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Student migration aspirations and mobility in the global knowledge society: The case of Ghana

Kajsa Hallberg Adu *

Abstract

In a global knowledge society, progress is driven by knowledge workers. Therefore, we must analyze migration and the mobility of knowledge workers in this new light. University students are both knowledge workers and knowledge-workers-to-be. Hence, this paper examines the migration aspirations of undergraduate university students in the Global South, exemplified by the West African nation Ghana. Increased access to higher education in Ghana and the Global South in general provides many more young people the opportunity to study, but the massive demand for education is still not being met, and access is woefully inadequate from the secondary level up to higher education. In addition, although the economy is growing steadily, graduate unemployment or underemployment is a major issue. This is the context for many students in and from the Global South. I argue that having the ability to migrate—mobility—is an unevenly distributed good, and partaking productively in the global knowledge society is highly conditional on a student's country of origin.

By taking the theoretical approach that aspiration is the first stage of migration, this research draws on a survey of undergraduate university students from two campuses in Ghana (n=467) and reveals that most of the students aspire to migrate, mostly for educational reasons. However, many of these students also aspire to return, others to live transnational lives, and one in twelve students surveyed are not interested in migrating—that is, in leaving Ghana for more than one year. These results show that university students in Ghana often imagine their future at home, but their life strategies include graduate school and gaining work experience abroad. Hence, mobility, but perhaps not necessarily migration, is a central feature of their life aspirations.

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Introduction

The idea that knowledge is a key driver of societal wealth enjoys broad support (Chen & Dahlman 2005; United Nations 2005; World Bank 1998). Since 2005, the World Bank and the United Nations and its associated organizations have produced reports and measurements for the global knowledge society, or the knowledge economy. For this paper, I define knowledge society as a term for societies that demonstrate the people-centered ideology. To stress its conceptuality and to not confuse it with a description of certainty, it may be written in the plural to suggest that there are many models of knowledge-centered societies, as opposed to for instance the industrial society (Hallberg Adu 2014: 19).

The shift from measuring societies by hard infrastructure to people and knowledge suggests the need to prioritize education and research. Around the globe, higher education is becoming more accessible and more global.

However, while access to higher education in the Global South is on the increase, the massive demand for education remains unmet, and inclusion is hence woefully inadequate from the secondary level up to graduate higher education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012). The globalization of higher education includes research projects, users of research including multinational companies, but also the mobility of students, academics, and researchers (Altbach 2016: 5–6). Student mobility is the fastest-growing aspect of the internationalization of higher education, with 2.9 million students studying outside their country of origin in 2006 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2008). However, as the total number of students has increased, the proportion of international students has remained more or less stable, at around 2% (Teichler 2017: 186). Student mobility is a multi-billion dollar industry worth USD 30 billion annually or 3% of trade in services for the OECD countries (Gargano 2009). University students are both knowledge-workers-to-be and current knowledge workers, as they carry out professional tasks such as teaching seminars (Iredale 2002). Since students and recent

graduates constitute the engine of any knowledge economy, it is important to study student mobility.

1. Literature review

The international student migration (ISM) literature largely focuses on students in or from the Global North and their experiences in programs such as Erasmus, despite a growing share of international students coming from the Global South: in 2014, 9.5% of international graduate students in the OECD countries came from Africa and 53.1% from Asia (OECD 2016: 332). The ISM literature covers study abroad for shorter periods (credit-mobile students) or for the entirety of a degree program (degree-mobile students). Many of these studies focus on the personal reasons for studying abroad, and although the reasons for migrating vary, they seem to converge into the following broad themes: improving language skills, expanding career opportunities, and making personal gains such as broadening one's horizons and experiencing other countries and cultures (Cairns & Smyth 2011; Carlson 2011; King, Findlay, & Ahrens 2010; Murphy-Lejeune 2003). Within the ISM literature, academic reasons for student migration are rarely among the top reasons given, even for short-term programs tailored for academic exposure (Ahrens, King, Skeldon, & Dunne 2010). This could be explained by the idea of "vertical" student mobility—which seeks "an advanced academic level"—versus "horizontal" student mobility—which does not "expect a higher level of learning and teaching. . . but contrasting experiences" (Teichler 2017: 192). Another strand of the ISM literature considers student migration as an opportunity for the schooling of the elite and migration as an upward social mobility scheme (Brooks & Waters 2011; Ho 2011). It may be fruitful to consider these power dynamics not only for students in the Global North but also within the Global South.

