involved in educational migration generally receive little or no support from their governments and instead cover most of their own costs.

The higher education system is now part of a global education industry. Issues of educational and labour migration, and brain drain versus brain gain, resonate at continental level, too, in the sense that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as an enabling continental institution, has as one of its main underlying principles the free movement of academia and related individuals. For these reasons, this particular form of migration is likely to increase, rather than decrease in years to come.[1]

A theoretical framework on youth migration

From a theoretical point of view, migration has traditionally been associated with younger age sets. The propensity to move from one administrative unit to another is believed to decline as age increases. An analysis of age patterns reveals that migrants are generally in the early years of their adult lives and research on migration generally corroborates the proposition that persons in their late teens, twenties, and early thirties are more migratory than their older counterparts. The interpretation is that the young are able to adapt more easily to new situations. Also, as the young are close to the beginning of their working lives they are envisaged as being more readily inclined to take advantage of new opportunities involving migration, while older people are apt to be constrained by a host of more permanent social and economic ties at their places of residence.

On the educational front, a considerable number of studies, while controlling for a wide range of socio-economic factors, support the proposition that migration correlates quite highly with education levels (see, for example, Shaw 1975). The rationale is simply that the higher an individual's level of educational attainment, the more likely it is that they will be aware of differential opportunities, amenities, and so on, to be had in other places. Further, migration to more *distant* destinations is highly correlated with *higher* levels of education, particularly university training. However, generalisation about the impact of various levels of educational attainment on migration behaviour is a different matter.

A microanalysis of the more subjective elements in the migration process and of individuals' motives for migration illuminates the link between educational aspiration and migration. Factors such as social status or family attachment have a direct bearing on an individual's receptivity to various

migration stimuli. In this regard there may be some theoretical justification for relating youth migration to the concept of an individual's subjective perception and evaluation of place of residence, and to broadly conceived motivations that may trigger the move (Simmons 1982; Waters 2006). The so-called 'push' and 'pull' factors that impact on decisions to migrate have been well documented in the literature (see, for example, UIS 2009). The frustrations of under-resourced universities at home and aspirations to pursue particular fields of study fit into the 'push' category. In the 'pull' category, choices of destination for students can be determined by reputable academic institutions and affordability of tuition (UIS 2009). South Africa as a major students' destination is likely to be in this category.

Three elements are worth considering in this regard. The first is an attitude of aspiration; a young person perceives and evaluates migration as an opportunity for realising ambitions and aspirations. Such an individual is typically already somewhat dislocated from primary and secondary groups in their area of residence. (The 'primary group' refers in most cases to the parental node or nuclei – biological or extended family at large – while the 'secondary group' includes the community or networks of persons with whom the individual is acquainted.) The second element to consider is that, in a state of dislocation, the youth may view migration as a solution to some of the limitations experienced at the place of origin. As a result, migration may be perceived and evaluated as the best alternative to factors such as unemployment or as a means to realise specific and limited objectives such as educational attainment. Therefore, and this is the third element, young people view migration as a means to contend with unique personal factors such as educational challenges.

As Taylor (cited in Shaw 1975) proposes, a motivational approach to migration among the youth suggests a conceptualisation of this event in relation to the degree of structural strain at the place of origin, and how the concerned individual perceives and evaluates elements of stress. Thus, we may assume that, at the level of the individual, there are stimuli for both short-term (education) and long-term (employment) aspirations, there is a feeling of dislocation (failure to achieve autonomy), there is the belief that conditions are better elsewhere, that migration is a feasible option, and that trigger factors spur the decision to migrate.

The move to a place outside one's country of origin may be prompted by considerations that, in migration studies, are generally associated with the concept of *place utility*. Young people may be prompted to move as a result of feeling deprived of educational facilities, employment opportunities

and so on. Once again, this comes as a result of subjective evaluations of utilities available at the individual's place of origin versus utilities available in alternative places of residence. At the same time, it cannot be assumed that individuals will automatically relocate to a place of higher utility. Rather, this depends on an individual's ability to adjust to the utility profile offered at the new place of residence, and their ability to cope with stress – or what is termed the 'strain threshold' (Simmons 1982).

Relocation to a place of higher utility also depends on the information available (and its perceived accuracy) regarding utilities to be had elsewhere. Therefore, an important aspect of place utility as a concept central to research on youth migration is the way in which young people *perceive* their existing environment versus the utilities to be had in distant environments other than their own. This aspect is, to a certain extent, tied up with individuals' needs, drives and abilities, which may be constrained within the space occupied at the time the move is being initiated. This space varies in accordance with the person's characteristics and developments in their environment.

To put this in the context of the research reported in this chapter, living conditions in many African countries create environments of considerable stress, and are thus as capable as other factors of generating motives for mobility. (From a research standpoint, it would be interesting to attempt to identify the actual strain threshold – the point at which a young person decides to relocate.) Research indicates that the decision to relocate will be a function not only of the availability of alternative options, but also of the individual's strain threshold (especially associated with actual job searches or the prospect of finding future employment) (Simmons 1982). Balac (2010), in his study of young Moroccans' emigration to Spain, shows that unemployment and vulnerability are dominant causes. It can be inferred that educational migration to distant locations among young people takes place when stresses in the place of origin, as experienced by the individual, cause the individual's strain threshold to be surpassed. At that point, what the existing social and physical environment can provide in relation to a person's wants is insufficient to restrain them from relocating. Most of the frustrations come from the failure of a state to fulfil its mandate of providing inclusive access to education of good quality (UIS 2009). Students increasingly face difficulties accessing tertiary education due to dysfunctional states – this problem affects most of the tertiary institutions on the continent (CODESRIA 2008). This is not, however, a situation confined to the present day. In fact, the collapse of the higher education system is an enduring trend, which started in the 1970s and deepened in the 1980s and 1990s with the implementation of structural

adjustment programmes, supported by the Bretton Woods institutions (Burja 1994; CODESRIA 2008). These programmes advocated, among other things, drastic cuts in public spending and commercialisation of higher education (Barro 2012; Chachage 2001; Sawyerr 1998).

An approach to youth migration using stress factors relates well to the concept of place utility, based upon both the characteristics of young migrants and their places of residence. Variables such as family status, employment prospects, political instability and insecurity, the capacity (or lack thereof) of the higher education system in the home country to absorb students, and the perceived quality of the higher education institutions in the host country account to a great extent for increases in migration. Place utility evaluations as factors in migration are likely to occur in areas that are deprived, when compared to other, similar areas.

