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# Migration and Brain Drain: A Case Study of African Students in Southern Sweden

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# Abstract

The international migration of both skilled and unskilled persons from the global South to the North has reached an alarming proportion. This study investigates the underlying factors that informed the decisions of some African students not to return to their countries of origin after graduation from the Swedish Universities. The participants are former and present students of two Swedish Universities based in the Southern region, Lund University and Malmö University. It uses two international migration theories, the Neoclassical Economic Migration (NEM) theory, the New Economics of migration theory (NELM) and Brain drain approaches. It appears that the factors which compelled African student-migrants to remain behind in Sweden after studies include bad economic situations, worsening educational situations and conflict situation in their home countries. Considering the present situation of the participants, this paper does not find evidence of a brain drain, but brain gain. The participants benefited from high quality education, free tuition fees that existed in Sweden before 2011 and that gives them the opportunity to search for employment internationally. In conclusion, although many African students would like to stay in Sweden after graduation, but the impetus is to accumulate sufficient knowledge and financial resources that would enable them to return to their countries to start up their own business even if they cannot find employment elsewhere. Thus, there is a clear indication that a stable economic and political environment, support for social security would encourage many African students residing in Sweden to return to their countries of origin after graduation.

**Key words:** African students, Migration, Brain Drain, Study, Sweden

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## **List of Abbreviations**

IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labor Organization
HDR	Human Development Report
NELM	New Economics of Labor Migration
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
IDRC	International Development Research Center
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
USD	United State Dollars

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# Table of Contents

1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Aim .....	3
1.3 Significance .....	3
1.4 Organization of the paper .....	4
1.5 Previous Research .....	4
2 Methodology.....	6
2.1 Methods.....	6
2.2 Case Studies .....	7
2.3 Sampling.....	9
2.4 Research Environment.....	10
2.5 Limitations.....	11
3 Theoretical framework.....	12
3.1 Neoclassical migration theory.....	12
3.2 The New Economics of Labour Migration.....	14
3.3 Brain drain.....	14
4. Analysis of Empirical Evidence .....	16
4.1 Economic Situation .....	16
4.2 Educational situation .....	19
4.3 Conflict situation .....	20
5 Discussion/Conclusion .....	21
References .....	24
Appendix I .....	27
Appendix II .....	28

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# 1 Introduction

Migration is not a new phenomenon, for centuries people have moved constantly from one country to another as a result of either forced or voluntary migration. However, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of international migrants over the past 10 years from an estimated 150 million in 2000 to 214 million in 2011 ( IOM, 2015). According to the United Nations estimate, about 3 percent of the world's population (191 million people) now lives in countries other than their original countries of birth. Of which, 33 percent of the number moved from developing countries into developed countries (Xu, 2007). The recent increase in outflow migration from less developed countries to developed countries is assumed to be associated with globalization. Conable (2014:1) defines globalization as the information age, integration, transnational movement, an intersection of global and other special qualities. For Castle and Miller (2009: 3), international migration is a central dynamic within globalization, which has greatly eased labor and capital mobility all over the world. Thus, globalization shapes development and migration nexus.

The link between migration and development has been debated extensively in the literature (Brettell et al., 2008). Yet, there is no agreement on the direction of the interaction between them, but according to HDR- Human Development Report 2009, mobility increases human development if and only if it is a voluntary mobility. For instance, migration could boost productivity, provide migrants with employment opportunities and higher wages that will not only be enough for the migrants, but they could support their families back home in their countries of origin. Hence, migration can contribute to economic growth, economic development and human development, not only to the economies of their countries of origin, but also those of their host country.

Africa has generated significant outflows of international migration, mainly to Western Europe, but also to North America and the Arab region. According to one African scholar, the migration of Africans into Europe and North America can be traced back to the 1960s, when large numbers of Africans migrated, engaging in a record expansion of access to education across Europe and America (Adepoju, 2004). For Wusu (2006), the number of Africans heading out of the continent was initially small during the 1960s, although this later increased due to the deteriorating state of the social, political and economical conditions of their various countries. It

is estimated that around 27,000 highly educated Africans migrated to developed countries between 1960 and 1975; and migration increased to around 40,000 annually during the following decade. The number increased at about 80,000 in 1987, but has leveled down to about 20,000 a year since 1990 due to tightening migration rules across Western Europe and North America” (Wusu, 2006: 91-92).

Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the number of students from different parts of the world coming to Sweden for studies. The Swedish government offered free tuition fees for foreign students across the world between 1990 and 2011. But, since autumn term 2011, students who are citizens of countries outside the European Union(EU), the European Economic Areas(EEA) and Switzerland are required to pay tuition fees. A few African students whose family members could afford to pay for their living costs before the introduction of school fees in the Swedish Universities benefited. In essence, African students were not left out in the Swedish free tuition offer, but they make up a fraction of the international students in Swedish Universities. Meanwhile, the number of African students has dwindled since the introduction of school fees in the Swedish Universities, but those who came to Sweden to study are not returning back to Africa either. Yet, the majority of African students is young with previous educational qualification such as high school diploma and university degrees. Their level of education entitles them to pursue either Bachelor degree or Master degree programs in the Swedish Universities.

Some argue that globalization tools such internets, cell phones and multimedia have made it easy for the students when they completed their education to extend search for employment beyond their host countries(El-Khawas, 2004). According to Tebeje (2015), from International Research Centre, Canada, most of the money spent on training African professionals and students abroad were received as aid from the developed countries. He argued that cost of brain drain is high. For example, he estimated that US\$40, 000 is approximately the cost required in further training of a Kenyan medical doctor and US\$15,000 for a Kenyan University student. Besides, 35 percent of Africa’s official development assistance is spent on recruiting expatriates; even though there are over 300,000 African professionals who reside outside the continent (ibid). He adds that African continent as well as other developing countries are (*subsidizing*) the OECD countries due to the movement of graduate students and highly trained personnel such as engineers, doctors, nurses and paramedics (ibid). Suggesting that, African governments spend

more on hiring expatriate while losing African professionals and African student-migrants<sup>1</sup> to the developed countries which is assumed has a negative impact on the development of Africa and other less developed countries (Benedict & Ukpere, 2012).

