

An Assessment of Ghana's Policies and Institutional Framework to Promote State-led Academic Diaspora Engagement

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Abstract

Despite African governments' increased interest in tapping the development potential of their diaspora, the transfer of skills by professors and researchers in higher education institutions abroad has received limited attention. Known as the academic diaspora, these groups are recognised as reliable mediators for African universities in the midst of unending globalisation, transnationalism and internationalisation of higher education. This article explores Ghana's policy environment and institutional framework to tap the development potential of its academic diaspora for higher education. We conclude that capacity building and the extension of rights and privileges are important elements that need to be embraced by the government to motivate experienced and highly skilled academics to contribute to the country's higher education sector.

Key words: academic diaspora, Ghana, diaspora engagement, higher education, skills transfer, brain gain

Malgré l'intérêt accru des gouvernements africains pour exploiter le potentiel de développement de leur diaspora, le transfert de compétences par les professeurs et les chercheurs des établissements d'enseignement

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supérieur à l'étranger a reçu une attention limitée. Connus sous le nom de diaspora universitaire, ces groupes sont reconnus comme des médiateurs fiables pour les universités africaines au milieu d'une mondialisation sans fin, du transnationalisme et de l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur. Cet article explore l'environnement politique créé et le cadre institutionnel mis en œuvre par le Ghana pour exploiter le potentiel de développement de sa diaspora universitaire au profit de l'enseignement supérieur. Nous concluons que le renforcement des capacités et l'extension des droits et privilèges sont des éléments importants que le gouvernement doit adopter pour motiver des universitaires expérimentés et hautement qualifiés à contribuer au secteur de l'enseignement supérieur du pays.

Mots clés: diaspora universitaire, Ghana, engagement de la diaspora, enseignement supérieur, transfert de compétences, gain de cerveaux

Introduction

Over the years, the impact of migration in the broader context of development has been studied in relation to the gaps (for example, brain drain) that it creates in the home country (Mangala, 2017; Tonah and Setrana, 2017). However, the past few years have witnessed increased interest in the African diaspora in general and in the African academic diaspora (hereinafter AAD) in particular, as a recourse to address Africa's marginalisation in the global intellectual space (Ogachi, 2016). Members of the AAD are recognised as reliable mediators for African universities in the midst of unending globalisation, transnationalism and internationalisation of higher education (Ogachi, 2016; Foulds and Zeleza, 2014).

There are limited statistical data on the AAD (Ogachi, 2016; Zeleza, 2004). Mensah explains that although the potential benefit of engaging academic diaspora is enormous, it is

hard to estimate accurately, as there is no reliable database. ... for a long time now, most of the top students from African universities have sought and gained admissions, normally with scholarships, grants and teaching assistantships, to Western universities to pursue their graduate studies; and many have chosen not to return. These diasporans tend to be the proverbial cream of the crop. Of course, some excellent students choose to stay behind, but the size of the latter is nowhere near that of the former. The World Bank has made a number of attempts to develop a database of African diaspora, but, to date, no comprehensive database exists (cited in Dell, University World News, 2020¹).

It is estimated that there were more than 300,000 Africans in the diaspora with higher education qualifications in 2009, of which 30,000 had

doctoral degrees (Ogachi, 2016, citing Shinn, 2008). Other estimates record between 20,000 and 25,000 African faculty in American universities and colleges (Ogachi, 2016). A number of African countries have designed or are in the process of designing more diaspora-friendly policies that do not require the AAD to relocate permanently, but enable them to engage with institutions in their home countries under conditions convenient to both parties (Ogachi, 2016). At the continental level, the African Union (AU) Executive Council meetings in 2005 and 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria and Khartoum, Sudan, respectively recognised the important role of the African scientific diaspora in improving Science and Technology on the continent. A decade later, African governments' interest in academic diasporas was revived through the Continental Forum convened at the Headquarters of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from November 13-14, 2019, with the aim of unravelling *The Role of the Diaspora in Higher Education, Research, and Innovation in Africa*. The Forum was organised by the Institute of African Studies, Carleton University, Canada in conjunction with the AU's Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Setrana, 2019). At the national level, countries such as Nigeria and Ghana have demonstrated interest in engaging their AAD to address the increasing shortage of teaching and research staff due to the recent expansion of their universities (Teye, Alhassan and Setrana, 2017).