However, there is a problem in any generalisation of this concept of place utility. It is deemed a function of aspirations of the individual concerning residential environment. In turn, the aspirations of any young person are likely to be a function of education, family status, stage in lifecycle development and so on. In other words, the orientation to family, which is a component of the cultural system, also plays a critical role in the decision to migrate. Regardless of the age factor, the role of the extended family or family cohesion – as either stimulus to or constraint on migration – has been extensively identified with regard to the receptivity of individuals to migrate. More specifically, young people with close family attachments and a tertiary education attainment level are more likely to receive financial support for migration, as the degree of persuasion and valuation tends to be strong. Such young people are seen as migrating for better opportunities and as having greater chances of success and of sending remittances home once employment has been secured (Stahl 1989; Suksomboon 2007).

Data and analytical methods

As mentioned, this chapter is based on a combination of primary- and secondary-source information. The primary data was collected via a survey of 207 students from francophone Africa who migrated to South Africa and were based in various departments at the University of the Western Cape. A few students from the nearby Peninsula Technikon[2] campus were also interviewed. The survey took place from March to April 2009. The survey was of a cross-sectional design, with respondents selected using a purposive method and the snowball sampling technique. Respondents in the sample were therefore selected subjectively because I did not have a list of students

from which a representative sample could be drawn. The snowball sampling involved contacting a member of the student population of interest and asking whether they knew anyone else with the required characteristics. The two interviewers I worked with (postgraduate students under my supervision) were very helpful with regard to arranging contacts with respondents. The approach targeted students from francophone countries in West and Central Africa only, including Gabon, Cameroon, Rwanda, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire. A questionnaire was drawn up which aimed to provide insights into respondents' educational patterns and trajectories. Both structured and unstructured questions were included in the questionnaire, and information was gathered on students' current personal details, pre-migratory social situations, migration decision-taking, post-migration experiences, and intention to re-migrate. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents and respondent's details were kept confidential. The two interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews and some respondents completed the questionnaire in writing themselves as the questions were self-explanatory.

As is often the case during any data-collection operation, some problems were encountered. These were mainly to do with respondents' susceptibility, refusal, tracking take-home questionnaires, and not showing up for appointments. Despite these minor problems, there was general enthusiasm for participating and respondents said they were happy to be given a space to express their views.

Using the information gathered, the analytical challenge was to organise the responses into a narrative that captured differing individual experiences of migrant status, location, housing, study and livelihoods. A systematic approach was adopted to turn the material into a consistent narrative on selected migrants' individual experiences relative to their conditions of departure, accommodation arrangements, work, study, social capital and networks at different places. Understanding young migrants' trajectories necessitated a *tuning* of the primary material, blending events and experiences into a coherent whole, and considering various activities that migrant students have been involved in since arriving in South Africa. The intention here was not to sketch a precise typology of youth mobility with regard to the migration process. At most, from the interview data gathered, a series of insights – limited but factual – could be derived, and assumptions or hypotheses proposed for possible testing in an objective model. (Such a testing exercise is described in the following section.) It is also worth noting that such hypotheses could be first assessed as assumptions to be approved or rejected through a rigorous

reading of the spectrum of responses. For example, the assumption that some young people migrating to South Africa would be more involved than local students in trading activities as street vendors could be tested. Similarly, the related assumption that these young migrants might have some predisposition to these activities, due to survival skills they had learned while living under stressful social conditions in their home countries, or because of the networks they establish with other migrants before or after arriving in South Africa, could be put to the test.

From an analytical point of view, the experiences of migrant students can be used to make connections between different pieces of 'objective' information and to obtain insights into certain elements of the ideology of the subject. Three significant types of discourse may be derived from the narratives. The first is an exposé of the reasons for departure from the country of origin. The second focuses on the links (of diverse nature) maintained between the place of origin and the place of current stay, while the third focuses on projects for betterment or wellness in relation to educational and (possibly) professional achievements.

The continental context

South Africa is a new destination for young migrants looking for higher education facilities and, as has already been stated, this is particularly the case with migration of young people from francophone Africa. Most of these migrants started to arrive around 2005, although it remains difficult to date or quantify in an exact manner the magnitude of different waves. Massey (2006) argues that the end of apartheid in 1994 seems to have contributed to the formation of a migratory sub-system centred on this country. Up to the collapse of apartheid, immigrants were predominantly non-Africans, while the entry of Africans was controlled and limited (Crush 2000). Soon after apartheid was abolished, an intense movement of traders took place between these countries and South Africa, with Johannesburg being the main supply centre for goods (Akokpari 2002; Legoko 2006). This trade-related mobility may have contributed to South Africa's image as a viable destination country for income-generating and educational opportunities. With its modern infrastructure and relatively developed economy, the country is seen as an alternative to traditional destinations such as France, Belgium, the United Kingdom and some North African countries. South Africa has gained significance as those countries have implemented increasingly selective admissions policies with regard to foreign students. The statistics compiled from the Department of Higher Education and the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2009) show consolidated growth

in the number of students from different geographical origins. In spite of the language barrier and the costs involved in relocation, significant numbers of young people from francophone Africa choose to migrate to South Africa for study-related purposes.

Figures compiled from national educational bodies indicate a consistent increase from 1994 to 2010 in foreign student numbers coming to South Africa (see Table 7.1). These foreign students originated predominantly from sub-Saharan Africa (UIS 2008 cited in CHE 2009). South Africa is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa to attract substantial numbers of foreign students. The potential for benefits to be gained from foreign students has motivated the authorities in charge of the higher education system to increase recruitment of students from within the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The benefits are particularly directed at the postgraduate level, where low numbers of South African candidates are a matter of concern, both from an academic and a research capacity point of view. It is, thus, no surprise that the majority of foreign students in South Africa enrol in postgraduate programmes. Overall, South African students still represent more than 92 per cent of the total enrolments, but they are proportionally in decline. Although statistics are hard to come by, Table 7.1 displays the evolution of enrolments from 1994 to 2010.

TABLE 7.1 Student enrolment at public universities by region of origin, South Africa 1994–2010

Year	South Africa	SADC countries	Other African countries	Rest of the world	Unknown	Total
1994	–	6 209	1 521	4 827	–	–
1997	–	7 822	2 079	5 268	–	–
2000	545 184	21 318	4 263	5 568	14 228	591 561
2003	666 367	36 207	6 664	7 108	1 447	717 793
2004	691 910	36 302	6 874	7 836	1 564	744 486
2005	683 473	35 074	7 196	7 839	1 491	735 073
2006	687 642	35 922	8 569	7 673	1 574	741 380
2007	701 853	41 713	8 682	7 136	1 706	761 090
2008	735 538	45 851	9 554	6 619	1 928	799 490
2009	876 923	41 906	10 663	7 011	1 276	937 779
2010	826 887	46 496	10 986	7 302	1 353	893 024

Sources: Data from 2004–2007 derived from CHE (2009). Data for 1994–2003 and 2008–2010 (excluding South African nationals) derived from the DHET (2011, cited by IEASA 2011).