Benedict & Ukpere (2012), further argue that African countries since independence are faced with a brain drain phenomenon– migration of highly skilled Africans from the continent of Africa to other parts of the world which has left some countries in Africa short of skills to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Some authors argue that brain drain could be accompanied with brain gain. They add that migrants send remittances back home, make investments and establish business relationship between their home and destination countries. In abroad, they acquired advanced knowledge in the chosen profession, become highly skilled and established networks that help to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in their countries of origin, such as in China, Mexico, Turkey and India (Batista t al., 2012; Kamoche, 2011; Beine et al., 2011; Crush & Frayne, 2010; De Haas, 2005). From these perspectives, this study proceeds to investigate the central research question below.

*What factors motivate African students to remain in Sweden after study?*

## 1.2 Aim

This study has two aims, first, the aim of this study is to understand the factors which informed the decision of some African students not to go back to their countries of origin after graduation from the Swedish Universities. Second, to understand whether African student-migrants have become part of the brain drain or brain gain African migrants.

## 1.3 Significance

The relationship between international migration and brain drain has attracted great attention across academia because its impact has social, economic and political consequences. Thus, in order to generate much knowledge about the issue, case studies become imperative to obtain

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<sup>1</sup> African student-migrants suggest African students whose visa status have changed from that of students to migrants in their host countries. Some of them might have acquired residence status or become undocumented migrants.

different experiences from African student-migrants in Sweden whom themselves are involved. In the literature, there are those who believe that African development might have been stalled due to migration of African students, skilled and professionals. Understanding the factors that influence African student-migrants are vital in order to contribute to the debate about the relationship between migration and brain drain. Through this way, this study will provide additional insight required to assess the constraints and potential of African student-migrants as a tool for African development.

## 1.4 Organization of the paper

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. Chapter one begins with the general introduction, followed with a research question, aim, significance and end with research overview. Chapter two presents the methodology, the theory and methods which inform this study. Chapter three situates this study in its analytical and theoretical frameworks. Chapter four is the analysis of the empirical evidence. Chapter five is the discussion and conclusion. It examines the central argument with previous findings and discusses the usefulness of theories before drawing conclusions

## 1.5 Previous Research

Shinn (2008) investigated cases of Brain drain across African countries. He found that the reason highly educated Africans migrate are many, but key factors include bad economic situation and political instability. For example, as the living conditions declined and conflict intensified in Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, in the 1990s, some of these countries' professionals, including students who could afford the cost of migrating overseas searched for opportunities in other parts of the world and left Africa. Although, since independence in the 1960s and 1970s, these countries have continued to experience weak economies, high unemployment, high corruption, low wages, and a generally high level of poverty. Even in the twenty-first century, the economic situations that existed in Europe in the seventieth century still exist in most African countries. And as such, the present African professionals as well as students tend to look for opportunities elsewhere.

Apart from that, human rights abuse, absence of academic freedom and illegal regime changes in many of the African countries also contributed to the increase in the level of brain drain taken place in Africa. Low wage is another factor that often makes African professionals and students to migrate. For example, graduates of medicine in Kenya are paid an average of about 1,000 USD per month. While in some developed countries, they could receive a salary as high as 14,000 USD monthly. In few other African countries other than Kenya, physicians earn as low as 100 USD per month and this difference in wages has a major effect in making professionals abandon their jobs in Africa and migrate to other parts of the world where they can make more money and earn higher wages for the same jobs (ibid).

Chimanikire (2003), found in his study of brain drain in Africa that weak institution is the problem. According to the study, educational institutions lack autonomy. Hence, such situation prevents professionalism in the majority of African countries, and this contributes to making students as well as other highly trained professionals choose to migrate to other parts of the world. Lack of research and training facilities weakness morale, discourages professionalism and contribute to the brain drain of student from developing continent such as Africa. Besides, the relationship between the government and the Universities in Africa is also very hostile. The governments are more often in control of the Universities, and their strict control makes the University administration have a minimal involvement in the education policies. According to Chimanikire, “Most Sub-Saharan Africa do not have particularly friendly working environments, strong budgets, clear policies or generous research funds and there is often no national policy for or even little investment in science and technology” (p. 12). Although some African countries like South Africa and Botswana are exceptions in this regard due to their stronger economies. Nevertheless, the two countries also lose a substantial number of professionals and students annually to the developed countries in Europe and North America (p.13).

In contrast to push factors, according to research done in 2003 and supported by the European Commission, it is stated that access to technology and scientific equipment is one of the main factors influencing the mobility of researchers, but lack of it leads to brain drain of African professionals and graduate students (Times Higher Education, 2003). Thus, the pull factors are attributed to professionalism in the developed countries. The level of career development and job mobility is high, and more attention is put on human resource policies, supervision and training. For the Universities, they are well equipped with necessary facilities for education, including full

access to the internet facilities and books in the library. Also, research funds and scholarships are available in developed countries; and there are generally fewer bureaucratic controls (Shinn, 2008).