This paper looks at the Ghanaian case of student migration aspirations and mobility, with a focus on the new reality shaped by the global knowledge society. Ghana is chosen as a country that exemplifies the Global South, since it is typical of it in several ways: Ghana's total number of

international mobile students is the closest to the African average (Kritz 2015: 35); there is high graduate underemployment and unemployment (Ayele, Khan, & Sumberg 2017; Gough, Langevang, & Owusu 2013; Jennische 2018; Zakaria & Alhassan 2019); and many highly skilled Ghanaians currently live abroad, which will be discussed further in the next paragraph. On the other hand, since the beginning of the process of democratization in 1992, Ghanaians have seen a steady improvement in living standards, including the broadening of opportunities for higher education within the country, mirroring the increased access to higher education in many countries in the Global South.

Most outmigration from Ghana consists of flows to other African countries, Europe, and the United States, but also increasingly to Asia and the Middle East (Amoah 2008; World Bank 2009). It is impossible to estimate the level of migration of the highly skilled using Ghanaian data, as this information is not collected nationally. However, the OECD's Migration Database shows that there are 52,370 highly skilled Ghanaians in the OECD countries, most of them living in the United Kingdom and the United States (Quartey 2009). The aim of this paper is not to study the impacts on development of highly skilled Ghanaians living abroad, but it is worth noting that the effects are mixed. Remittances are important to the Ghanaian economy, but labor shortages, low levels of productivity and innovation, and skills mismatches are devastating (Akabzaa, Asiedu, Budu, Quartey, & Akouni 2010; Awumbila 2008). The potentially positive aspects of the migration of the highly skilled (like financial remittances) are likely to be sustained only by the first generation of migrants (Kwarteng 2013).

A number of migration overviews or reports have been carried out for Ghana (Akabzaa et al. 2010; Anarfi, Kwankye, Ababio, & Tiemoko 2003; Awumbila, Manuh, Quartey, Antwi Bosiakoh, & Tagoe 2011; Black 2004; Manuh 2005; Quartey 2009). The merits of these studies are many; they point to the scale and tenacity of migration out of Ghana, but they also discuss the lack of knowledge about the processes of migration and the dearth of empirical data on Ghanaian migrants, especially young professionals and students. Among the exceptions is a study of high school students by Gibson and McKenzie (2012), which tracked students from thirteen top high schools in Ghana between 1976 and 2004. They found that migration rates among this group were "extremely high," with three-quarters of the

group having migrated before the age of 35. However, many also returned; by the age of 45, 43% of the migrants had returned. While this suggests a bleak picture, in terms of the initial loss of highly skilled individuals, the knowledge society is characterized by high mobility, and the higher one's education, the more mobile one is. For instance, data for the OECD countries show higher levels of migration among master's degree holders compared to bachelor's degree holders (OECD 2016: 333). Similarly, research on migration aspirations among health professionals—not students—suggests that further study is an important factor for highly skilled prospective migrants in the health sector (Anarfi, Quartey, & Adjei 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2008).

The growth in international students has brought with it a scholarship on international student migration, reviewed above. However, despite increasing numbers of students coming from the Global South, and substantial shares of cohorts from Africa, especially for graduate higher education, little work has been conducted on migration aspirations and mobility outside of the health sector. Do students from the Global South aspire to be mobile? Are they mobile? How do they experience the global knowledge society?

2. Conceptual framework: Migration aspiration and mobility

In this section, I will discuss my conceptualization of migration and mobility respectively, and I will explore why a research focus on aspiration offers new and important insights. This paper has two theoretical starting points: First, the ability to migrate is an unevenly distributed good from a Global South perspective. Second, before one migrates, one aspires to migrate, hence, aspiration is the first stage of migration.