As shown in Table 7.1, the population of foreign students from other African countries has grown substantially, overtaking students from the rest of the world in the period under consideration. This growth is considerable when one considers that in 2000, for example, South African universities had only 4 263 students from other parts of Africa (*excluding* the SADC region) against 5 568 students from the rest of the world (outside Africa). Students from the 'rest of the world' category come mainly from Europe, Asia and to a lesser extent North America (USA and Canada), and mostly via student exchange programmes. For the same year, 2000, the SADC region was represented by 21 318 students enrolled at South African universities. Thus the country draws its foreign student population mainly from its geographical zone of traditional economic influence, as it did for foreign labour recruited on mines during the apartheid era. The migrational relations are geographically maintained, despite some change in the composition of the migrants' demographics and motives. Zimbabwe is a major source of foreign students. A country once well endowed with good quality educational facilities, the economic and social crisis of the past years has seriously undermined the higher education system and resulted in massive influxes of students to South Africa. No doubt the substantial decline in the number of students from SADC countries in 2009, as evident in Table 7.1, is a reflection of the violent xenophobic attacks, which took place in 2008 and 2009 and mainly targeted African migrants. These attacks probably deterred some of the potential candidates from neighbouring countries from migrating to South Africa and may have prompted others to leave the country. An increase is evident in 2010, when new migratory measures between South Africa and Zimbabwe were implemented such as short-term work permits and the regularisation of cross-border migrants in irregular situations.

The precise number of these migrants in South Africa is not known because some of them enrol in private education institutions. The private higher education sector has undoubtedly also experienced a considerable increase in the number of students from African countries who have enrolled since 1994. In 2011, the South African education department released a list that indicated that there were 114 private tertiary institutions authorised to operate in the country, although only 84 were fully registered (IEASA 2011). Quite a few of these institutions are linked to international universities and give preference to vocational programmes, tapping into market-oriented skills (IEASA 2011). Notwithstanding the growing importance of the private sector, it is reasonable to assume that each year hundreds, if not thousands, of young people attempt to enrol in South African public higher education institutions.

From the literature on this subject (Bunting 2003; IEASA 2011; Jooste 2011; Marko 2009; UIS 2009, 2012;), some unanimity regarding motives for migration emerges. As already noted, most of these migrants are pushed out of their countries of origin by lack of appropriate higher education institutions, highly competitive entry requirements at their home institutions, as well as by poor career and income-generation prospects. Supplementary push factors are the poor quality of education that tends to be offered at the home higher education institutions, and considerations of the fitness (or lack thereof) of qualifications to specific jobs. Many sub-Saharan African countries, especially those in the central region, are affected by the complete breakdown of social and economic systems – markets, services and security. Young people therefore rely less and less on their 'localities of belonging' to meet their aspirations in terms of education and employment. Moving to richer countries on the continent has increasingly become a first-choice strategy among young people looking for quality education or better employment opportunities.

So, the desire to pursue studies in South Africa (or one of the other richer African countries such as Morocco or Côte d'Ivoire) is one of the major drivers of migration among the more educated youth. This is clearly related to personal aspirations and ambitions of obtaining an education that will enable them to gain access to meaningful employment at some level in the global economy. The educational migration of young people can be viewed as part and parcel of a 'lifecycle development', in that it combines with a search for employment in the place of destination. In most cases, as stated earlier, migration to South Africa occurs after failed attempts to reach Europe.

The motivations behind the choice of destination, the trajectories migration can take, and the modes of educational and labour market insertion are highly complex. In their places of origin, young people are pushed to move as they feel deprived with respect to educational facilities, employment opportunities and other factors. For these migrant students, social capital and social networks provide the channels through which costs (anticipated and actual) associated with migration are minimised. At the place of destination, getting a better education is not incompatible with participating in the labour market, albeit informally, to cover their tuition costs. Some make it that way to legitimise their stay in the country as students while others choose alternative options, one of which is to seek refugee status. The research on which this chapter is based found that it is common practice among young migrants to be simultaneously involved in the lower-paid segments of the labour market and in studying at a higher education institution. For some young people

migration and insertion in the host society may be facilitated through the support received from home; for others that may not be the case.

South Africa is a preferred destination because of its developed educational infrastructure. This does not come as a surprise. Globally, South Africa was rated in 2009 among the top ten destinations for foreign students wanting to pursue a university education away from home (UIS 2009). With international students forming just over 8 per cent of South Africa's total university population (761 000 students at the time), the country was ranked as the world's eighth most popular study destination. According to the 2009 *Global Education Digest* published by UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS), one in five foreign students from Africa was studying at a South African university. Table 7.2 provides figures on foreign students enrolled at 12 South African universities in 2009, while Table 7.3 shows the distribution of students in South African higher education institutions, by geographical origin, in 2006 and 2007.

TABLE 7.2   Foreign enrolments at South Africa's public universities, plus foreign student numbers in the world's top ten study destinations, 2009

University	No. of foreign students	Foreign student numbers in the world's top 10 study destinations
University of Cape Town	4 423	US 595 900
University of Pretoria	3 008	UK 351 500
Stellenbosch University	2 731	France 246 600
University of KwaZulu-Natal	2 229	Australia 211 500
University of the Witwatersrand	2 189	Germany 206 900
University of Johannesburg	2 112	Japan 125 900
University of the Free State	1 945	Canada 68 500
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	1 891	South Africa 60 600
University of the Western Cape	1 357	Russia 60 300
Walter Sisulu University	341	Italy 57 300
University of Zululand	250	
University of Limpopo	182	

Source: Compiled from UIS data cited in Govender (2009: 6).

TABLE 7.3   Students in public universities by geographical origin, South Africa 2006/ 2007

Institution	Year	South African citizens	SADC citizens	Other
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	2007	27 103	1 267	582
Central University of Technology	2007	9 902	532	44
Durban University of Technology	2007	22 381	243	78
Tshwane University of Technology	2006	49 401	1 495	550
Mangosuthu University of Technology	2006	9 978	115	3
Vaal University of Technology	2007	14 834	871	441
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	2006	22 321	1 095	829
University of Johannesburg	2007	40 000	1 084	527
University of South Africa	2006	208 720	13 375	4 676
Rhodes University	2006	4 490	1 151	273
Walter Sisulu University	2007	23 884	157	79
North West University	2006	34 828	3 536	345
University of Cape Town	2006	16 498	2 299	2 159
University of Fort Hare	2006	7 425	1 012	89
University of the Free State	2007	22 802	1 533	183
University of Kwazulu-Natal	2007	35 516	1 386	948
University of Limpopo	2007	16 905	331	233
University of Pretoria	2007	36 045	1 515	1 073
University of the Western Cape	2006	13 522	598	382
University of the Witwatersrand	2007	23 272	1 010	819

Source: SARUA (2009).