Notwithstanding, according to De Haas (2005: 1272), in a study of 33 labor exporting countries, only 10 percent of the highly educated are found to have migrated. Massey et al. (2008: 223) argues that “The inflow of capital through migrant remittances (the money migrants send home to their families and communities) could improve productivity and incomes.” Similarly, Beine et al.(2011), used panel data covering 147 countries tested the impact of skilled labor on human capital accumulation between 1975 to 2000. The study found that skilled migration prospect foster human capital accumulation in low income countries. From the above discussion, we can summarize the arguments of the authors in the following key words which captured the push factors: poor education, less job opportunities, low wage, armed conflict, political instability. While the pull factors are captured with the following key words: high standard of living, high standard of education, high salaries, Safety of environment, less bureaucratic control and policies encouraging migration.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Methods

In this chapter, I discuss the method in theory as well as the practical matters.

The research design chosen for this study is qualitative method. Qualitative research methods include a variety of techniques such as participant observation, ethnography, semi-structured interviews, oral histories and group discussions (Scheyvens & Storey, 1999: 57). The objective of qualitative methods is to understand the world and interpret the perception of its actors, collect data in natural settings and generate theory. Thereby, providing powerful insights into the world (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003). Unlike quantitative methods which are more deductive in nature and testing of theories, qualitative methods are more inductive; making up theory from

observations and the researcher begins with an open mind and a few preconceptions as possible allowing theory to emerge from the data (O'Reilly, 2009).

The qualitative research method is used to reveal motivational aspects of either the behavior of a group of respondents or their expectations. The qualitative research method has an unstandardized character; its purpose is to study a wide range of objects manifestations and do not always track its quantitative regularities but rather are oriented at revealing the causalities. Among so many advantages, this method allows respondents free expression which helps to reveal their intrinsic values and feelings, stimulates their creative potential (SOCIS, 2008). Qualitative methods allow the understanding of people, behaviors, and perceptions among others. This substantiates the reasons for applying this method for this study as it deals with the perceptions of African student-migrants in southern Sweden on migration and brain drain. Furthermore, Scheyvens and Storey (2003), maintain that questions such as “what do/is”, “how is/do” and “why is/ does” questions can best be answered by using qualitative methods. This manner of posing questions was a guide in the investigation of the present case.

This is contrary to quantitative research whose primarily objective is to measure, test a predetermined hypothesis and establish causations or correlations. Qualitative research takes a more holistic understanding of complex realities and processes and can still lead to the emergence of questions and hypothesis cumulatively as the investigation progresses (Desai and Potter, 2006: 117-118). In line with this argument, I chose qualitative method to investigate and understand the perceptions of African student-migrants in southern Sweden on the issue of migration and brain drain. This corresponds with the view that qualitative methods typically seek to understand the comprehensive nature of the case under investigation (Yin, 2003).

## 2.2 Case Studies

In order to get a detailed explanation of the issue under study, a case study is important as it enables the researcher to ask detailed questions in such a way that the researcher will obtain answers to question (s); as Flick, (2009: 134) asserts that “case studies can capture the process under study in a very detailed and exact way”. According to Yin, (2003), “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context”. Case studies are important to suit the specific context as Dessai and Potter, (2006: 200-201)

affirm that “an in-depth research, taking the form of a case study, can play an important role in planning and carrying out a development project particularly designed to suit the local context”

Furthermore, a case study helps researchers to carry out a specific and unique inquiry in order to obtain answers to their investigation; just as Gomm *et al.*, (2006:1-3) affirm that the term “case study” is employed to identify a specific form of inquiry and usually, it investigates a few cases in considerable depth and constructing cases out of naturally occurring social situations”. Their definition is similar to that of O’Reilly, (2009) which suggests that “a case study” investigates a few, or often just one case in considerable depth (ibid: 23).

Therefore, my research strategy is based on a case study. As a research strategy, the case study is being used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individuals, groups, organizational, social, political and related phenomena. “Generally, case studies are the preferred method when (a) ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, (b) when the investigator has little control over events, and (c) when the focus is of a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (Yin, 2003: 2). In this study, some parts of the research questions also contain ‘how’ and ‘why’. Hence, the use of case study becomes useful in order to explore and probe into the issue under study.

It is also argued that case studies can lead to generalization. Nonetheless, Flick, (2009) suggest a solution to this problem of generalization by saying that a series of case studies of the same issue under study can be conducted even though it is time consuming and command more resources. However, Stake in Gomm *et al.*, (2006), suggests that knowledge of case studies leads to what he calls ‘naturalistic generalization’ which develops within a person as a product of experience and how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be better later or in other places with which this person is familiar ” (p. 22).

Besides, according to Flick, (2009), focusing on a single case enables a researcher to carry out an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon, but not to make generalizations. Similarly, it is not expected that findings from this study will be used to make generalizations about all migrants at large or to African student-migrants from other parts of Sweden and in different parts of the world. Therefore, this research investigates the perceptions of the participants on brain drain in order to generalize to the theories and not to the population of the case. It means to understand the brain drain phenomenon is a theoretical endeavor not empirical as this study is not expected to inform migration policy of any entity.

## 2.3 Sampling

According to Webster in O'Reilly (2009), "a sample is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to obtain information concerning the whole. Sampling involves the selection of cases from a broader set of choices such that the subset or sample chosen are in a way representative of the broader set or population." (p. 194).

The kind of sampling technique used in this study is *purposive sampling*, which also allows *snowballing effect* (Denscombe, 2007). O'Reilly, (2009) explains that *purposive sampling* ensures that all criteria of relevance are included such as age, gender, ethnicity and social class background. Denscombe (2007), states that in *snowballing*, the sample is created through a process of reference from one person to the next. Bryman (2008), also explains that in *snowballing*, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people and then uses these to establish contacts with others. Similarly, my research moved in a snowballing manner; my contact with two African students-migrants led to contact with the others.