These positive developments notwithstanding, there is little evidence of African governments' proactive engagement with the academic diaspora (Zeleza, 2012, p. 36). Many AAD programmes are individual voluntary contributions or projects spearheaded by international organisations to support skills transfer for the development of education (Mensah et al., 2018; Setrana, 2019). Examples include the International Organization of Migration's (IOM) Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA); the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals; and the Carnegie Corporation's Next Generation of Academics in Africa Project.

It is against this background that we use Ghana as a case study to explore the extent of the nation's interest and readiness to engage its academic diaspora through the setting up of programmes, institutions and policy guidelines for the development of the higher education sector. We argue that, in order for the government to benefit from its academic diaspora, there is a need for initiatives that nurture their sense of belonging. Current programmes include the annual homecoming summit and the year of return by the Diaspora Office, Office of the President.

The article relies heavily on the policy approaches used by different countries that were identified by Gamlen (2006). The different approaches were mapped to analyse Ghana's capacity and readiness in extending rights

1. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200212080543756>

to and extracting obligations from its diaspora. We conceptualise academic diaspora policy engagement as capacity building and extending rights and privileges to the academic diaspora for the purposes of establishing an appropriate atmosphere for skills transfer to the home country for development. Rather than focusing on the three categories identified by Gamlen, we argue that, in order for the extraction of obligations to function effectively, institutions, programmes and policies should be sufficiently practical and flexible. We use the typologies he identified to explore the extent to which migration/diaspora policies and institutions in Ghana promote academic diaspora engagement. The article's contribution is to demonstrate that, in order for academic diaspora to transfer their skills in support of the higher education sector in Ghana, the government needs to develop concrete institutions, programmes and policies.

The term academic diaspora is derived from the broad definition of diaspora - the Greek word *diasperien*, which is derived from *dia* -, 'across', and *seperien*, 'to sow or scatter seeds' as well as the African definition of diaspora. For the purposes of this article, it is defined as highly skilled/qualified Ghanaians working in universities and research centres in destination areas who have migrated and are resident outside Ghana, those born to Ghanaian parents living outside Ghana described as the second and third generations, the youth (who migrated from Ghana or were born abroad), descendants of enslaved Africans and all persons of African descent who have historical and cultural ties with Ghana and an interest in the country's development.

The data for this article were sourced from Ghana's academic and policy databases and triangulated from various organisations, including the Ministries of Education, and Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Diaspora Affairs Offices, and selected universities. Interviews were conducted with five key stakeholders from Diaspora Affairs, Office of the President (DAOOP), the Diaspora Affairs Unit (DAU) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the Ministry of Education, and two public universities. Descriptive and prescriptive analysis were used to analyse the policies and institutions.

The first section of this article discusses the conceptual approach to diaspora engagement policies developed by Gamlen (2006). Section two provides a historical account of academic diaspora engagement in Ghana, while the third section details the policies and institutions relevant to the government's academic diaspora programmes. The final section critically analyses the country's readiness to engage the academic diaspora and presents conclusions.

Conceptual Approach: A Review of the Literature

This article relies on Gamlen's (2006) classification of the policy approaches to diaspora engagement used by different countries, to analyse Ghana's capacity and readiness to extend rights as well as extract obligations from its diaspora. Gamlen (2006) categorises diaspora engagement policies into three broad areas; however, only two are used in relation to programmes aimed at extracting obligations from the diaspora. Gamlen's mapping revealed that one of the key elements running through diaspora engagement policies was capacity building which includes symbolic nation and institution building (Gamlen, 2006). In relation to the former, home country governments establish a relationship with diasporas that is based on state-centred national identities (Gamlen, 2006, Gonzalez Gutierrez, 1999; Foucault, 1982). The objective is to enhance the diaspora's sense of attachment to home. Symbolic nation building activities include conferences, symbols, cultural programmes and homecoming summits, among others. In the case of Ghana, they include Emancipation Day, the Joseph Project, and the Pan African Historical Theatre Project (also called the Pan African Festival (PANAFEST)). However, these projects aimed to enhance the relationship with the diaspora in general. On the other hand, institution building involves the creation of consular and consultative bodies; transnational networks and ministerial agencies to manage diaspora engagements, including with academic diaspora. Ghanaian examples include the creation of the Diaspora Affairs Unit under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI) and the DAOOP as well as the establishment of the Diaspora Desk for missions abroad. Such institutions usually aim to encourage investment in the country rather than encouraging academic diaspora to transfer their knowledge and skills to support Ghana's overburdened and weak higher education sector.