Note: The University of Stellenbosch, the University of Zululand and the University of Venda provided no breakdown in student numbers by citizenship and are excluded from this data.

Although Tables 7.1 and 7.2 do not provide a breakdown of the geographical origin of foreign students in South Africa, it is likely that a considerable number have come from Africa in recent years. As shown in Table 7.3, students from the SADC region outnumber those from outside that region. The number of SADC versus non-SADC students varies across the institutions, but the attractiveness of well-ranked national universities is clear; the higher the ranking, the larger the number of non-SADC foreign students. The only detailed data I managed to gather on the geographical origin of students dates back to 2000 (see Table 7.4).

TABLE 7.4   Foreign students enrolled by public university and geographic region of origin, South Africa, 2000

University	SADC	Rest of Africa	Asia	Australia and Oceania	Europe	USA/ Canada	South America	Total
University of Cape Town	860	148	136	14	437	249	9	1 853
University of Durban-Westville	127	57	11	2	3	3	24	227
University of Fort Hare	112	12	0	0	0	0	0	124
Medical University of South Africa	182	143	42	1	10	2	1	381
University of the North	3	3	0	0	2	0	0	8
University of the Free State	363	91	14	0	26	23	2	519
University of Port Elizabeth	3 783	1 591	13	5	21	12	2	5 427
University of Potchefstroom	1 961	51	30	1	40	5	3	2 091
University of Pretoria	498	188	120	37	292	49	17	1 201
Rand Afrikaans University	248	43	28	1	51	6	2	379
Rhodes University	843	96	30	1	166	26	0	1 162
University of South Africa	6 539	658	628	59	1 542	112	64	9 602
University of the Western Cape	192	78	5	0	28	3	0	306
University of the Witwatersrand	597	314	293	9	326	78	12	1 629
University of Zululand	40	71	1	1	1	0	0	114
Vista University	739	2	3	0	0	1	0	745
University of Venda	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	17 109	3 546	1 354	131	2 945	569	136	25 770

Source: Adapted from CHE (2009).

Note: Many of the names of higher education institutions have changed since the mergers that took place as part of the transformation of the South African higher education landscape between 2000 and 2010.

It is important to note that students from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are included in the SADC figures since, for geopolitical reasons (mainly serving the interests of South Africa), the DRC is a SADC member. In the SADC category, Zimbabwe sends the highest number of students to South Africa, and this is undoubtedly related to the under-resourcing of universities in that country, as already mentioned. Other SADC countries that had high numbers of students in South Africa in 2000 were Namibia

(10 169 students), Botswana (4 963 students), Swaziland (2 825 students) and Mauritius (1 213 students). The presence of Mauritius is quite surprising when one considers its level of development in comparison to much of continental Africa. The reason seems to relate to specific courses offered in South Africa. (This also seems to be the case for some students from Europe who have enrolled at institutions such as Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University.)

The data in Tables 7.1 to 7.4 suggest that South Africa is a destination for an increasingly diverse flow of international students, and students from elsewhere in Africa are strongly represented among these young migrants, even if their exact number is difficult to determine.

Thus, there is little doubt that South Africa's educational services are probably among its major growth sectors in terms of export earnings. International students from non-SADC countries pay higher fees than their South African counterparts. The financial contribution of foreign students to the South African economy, and to the higher education sector in particular, is, therefore, considerable and nearly all foreign students are self-financed from their first to their last year of study.

The South African higher education system has not yet reached the stage of being a *major* export industry, as is the case in the United Kingdom (Shen 2007) or Australia (Baas 2007) in attracting Asian students, for example. Yet the expectation is that the educational sector in South Africa will grow considerably in that direction, given the increased deterioration of tertiary institutions in other parts of Africa. It is perhaps in view of this that the policy towards facilitating students' entry into the country has become more flexible. From what was previously a very restrictive student-permit, South Africa has gradually introduced a more progressive policy regarding the issuing of visas to students from elsewhere in Africa. Thus, while refugees and asylum seekers are exempted from obtaining study permits, other students are allowed to enrol, provided they can cover their costs. Yet, despite the implementation of faster and more efficient processing procedures, visa or entry clearance remains the main obstacle for students from other African countries entering South Africa. Obtaining a visa in the country of origin requires the possession of sufficient resources, proof of admission to a South African higher education institution, and medical insurance. Nevertheless, the number of students from other African countries flocking to South Africa appears to be constantly on the rise.

Another pull factor is that, unlike universities in Western Europe, South African higher education institutions do not systematically require proof

of English proficiency such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score. South Africa's policy in this regard really facilitates the admission of students from francophone Africa, some of whom have limited or no English language skills. It must be noted that the economic imperative to increase the intake of students played in favour of these students (Bunting 2003).

Having examined the patterns of foreign students' mobility at the macro and institutional levels, it is important to look at this migration from the perspective of students themselves. These are the main decision-takers in this mobility, and listening to their voices is as important as looking at enrolment figures. In the sections to come, I make use, where appropriate, of the in-depth interviews conducted with foreign students enrolled at the University of the Western Cape. This institution serves as my case study. While it is important to recognise the uniqueness of this institution's experience with foreign students, it may have traits in common with other, similar institutions in the country. From the interviews conducted, I gained some insights into patterns regarding the motives behind the choice of a particular institution, as well as the reasons behind the choice of South Africa as a study destination. All the tables displayed in the sections to come were generated from Tati (2010).

Patterns in the socio-spatial trajectories of migrant students

Without exception, the young people surveyed clearly suggested that they chose to migrate for personal reasons and were quite positive about their experiences of relocation. Migration had allowed most respondents to develop skills in educational fields that are either not available or are difficult to gain entrance to in their own countries. As one of the respondents put it, 'Here [in South Africa] you can study in such prestigious disciplines as engineering, computer science, medical and pharmaceutical studies or business, with no problem, as long as you have the minimum requirements and a bit of money to pay registration fees'. Others emphasised the possibility of earning income while studying, to pay for their higher education. The disciplines chosen by respondents were diverse, with science subjects such as physiotherapy, nursing, microbiology, science, chemistry and medical technology tending to predominate.

Motives, educational access and prospects for employment

The interviews conducted revealed that dysfunctional tertiary education systems in the countries of origin played a critical role in generating migration. Many students had struggled to find work or educational opportunities at home; although in lower numbers compared to undergraduate foreign

students in the *overall* statistics, students at the postgraduate level are the ones who seemed to have encountered that situation most. Destinations such as South Africa become particularly attractive for those entering the postgraduate cycle and looking to settle down on their own. Confronted with increased competition for admission at postgraduate level – vocational training or higher education – in the countries of origin and the prospect of long-term unemployment, many see migrating to South Africa as a viable alternative. This explains why the pursuit of formal postgraduate education (honours and master's degrees) emerged as a major reason for migration by most of the young people interviewed.