Generally, purposive sampling is considered as helping the researcher to select the 'right' informants with the 'right' information. The researcher "makes a decision on whom to include in the sample" (Scheyvens and Storey, 1999: 43); with 'typical' characteristics of the target population. Similarly, the participants in this study were ten African students, seven male and three female. Four persons hold Bachelor degrees and six persons possess Master degrees. They are graduates of two Swedish Universities based in the Southern region (Skåne), Lund University and Malmö University (See appendix II). Their common experiences will help us to acquire in depth knowledge of the factors that influence brain drain or brain gain in the countries where they come from. Thus, this study used the following selection criteria:

- A participant must come from one of the African countries.
- Have not lived in Sweden or in any of the European countries as at the time he or she was offered admission to study in Sweden.
- Have either completed the initial program that brought him or her to Sweden or continued to study.
- Have lived in Sweden more than four years.

## 2.4 Research Environment

Olsen & Pederson, (2008) state that in qualitative research, interviews play an important role because in the conversation there is the potential for understanding changing viewpoints, signs and intentions. This type of interview is in the form whereby questions are prepared in advance and directed to the respondents (Halvorsen, 1992). Formulating questions in this way according to Mikkelsen (2005:169), allows for flexible checks and guides. It generates information and data. According to Mikkelsen, interviews could be conducted with individuals or groups.

For this study, an individual interview was employed using semi-structured interview questionnaires. Approximately 16 questions served as a guide during my interview process; and this enabled me to keep track of the main research aim while conducting the interviews. ( See Appendix I). According to Dessai and Potter (2006), semi-structured interviews follow a form of the interview schedule with suggested themes. Hence, it does not only provide the researcher with the opportunity to cover the areas he/she believe are important, but, there is scope for the interviewees to develop their responses by giving them the opportunity to bring up their own ideas and thoughts. The interview sessions were held at each participant's residence. By so doing, the respondents were more comfortable and spoke their mind freely. It was an environment that gave the researcher an opportunity to gain a detailed insight on the topic under research. The open ended questionnaire gave room to spontaneous questions following the response of the interviewee. It helped the researcher to have a better understanding of the perception of the participants.

Flick (2009) advises would be researchers to be professional in their approach and avoid confrontational questions that might irritate the interviewee. Following Flick's advice, even though I know some of the participants previously, in the field, I followed professional conduct. In every interview, I briefly introduced my research in order to create an awareness of the issue. In some cases, the interview sessions were recorded, and this was done only with the consent of the interviewee. The rationale for this was to maintain and keep track of the originality of the message /data. The information obtained was then transcribed into text /excerpts for analysis.

The language of the interview was mainly English. However, I conducted some of the interviews in the respondent's local language (Pidgin English). Using pidgin English was a way to get much deeper answers from the respondents, especially for the participants from Nigeria,

Ghana and Cameroun. In essence, pidgin language makes the interview environment more conducive for the participants to really communicate in an informal way. The interview time lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour; depending on the place and the number of people who were present at the point of the interview.

## 2.5 Limitations

Although it was not easy to get informants, the greatest challenge was to secure the trust of those who signaled their intention to participate in this study. Even though I assured them that the information they will give will only be used for academic purpose and their identities will remain anonymous, but some were not comfortable to speak on the issue of migration. Those who were skeptical from the onset dropped, some participants were not keeping up with appointments and some cancelled the appointment three times. In addition, during the interview session with some participants, it was interrupted several times by the guests of the interviewee. As mentioned earlier, the interview sessions were held at each participant's residence. In such situations, more time was spent explaining and even pleading with the intruders not to interrupt the interview and in some cases; the location for the interview was changed.

Irrespective of the above challenges encountered during the interviews, the situation was controlled. In case of absence of a participant on the day of the appointment, I rescheduled a new appointment while for the intruders,. I paused recording and resumed when the intruder had gone. Eventually, I obtained reasonable data vital for this study. In order to protect the identities of the participants, in my analysis of empirical evidence in chapter 4, I used numbers to represent each participant.

## 3 Theoretical framework

There are several international migration theories and each of the theories tries to explain migration and development nexus. For the fact that theories are parsimonious, the author does not expect a single theory to have all the tools that would lead this study to answer its research question and as such, the theoretical framework in this study integrates two international migration theories and one approach. In essence, this study makes use of *the Neoclassical migration theory*, *the New Economics of Labor Migration* (NELM) theory, and Brain drain approach.

### 3.1 Neoclassical migration theory

The neoclassical migration theory suggests that certain factors such as differences in wages and job opportunities are responsible for the movement of migrants, whether within the nation state, regional or international borders. According to the theory, *push and pull factors* influence the direction of migration (Castles and Miller 2009; Brettell et al., 2008; Shinn, 2008; Xu, 2007). The *pull factor* can be described as those favorable conditions in the receiving countries that attract many migrants from Africa and which makes them to decide to migrate in the first place. Most of these favorable conditions include, among others, higher standard of living, higher salaries, good social welfare system, the safety of the environment and less bureaucratic control. On the other hand, the push factors can be described as those unfavorable conditions in Africa, which instigate these people to migrate into other parts of the world. These conditions include poor education system, less job opportunities, low wages, armed conflict and political instability (El-Khawas, 2004, 39). Although the impact of push factors can vary from country to country in Africa or elsewhere. In the sense that, the push factors which impacts negatively on countries like the DRC, Sudan and Somalia include conflict and political instability than economic concerns. While, countries like Burkina Faso, Ghana and Zambia are faced with economic push factors than conflict and political instability (Shinn, 2008).

