

Peer-reviewed article**Internationalisation through South-North mobility: Experiences and outcomes of research capacity-building programmes for African scholars in Denmark****Hanne Kirstine
Adriansen**Aarhus University
Copenhagen, Denmark

hka@edu.au.dk

**Lene Møller
Madsen**University of Copenhagen
Copenhagen, Denmark

Immadsen@ind.ku.dk

Abstract

Internationalisation of higher education in the global South manifests in different ways through different modalities. Using a multi-disciplinary mobility-lens, this paper discusses outcomes of geographical mobility practiced by African scholars going to universities in the global North as part of research capacity-building programmes. Over the past 30 years, Danida (Danish International Development Assistance) has provided financial assistance – including research visits at Danish universities – to academics in the global South, who would work with problems in their home countries. This type of internationalisation through research capacity building is used in many European countries and is interesting because it facilitates geographical mobility across the North-South socio-economic divide. Based on a survey sent to 499 current and former African scholars as well as 15 qualitative interviews, the aim of this paper is to analyse the reflections from African academics being involved in this type of internationalisation practice. Thereby we give voice to scholars from the global South who are the practitioners of South-North mobility. More specifically, we analyse the role of different locations for becoming an academic and for their knowledge production. Thus, the paper critically examines the impact made by 'internationalisation as mobility' on the personal and professional development of African academics.

Introduction

Universities in the global South are – like universities in other parts of the world – being pushed to internationalise (Zezeza, 2012). In a recent article, Teferra (2020) argues that there are different manifestations of internationalisation; the most important ones are mobility (of students and academics), research (through cooperation and partnerships), curriculum (in delivery and methodology) and language (for instruction and publishing). Research capacity-building programmes are mostly funded by the global North and aim at empowering individuals and/or institutions in the global South through academic collaboration within the global North. It usually involves mobility of people and/or materials (Adriansen, 2020). Following Teferra (2020), we see research capacity-building programmes as internationalisation that manifests itself as academic mobility and research cooperation. The aim of this paper is to explore internationalisation through research capacity-building based on North-South academic collaboration. We do so by analysing an empirical case of capacity-building programmes aimed at academic collaboration between scholars at universities in 18 different African countries and seven universities in Denmark.

An important element in this type of collaboration, used in a number of European countries, is the academic mobility across the North-South socio-economic divide. Teferra (2020) challenges the notion of ‘intentionality in internationalisation’ and criticises the relevance of its definition for universities in the global South. He goes on to argue that: “Internationalisation has a double-faced character – with both intention and coercion” (Teferra, 2020:162) and that we need to map internationalisation as it manifests itself rather than focusing on documents describing its (good) intentions. In their analysis of international academic collaboration and the core-periphery relationship, Canto and Hannah (2001) argue that North-South academic collaboration can become a neo-colonial relationship, because it perpetuates old power structures. These unequal power relations mean that states, which have become formally independent of their colonisers, remain dependent on the support from the centre/global North. Likewise, universities in the periphery/global South are dependent on institutions located in the centre/global North. According to Canto and Hannah (2001:29): “there are at least five reasons for a neo-colonial relationship: (a) historical roots, (b) the use of European languages, (c) technological dependence, (d) dependence on European communications network, and (e) the lack of a strong training system”. While the Scandinavian universities not are part of the hegemonic Anglo-American academy and their languages not are used outside Scandinavia, they are still located in the centre. Obamba and Mwema (2009) have explored the asymmetry embedded in the politics of North-South research cooperation such as capacity-building programmes. They argue that the partnership rhetoric, which became in vogue among development agencies in the 1980s, can exclude the power dynamics from the political economy of such cooperation. This, for instance, can be in terms of labour division where the North partner defines the scope of the project, while the South partner is in charge of collecting empirical material. While seeming like partners, there is a clear power dimension in this labour division.

Such critique of the asymmetrical nature of North-South partnerships are timely and important, we have added to these discussions by analysing academic dependency (Madsen & Adriansen, 2020) and issues of coloniality in research capacity-building (Adriansen & Madsen, 2019). Analyses of discursive artefacts and tools such as policy reports, performance indicators, and technical assistance (e.g. Shahjahan, 2016) are also important in pointing out the colonial geopolitics in higher education.

However, in our participation in North-South academic collaboration, we have also witnessed another manifestation – a specific engagement and empowerment of individual African academics involved in these collaborations. It is to these experiences and outcomes for scholars involved in North-South collaboration to which we turn our gaze in this paper.

Over the past 30 years, Danida (Danish International Development Assistance) has facilitated scholarships and research projects of global South academics collaborating with Danish universities on issues of relevance for the countries or regions in the global South (e.g., famine early warning, malaria prevention, natural resource management). It is within this context that our study is situated. We focus on scholars from African countries, who have come to Denmark as part of Danida-funded projects, hereafter called fellows because they have been part of Danida's fellowship programme. Despite good intentions, research capacity-building programmes such as Danida's are embedded in a discourse of the South as lacking and the North as possessing the (right) capacity for research. While there is no doubt about the North-South asymmetry in funding and resources for research, this discourse of research capacity-building could be criticised in much the same way as scholars like Rizvi (2011) has criticised the discourse of development. Moreover, research capacity-building programmes are often seen as 'development aid' in the everyday discourse at the participating universities, such as our own in Denmark. This often happens without problematizing that the discourse of development represents a new form of colonialism and as Rizvi (2011) has pointed out (in a similar vein to Canto & Hannah, 2001) that this colonial practice uses higher education to institutionalise global inequalities. We bear this critique in mind when we explore how individuals from the participating African countries express their experiences and outcomes of being involved in these research capacity-building programmes. We do so by asking the following research question:

How does internationalisation through academic mobility facilitated by capacity-building programmes influence the participants from Africa?