Some respondents said that they covered their costs either by earning income or by working for a relative or someone known to them in return for financial support. Others acknowledged that migration came with hardships associated with being away from one's family and cultural environment. For most, these disadvantages and potential dangers were considered to be more than offset by the potential benefits, tangible or otherwise. It was very clear that the choice of South Africa was strongly associated with the respondents' desire to improve their marketability through better education.

The language factor was seen as quite critical in shaping prospects for employment. When asked if studying in English was not an impediment to success, those with no prior fluency in the language stated this was not the case. On the contrary, they pointed out, improving their skills in English was part of their strategy to boost their prospects of finding a job, either in South Africa or elsewhere. In fact, many had already considered the possibility of English being an obstacle when they were considering migration and they had attended English courses before migrating. All of the interviewed students indicated that they had not been required to take a fluency test in English when applying for admission to South African higher education institutions.

It is important to point out that several students' decisions to move were strongly motivated by offers of financial assistance of whatever type from the institutions to which they had applied. As South Africa's higher education system comes to function increasingly like an industry, universities' recruitment strategies tend to advertise these sorts of offers, raising the expectations of financial support among potential migrant students. Upon arrival, though, several students had been disappointed by not getting what they thought they had been promised prior to migrating. As explained by a female student (EJ, holder of a DEA in mathematics[3]) from Cameroon:

I was admitted at UCT for doctoral studies in mathematics. At the time

of admission, my supervisor agreed to support me financially with a studentship. When I arrived in South Africa, he instead told me that I should apply for a doctoral scholarship within a special NRF [National Research Foundation] programme for African students. I did it, but failed to get a scholarship. I decided to look for another institution with the hope of getting some financial aid. I ended up by joining the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences.

The above student has since left the country to relocate to Florida in the United States, after being offered a doctoral scholarship there.

South African law allows foreign students with a 'study permit' to obtain paid employment on or off campus for a maximum of twenty hours per week. Most students interviewed had a number of compelling reasons for wanting to work while studying. Having come to South Africa with a limited amount of money, they had usually spent this on books, rent and transport within a couple of months of their arrival. After that, as they often pointed out, they were on their own. Finding employment was thus necessary to cover their living expenses. In addition, some respondents were expected to send money home. As they explained, paying back what they owe was often part of the bargain from the beginning – their families helped to provide the necessary initial funds but hoped that one day soon a return on their investment would be made in the form of remittances. This situation meant that many respondents admitted to working more than twenty hours per week, and also seemed to find this quite normal. Due to the temporary and informal nature of such work, there tends to be significant under-reporting for tax payment purposes. Respondents reported a case of a female student from Mauritius routinely working forty hours a week in a consultancy firm without being registered with the South African Revenue Services. One hears of many similar cases. On the one hand, the respondents were perfectly aware that twenty hours was the legal maximum number of work hours, but, on the other hand, they argued that they simply had to earn more, and that 'everybody else' was doing this too. In my view, their sense of this being normal related not only to the financial pressures they were under but also to what they saw as being normal for a migrant as temporary migration for work-related reasons is the most common form of young-age student migration.

Besides, not all students take every step in a fair or legal manner and various tactics seem to be quite commonly be used in order to circumvent the formal procedures. It was gathered from indirect sources that some foreign students attempt to gain access to higher education in South Africa using

fake certificates, unsupported applications for refugee status, bribes to South African Department of Home Affairs officials, and arranged marriages, to name but a few. Such unlawful strategies tend to be justified by those using them with reference to the fact that the legal framework around residential permits is constraining and procedures are overly bureaucratic.

In other southern African countries, it seems that finding temporary employment with a study permit is virtually impossible. Drawing on a study I conducted in Swaziland (Tati 2006), for example, young Congolese students (from DRC) pursuing their studies reported finding it difficult to cover their costs with the money they received from their impoverished families back home. Swaziland's immigration regulations also require foreign students to pay their tuition fees in full before allowing them to register. This rule also applies in the case of senior students who may require more than one year to obtain a degree. The relocation of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from Mbabane (capital city of Swaziland) to Pretoria in South Africa also apparently made it difficult for students to obtain funding for study because the processing of applications became increasingly time consuming and difficult because of the long distances involved. Many undergraduate Congolese students had to give up their studies in Swaziland (Tati 2006).

Choosing South Africa in a globalising higher education system

In the world of today, the international system of higher education operates like a market in which there is both supply (the universities with their programmes) and demand (the student population). This market is of course influenced by factors such as prices, migration policies, and university policies, to name but a few – in other words, so-called market forces apply. However, in the 'real world', subjective or personal considerations matter too, and they add to the domain of market-driven considerations.

In the survey conducted at the University of the Western Cape (Tati 2010), student respondents were asked to compare South Africa with universities in other countries to which they had intended or contemplated migrating for study. Respondents were thus asked to call upon the knowledge they had gleaned from different sources (the internet, leaflets, friends, among others) about the quality of education and life in those countries. Because of the purposive character of the sample of respondents, the data collected should be regarded as mere indications. Nevertheless, Table 7.5 summarises the ways in which respondents perceived South African tertiary education institutions to compare favourably and unfavourably with similar institutions in the North.

TABLE 7.5 Respondents' perceptions of South African universities and those in the North

South Africa compares favourably	Agree	South Africa compares unfavourably	Agree
Offers almost the same quality of education	11	The standard is higher in the North	9
Study costs are low	9	Crime and xenophobia are less in the North	7
Unemployment is high in South Africa and locals get jobs first	2	The North offers more job opportunities and it is easier to obtain residence status	7
Offers a 'more African' (relatively familiar) environment	6	The North is more welcoming/accommodating	2
Offers an appropriate social environment for study (respect for human rights)	1	Students in the North receive more financial and other support	1

Source: Tati (2010).

Note: The categories of responses shown here were compiled to collate responses to the questionnaire that were closely related. The numbers shown are low as they reflect responses only from those respondents who attempted to apply (or contemplated applying) for admission to universities outside South Africa.