Bad government policies facilitate push factors. Likewise, pull factors can be enabled by deliberate government policies. For example, the immigration policies in several developed countries such as Germany, France and the United State among others encourage the brain drain

phenomenon (Shinn, 2008). The United States offers employment-based immigrant visas which are divided into five categories. A particular part of this program is mainly focused on attracting people with a special ability in the field of sciences, athletics, arts, education and business. In 2007, the United States received 162,000 migrants under the program worldwide and the largest groups came from China, India, and the Philippine. Around 4,300 Africans were admitted into the US under the program. Furthermore, several highly developed countries have actively focused on the developing countries in recruiting skilled workers in different categories, such as doctors and nurses. According to Shinn, “Canada, Australia and some members of the European Union have used this method to recruit skilled workers from Sub-Saharan Africa. Senegal and Tanzania have lost high numbers of primary and secondary school teachers to some European countries due to this effort” (Shinn, 2008)

The United States has a diversity visa (D. V) program, it is intended to encourage the immigration of historically under-represented nationalities to acquire United States citizenship. Although the program is based on a lottery as its name suggest “green card lottery”, but the applicants must possess a high school education or its equivalent in order to be eligible for the program. The annual worldwide D.V quota is 50,000 immigrants (US Department of State). In 2007, 42,000 immigrants moved into the United States under this program scheme, and more than 19,000 Africans were admitted during the 2007 program. Egypt had the highest number, followed by Ethiopia, Nigeria, Morocco, Kenya, and Ghana (Shinn, 2008).

“Neoclassical theory assumes that potential migrants have perfect knowledge of wage levels and employment in the destination region and that their migration decisions are overwhelmingly based on these economic factors” (Castles and Miller 2009: 22). The New Economics of Labour Migration challenged some of the key assumptions and argues that decision for an individual to migrate is collective and takes place within the family of a migrant. According to this theory, international migration requires substantial investment and as such, migrants are sponsored to migrate to well developed countries where their families know their investment capital will be gainful in the long run (Massey et al, 1998, 19).

## 3.2 The New Economics of Labour Migration

The NELM suggests that migration is something that is never an individual decision, instead, it is often a collective decision which involves a combination of a group of people, individual families or even communities. Hence, the focus here is on the group of individuals who initiate migration (Castles and Miller, 2009 : 24). The NELM theory tends to explain that migrants not only migrate due to higher wages, but also as a way to diversify income sources and provide resources for investment in existing activities or businesses back in their countries of origin. Back home migrant remittances have been invested in the existing businesses such as supermarket, family farm and to support their families to improve their standard of living (Castles and Miller, 2009 : 24). Living in a country without any sort of welfare support is difficult. Hence, some of the money migrants sent home for investment are often diverted to meet the basic needs of their family back home. Migrants might hope that they have investments back home, but only to discover after a long time that his or her remittances did not go into any investment but on basic needs for family survival. For instance, Sweden has a well developed welfare system which makes the country attractive. The advantage of a good welfare system is that it prevents citizens from falling into absolute poverty. Hence, migrants from the developing countries where no welfare exists are desperate to acquire foreign citizenship. Similarly, according to Massey et al, capital and consumer credit such as micro credits in most countries that receive migrants are relatively complete and well functioning, enabling families not just the rich, but also the less privileged to borrow money which can enable them to be able to finance small businesses or projects. While in most African countries “investment capital and consumer credit are unavailable or are procurable only at high cost” (Massey et al, 1998, 21-22), Therefore, the absence of inadequate policies for capital and credit markets creates a strong desire for international migration to enable migrants accumulate finances (Massey et al, 1998, 22).

## 3.3 Brain drain

This is the most developed approach and can even be assumed to be a theory of international migration. The approach suggests that due to low wages, unemployment and lack of

technological upgrading in many of the developing countries, well-educated and talented citizens of the developing countries or less developed countries pursue their career in foreign lands, mostly, Western Europe and North America, but never return to their countries of origin to contribute to the development of their own countries (Shinn, 2008). Even though, the education of the majority is assumed to have been funded by the governments of their countries of origin. When they choose to live abroad, their countries of origin will lose investments made in their education as well as their expected contributions in their countries of origin (Benedict & Ukpere, 2012). Such people are considered by their government as unpatriotic citizens because they contribute to the further development of the Western countries that are already developed rather than their own countries that are developing. For this reason, some countries have introduced strict measures to curtail brain drain. For example, in Morocco, their citizens who decide to immigrate after being employed in the civil service will not be given an opportunity on their return to work in the civil service again in their lifetime (De Haas, 2005:1273). Some other countries demand their citizens who immigrated to pay back the money that the state invested in their training. They accused the developed countries as being the ones receiving the best educated and talented people because their wages are higher compared to the wages in the developing countries.

Others argue that brain drain could be accompanied with brain gain. They argue that although skilled individuals and highly educated people from less developed countries employed in developed countries are a great gain for their countries of origin. Because these groups of migrants stand better chances to be employed in the developed countries even if there is unemployment. If they are employed, their wages will not only be sufficient to support themselves but also their dependant relations back home. Hence, employment abroad will enable highly educated migrants to send remittances back home, make investments and establish business relationship between their home and destination countries. Besides, in abroad, they acquire advanced knowledge in their chosen professions, become highly skilled and established networks that help to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in their own countries, such as in China, Mexico, Turkey and India. Some of the FDI moving to these countries would not have been possible if the educated people had remained in their countries (Batista t al., 2012; Kamoche, 2011; Beine et al., 2011; Crush & Frayne, 2010). Therefore, educated immigrants usually return home with economic and political ideas that help to transform their society. For

example, the development of a civil society and the emancipation projects are usually supported by those who returned from abroad. Because they have learnt how to organize the marginalized groups in the society and as such contribute in reforming the domestic policies. Countries such as India, South Korea, the Philippines, Mexico and Tunisia have established policies aimed at encouraging migrants to invest and contribute to the development of their countries. In support of this theory, some argue that the only way to stop international migration of educated citizens of less developed countries is not to force people not to leave their country, but encourage willing immigration, development assistance and trade liberalization (De Haas, 2005).