The second feature of diaspora engagement policies is countries' extension of rights to their diaspora through political incorporation, provision of civil and social services and protection of their rights (Gamlen, 2006). While most countries desire to protect their emigrants, only a few have adopted practical measures to achieve this. Such rights include citizenship rights, voting rights, and the portability of pensions and other social benefits from destination countries. While Ghana's constitution allows for dual citizenship and some categories of diaspora have voting rights, it is not clear whether these provisions were aimed at motivating academic diaspora to transfer their skills back home.

The third type of diaspora programmes are those that aim to extract obligations from the diaspora. Thus, the government liaises with emigrants with the aim of regaining lost skills and resources. Measures in this regard

include remittances, bonds, investment and skills transfer. Among the various engagement policies and programmes, governments have adopted measures to formalise, enhance and coordinate the flows of investment and remittances for national development.

We argue that, in order for the government to extract the academic diaspora's skills and knowledge, there is a need for existing and future institutions and programmes to focus specifically on this group. Firstly, the government needs to recognise the gaps in university education in Ghana; and secondly, it should establish state-led programmes and activities aimed at motivating the engagement of highly skilled Ghanaians working in credible universities in destination countries.

Historical Antecedents of State-led Academic Diaspora Interventions in Ghana

In Ghana, state-led diaspora engagements have existed since the country gained independence in 1957. Its first president, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, and subsequent governments sought to engage Ghana's diaspora through programmes such as Emancipation Day, the Joseph Project, and PANAFEST, etc. (Alhassan, 2010). The first state diaspora-led engagement in Ghana was the All African People's Conference in 1958 (Manuh and Asante, 2005) that aimed to unite Africa and its diaspora for the development of the continent. However, following the overthrow of Dr Nkrumah, enthusiasm for this project waned until the year 2000 when President John Agyekum Kuffour took up the reins of government (Teye et al., 2017). In 2001, he organised a homecoming summit in Accra around the theme, "Harnessing the Global Ghanaian Resource Potential for Accelerated National Development", with the aim of motivating the diaspora to transfer their skills and resources to Ghana (Manuh and Asante, 2005). Following the summit, a number of Ghanaians returned to the country to take up ministerial positions. Furthermore, in collaboration with the academic diaspora, the University of Ghana published a book on migration and development titled "At Home in the World? International Migration and Development in Contemporary Ghana and West Africa (ibid)". The state-diaspora-led engagement facilitated by these initiatives led to the establishment of the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of Ghana in 2006 with the support of the Netherlands government and the UNDP. The Centre aims to build capacity on migration and diaspora issues. Its core mandate is teaching, research, and policy development and assessment. Since 2000, subsequent government administrations have maintained engagement with the Ghanaian diaspora.

In 2012, the Diaspora Affairs Unit was established under the auspices of the MFARI through a joint effort of the IOM, Ghana, the Deutsche Gesell-

schaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the CMS (Teye et al., 2017). In 2014, the Unit organised a Diaspora Capital workshop in Accra that was funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) through the Migration EU eXpertise (MIEUX) initiative (*ibid*). The purpose of the workshop was to initiate the drafting of a diaspora engagement policy to solidify and formalise dialogue between the state and its diaspora. Among other objectives, the draft policy seeks to encourage the short-term return of professionals and academics to support teaching and research at university level. The CMS was tasked with leading the development of a national migration policy with support from the technical committee, which was made up of all relevant ministries (including Education, Health, the Interior and Foreign Affairs) and international organisations such as the IOM, EU and GIZ. The policy was drafted during the Mahama-led administration and the current administration of President Akufo Addo is seeking to finalise and launch it through the DAOOP, with the CMS at the University of Ghana, Legon, as the consultants.