First a note on geography. We would like to emphasise that talking about Africa as an entity is both contentious and problematic, as it can give rise to invalid generalisations and homogenisations of the continent and thereby disregard the diverse cultures, ethnic groups and multitude of languages as well as religious beliefs. Therefore, we want to contest essentialist claims about Africa. Nonetheless, we do use the terms Africa and Africans for two reasons. First, there are commonalities of education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Due to the colonial past, continued neo-colonial relations, and relatively underdeveloped present, indigenous cultures have been marginalised and are often still neglected in education (Breidlid, 2013a). Moreover, educational systems are modelled after the colonisers even after independences (Teferra & Altbach, 2004), contributing to what has been called the continued 'colonization of the African mind' (Wa Thiong'o, 1994). Second, we use the term 'African scholar' to anonymise the participants in the study. They come from 18 African countries but some of the countries have fewer than five scholars in the capacity-building programme, therefore they become easily identifiable if mentioned by name of the country.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: We set the scene by providing some thoughts about academic mobility. Then, we offer a brief outline of Danish capacity-building programmes, the wider Scandinavian context and outline the methodology of this study. After this follows the analysis in two parts – first we analyse how mobility and place influence the becoming of an academic, second

we unfold the role of mobility and place for research practice. In the discussion and concluding remarks, we address research capacity-building as internationalisation.

Setting the scene: some thoughts on academic mobility

The university has always been international in the sense that it has always been a site of flows – flows of knowledges through people, books, letters, and data. Hence, mobility and collaboration have historically been an important aspect of academic life, vital for academic knowledge production, and important in shaping academic identity (Heffernan, Suarsana & Meusburger, 2018). Technological revolutions such as the printing press, the postal service, and the internet have made mobility of knowledge more independent of the mobility of academics and has allowed for new types of academic collaboration. The development in communication and digital technology led to the prediction of ‘the death of distance’ (Cairncross, 1997). However, others have explained how this ‘death of geography’ is exaggerated (Morgan, 2004) and that proximity and space still matters (Rodríguez-Pose & Crescenzi, 2008). Thus, in recent years, academic mobility has become more systematic and a part of internationalisation strategies. Moreover, “academics, as a key part of the global transfer and production of knowledge, have become important to governments and universities that compete internationally” (Kim, 2017:981).

In their *Regimes of mobility across the globe*, Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) argue that we must move beyond the idea that mobility equals freedom and also understand the requirement for movement as a new mode of exploitation. Subsequently, we want to stress that the importance of mobility and exposure to other academic environments are important for scholars all over the world. Through mobility, academics obtain prestige and credibility of relations to other academic environments, thereby transnational mobility can be important for advancing academic careers (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). We would like to add that the valued mobility often moves in a certain direction, from the periphery to the centre to use the vocabulary of Canto and Hannah (2001), and this shows the double faced character of internationalisation in the global South mentioned by Teferra (2002) with both intention and coercion.

How has academic mobility been studied?

Often, academic mobility is studied as a type of human mobility thereby foregrounding the construction of the mobile subject (e.g. Morley, Alexiadou, Garaz, González-Monteaegudo & Taba, 2018; Henderson, 2019). Recently, a number of scholars have included the mobility of knowledge and shown the links between mobility, knowledge production, and power (Fahey & Kenway, 2010; Raghuram, 2013; Jöns, Heffernan & Meusburger, 2017a). The most elaborate example of this is the edited collection *Mobilities of Knowledge* (Jöns et al, 2017a), in which different chapters analyse how the physical or geographical mobility of people and (im)material things has affected knowledge production and epistemologies in different geographical settings and historical eras. In their introduction, Jöns, Heffernan and Meusburger (2017b) add a sixth dimension ‘mobile knowledge, (institutional) concepts, and practices’ to Urry’s (2007) five interdependent dimensions of mobility. Urry’s five dimensions include mobility of: material things (including books and specimens); people; imaginations and representations (such as stereotypes and geographical imaginaries); communication

(both electronic and physical mails for instance); and virtual information (such as electronic journals). We point to it here, because we want to highlight the interdependent nature of mobility of people and mobility of knowledge, concepts, and practices.

In their introduction, Jöns *et al* (2017b) distinguish between mobility *of* knowledge and mobility *for* knowledge: “mobilities *for* knowledge in the process of its production and *of* knowledge as part of its dissemination and transfer” (Jöns *et al*, 2017b:2). They explain that the mobility for knowledge production can include the movement of people, as well as research infrastructure such as laboratories and libraries. Importantly, mobility of knowledge can also be the circulation of theories and letters as well as virtual communication. Mobility of knowledge is a part of its dissemination and transfer and can involve all of the above-mentioned aspects. In line with this, attention should be paid to the meaning of place when understanding the relation between academic mobility and knowledge production (Gunter & Raghuram, 2018).

As geographers, we foreground the role of place in our analyses, as we work from the premise that knowledge is geographical and created in the moment of encounter. In the words of Livingstone (2010:784): “Knowledge, it turns out, is a geographical phenomenon. It is acquired in specific sites, it circulates from location to location, it transforms and is transformed by the world”. There are other studies of academic mobility in/from the global South with such focus on geography and place. Munoz-Garcia and Chiappa (2017) have examined the impact of academic mobility on the academic practice and knowledge construction for Chilean scholars, who have been on research stays abroad. They show how mobility allowed these scholars to question legitimised ways of doing research upon their return. Gunter and Raghuram (2018) have studied academic mobility in South Africa in the wider context of the geographies and histories of knowledge mobility. They argue that we need to link institutional, academic, student and knowledge mobility to provide a more complete understanding of the international higher education landscape. Finally, Adriansen (2020) has used a mobility and materiality perspective (Brooks & Waters, 2017) for analysing research capacity-building programmes in African higher education. She showed that the communication revolution and the subsequent increased accessibility of journals, as well as fast communication through e-mails and video conferencing, has not removed the need for human mobility for those wanting to pursue an academic career.

When studying research capacity-building as internationalisation in this paper, we are inspired by the above-mentioned studies as we are not only interested in the mobility of people, but also in the influence of mobility for their how they become academics and their research practice. With these initial reflections as an analytical context to the remainder of the paper, we will attempt to bring these ideas to bear on thinking about academic mobility, research practice, and the role of place in forming academic practices.

