Master's thesis

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MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES OF WEST AFRICAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE GLOBAL NORTH

Master's thesis in Globalisation and Sustainable Development
Supervisor: Marianne Garvik
June 2022

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ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	**CORONA VIRUS DISEASE 2019**
EU	**EUROPEAN UNION**
GN	**GLOBAL NORTH**
GRE	**GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATION**
HEI	**HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**
IELTS	**INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM**
ISM	**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY**
NOK	**NORWEGIAN KRONE**
NSD	**NORWEGIAN CENTER FOR RESEARCH DATA**
OECD	**ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT**
SDG	**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL**
TOEFL	**TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**
UDI	**THE DIRECTORATE OF IMMIGRATION**
UK	**UNITED KINGDOM**
UN	**UNITED NATIONS**
UNESCO	**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**
UNHCR	**UNITED NATIONS' HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**
USA	**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**
USD	**UNITED STATES DOLLARS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the history of international student migration in the West African subregion and relates it to the current migration trajectories of international student migrants from the same subregion. This will form the basis for mapping and conceptualizing the patterns of such movements under the stepwise, serial, and circular theories of migration. To understand these patterns, this thesis delves into the factors that influence and or inhibit student migration from West Africa to the Global North. These include the factors that influence or constrain the decision to study abroad, the choice of destination countries and the choice of Higher Education Institution.This investigation will also be perpetuated through the lens of the aspirations-capabilities framework as propounded by De Haas.

Through a qualitative research approach, data was collected through interviews from student informants from Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Côte D'ivoire who are currently spread across different locations in the Global North (GN). GN in this context includes countries in Europe, North America, and some parts of Asia. Using the diversity of their migration experiences, I identify stepwise and serial migration as the dominant migration patterns used among students from West Africa to access educational and professional opportunities in the Global North and circular migration as the least encountered in the sample group.

In this thesis, I also focus on the uncertainty of student migration experiences. This is because student migration is often associated with 'safety' as opposed to other forms of migration such as unskilled labor migration or forced migration due to conflict. The uncertainty in student migration is rooted in the multifaceted identity that embodies the term 'international student'. International students are not merely persons pursuing higher education in other countries. They are simultaneously family members, citizens of particular countries, workers, and perhaps also refugees. (King & Raghuram, 2012, p. 134) They may be fathers, mothers, wives and husbands who may also responsible for the livelihoods of their families back home (King & Raghuram, 2012). It is this intersectionality of the identity of international students that makes their migration trajectories complex. This is because the identity they carry to each destination determines whether they thrive or struggle to meet their migration goal. It also determines whether they must stay, restrategize or give up on their quest of accessing better opportunities in the GN. Returning to the country of origin may in some instances, not be a viable option. In this paper, I emphasize on the coincidence of luck and opportunity in the acquisition of legal residence and job opportunities after higher education is completed. I also capture the accounts of former international students who have had to return to their home countries because of the absence of opportunities in the host country.

Lastly, the experiences of students are discussed along themes identified in my analysis of informant interviews. These themes are used to highlight the realities of living and studying in the Global North. More importhantly, the migration patterns that are used by students from West Africa to navigate these experiences, whether positive or negative are in focus in this thesis. I then conclude by proffering solutions to the challenges faced by this group of students as a way of making this form of migration safer and beneficial for all actors involved.

"Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restless, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others"

(Said, 1994)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I introduce the concept of international student mobility. I discuss the complexity of the interactions that international students have with receiving countries because of their desirability as migrants on one hand. I also point out the restrictions that are imposed on their mobility by receiving governmnents because of their capacity to displace others and compete with citizens for opportunites on the other hand (King & Raghuram, 2012). I further point out that, inspite of this complex interaction, student mobility from the Global South to the Global North is on the rise. In 1.2, I place emphasis on the Global-North-Global-South paradigm as a way of pointing out the inequalities on both sides of the globe. These disparities are used as a lens through which I discuss international student migration from the Global South to the Global North. Next, I introduce West Africa in 1.3 as my area of focus in the Global South. I then trace the history of intellectual student mobility in the region as a basis for understanding how the phenomenon has evolved from the colonial era in the region to the present. In 1.4, I justify the purpose of this study and introduce the research objectives of this thesis. This is to establish how this thesis bridges the knowledge gap in international student mobility and migration research.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Human mobility occurs as an interaction between people and place. Human mobility encompasses involuntary internal and cross border displacement of populations, voluntary internal and cross-border migration as well as planned and consented relocation (UNHCR, 2015). Human mobility through higher education may be involuntary or voluntary, planned or consented depending on the complexity of the identity and or the background of the international student. International student mobility (ISM) is a growing field of interest in global migration studies as a result of the magnitude of its flows and its ability to empower talents whilst simultaneously threatening to displace others. Though international students remain one of the most desirable groups of migrants across the globe, their mobility is constantly under interrogation (King & Raghuram, 2012). Their desirability is premised on governments' view that international students are valuable future skilled workers and economic assets to the industry of higher education on one hand. On the other hand, this desirability is conflicted with the need to take national security measures to avert terrorist attacks such as 9/11 (King & Raghuram,

2012, p. 130; Riaño & Piguet, 2016). In other instances, international students are also viewed as competitors to locals in the job market as well as threats to domestic students and their entitlements.