In 2017, President Akufo Addo's administration set up the DAOOP in addition to the existing Diaspora Affairs Unit in the MFARI (DAU, MFARI, 2019). It seeks to promote dialogue and harness diaspora resources, both tangible and intangible, for the development of Ghana's economy. This has created opportunities for the diaspora with higher education and practical experience to be involved in their home country. For instance, the president has appointed more than 40 members of the Ghanaian diaspora to various national positions including those who previously held full-time academic and research positions in the diaspora (Representative of DAOOP, 2019). In July 2019, the DAOOP organised the Diaspora Homecoming Summit, which provided a platform for diaspora academics to engage academic institutions in Ghana for possible collaboration, return, readmission and reintegration.

These examples demonstrate the extent to which successive governments in Ghana have shown an interest in engaging the diaspora for national development. However, the place of the academic diaspora in these discourses remains unclear; this motivated the research on which this article has been developed.

Towards a State-led Academic Diaspora Programme for Higher Education and Research

Gaps in Existing Educational and Migration Policies in Ghana

This section evaluates the extent to which existing education and migration policies acknowledge the potential contribution of the academic diaspora. Ghana's Education Strategic Plan, 2018-2030 guides all levels of educa-

tional engagement. In 2016, the country adopted a national migration policy, which serves as a national framework to manage diverse types of migration and diaspora. Diaspora and labour migration policies have also been developed, but are yet to be launched. This section discusses some of these policies, which are underpinned by historical and contemporary national policy guidelines.

Ghanaian tertiary institutions are largely self-regulated with some oversight by the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB) (Ministry of Education, 2018, pp. 10-13). While the Education Strategic Plan, 2018-2030 includes sections on how to enhance the quality of tertiary education, it makes no mention of diaspora involvement. Based on the policy approaches used by different countries that are identified by Gamlen (2006), such approaches might include activities and programmes for Ghana's academic diaspora to transfer their knowledge and skills through supervision, teaching and mentoring. Highly skilled Ghanaians with experience in recognised universities in destination areas who are willing to support the growth of Ghana's higher education sector, should be given the opportunity to do so through the Education Strategic Plan.

Under the sub-heading, 'Diaspora Resources and Development', the National Migration Policy (Ministry of Interior, 2016, pp. 69-72) identifies the critical role played by diaspora skills and knowledge transfer in Ghana's development. The policy also sets out strategies for the implementation of its objectives, including, "mainstream diaspora investments, skills, and knowledge transfer into development planning; create incentives for diaspora investment, trade, and technology transfer and facilitate citizenship and residency rights." The mainstreaming strategy demands that the government, through the Ministry of Education, institutes state- and diaspora-led programmes to engage academic diaspora in the broad strategies of the Education Strategic Plan for 2020 and beyond. The third and fourth strategies are incentives to motivate the academic diaspora who volunteer to be part of these programmes and to sustain the operations of the diaspora programme. As noted in the policy approaches identified by Gamlen (2006), such measures may also include strengthening and expanding relationships with universities and research institutions in destination areas. Joseph Mensah observes that:

An approach that might work is for institutions to rely or expand upon their existing partnership agreements in such a way that a diaspora scholar can choose to teach 'here' (overseas) or 'there' (Africa), depending on need and circumstances, with the overseas institution supporting or sharing the cost involved as part of the partnership agreement, or in exchange for their own students' engagements in

Africa – per field trips to Africa, for instance (cited in Dell, University World News, 2020³).

The draft³ diaspora policy seeks to promote transnational networks and skills transfer for sustainable development. It recognises the transnationality of the Ghanaian diaspora and recommends that the ideas, knowledge and social capital acquired abroad are institutionalised at the level of national or international organisations (for example, the IOM and UNDP) (DAOOP, 2019, p. 10). At present, Ghanaian diaspora professionals and academics mainly transfer their skills through individual initiatives. The policy suggests that they should be engaged through short-term consultancies such as sabbatical leave in Ghana. The main strategies outlined in the draft policy to engage academic diaspora in state-diaspora led programmes for higher education and research (MFARI, 2019, p. 10) are:

- Map and regularly update a database of the skills of the Ghanaian diaspora;
- Provide clear and concise information, preferably through the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre and the Diaspora Affairs Bureau on the steps in initiating business/development ventures in Ghana;
- Promote collaboration between diaspora professionals/associations and those in Ghana to strengthen knowledge transfer and support by providing up-to-date data on Ghana's human resource needs;
- Assist local institutions to improve their efficiency in accessing available intellectual and technical resources from the diaspora and peoples of African descent; and
- Collaborate with development partners such as the IOM, GIZ, JICA, and UNDP to fund short-term knowledge exchanges and consultancies.