As shown, South Africa is perceived to provide an appropriate social environment for study in terms of respect for human rights. This finds resonance in the popular recognition that South Africa has one of the most protective constitutions in the world when it comes to individual rights. Its tertiary education is also considered affordable. In real terms, it can cost an African student five to six times more to study in the United Kingdom. Interestingly, the area that attracted the highest score is the recognition among the respondents that the quality of education is almost the same. When probed during the interviews, students indicated that they were referring to programme content and access to learning material. The programmes offered generally met their expectations. South Africa is also viewed favourably because of its location within the continent; indeed the country has a locational advantage for students from the SADC region, and especially those from the Southern African Customs Union and Zimbabwe. These students do not have to travel as far as Europe or further to study, and can also to avoid the hassles associated with visa requirements.

Most respondents also thought that the culture shock was probably less dramatic in South Africa than they might experience in the North.

Conversely, based on feedback from the same respondents, universities in the North were valued more highly in terms of the support they provide to students. Bursaries and other forms of financial aid were frequently mentioned in this regard. Northern institutions were also seen as places where levels of crime and xenophobia are low, compared to the situation in South Africa (in this regard it is likely that respondents were referring to events that happened in South Africa in 2008 and 2009). Standards of education were presumed to be higher in the North, although, as mentioned, quite a number of respondents viewed the quality of higher education in South Africa as being on a par with the universities in the North. To a few respondents, the universities in the North are more accommodating than their counterparts in South Africa. When this statement was probed, it came out that this had to do with the way students are integrated into the structures of the university and how they become more socially integrated in the host country through the university. Although not mentioned by many respondents, a few did strongly state that foreign students from Africa are somewhat isolated from South African society. They do not interact or mingle socially with South African nationals, even on campus and they learn little about the society in which they are living. It goes without saying that widespread perceptions of rampant crime and xenophobia mentioned do not improve this situation and it comes as no surprise that students viewed the universities in the North as offering more opportunities than those in South Africa. Job opportunities during and after study were the most cited in this regard, in addition to the ease with which residential status can be changed.

Looking at Table 7.5, it is important to remember that many factors play in favour of the universities in the North. The major one is their well-established reputation built over several years (extending, in some cases, over centuries). Universities in the North remain attractive to many young Africans and the countries to which they intended to go for study revealed a strong preference for traditional destinations. Countries mentioned most by respondents were the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. South Africa is still seen as 'a new kid on the block' in the higher education industry. While relatively competitive, when it comes to costs, quality and the advantages of proximity and culture, the social climate that seems to count against South Africa; crime and xenophobia are the major contributory elements to this perception. An additional 'negative' factor is that South Africa is an African country – the stereotypes surrounding the image of the continent are often

TABLE 7.6 Respondents' preferred place of study outside South Africa

Country	No. of respondents this applied to
America (US)	13
United Kingdom	9
Home country	8
Africa	6
Australia	6
Canada	5
Anywhere in Europe Germany	4
Scandinavia	3
Anyplace	3
France	2
Netherlands	2
Anywhere outside Africa	2
Belgium	1

Source: Tati (2010).

Note: The numbers shown reflect responses only from those respondents who attempted to apply (or contemplated applying) for admission to universities outside South Africa.

reinforced in the media; and among young Africans the view that life in Western Europe or North America is much better than in Africa remains strongly entrenched.

It is important to consider the distribution of countries where respondents indicated that they would like to go and study. As shown in Table 7.6, North America, Western Europe and Australia were the preferred choices. Interestingly, quite a few opted for institutions based in southern and East Africa. The universities of Botswana, Zimbabwe and Uganda were each mentioned by one or two respondents. This suggests that South Africa may have been a second choice for some students, and had they been given a chance to go and study in Europe, they probably would have taken it.

Failing to make it to the North

Translating one's intention to migrate abroad into a reality is not always an easy process. Even after being offered admission by an institution of choice, there is no guarantee that migration will take place as planned. For most students aspiring to migrate to Western countries, the biggest obstacle they are likely to face is securing funds to cover the costs of study. State-sponsored bursaries or personal resources are not always available, especially in this time of drastic cuts in the financing of higher education. As indicated in the previous section, relatively lower costs work in South Africa's favour.

Given the direct link between financial eligibility and the granting of visas to enter the desired country, a lack of financial resources was the main reason why respondents had failed to migrate to the North as is shown in Table 7.7.

Looking at the responses listed in Table 7.7, lack of financial resources was indicated by about 62 per cent of the respondents as the reason why they failed to migrate to the North. Far below, in second place, respondents indicated that they had experienced problems related to obtaining the required visa (although these two reasons would probably have been linked). Putting these negative outcomes aside, some respondents noted with hindsight that studying in South Africa had worked out better for them than they had expected.

As indicated in Table 7.7, some students opted for South Africa because of its proximity to their home countries, the ease of migrating and the financial support available. Obtaining refugee status and social commitment were two other reasons given by respondents. Since the major factors mentioned by respondents were the relative affordability of study in South Africa and the quality of education offered here, the country's higher education institutions should capitalise on these issues if they wish to attract additional African students to their universities.

TABLE 7.7   Reasons for not migrating to the North

Reason	No. of respondents this applied to
Financial problems	85
Visa problems	13
Found better opportunities in South Africa	7
Insecurity	5
South Africa was my first choice	5
South Africa is closer to home	4
No connections	3
Had bursary a bursary to study in South	3
Africa	3
Social commitment to Africa	2
Not stated	1
Application submitted late	1
Easier to come to South Africa	1
'Free' education in South Africa	1
No admission	1
Refugee status	

Source: Tati (2010)

Choosing a university in South Africa: things that matter

As in any other part of the world, African students applying for admission to South African universities face various considerations. Securing admission is, of course the most important one. With this come expectations around the quality of education, the availability of a study programme that is suited to one's needs, the institutional environment and the sense of social belonging, to name but a few. Obviously these considerations can overlap, compete or gain prominence sequentially when one is choosing where to study. Table 7.8 lists the issues that motivated respondents to choose the University of the Western Cape as a learning institution.

As shown, the cost of study was the *prime* consideration for respondents and this was followed by the reputation of the institution. Thus, once the quality of education at a particular institution is perceived as being good, the students are likely to flock there in numbers. This is not merely a perception; it can be ascertained by examining the ranking of the South African universities in relation to the number of foreign students registered as shown in Tables 7.2 and 7.3.

TABLE 7.8 Respondents' reasons for choosing the University of the Western Cape

Reasons	No. of respondents this applied to
Affordability and flexibility in payment	36
Good reputation and quality	25
Friends studying here	23
Specific programme of study	15
Convenient and supportive	13
Any place to study further will do	9
Easy admission	8
Family members in the area	6
No knowledge of any other places to study further	6
Accessible and flexible mode of payment	4
Historically black university	3
Financial support secured	3
Second choice	3
Availability of supervision	2

Source: Tati (2010).