From the above theoretical discussion, it is evident from diverse perspectives that there is a common understanding that international migration is good for development but the difficulty remains how to balance the interest of the concerned parties to achieve development for all. We can conclude that the factors that are central to the push and pull include economic, educational and conflict situations. From this perspective, we move on to the next chapter where we use these elements as themes to examine the empirical evidence.

## 4. Analysis of Empirical Evidence

In this section, the empirical evidence will be analyzed in order to find out why African students who had studied in Sweden decided to stay back in the country after the completion of their studies. The three elements lifted from the theoretical frameworks, economic situation, educational situation and conflict situation will serve as themes for this chapter.

### 4.1 Economic Situation

According to the NEM theory, the pull factor that influence the decision of migrants to migrate in the first place is the favorable economic conditions in their host countries (Castles and Miller 2009; Brettell et al., 2008; Xu, 2007). Following this assumption, previous studies hold that the state of the economic situation in Africa plays a larger role in why African students and

professionals seek employment in foreign countries and abandon employment in their countries of origin after acquiring advanced education in Europe and Northern America (Benedict & Ukpere, 2012; Shinn, 2008). In line with the NEM theory, before leaving their countries of origin to Sweden, all the participants said that they had information about the economic situation in Sweden, tuition free offered by the Swedish Universities, aware of the high quality education that exist in Sweden and for these reasons they choose to study in Sweden. Below are some of the responses of the participants.

Ah, my friend, I decided to leave my country Ethiopia and migrate to Sweden because the economic situation there is really bad. In my home country, there is little opportunity of getting a job there. For young students who just graduated from the university, the possibility of getting a job is very low as the economic condition in Ethiopia is not good (Interviewed student 1, 04-02-2015).

I have always wanted to travel to Europe for studies and when the opportunity came for me to go and study in Sweden, I quickly took it and here I am in Sweden today studying. In my application to get a visa and come to Sweden for my studies, I made mention that I was going to return back to my country after my education. My guy, that statement I made on my application of going back to my country is not true and I only said that just to get the visa to come to Sweden. I have no plans of returning back to Africa after my education here in Sweden. After my studies, I am planning of looking for a job not only in Sweden, but also other parts of the world and this is because the possibility of getting a job back in my home country is very low, as the economic situation is bad (interviewed student 2, 06-02-2014).

My guy, I finished my undergraduate studies long time ago, and since then I have not been able to secure any job with my degree after many years of graduating from the university in Nigeria. Since I could not get any work to do in my own country with my university degree, I had to move to Sweden for my master's studies when I got the opportunity to study here (Interviewed student 5, 14-02-2014).

From the response of the participants, it is evidence that they were concerned about the lack of employment opportunities in their own countries and also the wages. Hence, even though the participants may end up finding jobs that are unconnected to their field and with low wages, but, they all believed that it is better to do unskilled work in Sweden than to become unemployed in Africa. One of the participants said,

I think it is better for me to remain in Sweden with an unskilled job than to return back to Uganda after my education. Even if I am working as a cleaner here in Sweden, I would earn more money than a graduate in Uganda. I can say me not wanting to return back to my country after my studies make me a part of the brain drain problem in Africa. Just look around my friend, the better opportunities in Sweden is what is making me want to live here and not to return back to Uganda. Well, maybe in the future I might return back to Uganda to practice my profession, but that will only happen after I have saved enough money in Sweden (Interviewed student 6, 17-04-2014).

After my education I am planning to still remain in Sweden, but maybe I might return back to Cameroon only if I do not find a job in Sweden (Interviewed student 4, 19-02-2014).

In the first place, coming to study in Sweden was an attempt to escape unemployment as expressed by a participant from Nigeria. They believe that their countries of origin in Africa are not suitable for them to explore the economic potential of their degrees acquired in Sweden. Besides, the Swedish welfare system, transparency in public and private sectors have influence in the decision of the African student-migrants to remain in the country. One of the participants added, “I have discovered that Sweden has one of the best welfare system in the world, unemployment benefits are available for college and University graduates and the country has a zero intolerance for corruption and human rights abuse which are so common practice in Africa. How can anyone from Africa after studying in Sweden think about returning back to that hopeless continent?” (Interviewed student 5, 14-02-2014). Another participant added, I better become undocumented migrant in Sweden than to return back to my country.” (Interviewed student 1, 04-02-2015).

In line with NELM theory’s presupposition, all the participants were sponsored by their families not their governments. Each of the participants said that he or she is being expected by their families to find work in Sweden or elsewhere in order to support them to improve their businesses back home. Most of the participants, their parents are mainly small holder farmers, except three participants ( students, 1, 2 & 6) whose parents apart from farming also engage in other businesses. In essence, they are farmers, but also trading on petty food items. They have shops closer to their homes, and their younger siblings back home are the ones in charge of the shops. The three participants like others said that they are expected to send money not only to support family business, but to pay for their siblings' education

From the above discussion, in the first place, it is evidence that a bad economic situation in Africa made African student-migrants decide to come to Sweden for their studies. Hence, even after studies, continued bad economic situations in Africa affected their decision not to return back to their home countries. Their degree obtained from Swedish Universities offered them an opportunity to start a new life either in Sweden or in another European country or move to Canada or USA.