These strategies involve mechanisms such as the creation of academic transnational networks, an up-to-date database and institutionalising information strategies to keep academic diaspora abreast with the situation in Ghana. They could also include capacity building and extending rights to the academic diaspora.

The labour migration policy⁴ seeks to strengthen the labour migration governance system and promote policy coherence, collection and analysis of reliable data, and protection of the rights of migrants and their families.

2. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200212080543756>

3. Prepared by a consortium for the DAOOP, the DAU, and the MFARI led by Delali Badasu, Stephen Kwankye, Yaw Benneh, Joseph Teye, Osman Alhassan, Leander Kandilige and Mary Setrana from the CMS, University of Ghana, 2020

4. Prepared by Joseph Teye, Director, CMS, University of Ghana for the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, 2019

Once implemented, it will streamline labour migration for greater impact on Ghana's development. The policy adopts a triple win-win approach for the migrant, and the receiving and sending countries. Through the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, the government would develop the framework for the creation, recruitment, operationalisation and sustenance of academic local/state-diaspora led programmes for higher education and research.

The policies presented above are broad national policies that address different national interests and issues. Using the typologies identified by Gamlen as a guide, we argue that a combination of such typologies would ensure that the academic diaspora is included in the design of higher education programmes. When expanded, these typologies offer policy guidelines for the implementation of such an academic programme. Their content is relevant and important in making the case for the need to integrate the academic diaspora in higher education in the country.

Key Actors and Institutions

This section discusses institution building which involves the creation of consular and consultative bodies; transnational networks and a ministerial agency to manage diaspora engagements, including academic diaspora.

No concrete state-led academic diaspora interventions currently exist in Ghana. However, key policies like the National Migration Policy and the two yet to be launched policies (diaspora engagements and labour migration) discussed above suggest that an enabling policy environment exists for the establishment of such a programme. A key contribution of these policies is their identification and assignment of roles and coordination responsibilities among national actors. The various government agencies, institutions and departments that are discussed below fall under the capacity building category within the framework for mapping diaspora engagement policies; and the media through which the academic diaspora can express their concerns to the government.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for all levels of Ghana's educational system. It has the capacity to collaborate closely with other relevant ministries to ensure the implementation of a state-led academic diaspora programme. The Ministry could improve teaching and learning conditions in tertiary institutions and simplify complex bureaucratic processes to attract Ghana's academic diaspora and, in turn, improve research and innovation in teaching and learning. A specific desk could be created to liaise with academic diaspora who are interested in transferring their skills to Ghana.

The MFARI is mandated to provide for the social and economic welfare needs of Ghanaian migrants abroad (MFARI, 2019). It operates through

Ghana's missions abroad and the Diaspora Affairs Unit to protect Ghanaian emigrants within the country's policy and legal structures. The Ministry has established offices and units that connect with all diaspora.

The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations is mandated to promote the creation of productive employment in all economic sectors including tertiary education (Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, Retrieved on 21 June, 2019). One of the ways of achieving this and addressing the skills gap in the education sector is to engage the Ghanaian academic diaspora. Instead of employing expatriates to provide technical skills, the Labour Department within the ministry should lobby for the launch and implementation of a labour migration policy that could support short-term voluntary services by the diaspora.

In terms of the National Migration Policy, the Ministry of Interior has the responsibility to formulate policies and strategic plans in accordance with the country's broad legal and policy framework to manage migration (MoI, 2016). Its Migration Unit collaborates with the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) to manage entry into and exit from Ghana. The GIS issues visas on arrival to some countries while the MoI issues dual citizenship for Ghanaians and naturalisation for the diaspora. These issues are very important for the smooth sojourn of members of the academic diaspora who may need such assistance for many reasons.