To what extent are these young student migrants relying on social networks to accomplish their educational objectives upon arrival in South Africa? The data gathered suggest a choice of destination guided by the presence of social capital, but also a search for a place that can offer economic, educational and cultural possibilities. Again, as shown in Tables 7.2 and 7.3, the major cities offering prestigious universities seem to be first choice for young migrants from francophone Africa. The major urban centres offer certain other advantages linked to concentrations of migrants from the same country. Not only does this have the potential to reduce isolation, it also provides migrants with a valuable network for finding employment and accommodation. Associations based on country citizenship are generally used as a channel through which assistance, information and moral support are obtained in times of hardship and in the search for opportunities. Specific strategies are also worked out within these associations to deal with possible constraints encountered in relation to local administrative structures. Most respondents stated that they were able to secure admission to university prior to moving to South Africa, with the assistance of persons related to them (often siblings) or friends. For others, admission was accomplished through university websites, which they accessed via the many internet cafés in their countries of origin.

Although all major cities offer similar advantages, the choice of a particular city is greatly influenced by the stock of information communicated to potential migrants by those who have already migrated about the quality of life in the area. For example, some respondents mentioned that they preferred Cape Town to Johannesburg because foreigners reportedly encounter less harassment from police officers on the streets. Others stated that it is more difficult to find a casual job or to run a business in Johannesburg than it is in Cape Town even if one is suitably qualified. Respondents who had previously stayed in Johannesburg confirmed that living in Johannesburg comes with a lot of police harassment and the city has a reputation for placing administrative hurdles in the way of foreigners who apply for residence or work-related documents at the offices of the Department of Home Affairs. Thus considerations related to what were seen as 'friendly' urban environments were of major importance and they informed the choices made by young migrants as to where to relocate within South Africa.

Staying or leaving after graduation

An analysis of responses regarding intentions to leave or stay in South Africa upon completion of study shows an interesting pattern, which contrasts

somewhat with the generally accepted view that student migrants are predominantly candidates for *departure*: of 207 respondents, 111 (54 per cent) had positive attitudes towards leaving South Africa, 88 (42 per cent) were willing to stay, and only eight (4 per cent) were uncertain about whether to stay or leave. For those planning to leave, the timing tended to fall within a one to three years of completing their studies, and naturally this was conditional on actual completion of study. Thus, for the majority of survey respondents, returning to their home country was part of their plans for the near future, and it seemed likely that migration would not translate into a permanent residential relocation for them.

Among the group who said they would opt to stay in South Africa, the major reasons cited were related to pursuing further studies and finding employment. This intention was well expressed, with strong optimism, among those with refugee status. This is understandable, as South Africa's refugee policy makes provision for individuals who have no place to go to remain in the country. The respondents had not, however, reckoned on the difficulty involved in finding the much-desired job. One computer science student put it succinctly:

> If I get an excellent job, I can continue my career in IT without change of place. I will need to get a job first to be able to apply, and when I apply for a job they ask for resident permit. Well, that's funny, don't you think?

For some students, the reason for staying is marital, and their migration may have been induced in the first place by family regrouping. As a country of relocation, South Africa is not always hostile to foreign students and new family attachments are a significant reason for graduates not leaving the country. As one medical science student (from Rwanda) put it, 'My family stay here; South Africa feels like home for me'.

However, among those opting to leave South Africa (54 per cent), some opposite sentiments emerge. A considerable number stated that they wanted to return home for family-related reasons. Other reasons included xenophobia, insecurity, bureaucracy, discrimination, and better job prospects elsewhere. While the home country was frequently mentioned, other major destinations cited included Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. Excluding the United Kingdom, the fact that none of the respondents mentioned European countries in the Schengen Zone is an indication of the extent to which these countries are increasingly seen as hostile to immigration from Africa. France, for instance, no longer represents a preferred destination for francophone students who possess a good

command of professional English. Table 7.9 presents selected views collected from respondents regarding the reasons for planning to leave South Africa.

TABLE 7.9   Selected statements from respondents on their motives for leaving

(The question posed to survey respondents was: What is the motive for your departure from South Africa?)

1. To develop my country with skills I have acquired in my field of study.

2. Discrimination for foreign people. I don't trust this country and this people. What happened in 2008 [in reference to xenophobic attacks] can happen again.

3. To earn a bigger salary. My home country, higher wages, and meet friends and relatives. African international students often regarded as a threat in the job market, and I would not like to be part of the threat.

4. South African people are xenophobic…am tired of them!

5. Do not like the place, because of discrimination. They do not want foreigners.

6. Settle at home.

7. To go and apply the knowledge I have acquired for the development of my country (charity starts at home).

8. I wanna develop my country when there is still a possibility of making a change.

9. To develop my country and be close to family.

10. I am not happy here and peoples are not that friendly. This is really a not safe country to live in.

11. Discrimination, violence, crime, xenophobia and development in my field of study. Home Affairs officials especially don't like Nigerians, same as South Africans. South Africans believe all Nigerians are drug dealers or in shady deals. I do not think the stereotype can easily be dealt with. A colleague once told me she grew up hating foreigners due to what her mother told her. The xenophobia (Negrophobia) incidents of last year [2008] attest to this.

12. Find a job in a secure country. I feel insecure here with xenophobia. Being accepted as someone who can help in the system. Here they are thinking that giving a job to a foreigner is a great favour.

Note: Student responses are quoted verbatim.

Viewed from the perspective of South Africa and the country of origin, the considerable numbers of students returning home is an indication of the element of brain gain. For the sending country, it brings the benefits related to developmental impact. As most of the respondents indicated, migrant students intend to use the skills acquired in the South African education system to help develop their respective countries.

Students who do not return home after completing their studies risk becoming undocumented, irregular or illegal migrants, thus being excluded from any kind of official support (such as welfare benefits or social security) in the host country. For young migrants who decide not to return home, prospects in the home country tend to be even more tenuous and employment conditions even more insecure than in the host country. According to UNESCO statistics, the number of foreign African students applying for work permits after graduation is high (UIS 2009). For these students, South Africa does not just offer an interesting study-abroad option with the possibility of becoming a resident; it also offers, quite simply, an opportunity to obtain employment.

Interestingly, most of the students interviewed mentioned the issue of parental approval for staying abroad, as it brings families a strong promise of remittances in future. This is an indication of inter-generational contract, where interdependence and autonomy coexist, albeit that the relationship is unequally balanced in favour of the parents. However, as argued by Hashim (2006), such a contract benefits both the young person involved in the migration, and his or her relatives, and thus some degree of equilibrium in the relationship is reached.