Conceptually, migration and mobility are sometimes used interchangeably and at other times treated as separate ideas. First, “mobility” can indicate shorter periods (less than twelve months) of geographical movement; consequently “migration” describes longer-term movements (more than twelve months). The latter timeframe is used by the United Nations and adopted by many, but not all, migration databases (Anderson & Blinder 2014; Clarke 2012). For instance, the IOM (International Organization for Migration 2011) uses a definition without a set time. The dichotomy between mobility and migration has been criticized for failing

to describe how geographical movement can be initiated for one reason and continued for another, and how both permanent migration and return are sometimes planned but other times inadvertent (Castles 2010). It is more useful to consider “mobility” as the ability for movement, something that many scholars have argued carries increasing importance in our time (Bauman 2000; Carling 2002; Castles & Miller 2003; Jónsson 2011). De Haas (2014) compares mobility to freedom, borrowing Sen’s (2011) conceptualization of “development as freedom.” In this paper, in accordance with the UN definition, I will primarily use “migration” to mean longer-term, international movements (more than twelve months), as opposed to shorter-term “travel,” and I will reserve “mobility” to mean “the ability to migrate internationally.”

Before one migrates, one aspires to migrate. Aspiration is thus the very first stage of migration or “a precondition for trying to migrate” (Carling 2002: 12). Aspiration is less researched than other stages of migration such as travel, integration, and possible return. This may be because aspirations concern mindscape(s), ideas, and dreams, and as such are more difficult to quantify and operationalize. Nevertheless, aspirations are important to study because they constitute a normative part of the context in which migration decision-making takes place, or “regimes of mobility” (Glick Schiller & Salazar 2013). If we only focus on those who are able to travel or migrate, we are only looking at the tip of the iceberg. This is because migration aspiration includes not just the (potential) migrant but the total population, including those who have migration aspirations but are unable to migrate—that is, immobile. This approach enables a holistic understanding of the issue. For example, a student’s idea about their country of origin compared to their idea about “abroad” might be the catalyst for a migration aspiration and for plans to migrate. Alternatively, they may have the aspiration but not the ability to migrate. Life decisions might still be made in accordance with the dream or aspiration and not the ability.

3. Method

Methodologically, this paper is a quantitative descriptive analysis of 467 survey responses by university students in Ghana about their mobility and migration aspirations.

3.1 Description of the sample

The target population for the study was university students in Ghana. As a proxy, two universities were chosen as sites for the research: the University of Ghana (UG), the first public university in the country and the largest in terms of student numbers; and Ashesi University, chosen as a representative of a new, small, and private university. These two diametrically opposite higher education institutions (HEIs) were chosen to capture the range of student experiences. This research targeted students who were enrolled at one of the two institutions and who were Ghanaian citizens. Students self-selected to participate in the study, hence a nonprobabilistic sampling technique was used.

Ultimately, 506 students filled in the final questionnaire; out of them, 35.7% (n=180) were female and 69.4% (n=326) were male. Later, international students whose experiences were not the target of this study, operationalised as non-Ghanaian citizens, were omitted from the sample and 467 students responses were considered for analysis. Almost 7 out of 10 respondents came from the larger University of Ghana (69.6%, n=352) and the rest from the smaller Ashesi University (30.4%, n=154). The mean age was 21.4 years, with a standard deviation of 3.23 years. The oldest respondent was 52 years and the youngest 17 years. All ten¹ regions in Ghana were represented.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Quantitative data was primarily gathered via a web survey for reasons of confidentiality and economy. A study comparing response rates in mail and web surveys suggested that college students as a group were more likely to answer web surveys than other groups (Shih & Fan 2008). Web surveys also enable privacy in responding to the questionnaire, a positive feature in research in general and specifically for the Ghanaian case (K. Aikins, personal comment, 24/01/2011). Furthermore, web surveys make it possible to obtain a large N, as the allocated budget can cover many more responses