Capacity-building of higher education in African countries by Scandinavian countries

Within the Scandinavian countries, there has been a long history of being engaged in higher education in Africa. For more than 30 years, support has been given to a variety of programmes and higher education institutions in African countries – also in periods where other donors, as for example the

World Bank, have been absent at the higher education level (Jensen, Adriansen & Madsen, 2016). Research capacity-building based on bilateral donors is not a well-defined concept – neither in research nor in practice. However, for the Scandinavian countries there seems to be an overall common goal that capacity building through bilateral academic cooperation should strengthen teaching, learning and research in the recipient country (Jensen *et al*, 2016; Madsen & Mählck, 2018; Zink, 2018). Further, funding is donated to projects that address problems in the recipient country; thereby funding emphasises applied research and what would often be labelled ‘development research’. Even though conceptualisations can vary, three types of research capacity-building are present in a Scandinavian context: development research, fellowship programmes and targeted capacity-building programmes (Adriansen & Madsen, 2019). Fellowship programmes can be similar to other study-abroad PhD programmes, except from the fact that the PhD-research must be of relevance to the recipient country.

The focus in this paper is on fellowship programmes for African scholars which are supported by the Scandinavian countries. Fellowship programmes focus on PhD education as a learning process: learning to become a researcher. While the details of the programmes have changed, the basic feature has been to offer scholarships to candidates from prioritised countries in the global South for studying at Scandinavian universities, often with long fieldwork periods in their own countries. For example, since the late 1980s, Sweden has offered scholarships in Mozambique and Tanzania designed to help scholars maintain links with their home institutions during training (Fellsson & Mählck, 2017). This requirement to conduct research of relevance for the home country and to conduct fieldwork there is articulated as a means to avoid ‘brain drain’ from the recipient countries (Gaardhøje, Hansen & Thulstrup, 2006) and stems from the initial idea of development efforts, namely to combat poverty (Obamba & Mwema, 2009). In that way, the Scandinavian fellowship programmes are quite different from study abroad programmes seen in the global North that works to attract the ‘best and brightest’ in the global race for talent (see also Raghuram, 2013). Fellows are offered PhD courses as part of their education, but usually have no teaching obligations. By offering free education and different types of stipends to students, higher education in Scandinavia is unlike that of the Anglo-Saxon world. There are no tuition fees, because higher education in Scandinavia is seen as a welfare good not as a commodity (Antikainen, 2006). The neo-liberal market view of education and international students – as Rizvi (2011) has reported from Australia – is not practiced in the same way in Scandinavian countries, it has taken a different, less pronounced form here. Consequently, the scholarships offered as part of Scandinavian research capacity-building programmes should be seen in this context.

In Denmark, the Danida Fellowship Centre was inaugurated in 1990 and has since funded thousands of fellows from all over the world. Bente Ilsøe, the long-term coordinator of the different initiatives, describes the objectives of the Fellowship Centre: “through different support forms, the main objective of the support has been to contribute to the solution of developing countries’ problems, both in terms of new research results and in the building of research capacity” (Ilsøe in Madsen & Adriansen, 2019:46). In 1989 -2003, the Enhancement of Research Capacity (ENRECA) programme was in place. It supported research partnerships that were managed by a Danish partner and was:

aim[ed] at building the research capacity at partner institutions in Danida priority countries through cooperation on research activities [...] The main driving force behind the partnership projects has always been the professional interest and enthusiasm of the involved researchers from Denmark and from the partner countries (Ilsøe in Madsen & Adriansen, 2019:46).

Well performing ENRECA partnerships could be supported up to 15 years. ENRECA as other research capacity-building programmes aimed at providing local solutions. The programmes included scholars from natural and health sciences and some from social science, which reflects where solutions to local problems were sought.

Mobility of fellows has been an integrated part of the Danish fellowship programmes. In the first ENRECA projects, it was possible to stay in Denmark for the entire duration of the PhD study. But now most PhD students are enrolled at a university in their home country, with study stays in Denmark. For the individual fellows, study stays in Denmark can range from a few weeks up to several months and can consist of one or multiple stays in Denmark. Danida's present aim of supporting research is to: "generate new knowledge that contributes to the fulfilment of the UN Development Goals as well as to the strengthening of the research capacity in the partner countries and the application of the research results" (Ilsøe in Madsen & Adriansen, 2019:47).

As mentioned in the introduction, this type of collaboration can be seen as neo-colonial (Canto & Hannah, 2001). There are many other studies problematizing research capacity-building programmes and the perception of the South (or Africa, in this instance) as lacking and the North as possessing the right capacity for research (e.g. Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Breidlid, 2013b; Madsen & Mählck, 2018). Despite this, we argue that turning our gaze to the experiences and outcomes articulated by African scholars involved in these North-South collaborations, as we will do in this paper, can inform our knowledge of the ways in which this type of internationalisation plays an impactful role for individual scholars.

Methodology

In 2018-2019, we conducted a study on the experiences and reflections of African researchers who were involved in Danida-funded research capacity-building over a 30-year period, 1989-2019 (Madsen & Adriansen, 2019). This study has provided us with the majority of the empirical material used in this paper. The study was financed by Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC), which is in charge of the fellowship programme. We were asked to conduct the study based on our previous critical research into capacity building of higher education in African (see Adriansen, Madsen & Jensen, 2016a). It is important to note that we were asked to be critical and to elucidate both the positive and negative experiences from the fellows. The empirical material consisted of qualitative interviews and a survey, the majority of the interview were made prior to the survey and thus informed the setting of the survey questions.

The qualitative interviews were conducted with 14 fellows who had been involved in research capacity-building supported by Danida. They were selected to achieve a maximum case variation (Flyvbjerg, 2006) in terms of age, gender, country of origin, and length of participation in the capacity-

building programme. Access to interviewees was obtained through DFC's list of visiting research fellows, DFC's lists of Danish project holders and our own network within the Danish research community. Two interviews were conducted via Skype, one interview was conducted as a two-person group interview and the rest were individual, face-to-face interviews. All interviews focused on the individual experiences and perceptions of being involved in research capacity-building both in relation to Danida's funding and in relation to broader issues of power in North-South relationships. For further details on participants and methodology, please see Madsen & Adriansen (2019).

In order to provide a systematic overview of the scholars' current employment and continued relationship with the Danish research environment, we carried out a survey with 50 questions. These focused on the scholars' current employment, research collaboration, publications and mobility, as well as a number of open-ended questions regarding their ideas about benefits and challenges of being involved in research capacity-building. The questionnaire was distributed to 499 fellows in October 2018 and two reminders were sent out in November 2018. In total 297 people completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 60%. The majority of respondents were born in Tanzania (30%), together with Ghanaians (26%) they made up more than half of the respondents (Figure 1). The majority of the respondents had their current principal employment in the university sector, followed by the public sector (together these constituted 83% of the respondents). 70% of the total number of respondents were male and 30% female, with almost the same distribution for each category of respondents. This corresponds to the gender distribution in the total population of the survey (Madsen & Adriansen, 2019).