## 4.2 Educational situation

The brain drain proponents suggest that the educational situation in Africa is poor. For that reason, African professionals and African students who studied in Europe and North America wish to remain there and seek employment outside their countries of origin (Benedict & Ukpere, 2012; Shinn, 2008). As already discussed, all the participants mentioned that the Swedish policy of free tuition fees in their Universities attracted them to search for admission in the Swedish Universities. According to one participant,

When I decided to study abroad, I started searching for cheap universities in other countries and luckily for me, I found information online that Swedish universities were tuition free. I got admission offers from universities in other countries which I have already applied to before. But I chose to come to Sweden because it was wiser and cheaper to study in Sweden than in America and this is because it is tuition free here and you receive almost similar degree certificate (Interviewed student 10, 26-02-2014).

Apart from this participant, all other participants were of the view that the education in Africa is expensive. Yet, the quality of education in Africa is poor. In comparison, one participant added (Interviewed student 6, 26-02-2014), “while the system of education in Sweden gives students career prospects, African education does not. For instance, in Sweden, graduates are equipped for analytical work.” In essence, Swedish education is more practical compared to the theoretical approach in African Universities. In terms of the teaching environment, in Sweden, the number of students per class is usually a few and that makes teaching interactive. In Africa, for example in Nigeria, the high number of students in a classroom per lecture is mind boggling. And as such, the noise of unanxious and unserious students will prevent the serious ones from paying attention to lecture. For this reason, most lecturers do not have interest to impart knowledge to the students, but rather their intention is to exploit the students through payment for lecture handout. The higher the number of students per class, the more the lecturer will be able to sell lecture handouts and that means more money (Ojo et al., 2011; Okolo et al., 2014).

For the participants, studying in Sweden is brain gain rather than brain drain. They have the opportunity to acquire free education, high quality education and seek employment within and outside Sweden. According to one of the interviewed students from Ghana, he believes that the standard of education in Sweden would enable students to get jobs easily when compared to the

education they get in Africa (Interviewed student 8, February, 2014). Another student from Uganda also pointed out that the Swedish system of education trains people to be job oriented, but the education they obtain in Uganda is much more of theoretical in nature (Interviewed student 9, February, 2014). Besides, according to the participants, the system of obtaining a student visa to Sweden did not demand that one makes a deposit to cover the living cost in Sweden before applying for a student permit. Hence, the financial demand to study in Sweden is better than the financial stress faced by other African students who apply in other European universities. According to one of the participants from Kenya, it was wiser and cheaper to study in Sweden than to study in America because it is tuition free and one receives a degree certificate of equal merit if not better (Interviewed student 10, February, 2014).

### 4.3 Conflict situation

The political situations in many African countries are weak and unstable. The power struggles in Africa frequently create conflict situation. According to El-Khawas, 2004, it is estimated that around 7 million people lost their lives in Africa between 1960 and 1990 due to civil war and political violence (El-Khawas, 2004: 41). The 1990s have seen the number of wars and political violence doubled in Africa and has included countries such as Rwanda, DRC, Liberia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ivory Cost, Nigeria, Somalia, Uganda etc. these armed conflicts regularly lead to the displacement of people and forced migration. An example of this kind of situation is Sudan, which have lost many of its highly educated students because of the long civil war (El-Khawas, 2004: 42). According to some students from Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Uganda, the political system in these countries are oppressive, full of corrupt leaders and dictators. A respondent from Cameroon actually referred to the political system in his home country as democratic on paper, but dictatorial in practice. When asked why he thinks so, he further stated that the president of Cameroon has been in power for over 25 years, and he does not consider that as democratic (Interviewed student 4, February, 2014). Interviewed student 5 described the political system in his country as corrupt and that he does not see any future for the young Nigerians in the country, because the country is being ruled by the same groups of leaders for over three decades (Interviewed student 5, February, 2014). Interviewed student 3, stated that the political system in his country (Ethiopia) as one of the main reasons that made him to decide to

move to Sweden for his Masters studies. He explained further that as a student, you can only study up to the bachelor's level in Ethiopia and you have to be a member of the ruling political party before the person can continue on the master's level (Interviewed student 3, February, 2014). One participant said,

The civil war going on in my home country (DRC) made me to migrate from my country to study in Sweden. Ah, the civil war in my country has really affected the educational system in my country, and many other students are seeking for education in other parts of the world (Interviewed student 7, 20-02-2014).

I decided to migrate to Sweden for my masters studies because of the political system in my home country Ethiopia. As a student in Ethiopia, you can only study to the bachelors level and you cannot further your education to the masters level if you do not have any member of your family in the ruling political party in government. It is only when you have a relative in the ruling political party that you are sure of getting a study for a masters degree in Ethiopia (Interviewed student 3, 10-02-2014).

The conflicts and civil wars in Africa is a contributing factor that increases the chances of migration of students and also skilled personnel. The conflicts in Rwanda, Somalia, DRC, and Sierra Leone have led to the loss of many of these countries' skilled personnel, including students (Shinn, 2008).

## 5 Discussion/Conclusion

In this final section, this study presents a summary answer to our research question below in order to see whether the empirical evidence presented in this chapter has helped us to achieve our two aims which include, first, to understand the factors which informed the decision of some African students not to go back to their countries of origin after graduation from the Swedish Universities. Second, to understand whether African student-migrants have become part of the brain drain or brain gain African migrants. However, This section also discusses the usefulness of the theoretical framework adopted in this study to understanding the case of brain drain among African student-migrants in Sweden.

*What factors motivate African students to remain in Sweden after study?*

From the empirical evidence, other than the high quality education and free tuition fees that attracts African students to Sweden, the poor economic, educational and conflict situations are

the key factors that influenced the decisions of African students to eventually stay back in Sweden after the completion of their education. It is evident from the empirical evidence that the participants were not funded by their governments or sponsored by any organizations, were unemployed in their countries before coming to Sweden and had no hope of employment back home after graduation. Hence, we do not find evidence of a brain drain, rather, the evidence points to brain gain. Because the African migrant-students had benefited from the Swedish educational system and the degree from the Swedish Universities gave them the opportunity to search for employment in Sweden and internationally after graduation. Not only that, the wages they earn in Sweden enabled them to support their family back home and save for future investment in their home countries.