The DAOOP was set up in February 2017 to coordinate all national engagements with the Ghanaian diaspora (DAOOP, 2021). It operates from the Office of the President and is headed by a Director, assisted by a Deputy Director, an Administrator, a Legal and Research Officer, and a Youth Ambassador (*ibid*). It is also responsible for leading the implementation of the Ghana diaspora engagement policy to promote sustainable development. The office adopts a multi-stakeholder approach and engages all groups and institutions such as government ministries, academia, Ghanaian associations abroad, the private sector, and non-profit and international organisations to ensure that the Ghanaian diaspora is informed about Ghana. The office also "explores the most attractive and cost-effective means to encourage investments and capital inflow from the diaspora and transform remittances into sustainable development finance" (DAOOP website, Retrieved on 10th July, 2019). It engages academics in various institutions to support universities in Ghana and has initiated the Ghana Graduate International Service and the Diaspora National Service for the academic diaspora with higher education qualifications to volunteer their services in the country. The DAOOP maintains a database of academic diaspora programmes and their needs for dissemination to Ghana's missions abroad (Representative of DAOOP, 2019).

The Diaspora Affairs Unit (DAU) operates as a support unit to the

DAOOP, but works under the MFARI (Agyemang and Setrana, 2014). It also collaborates with the National Migration Commission (made up of relevant ministries, departments and agencies) to coordinate the implementation of the Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP) within the MFARI. A state-led programme could be facilitated, established and implemented within this framework. Both outfits could work to expedite engagement with academic Ghanaian diaspora either individually or through bilateral agreements with universities and networks in major destination countries – the UK, US and Germany - for Ghanaian emigrants to create an enabling environment for the transfer of skills and knowledge in the tertiary education sector.

Ghana's missions abroad serve as the point of contact for Ghanaian emigrants in their host countries (*ibid*). They liaise between these emigrants and the government to provide information on the state-led academic diaspora programme and could create a diaspora desk for this purpose.

The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) advises the Minister on measures to improve the provision of tertiary education in the country. It is mandated

to enquire into the financial needs of the institutions of tertiary education and advise the Minister accordingly; to recommend to the Minister, for the purposes of the preparation of the annual national education budget, block allocations of funds towards running costs; and grants towards capital expenditure of each institution of tertiary education, indicating how the allocations are to be disbursed; to advise governing councils of institutions of tertiary education on suitable measures for generating additional funds for their institutions (NCTE, Retrieved on 22 June, 2019).

The Council is supported by the Finance/Audit Committee, Academic Committee; and the Infrastructure and Promotion Committees (*ibid*). The strategic positioning of this council enables it to advise the minister on the need to support quality tertiary education by institutions and policy guidelines to attract Ghanaian academics.

Despite the significance of these institutions, the main gap is that they do not target the academic diaspora per se. Even if specific institutions cannot be created to manage the academic diaspora, their developmental contribution to higher education must be acknowledged and harnessed. The creation of special desks in these offices would enhance their ability to liaise with the academic diaspora for the purposes of developing the tertiary education sector.

Discussion and Conclusion: Policy Guidelines and Institutional Frameworks for a State-led Academic Diaspora Programme

The data suggests that the Ghanaian government does not have state-led

academic diaspora programmes for higher education, although several projects have been launched to engage the diaspora since the country's independence. Our analysis shows that the policy and institutional environment has the potential to encourage the academic diaspora's involvement in higher education development. However, policy and institutional challenges remain.

While the Education Strategic Plan makes no mention of academic diaspora engagement; the National Migration Policy, which was launched in 2016, is still in its initial implementation stages. The DEP and the labour migration policies have yet to be launched. Furthermore, while the DAOOP has launched some initiatives, it lacks funds to implement them. A key informant from an international organisation stated:

The worry is that it is expensive to manage economic diaspora compared to other professionals, or have academic diaspora programmes. For the academic diaspora, we will have to provide accommodation, stipend, basic insurance among others, which are usually not the case when it comes to funding other professionals such as entrepreneurs (Representative of the IOM, 2019).

However, such arguments pertain to the academic diaspora's physical presence on their home soil, neglecting other less expensive options such as online/tele teaching, curriculum co-development and graduate student mentoring (Foulds and Zeleza, 2014).

Other informants identified the lack of coordination and collaboration among institutions as a major challenge. They noted that information is not shared with other ministries, departments and agencies. In addition, the data collected by the GIS is not user friendly, limiting its capacity to inform planning in other economic sectors. It was noted that, through the National Migration Commission, the National Migration Policy, once implemented, could address some of these challenges.