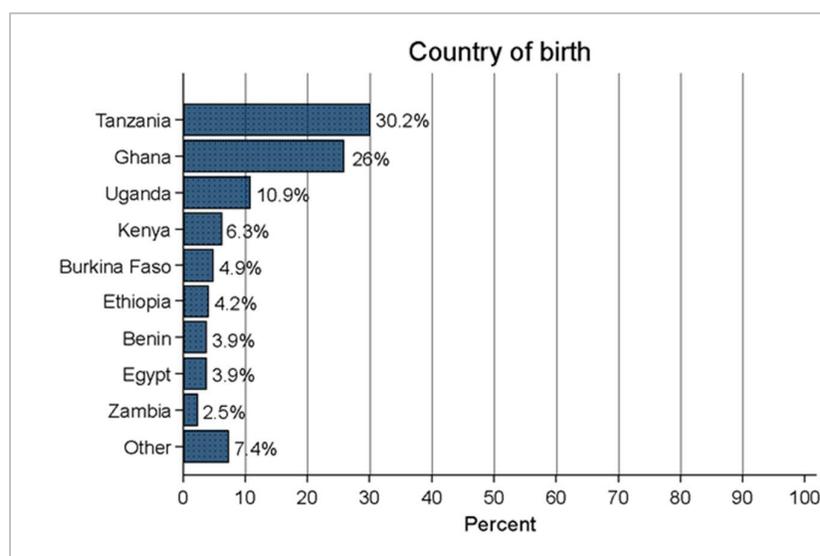


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents according to country of birth (n=285) (from Madsen & Adriansen, 2019:12).

The empirical material for this paper consists of the survey and the 14 qualitative interviews mentioned above (Madsen & Adriansen, 2019) and one qualitative interview conducted by Adriansen for a related project (Adriansen, Mehmood-Ul-Hassan & Mbow, 2016b). We have anonymised all

participants. However, one of them was the co-creator of one publication (Adriansen *et al*, 2016b) and therefore we cite his real name.

Before we proceed with the analysis, a few words on researcher positionality. We are both white, female, Danish women in permanent positions at large, Danish, research universities. We have been engaged in research capacity-building programmes in various ways, on and off, over the past 15 years. In this paper, we speak from an insider position (see Adriansen & Madsen, 2009) when it comes to research capacity-building programmes, importantly we speak from the position of the donor country (to remain within the jargon of the funder) and thus from the privileged position of the global North. While our task in the aforementioned study was to find and make space for the voices and experiences from the people in the global South, it was not a participatory, action research project. We did not share our analytical power with the participants and they were not co-creators of this study.

Analysis: Experiences of South-North mobility

We now turn our attention to our research question: How does internationalisation through academic mobility facilitated by capacity-building programmes influence the participants from Africa? As argued in 'setting the scene' we aim to analyse this by paying attention to not only the mobility of people, but also to the influence of mobility and place for the becoming of an academic and their research practice.

In the analysis, we draw both on Livingstone (2003), who highlights how research bears the marks of its place of production, and on Levinson and Holland's concept 'the cultural production of an educated person' (1996). Through this concept, Levinson and Holland (1996) point to the fact that who is seen as an educated person varies from one culture to another, and furthermore what it means to be educated is situated and place specific. However, when it comes to being an academic, it could be argued that who is seen as an academic does not vary from one culture to another; diplomas and standardised degrees such as a bachelor, masters or PhD provides a global recognition of 'an academic' although with quite different (place-based) rankings. Moreover, what is considered a good academic varies. Therefore, we combine the cultural production of an educated person with Simandan's (2002) ideas on what it takes to become a 'good' geographer, to coin the concept 'the cultural production of a good academic'. Simandan (2002) argues that academia and disciplines not only are traditions of thought, but also traditions of practice and that place matters when it comes to understanding what it means to be a good academic. We use this to argue that 'the good academic' is culturally produced and situated in specific academic settings in particular places while also travelling with mobile scholars. In many ways, this is similar to Tran's (2016) analysis of mobility as 'becoming' for international students in vocational education.

We present the analysis in two parts – first we analyse how mobility and place influence the cultural production for becoming a good academic, second we unfold the role of mobility and place for research practice.

Importance of mobility and place for becoming a 'good' academic

When coming to universities in the global North, the African academics often experience privileged working conditions and different forms of academic everyday lives (Møller-Jensen & Madsen, 2015; Madsen & Nielsen, 2016). To illustrate the outcome of mobility for the fellows, we start with Cheikh Mbow's story of mobility and its relations to what it means to be an academic. Mbow is a Senegalese researcher, who did his PhD which was supported by one of Danida's capacity-building programmes. This brought Mbow to Denmark, where the three of us met. As one of us, Adriansen was doing fieldwork for her PhD in Senegal, Mbow and Adriansen met regularly and a friendship emerged, which years later led to a joint publication *Producing scientific knowledge in Africa today: auto-ethnographic insights from a climate change researcher* (Adriansen *et al*, 2016b). The following is based on this joint publication and a later interview with Mbow. For Mbow, one of the most important experiences from his academic life in Denmark was the ways in which knowledge was produced and what was expected of a PhD student in a research group. In Senegal, Mbow had – to précis his words – been trained to reproduce knowledge, the knowledge of the professors; he was not trained in the creation of new knowledge (see Box 1 for Mbow's quotations).

Box 1: Phases of Mbow's academic development (from Adriansen *et al*, 2016b:129).

DEPENDENCE: I went to primary, secondary and high school in Louga, Senegal. All public schools had French inherited programmes and the curriculum was inspired from France. The university was no different; from first to third year of geography, all maps and fundamental books were from France and many of my teachers were French.

TRANSITION: After my 3rd year at university (license in French), knowledge about Africa and Senegal became part of our training. We studied the climate, hydrology, geology, vegetation and geomorphology of Africa. This literature was not textbook based, but often doctoral thesis and other publications were written by local academic staff.

PRODUCTION: For my MSc and PhD research, I worked on topics relevant to my own country namely about how Niokolo Koba national park was affected by recurrent bush fires. However, I used methods designed from the global North, in particular from France, and benefitted from a capacity-building programme in Denmark.