1 Since the study was carried out Ghana has increased the number of administrative regions from ten to sixteen.

since distribution costs are low and coding is automatic. Data collected by asking respondents to answer questions on their own is called “self-report” data. Its advantages include its efficiency and its appropriateness for collecting attitudinal and behavioral data, such as migration aspirations. However, the researcher must be aware of “self-serving bias,” which may cause respondents to skew their answers, often in a more positive light than the reality (VanderStoep & Johnston 2009: 66–67). As the target group—students—has relatively good access to computers and all students at the two universities had been allocated university email addresses, the decision was made to conduct the survey electronically.

Ethical clearance was sought and granted². After testing the instrument in a pilot, the survey was administered in March 2014. To encourage participation, a voluntary final question was added, offering entrance into a raffle with cinema tickets as prizes (value USD 20). The main challenge was access to a steady electricity supply, since some students reported that they had to fill in the survey again when their computer shut down due to electricity shortages.

The response rate was calculated by dividing the total number of answers by the total number of undergraduate admissions. The response rates for online surveys are often much lower than for mail or in-person surveys, especially if they are sent out by email. Response rates of 10–15% are considered high for mail surveys (VanderStoep & Johnston 2009: 110). The response rate for Ashesi was 26.0% and for UG 1.8%. This difference can likely be attributed to different levels of institutional reliance on email, which I tried to mitigate by employing several other strategies in addition to the invitation to participate via email. Further, the proportions of men and women in my sample largely correspond to the proportions of men and women at the respective HEIs. This suggests that, at least on this metric, the sample correlates well to the population. While the sample was not random, in that students self-selected from the emails, all students had the same chance of receiving the email and joining the research project, since students on Ghanaian campuses are all familiar with email communication and have access to relatively reliable internet.

2 IRB approval was obtained by Ashesi University. At the time, University of Ghana was in the process of setting up its ethical review body.

Table 1: Response rates by total number of students admitted

HEI	Total admissions (Year)	Total responses	RR
Ashesi University	592 (2013/14)	154	0.26
University of Ghana	19,422 ³ (2011/12 ⁴)	352	0.02

As response rates were low, I compared my distribution of year groups and sex among the respondents (presented in Table 2) with distributions of year groups and sex in the HEIs by accessing their admissions data. I found that the levels were similar enough to assume that my sample is fairly representative of each institution.

Table 2: Distribution of sex and year group for the two HEIs (admissions data)

	Total admissions (year)	Men (as percent of total)	Women (as percent of total)	Year 1 (as percent of total)	Years 2, 3, and 4 (as percent of total)
Ashesi University	592 (2013/14)	315 (53.2)	277 (46.8)	169 (28.5)	423 (71.5)
University of Ghana	19,422 (2011/12)	11,122 (57.3)	8,300 (42.7)	4,487 (23.1)	14,935 (76.9)
Total	20,014	11,437 (57.1)	8,577 (42.9)	4,656 (23.3)	15,358 (76.7)

Sources: Admissions data from University of Ghana statistics, 2011/12 and Ashesi University admissions office

The survey was analyzed by creating a set of descriptive statistical tables and figures. The questionnaire was constructed on an internet platform, LimeSurvey⁵, hosted online by LimeService, and sent out to students via

- 3 This number is for the central campus and hence excludes distance and city campus students.
- 4 Unfortunately, the most recent data on admissions available from the University of Ghana is 2011/12. This is hence used as a proxy for the admissions data of 2013/14.
- 5 LimeSurvey is an open-source online survey system for creating high-quality online surveys. It is available at <http://limesurvey.com>.

email addresses provided by the university. The survey included questions on background, education, and thoughts on and potential previous experiences of migration. This type of information revealed who, in terms of background, gender, age, class, ethnicity, education major, etc. had aspirations to migrate, and who believed they also possessed the ability to migrate. The survey can be found in Appendix 1.