A degree of unanimity emerged from respondents' in terms of not being forced by parents or other relatives to migrate for study. This is not to say that there were no apprehensions of any kind from the parents' side. It seems that in most cases the decision to migrate, however, had been negotiated – either with parents or other relatives – in order to secure the necessary material support, or simply to get the parental blessing for the venture. As one respondent put it:

> My parents had to act as mediators in persuading my cousin in South Africa to facilitate my migration. In the first place he was opposed to it, saying he had no money to cover the costs. In fact, it's the problem of accommodation. He was sharing a two-bedroom flat with five other persons and could not therefore provide for accommodation. I had many problems finding accommodation upon arrival, until I got one in the students' hostels.

The situation of this respondent is not uncommon. At destination, young people experience, to varying degrees, specific problems, including overworking, wages below the statutory minimum, illegal residential status, xenophobia, inappropriate accommodation and so on. Yet, against the backdrop of all these challenges, almost all the young people interviewed stated they preferred the South African environment to their countries of origin. Some viewed

life at home as being much more difficult than the problems faced in the host environment. Such a view suggests a positive evaluation of the real and potential opportunities that migration might offer.

Insertion into the labour market after graduation

As noted, migration to South Africa for study purposes is associated with the objective of finding or taking up a better job after graduation, either back home or in the current location. Prior to the migration, this objective was not automatically achievable in the students' countries of origin. Many respondents mentioned numerous acquaintances at home who had failed to find employment, despite having obtained tertiary qualifications in their home country. Others stated that their decision to migrate to South Africa was strongly motivated by friends or relatives – also migrants – who had gained access to local employment after studying in South Africa. It was clear that the relationships they had with such people not only helped them to obtain information about higher education institutions, but was expected to be equally helpful when it came to searching for employment after they graduated. Such statements tend to lend credibility to the operation of social capital or social networks among prior migrants to the destination. This social capital is especially evident among young migrants originating from regions with a strong culture of migration, for example, young migrants from the western regions of Cameroon. From the interviews, most Cameroonians, for instance, indicated that prior to their arrival in South Africa they had some knowledge of how to find employment in specific segments of the labour market. Some were aware of the relative ease with which they could find formal employment and of the possibility of working as casual workers or street traders. As reported in numerous studies on migration, home-visiting migrants represent an important source of information for prospective migrants. These visitors consolidate the perception among young people that life elsewhere can be much better.

This prospect of future employment is reinforced by the experiences of fellow migrants or other foreigners who have managed to find regular employment. Yet the transition from study to employment is not barrier-free, as already mentioned. Securing employment is subject to obtaining proper documentation, namely a valid work permit. Immigration policy makes provision for changing one's residential status from a study permit to a work permit, but this is highly regulated and restricted and is only possible under specific circumstances. Obtaining a South African qualification does provide such a possibility, especially at master's or PhD level, or in areas classified

as 'scarce skills'. This is one of the reasons why foreign African students see postgraduate programmes, beyond the bachelor degree level (*licence*), as holding greater promise of eventual employment than staying at home.

Discussion and some concluding comments

The findings presented in this chapter on the patterns of departure and relocation among young educational migrants confirm that they have strong incentives to migrate. This is so because, for many, migration offers the most viable alternative to long-term deprivation. Taking responsibility for expenditure, such as educational costs, forms part of the migrational decision to pursue a personal desire to be independent and escape from a difficult environment. Migration is also seen as a channel through which migrants may fulfil the expectations of their parents, both materially and socially, through remittances and other transactions. At the migrants' destination, university attendance, in most cases, does not preclude engagement in paid work. University teaching timetables are generally flexible enough to allow the students to undertake employment, be it casual or formal. Moreover, such employment is often seasonal or night-economy work that is dependent on student labour. Under the guise of learning or studying, the clear evidence of a work component can, in fact, be said to blur the distinction between migration for work and migration for study purposes.

What theoretical insights can be drawn from this synopsis of trajectories? The patterns examined suggest that the meaning of an individual's migration or relocation decision develops over an extended period in their home environment. When asked about their reasons for moving, young migrants' responses provided some unambiguous, though limited, statements of their motivations, which revealed that the relocation or migration decision was embedded in the feelings of dislocation developed over a certain (if not the entire) period of the life course, rather than being linked only to circumstances in the period immediately prior to departure.

Equally reflected in the trajectories is, on the one hand, the developing meaning of migration to the individuals involved and, on the other, the multiple social influences shaping their perceptions of place. The personal objective of being independent of parents tends to be juxtaposed with the perception of a happier life elsewhere. This juxtaposition in the end makes migration an option worth considering. The trajectories and biographical accounts also reveal a complex web of cultural values and sources of social influence nested in the individual's general socio-economic milieu that favour and shape migration. In other words, family environment, educational

attainment, kinship ties and country fellows contribute, in varying degrees, to the construction of the desirability of relocating.

Within the limitations of the study reported in this chapter, and by approaching the issues from different angles, it has been possible to begin to trace the taken-for-granted values that shape migrants' mobility decisions. In conclusion, though, it must be cautioned that a comprehensive analysis of the practical consciousness of these young migrants requires a more detailed documentation of their temporal–social interactions, and additional analysis of the actions and conversations in which they are involved.

Starting such a process is urgently needed, given the uneven development among African states in a time of declining aid and global financial crisis (African Development Bank 2009). The higher education sector seems likely to reflect this uneven development. Only a handful of countries, including South Africa, seem set to benefit from what some analysts call the 'export education industry' (Baas 2007). In such a socially diverse educational landscape there is an urgent need to go beyond globalised normative understandings of 'a responsive educational system' at the national level and instead gain a greater understanding of how young people of different genders and backgrounds perceive, experience and engage with the images, challenges, opportunities and vulnerabilities of an expanding and 'Africanising'[4] educational system.

Moreover, migration cannot be viewed in isolation from underlying processes. Yet, little is known about the institutional dimensions of youth migration in the fast-changing socio-economic contexts exemplified by the NEPAD and African Union member states. For example, how are NEPAD's regional frameworks – its projects of 'mobility of scientists or academics', and the roles it presents for youth organisations – perceived and experienced by young people looking for further and higher education? Thus far, very few studies accurately depict what it means to grow up in an African state with a dysfunctional education system and a non-responsive government, or probe how young people see their lives in relation to the risks and opportunities that a (not necessarily) regionally integrated Africa presents. These questions and many others, that are not explicitly raised in this chapter, merit careful attention by researchers dealing with youth-related issues.

Notes

1   It is important to note though that little empirical evidence has been produced to substantiate the intensification of migratory movements of young people from the central part of Africa to distant education institutions in francophone Africa, North Africa and southern Africa. South Africa is the main destination country examined in this chapter.

2   This institution has since merged with Cape Technikon to become the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

3   DEA, which stands for *Diplôme D'études Approfondies*, is a degree delivered by French universities and is equivalent to a master's degree.

4   This word is coined in preference to the term 'globalising'.

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