This study uses neoclassical economic migration theory, the new labor economics of migration theory and Brain drain approaches. These theories help us to understand migration and the various factors that compelled African student-migrants to remain in Sweden after studies.

From our analysis, rather than brain drain approaches, the neoclassical economic migration theory and new labor economics of migration theories were most useful in understanding the factors that influenced African student-migrants to remain in Sweden after studies. Brain drain approach is still limited in two respects: first, it fails to clearly distinguish the character of brain drain (see Shinn, 2008; Benedict & Ukpere, 2012). It means that by considering all the professionals and students (free movers and government funded or privately sponsored) who had gone to overseas to study and remained after graduation as a brain drain is inadequate. The participants in this study are free movers, their decision to remain in Sweden after graduation was purely based on pull and push factors. Second, brain drain is based on the implicit assumption that the migration of educated people from less developed countries to developed countries overwhelming benefit developed countries than the developing countries. Because the empirical justification of the existence of brain drain or brain gain is still in its rudimentary stage and weak (Beine et al., 2011), but the critic of brain drain argues that instead of brain drain, professionals, highly educated individuals, skilled and unskilled people from less developing countries to developed countries have brought brain gain to their countries of origin ((Batista et al., 2012; Kamoche, 2011;; Crush & Frayne, 2010; De Haas, 2005; Massey et al., 2008: 223).

Likewise, in this study, we found evidence of brain gain, the education of the participants in Sweden has given them much hope. African student-migrants believed that if they secure employment in Sweden or any part of Europe, they will be able to support many in their own families and contribute to the development of their countries. Thus, pull and push factors remained influential cousins of the international migration theories, in this sense, rather than highlighting the influence of brain drain, it is sensible to consider the case of African Student-migrants in Sweden as that of push and pull factors. Hence, 'brain drain' approaches have on the whole weak evidence to substantiate the dynamic relationship between human capital and migration. Hence, by using rhetorical argument some studies assumed that all categories of educated migrants from less developed countries to developed countries are products of brain drain (Shinn, 2008; Benedict & Ukpere, 2012). Such argument is weak. Thus, a clear distinction of different categories of educated migrants and other categories of skilled and unskilled migrants is necessary in order to understand those influenced by brain drain and those mainly influenced by the push and pull factors. I argue that Brain drain can only be assumed to exist if individuals are funded by their governments or private bodies and after graduation refused to return to their countries of origin. From this perspective, the NEM and the NELM theories are useful to capture the underlying factors that influenced African student-migrants' decision to remain in their host countries not brain drain approach.

In conclusion, this study uses neo-classical economic migration theory, the New labor economics of migration theory and Brain drain approaches. According to these theories and empirical evidence, we found that the economic situation, educational situation and conflict situation were responsible for the decision of African student-migrants to remain in Sweden after graduation from the Swedish Universities. However, we do not find the case of African student-migrants in Sweden as that of the brain drain phenomenon, but rather it is a case of brain gain facilitated by the push and pull factors. In essence, African student-migrants benefited from the Swedish free tuition fees and high quality educational system. Subsequently, they have other opportunities such as to search for employment in Sweden and other EU countries, after graduation from one program in Sweden, it is easy to seek admission into another program and remain a student until one is able to secure employment. A situation, the participants pointed are unavailable in most countries in Africa.

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# Appendix I

## List of Respondents

Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Country of Origin	Current Occupation	Residing City in Sweden	Area of Studies Masters/Bachelors
1	Male	32	Single	Ethiopia	Student	Lund	Global Studies (Masters)
2	Male	26	Single	Nigeria	Student	Malmö	International Migration and Ethnic Relations (Bachelors)
3	Male	24	Single	Ethiopia	Student	Lund	Development Studies (Masters)
4	Male	30	Single	Cameroon	Student	Kalskrona	Computer Science (Masters)
5	Male	28	Single	Nigeria	Student	Malmö	International Migration and Ethnic Relations (Masters)
6	Female	25	Single	Uganda	Student	Malmö	Peace and Conflict Studies (Bachelors)
7	Male	29	Single	DRC	Student	Lund	Economic History (Masters)
8	Male	31	Single	Ghana	Student	Malmö	International Migration and Ethnic Relations (Bachelors)
9	Female	29	Single	Uganda	Student	Växjö	Peace and Development Studies (Masters)
10	Female	27	Single	Kenya	Student	Växjö	Mathematics (Masters)

# Appendix II

## Interview question guide

### **Section A: Basic information and educational background about the interviewee**

1. Name: sex, marital status.
2. Age : 15-20/ 21-25/ 26-30/ 31-35/ 36-40 41-45/ 46- above
3. What motivated you to move outside your country for your studies; and why did you choose Sweden?
4. What subject area are you studying in Sweden and for how long?
5. How long have you been studying in Sweden?
6. What field of study did you undertake before moving to Sweden for your education?
7. How can you describe the educational system in Sweden, compared to your home country?
8. What do you plan to do when you finish your current program of studies?

### **Section B: General Aspect**

9. Are you familiar with the brain drain phenomenon in Africa?
10. How are employment opportunities for graduates in your country?
11. Do you intend to return to your home country after completing your studies? If no;
12. If you are not moving back to your home country, where are you planning /willing to work?

### **Section C: Political Aspect**

13. Can you identify any opportunities you consider to be here in Sweden?
14. How can you describe the political situation in your country?
15. Can you compare the political situation there with Sweden?
16. Is there any kind of political impact in the educational system of your country?