4. Findings

4.1 *Aspirations to study*

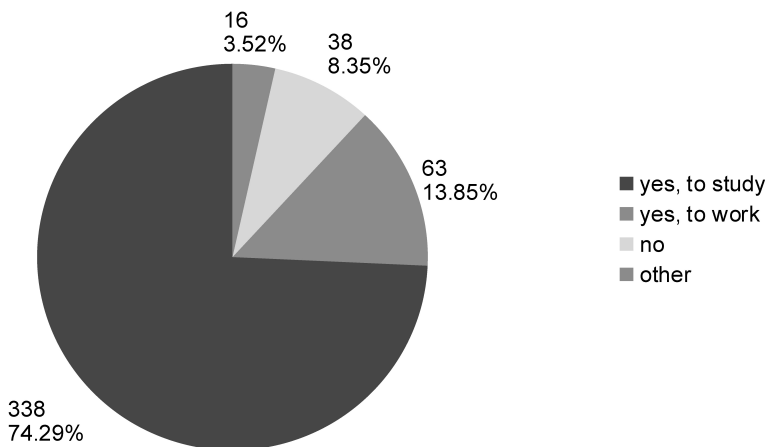
From the literature, we should expect students to have both migration aspirations and mobility, as students are sought after in the Global North, since they are seen as indicators of people who are highly skilled or who will be highly skilled in the future. Indeed, a large majority (Fig. 1) reports an intention to go abroad for more than one year; 9 in 10 (91.86%, $n=429$) say yes, either to study or to work. However, when breaking this down, almost 3 in 4 say “yes, to study” and only 1 in 7 say “yes, to work,” and less than 1 in 25 say “other” (a majority of these answers suggested that they had an intention to go for both study and work).

On the other hand, 1 in 12 (8.35%, $n=38$) say they have no intention of going abroad for more than one year. This finding is not unexpected, but also not well-theorized, and I will return to it in the section “Not all students aspire to migrate.”

For the question in my questionnaire measuring future intentions (“Where do you see yourself in five years’ time?”), the options were: “working in Ghana”; “working abroad”; “studying in Ghana”; and “studying abroad.” In five years’ time, all students targeted by the study would have graduated. Here, few students (15.4%) see themselves working abroad, compared to working in Ghana (40.0%) or studying abroad (40.3%) (Fig. 2).

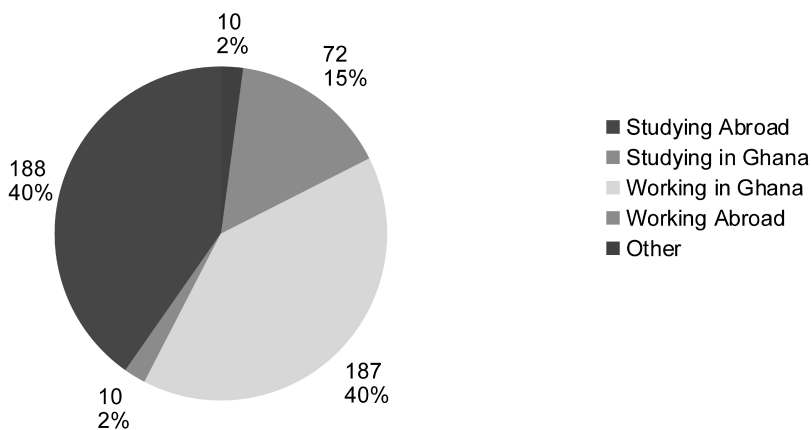
Less than 1 in 7 see working abroad as an aim and as few as 2 in 100 intend to study in Ghana. The two measurements of migration intentions show that a majority of the students (91.9%) intend to go abroad for more than one year, but a little over half of the students (55.7%) see themselves abroad in five years’ time.

Figure 1: Short-term migration intentions



Note: The pie chart describes the distribution of answers to the question: "Do you have any intention to go abroad for more than one year?"

Figure 2: Long-term migration intentions



Note: The pie chart describes the distribution of answers to the question: "Where do you see yourself in five years' time?"