EMANCIPATION: After some years of research, I began challenging some of the received knowledge and managed to specify what is particular to Africa. After being able to contextualize knowledge, I was able to make knowledge that concern and respond to societal needs and local realities in Africa. As this expertise is in demand internationally, I try to negotiate strong roles in partnership with researchers from the global North.

When arriving in Denmark as a young and promising scholar, Mbow experienced that there was an implicit, new understanding of 'the good academic' – this did not entail reproducing the knowledge of older professors. This highlights Simandan's (2002) point about academia and disciplines not only being a tradition of thought, but also a tradition of practice and that place should be taken seriously

in the 'becoming of academics'. The academic practices that Mbow learned in Denmark, namely critical thinking and questioning of the taken-for-granted, were important for his abilities to construct new knowledge and in his wider career:

I got insight into new ways of thinking about and researching local problems in a way that is relevant for local populations and local decision making. The courses I attended also enlightened me on problem-solving approaches to learning, an approach that makes students more likely to engage in the learning process. This is very important for me in my current employment position.

Mbow's story of his process of becoming a different type of academic is not unique. A similar story can be seen across our empirical material of questionnaire replies and qualitative interviews (Madsen & Adriansen, 2019). Even though they had different disciplinary backgrounds, the fellows told similar stories about the academic practices in Denmark. Learning to be a 'critical thinker' and to work independently as a researcher were mentioned time and again. Being able to discuss and share knowledge with their Danish colleagues and the relatively high level of social equality and flat social hierarchies in Denmark were highlighted. One of the participants, Marshall expressed it this way:

In Denmark a professor is riding a bike. During classes people are discussing issues, professors not imposing views on students. They are not wearing a tie to impose anything. The lack of hierarchy has always stayed with me. My supervisor was just so accessible, so approachable.

Another participant, Festo said something similar: "In Denmark we were encouraged to challenge the professors. I learned disciplines, work ethic, critical thinking. We were on a first name basis, you learn to respect people". For some of the African women, the different cultural production of a good academic also entailed empowerment. Carolyne, for example, spoke about the way her Danish supervisor treated her, being seen as an equal and experiencing that her merits mattered more than her gender was a new and positive experience for her. This shows the role of specific academic settings and places in producing a certain type of an academic; Marshall for example, said: "It shaped how I look at the world". Our empirical material shows that the ideas of critical thinking, discussing and sharing of knowledge and publication practices are all part of the Danish cultural production of a good academic.

However, being exposed to and adopting a new cultural production of a good academic can raise challenges when returning home to another academic setting. Researchers can end up being pessimistic about their future career development. Festo, one of our interviewees explained to us the difficulties that arose from being the kind of academic he had learned to be in Denmark. Festo first arrived in Denmark in 1992 and gained his PhD from a Danish university in 1996. At the time of writing this paper, he was now close to retirement from university work and could look back at how he had used the skills and abilities he had gained in Denmark: "In Denmark, I found that lecturers encouraged us to express ourselves and to even challenge the professors. This is something that I have tried also to do. I have brought it in my classes and I encourage my students [to challenge me]". He went on to explain how he used these approaches with his students. Some things, however, were hard to use at his home university: "There was a challenge. Colleagues don't accept open book exams". Likewise, he

found it difficult to change the social hierarchy. Muhammed, another interviewee, had preferred employment in an international organisation in order to maintain what he saw as the 'proper' working style of an academic. However, there were also examples showing that this was changing. Some participants argued that with the increasing number of African researchers trained abroad, other ways of being an academic were accepted now. This implies that multitudes of cultural productions of good academics are experienced when colleagues return from research stays at universities abroad. Moreover, it shows the importance of seeing universities as dynamic settings, changing over time with mobile academics. We will now turn our attention to how the notion of what it means to be a good academic also influences research practice.

The importance of mobility and place for research practice

The significance of academic mobility for research practice has been pointed out by Jöns (2007) amongst others and she shows the constitutive character of mobility for research. In our survey (Madsen & Adriansen, 2019), some of the participants saw research-capacity building and its human mobility as mainly related to gaining access to new knowledge: "Capacity building is giving the student knowledge with which they can come back and cause development in their country" or "Giving someone an opportunity to learn new things". However, the majority of the participants emphasised other aspects and wider perspectives. An example being: "Capacity building is an enabling process to help individuals or institutions achieve or realize their full potential".

The participants' experiences and perception of research capacity-building were overwhelmingly positive, especially with regard to empowerment and critical thinking. In Figure 2, it can be seen that 84% of the participants agree that capacity building can lead to empowerment, and 80% stated that it can enhance critical thinking. Empowerment and critical thinking were concepts interviewees had brought forward in the qualitative interviews. We used them in the survey to know how many agreed on these being important aspects of capacity-building programmes. For 61% it can lead to long lasting relationships. Furthermore, 72% agreed (or agreed to some extent), that capacity building can enhance the research capacity of the donor. Few think that capacity building ignores local knowledge and makes African researchers ill-suited to work with local problems. However, 30% of the respondents agree (or agree to some extent), that capacity building can be based on an uneven division of labour between the global North and global South, and, likewise, 34% that capacity building can make African universities more dependent on the global North. We were surprised by these very positive results from the survey, where the participants could air criticism anonymously.