Continuity and coherence remain a challenge when it comes to policy implementation and institutional operations (see Notermans, 1998), sometimes resulting in the stalling of government projects. Resources initially invested in such projects are thus wasted. In this regard, some informants described the current government's decision to pursue the diaspora engagement policy initiated by the former administration as a positive development.

It should be noted that diaspora activities in Ghana generate significant economic resources. For example, in 2019, total personal remittances received amounted to 3,521 billion dollars, representing 5.26% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank, 2019).

Social remittances such as academic knowledge transfer could swell the contributions of the Ghanaian diaspora. However, the diaspora's investment

in this area is not as intense as in areas such as business and investment. Ghana focuses on all kinds of professional diaspora engagement for the benefit of the country. While some universities encourage academic engagement, there is currently no comprehensive national diaspora programme and engagements are negotiated and funded at the university rather than the national level.

The discussion on Ghana's enabling environment is linked to the policy approach identified by Gamlen's (2006) mapping of diaspora engagement across different countries. Three broad themes emerged as components to harness the full potential of the academic diaspora for national development. We argue that while Ghana has been actively pursuing the first two, the third, which is equally important, has received less attention and lacks coordinated effort.

The first theme is capacity building that involves programmes that will produce state-centred diaspora communities through celebrations of national days, conferences, home coming summits and other symbolic events. As we have shown, programmes such as the national home coming summits, PANAFEST, and the year of return fall under the Ghanaian government's efforts in this regard. These activities contribute to a form of symbolic nation building and reinforce the shared national identity (see also Panossian, 2003; One Eyed Cat, 2006). However, state institutions that coordinate the activities of the newly created diaspora communities are required if these efforts are to be sustainable. Examples in Ghana include the DAOOP and the Diaspora Affairs Unit. However, the country has yet to create diaspora desks in all major destination countries for mobilising academic diaspora in particular. Such desks could host annual conferences or summits aimed at senior researchers and professors abroad.

The second concept of the typologies is strategies that extend rights to a country's diaspora. Examples include dual citizenship, voting rights, social security services, and labour rights, among others. Dual citizenship enables the academic diaspora to participate in higher education in their home country on a permanent or temporary basis. However, while dual citizenship is technically accommodating, access and usage can be complicated. For example, for a member of the academic diaspora to occupy certain high-level national positions in Ghana, s/he will need to denounce her/his foreign citizenship. Article 8 (2) of the Constitution as well as Act 591 of 2000 disallow dual citizens from occupying certain public positions or offices. Examples of such positions include Ambassadors or High Commissioners, Secretary to the Cabinet, Chief Justice and Justices of the Supreme Court.

Also on the issue of rights, the Representation of the Peoples Amendment Act (ROPAL) (Act 699 of 2016) allows Ghanaians in the diaspora to

vote in general elections in the country. However, full implementation of this Act has not been possible due to the Ghana Electoral Commission's logistical constraints.

The final broad theme includes programmes aimed at extracting obligations from the academic diaspora. These include diverting some diaspora funds for academic engagement, and advertising positions for short- and long-term transfer of knowledge to home institutions. Ghana has yet to strategically position itself at the national level in this regard. Compared to the first two dimensions, Ghana's national efforts to attract the academic diaspora leave much to be desired. This does not mean that such transfers and extractions from the Ghanaian academic diaspora do not exist, but that they are largely informal or organised by international organisations and are often left to the country's higher education institutions to initiate.

To conclude, we argue for a national academic diaspora programme for Ghana which aims to optimise the potential contribution of the academic diaspora and minimise the risks. Such a policy should recognise the challenges academics face in their home country by advancing the socio-economic and academic wellbeing of all those involved in higher education, research and innovation for national development. It would reduce the risk of creating an upper middle class of diasporas within and among academics as well as prevent further brain drain.

This article has shown that policies have been drafted to provide a policy framework for a state-led academic diaspora programme in Ghana. We also identified the state actors and institutions that could coordinate and implement such a project. Having identified several obstacles to implementing an academic diaspora programme, we argue that these challenges are not specific to the proposed programme but are inherent in the national policy and coordination framework; and that they can be addressed when the policies are rolled out and implemented. In conclusion, we recommend that the state-led academic diaspora programme be woven into already existing and yet to be implemented policies to ensure its smooth implementation. Given that strategically important migration policies are slowly being implemented, the timing has never been better.

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