We can compare this result on future aspirations (Q.4.3) with the exit survey of senior students at the University of Ghana in 2012–2013 ($n=3,414$) where 41% of the students said they planned to start a postgraduate program in Ghana or abroad after graduating. However, in this sample, 14% said they would do an MA/MPhil in Ghana. The survey had one question on the students' "aspirations after graduation." In this group, 27% said they would go abroad to continue school, 14% said they will do an MA/MPhil in Ghana, and only 2% said they would go abroad to work. 41% of graduating students said they would look for work in Ghana (Anyidoho 2015). This larger survey supports my key finding of Ghanaian students showing an interest in studying abroad, but not migrating for work.

4.2 Not all students aspire to migrate

A majority of students say they have an intention to migrate, whereas about 1 in 12 say they do not have any intention to go abroad for more than one year, and a quarter of students have not discussed migration with anyone since enrolling in university studies. In addition, about half of the students (50.8%) had taken no steps toward migrating (acquiring a passport, applying for a visa, etc.). Four out of 10 owned a passport and only 1 in 20 had ever applied for a visa. This is an interesting finding that needs to be better understood. The reasons could perhaps be reflective of Ghana's newfound economic growth or of culture, religion, and family obligations. It is also possible that this finding reflects the economic reality that it takes capital to go abroad (see Awumbila et al. 2011). More research is therefore needed here.

Part of the operationalization of the concept of mobility was to take into consideration preparations made for mobility. At the private university, Ashesi University, the majority of students had a valid passport. This is possibly due to the strong presence of the Office of International Programs, which leads programs and shares information on study abroad and other opportunities and constantly reminds students that a passport is a prerequisite for such opportunities. It may also be due to the more affluent family situation of the full-fee paying students at Ashesi University. More than double the proportion of students at Ashesi University

compared to the University of Ghana had applied for a visa (3.2% and 1.2% respectively). However, when it came to the proportion of students who had made no travel preparations at all, the institution did not matter, which may further support the explanation that the well-to-do students at the private institution (and not the other half of students) are the ones who make travel preparations. This runs counter to the brain-drain discourse that suggests that all well-educated individuals in the Global South are potential migrants.

Here, I use the word “intention,” a concept used to denote a wish or longing to go abroad that is not necessarily backed by any action. In the course of this project, I have experimented with the operationalization of “migration aspiration,” including different actions such as having a passport, having applied for a visa, and having made inquiries or applied to universities. Operationalizing aspirations to mean a belief that migration is preferable to non-migration and actions taken to further that belief is inspired by Carling (2002; 2008). In the analysis of data for this paper, however, I return to the simple binary variable aspiration—that is, either you believe migration is preferable to non-migration or not—to combine and compare responses. Only in a second step, I report those who have taken steps toward migration, here operationalized as having applied for a passport⁶.

4.3 Ghanaian students and mobility

From my quantitative data, most visa applications from students are rejected. 5.8% reported having been denied a visa, and 2.4% indicated that they had a valid visa. The countries students had applied to were the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa. When I asked what countries had denied them visas, the same four countries were cited, along with Schengen/Germany and Saudi Arabia. From this data, it

6 A potential problem with this operationalization could be that some students might wait to apply for a passport, which is relatively costly, until a concrete opportunity presents itself (for example, an offer from a university). However, as “travel experience” is often needed to obtain a long-term visa, I believe that this operationalization still offers a proxy for those with more advanced plans for traveling or migrating.

appears that a majority of students' visa applications are rejected. The students also showed a surprisingly low familiarity with student visa regulations in general. This was also true for the most popular destinations, like the United Kingdom.

In the survey, more students reported having the intention to go abroad than having taken steps to do so. The steps were: discussing migration, searching for information, obtaining a passport, applying for a visa, organizing travel⁷. One typical example from the data is that the students planning to apply for a visa were in the majority (73%), but a very small proportion held a valid visa (2.6%), and an even smaller proportion had applied for one before (2.0%). Because of the prestige that comes with a period of time abroad, there may be a bias toward migration, which is not always acted on.