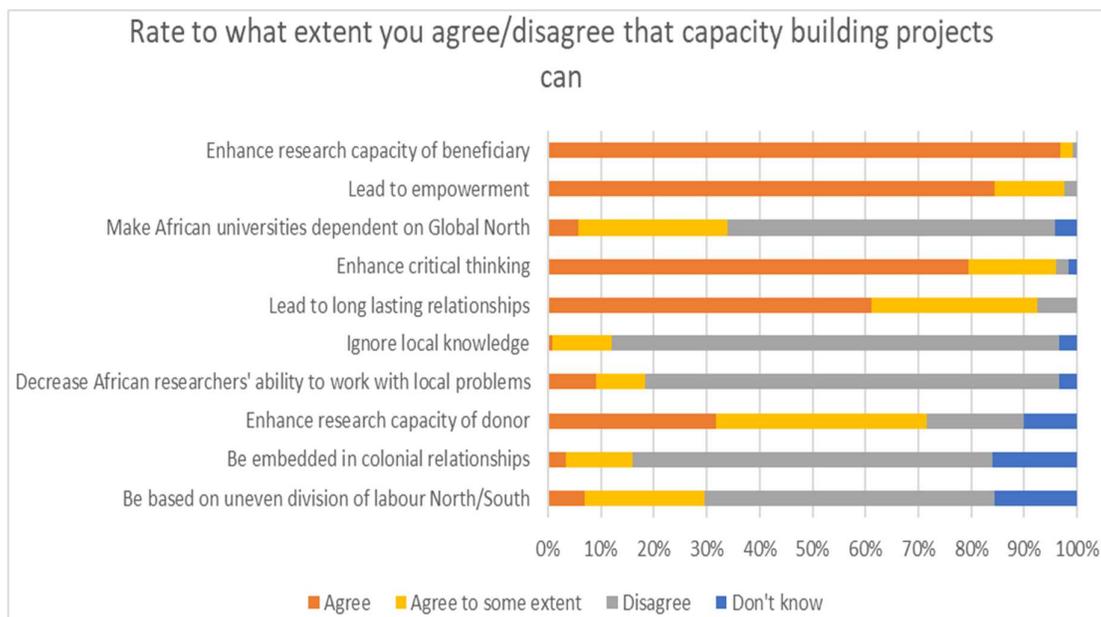


Figure 2. The percentage of participants who have indicated the extent of their agreement to ten statements about research capacity-building programmes (n ranges from 115-127). Current PhD students were not asked this question and therefore only 49% of the respondents could reply. (From Madsen & Adriansen, 2019:31).

In order to illustrate the meaning of mobility for the academics' research practice, we return to Cheikh Mbow (Adriansen *et al*, 2016b). From the very beginning in the 1970s, schooling for Mbow had implied mobility of knowledge, as his school had adopted the language and curriculum of the French coloniser. The majority of African scholars share similar experiences, because present day school systems in many African countries were introduced by the colonial regimes and are largely dependent on imported Eurocentric systems (Shizha, 2014). Until his last years at university in the 1990s, Mbow explains "I knew all about the geography and biology of France but nothing about that of Senegal". During his masters and his PhD, he started working with topics relevant to his own country, but using methods designed in the global North, in particular from France. When working within disciplines such as geography and biology, it caused some challenging situations when particular methods and theories from the global North were used as if these were universal. However, Mbow rarely experienced discussions about the mobility of knowledge through the transfer and applicability of 'Western' theories and methods in a Senegalese or West African context. We mention these mobilities of knowledge to highlight how theories, concepts and other types of knowledges can travel independently of people and how mobile knowledges have influenced the academics prior to their own mobility.

For other Danida fellows in the study (Madsen & Adriansen, 2019), the access to advanced lab-technologies in Denmark gave access to knowledge and research practice *on a par* with Danish colleagues, knowledge that became mobile with the academics. This was the case for Oliver. He saw his relation to his Danish supervisors and colleagues as "one long conversation". When he was in Denmark, he could interpret, discuss and share data – something that rarely happened at the university where he was employed. As he put it, "[at home] the students are struggling on their own,

but here [Denmark] you always have someone.” Hence, Oliver saw his own mobility as vital for his research practice.

Gideon provided another example of the importance of mobility for his research practice (Madsen & Adriansen, 2019). After being in Denmark for a while, he often helped his African colleagues with writing research papers, in this process he became aware of what he had learned from being in a research group in Denmark. In this group, the Danish researchers aimed to get their articles published in high-impact journals. Gideon experienced the researchers in his Danish research group as critical in the sense that it was more important for them to get one article published in a high ranking journal than publishing a large number of articles: “You don’t publish anything where you have not publishable results”, he said, adding: “anything is publishable [in the African system], at home a paper could easily be split into many papers.” Gideon’s story shows the impact of his physical mobility for his research practice – he changed the way he publishes and encouraged his African colleagues to do the same. Hence, the importance of human mobility in capacity-building programmes is not (only) about learning a new method or getting access to new disciplinary knowledge, it is also about how to work as an academic. For the latter, mobility and being emerged in another academic environment is very important.

Discussion and concluding remarks

In this paper, we have been inspired by Livingstone’s (2003) ideas that research bears the marks of its place of production and the setting of the producer. The paper has used Danida-funded research capacity-building programmes for African academics as a case to advance an understanding of the role of different locations both for becoming of an academic and for their research practices. We want to emphasise that there is not only one cultural production of a good academic in Denmark, nor are the characteristics (such as the emphasis on critical thinking) unique to higher education in Denmark. Something similar has been reported by Munoz-Garcia and Chiappa (2016:6) in their study from Chile: “studying and becoming critical abroad is highly tied to the notion of thinking differently about academia”. Like them, we want to show how mobility and place influences on ideas about what it means to be a good academic and how this in turn affects the academics’ research practice.

Given the geopolitics of knowledge (Shahjahan, 2016), we can read the narratives of African scholars’ as internalizing cultural imperialism, as a result of internalized oppression, and assuming the benevolence they witness among the Danes as they engage in academic cultural practices. Elsewhere, we have analysed issues of coloniality in capacity-building programmes and how cultural imperialism play a role in culture transfer through academic mobility, what it means to be a ‘good academic’ and have the right research practice (Madsen & Nielsen, 2016; Adriansen & Madsen, 2019; Madsen & Adriansen, 2020).

Here, we want to point to the different meanings of academic mobility. Mobility can be a self-formation process and a way of becoming (Tran, 2016) and an accumulation strategy of social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital (Ong, 1999). Mobility as an accumulation strategy is common among academics, where mobility is valued in the labour market and is a central aspect of internationalisation (Bauder, 2015). While our participants were generally very positive towards Denmark and spoke

positively about being mobile, we want to note that mobility not only equals freedom, as often portrayed in the neo-liberal economy, but also can act as new mode of pressure or exploitation in academia. We also want to note that prior to their own physical mobility, the scholars had been exposed to mobile knowledge in different ways and forms. For Mbow, for instance, the global North represented both an imposed curriculum through colonial heritage and the possibility to acquire the knowledge and practices for becoming an emancipated academic capable of creating new knowledge.