From the results above, it is clear that migration is a topic that students discuss and that they care about their mobility. However, it is important to note that there are also reservations about the migration option.

4.4 Return and migration reservations

The findings regarding the aspiration to return further support the hypothesis that student migration is often fueled by the drive for education; the largest share (28.8%) want to return within three years, and a very similar-sized group (27.4%) want to live transnational lives and divide time between home and abroad. When asked, almost all students (97.9%) would want to return to Ghana if they were to migrate, and almost half (46.2%) within six years. This again suggests that when we are discussing migration, we are often actually talking about education.

The main reservations about migration as a life option include costs such as tuition fees, with about half of the students (53.3%) answering that this hinders migration, further supporting the claim that migration is not an option for all students. Further, just over 1 in 4 say that "patriotism" is a reservation and 1 in 6 (16.0%) say that "racism in the destination country" is a deterrent. These findings suggest that students in Ghana

⁷ The steps were deduced from focus-group discussions carried out in an earlier part of the project, described in more detail in my dissertation (Hallberg Adu 2015).

and perhaps in the Global South in general consider their contexts and in some cases have reservations due to a sense of responsibility to their country. On the other hand, thanks to social media, students stay in close contact with friends and family who have previously gone abroad, and they quickly learn in what countries you can expect racism or harassment as a foreigner. Racism can also serve as a deterrent for mobility.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that it is important to study students and their mobility in the global knowledge society, as they are central to growth, development, and general progress. Students from the Global South are understudied, especially in a context in which these students constitute a growing proportion of international students and operate within a different “regime of mobility” or context to students in the Global North, including local norms and global geopolitics. This research surveyed university students in Ghana, as an example of students in the Global South. The students often imagine their future at *home*, but life strategies include going abroad for graduate school and to gain work experience, confirming that mobility is a central feature of the global knowledge society, especially for its key players: the highly skilled. While this study has examined migration aspirations, which are not necessarily reflective of actual migration flows, the findings also describe the global knowledge society from the viewpoint of students from the Global South, including their navigation of mobility enhancers like a lack of opportunities at home and mobility barriers like racism and the rejection of visa applications.

For the countries in the Global South, student migration and indeed academic mobility is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it provides increased access to education and resources for populations who desire it. On the other, it threatens to take highly skilled people away from their homelands, many for the rest of their productive years. Students are importantly aware of this, and while many students aspire to go abroad to further their education, at least in the case of Ghana over half of students report intentions to return within six years. This is corroborated in

other studies (see, for instance, Akabzaa et al. 2010; Anyidoho 2015; Gibson & McKenzie 2011) but not often highlighted. Importantly, there are also reservations about the migration option, and some students are not interested in migration (leaving Ghana for more than one year), stating that they would prefer to live and work in Ghana. In Ghana, a student has also traditionally been someone who travels, therefore the meaning of migration and mobility also anchors the student to the Ghanaian context.

This paper also found that 42.4% of the students said they saw themselves still being students in five years' time, however only 2.1% of them would want to continue their studies in Ghana. This can be explained by several factors, including the lack of graduate school options in Ghana (especially options including funding opportunities), as well as the prestige and tradition of attending graduate school abroad. However, clinging on to being a student might also mask the looming underemployment and problematic transitions to the job market in Ghana, as well as the migration policies in the Global North that close the borders to non-students.

This paper has also aimed to show that while mobility is assumed for all international students in the global knowledge societies, the reality is different for Ghanaian students and probably for students from other countries in the Global South. Three in 4 students have plans to apply for a visa as a student, although few ultimately apply and even fewer obtain a visa. This gap between aspirations and actual mobility is an important finding with possible implications for policymakers and university leaders around the world. Students' aspirations might still inform actions even if many students' initial plans are abandoned. Likewise, the findings problematize commonly held assumptions about students from the Global South and their mobility; despite international student migration being on the increase, students in Ghana have limited knowledge of the relevant visa regulations and have general reservations against migration. The common intention to return in the short to medium term suggests that Ghanaian students are interested in migration for educational purposes.

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