We started this paper by noticing that universities always have been international – marked by flows of people, materials, and knowledge. Moreover, academic mobility has been important throughout the history of the university as an institution and closely linked to research practice. Yet, internationalisation of higher education is on the agenda worldwide. What internationalisation means, however, seem to be a Westernised, Anglo-Saxon paradigm (de Wit, 2020). Across Sub-Saharan Africa, there is an unprecedented growth the international research collaboration, which means African scholars are caught in epistemological and material struggles of their research (Mills, 2020). International collaboration such as research capacity-building programmes can reinforce this through its South-North mobility. We have shown that the mobilities of scholars are closely linked to mobilities of knowledges and academic practices of the involved. Research capacity-building as internationalisation facilitates this by providing opportunities for mobility. This paper has also shown the ways in which the knowledges and practices are negotiated and transformed in relation to specific academic settings and places between which the academics travel.

A final point worth discussing is the *what*, *where* and *who* of internationalisation. It can be argued that many universities in Africa are very international by language (those of the colonisers and regional languages such as Swahili), by curriculum (from both the North and South), by ‘epistemic coloniality’ in its disciplines and by funding (from the global North) (Mills 2020, Teferra, 2020). As the story of Mbow showed, it is not only higher education that is strongly influenced by the global North. Mbow had been influenced by mobile knowledge from the beginning of his schooling through a French curriculum. Yet, African universities are often seen as lacking, hence the need for research capacity-building, international collaboration, South-North mobility and other manifestations of internationalisation. All this, however, seems to locate ‘the international’ somewhere, namely in the global North. Livingstone (2003) has shown how we are used to thinking of universities and their knowledges as universal. In a similar fashion, we would argue that we are accustomed to thinking of internationalisation as universal, but its manifestations tell us otherwise. Therefore, we need to study what internationalisation comes to mean in specific implementations of internationalisation.

In conclusion, this study has shown that mobility funded by research capacity-building has implications for the becoming of an academic and their research practices. Further, it has highlighted that not only the mobility, but also the place – the spatial setting – influences the involved African academics. We also want to note that prior to their own physical mobility facilitated by the research capacity-building, the fellows had been exposed to mobile knowledge, for instance in terms of an inherited colonial curriculum. Finally, turning the gaze to the individual experiences and outcomes for scholars involved in North-South collaboration shows how internationalisation through mobility can empower some of the participants through access to other cultural productions of a good academic. The participants argued that this way of being an academic through critical thinking, questioning the taken-for-granted and the ways that their Danish professors empowered them, allowed them to participate in academia

in the global North. For these participants, physical mobility entailed some sort of freedom. While we have also pointed to the coercion entailed in internationalisation for universities and academics in the global South, we hope that this study has brought forward some of the complexity in our understanding of academic mobility facilitated by research capacity-building programmes.

Funding sources:

The study was partly financed by the Danida Fellowship Centre, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Acknowledgments:

Our deepest gratitude goes to all the interviewees and other participants, who have helped provide information for this article. Thilde Juul-Wiese, Taina Saarinen, Vera Spangler, and Johanna Waters all commented on an earlier draft for which we are very grateful. All the usual disclaimers apply.

References

- Adriansen, H.K. 2020. Materialities and mobilities in transnational capacity-building projects: Uneven geographies of knowledge production. *Population, Space and Place*. 25(3): e2294.
- Adriansen, H.K., & Madsen, L.M. 2019. Capacity-building projects in African higher education: Issues of coloniality in international academic collaboration. *Learning and Teaching*. 12(2): 1-23.
- Adriansen, H.K., Madsen, L.M. & Jensen, S. (eds.). 2016a. *Higher Education and Capacity Building in Africa – the Geographies of Knowledge and Power*. Routledge Studies in African Development. Derby: Routledge.
- Adriansen, H.K., & Madsen, L.M. 2009. Studying the making of geographical knowledge: The implications of insider interviews. *Norsk geografisk tidsskrift–Norwegian journal of geography*. 63(3): 145-153.
- Adriansen, H.K., Mehmood-Ul-Hassan, M. & Mbow, C. 2016b. Producing scientific knowledge in Africa today: Auto-ethnographic insights from a climate change researcher. In: Adriansen, H.K., Madsen, L.M. & Jensen, S. (eds.) *Higher Education and Capacity Building in Africa – the Geographies of Knowledge and Power*. Routledge Studies in African Development. Derby: Routledge. 142-164.
- Antikainen, A. 2006. In search of the Nordic model in education. *Scandinavian journal of educational research*. 50(3): 229-243.
- Bauder, H. 2015. The international mobility of academics: A labour market perspective. *International Migration*. 53(1): 83-96.
- Bilecen, B. & Van Mol. C. 2017. Introduction: international academic mobility and inequalities. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 43(8): 1241-1255.
- Breidlid, A. 2013a. *Education, indigenous knowledges, and development in the global south: Contesting knowledges for a sustainable future*. New York: Routledge.
- Breidlid, A. 2013b. Collaboration in University Development: North-South, South-North. A Norwegian Case. *Postcolonial Directions in Education*. 2(2): 355-380.
- Brooks, R. & Waters, J. 2017. *Materialities and mobilities in education*. Milton Park: Routledge.
- Cairncross, F. 1997. *The death of distance*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

- de Wit, H. 2020. Internationalisation in Higher Education: A Western Paradigm or a Global, Intentional and Inclusive Concept? *International Journal of African Higher Education*. 7(2): 31-37.
- Canto, I. & Hannah, J. 2001. A partnership of equals? Academic collaboration between the United Kingdom and Brazil. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 5(1): 26–41.
- Fahey, J. & Kenway, J. 2010. Thinking in a ‘worldly’ way: Mobility, knowledge, power and geography. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. 31(5): 627–40.
- Fellesson, M. & Mählick, P. 2017. Untapped Research Capacities? Mobility and Collaboration at the Intersection of International Development Aid and Global Science Regimes. *International journal of African Higher Education*. 1: 1-24.
- Flyvbjerg, B. 2006. Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative inquiry*. 12(2): 219-245.
- Glick Schiller, N., & Salazar, N.B. 2013. Regimes of mobility across the globe. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*. 39(2): 183-200.
- Gunter, A. & Raghuram, P. 2018. International study in the global south: linking institutional, staff, student and knowledge mobilities. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. 16(2): 192-207.
- Gaardhøje, J.J., Hansen, J.A. & Thulstrup, E.W. 2006. *Capacity Building in Higher Education and Research on a Global Scale*. Copenhagen: The Danish National Commission for UNESCO.
- Heffernan, M., Suarsana, L. & Meusburger, P. 2018. Geographies of the University: An Introduction. In Meusburger, P., Heffernan, M. & Suarsana, L. (eds.) *Geographies of the University*. Cham: Springer. 1-20.
- Henderson, E.F. 2019. A PhD in motion: Advancing a critical academic mobilities approach (CAMA) to researching short-term mobility schemes for doctoral students. *Teaching in Higher Education*. 24(5): 678-693.
- Ilsøe, B. 2019. Danish support for building capacity in Africa, Appendix 1. In Madsen, L.M. & Adriansen, H.K. (eds.) *Opportunities, challenges - and bad weather: Experiences and reflections of African researchers involved in Danida funded research capacity building 1989-2019*. Copenhagen: Danida Fellowship Centre.
- Jensen, S., Adriansen, H.K. & Madsen, L.M. 2016. ‘Do “African” Universities exist? Setting the scene’, Adriansen, H.K., Madsen, L.M. & Jensen, S. (eds.) *Higher Education and Capacity Building in Africa – the Geographies of Knowledge and Power*. Routledge Studies in African Development. Derby: Routledge. 12–38.
- Jöns, H. 2007. Transnational mobility and the spaces of knowledge production: a comparison of global patterns, motivations and collaborations in different academic fields. *Social geography*, 2(2), 97-114.
- Jöns, H., Heffernan, M. and Meusburger, P. 2017a. *Mobilities of Knowledge*. Springer International Publishing.

- Jöns, H., Heffernan, M., & Meusburger, P. 2017b. Mobilities of Knowledge: An Introduction. In Jöns, H., Heffernan, M. & Meusburger, P. (eds.) *Mobilities of Knowledge*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. 1-19.
- Kim, T. 2017. Academic mobility, transnational identity capital, and stratification under conditions of academic capitalism. *Higher Education*. 73(6): 981-997.
- Levinson, B.A. & Holland, D. 1996. The cultural production of the educated person: An introduction. In Levinson, B.A., Foley, D.E. & Holland, D. (Eds.) *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice*. New York: SUNY Press. 1–54.
- Livingstone, D.N. 2003. *Putting science in its place: geographies of scientific knowledge*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Livingstone, D.N. 2010. Keeping knowledge in site. *History of Education*. 39(6): 779-785.
- Madsen, L.M. & Adriansen, H.K. 2020. Transnational research capacity building: Whose standards count? *Critical African Studies*. 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2020.1724807>
- Madsen, L.M. & Adriansen, H.K. 2019. *Opportunities, challenges - and bad weather: Experiences and reflections of African researchers involved in Danida funded research capacity building 1989-2019*. Copenhagen: Danida Fellowship Centre.
- Madsen, L.M. & Mählick, P. 2018. Postcolonial critique of knowledge relations in higher education. *Postcolonial Directions in Education*. 7(1): 1-10.
- Madsen, L.M. & Nielsen, T.T. 2016. Negotiating scientific knowledge about climate change. In Adriansen, H.K., Madsen, L.M. & Jensen, S. (eds.) *Higher Education and Capacity Building in Africa – the Geographies of Knowledge and Power*. Routledge Studies in African Development. Derby: Routledge. 147-168.
- Mills, D. 2020. The epistemic politics of ‘academography’: navigating competing representations of Africa’s university futures. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. 18(5): 541-552.
- Morgan, K. 2004. The exaggerated death of geography: learning, proximity and territorial innovation systems. *Journal of economic geography*. 4(1): 3-21.
- Morley, L., Alexiadou, N., Garaz, S., González-Monteagudo, J., & Taba, M. 2018. Internationalisation and migrant academics: the hidden narratives of mobility. *Higher Education*. 76(3): 537-554.
- Munoz-Garcia, A. L. & Chiappa, R. 2017. Stretching the academic harness: knowledge construction in the process of academic mobility in Chile. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. 15(5): 635-647.
- Møller-Jensen, L. & Madsen, L.M. 2015. Becoming and being an African scholar: a 15 year perspective on capacity building projects in Ghana. *Forum for Development Studies*. 42(2): 245–264.
- Obamba, M.O., & Mwema, J. K. 2009. Symmetry and asymmetry: New contours, paradigms, and politics in African academic partnerships. *Higher Education Policy*. 22(3): 349–371.

- Ong, A. 1999. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Raghuram, P. 2013. Theorising the spaces of student migration. *Population, Space and Place*. 19(2): 138-154.
- Rizvi, F. 2011. Theorizing students' mobility in an era of globalization. *Theory and Practice*. 17(6): 693–701.
- Rodríguez-Pose, A. & Crescenzi, R. 2008. Mountains in a flat world: why proximity still matters for the location of economic activity. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*. 1(3): 371-388.
- Shahjahan, R.A. 2016. International organizations (IOs), epistemic tools of influence, and the colonial geopolitics of knowledge production in higher education policy. *Journal of Education Policy*. 31(6): 694-710
- Shizha, E. 2014. Indigenous knowledge systems and the curriculum. In Emeagwali, G. & Dei, G.J.S. (Eds.) *African Indigenous Knowledge and the Disciplines*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. 113–129
- Simandan, D. 2002. On what it takes to be a good geographer. *Area*. 34(3): 284-293.
- Teferra, D. 2020. The Irrelevance of the Re-Configured Definition of Internationalisation to the Global South. *International Journal of African Higher Education*. 7(2): 157-172.
- Teferra, D. & Altbach, P.G. 2004. 'African higher education: Challenges for the 21st century'. *Higher Education*. 47(1): 21-50.
- Tran, L.T. 2016. 'Mobility as Becoming': A Bourdieuan Analysis of the Factors Shaping International Student Mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 37(8): 1268–1289.
- Urry, J. 2007. *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. 1994. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Zezeza, P.T. 2012. Internationalization in higher education: Opportunities and challenges for the Knowledge Project in the Global South. *Internationalisation of Higher Education: Perspectives from the South*. Essay in the SARUA Leadership Dialogue Series.
- Zink, E. 2018. Ugandan scientists, Scandinavian collaborations, and the cultural economy of science. *Postcolonial Directions in Education*. 7(1): 85–106.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>