In spite of these complex interactions between international students and host nations, international student migration remains one of the highest forms of migration. As of 2019 and on a global scale, 6.1 million students at the tertiary level had moved across borders to study more than twice the number in 2007. On an average, the number of international students increased by 5.5% per year between 1998 and 2019. (OECD, Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators, 2021).

The popularity of international student migration has over the years been enhanced through globalization and the globalization of higher education (Findlay A. M., 2010). Globalization is a term used to connote the interdependence of societies and nations across borders at the political, social, economic, and cultural level leading to a global homogenization. It describes the expansion, concentration and acceleration of worldwide relations driven by technology. (Osterhammel & Peterson, 2005). This phenomenon has brought with it expeditious communication, transportation as well as the advent of open markets. Some scholars (Steger & Wahlrab, 2016) have called for the replacement of the term 'globalization' with 'globality' as the phenomenon exemplifies the tightening of economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections across national borders and civilizational boundaries. It can further be argued that the need to interchange the aforementioned terms as proposed by the scholars is hinged on the scale and magnitude at which the practice of globalization is occurring worldwide. By extension, the globalization of higher education refers to the homogenization of education on a global scale. This is manifested through exchange programmes targeted at students and staff members of cross border institutions, the integration of school curricula between institutions and their satellite or overseas campuses, the commodification of education for economic gains by the host countries and the attempt to standardize education across nations which has begun in Europe and other parts of the Global North through the Bologna process (Findlay A. M., 2010, p. 165).

The ongoing standardization of education has necessitated the acquisition of globally recognized academic credentials by students, especially, those originating from the global south, as failing to do so may place them at a disadvantage on the local and global job market.

1.2 THE GLOBAL NORTH-GLOBAL SOUTH PARADIGM

In this paper, the terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' are used to distinguish between North America and Western European countries as one unit, and countries in Asia and Africa, specific to this context, West Africa as another unit. The Global North-Global South paradigm is relevant in this discussion as it highlights structural developmental issues that have made labor and student migration popular and lucrative for all actors involved. This paper takes cognizance of the denunciation of the usage of the terms Global North and Global South as it is rife with politics and power relations and has become associated with development and wealth for the former unit and the impoverishment of the latter (McGregor & Hill, 2009).

This dichotomy has its origins in colonization, when Europe through the industrial revolution extended its influence on overseas territories by colonizing weaker states in the southern hemisphere for the exploitation of natural resources and labor for profit. (McGregor & Hill, 2009, p. 473). Osterhammel & Peterson(2005) have pointed out that the onset of the industrial revolution and the history of globalization are intertwined. They posit that, the industrial revolution did not cause a sudden change in intercontinental economic relations. The revolution began as small economic domain and spread gradually across the world (p. 62).

The consequences of globalization from this era is still in motion today. The rapid industrialization through open markets has led to global economic homogenization. However, it did not bring economic parity to the northern and southern hemisphere. It led to the accumulation of wealth and brought economic prosperity to most parts of the northern hemisphere whilst impoverishing some parts of the southern hemisphere through exploitation and the stifling of local industries. These economic disparities have culminated into a widening income inequality gap between the southern hemisphere and the northern hemisphere. (IMF, 2022). It is within this context that the terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' are employed throughout this paper to emphasize the widening gap at the economic, social, and political level between the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern hemisphere. McGregor & Hill (2009) have advanced that, in spite of the criticisms leveraged against the use of the North-South expression, '*it is an indispensable concept for interpreting international economic and political relations, providing a useful lens for identifying unevenness and inequality at the global scale*' (p.476)

To bridge the economic gap, migration has been mobilized as a tool by citizens of the Global South to gain access to better standards of life, better opportunities and work conditions, skills, and training to help family connections in their countries of origin or to create their own wealth.

1.3 THE HISTORY OF INTELLECTUAL MOBILITY FROM WEST AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW

Figure 1 below provides a cartographical description of the West African sub region. The region comprises of sixteen countries, namely, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, Cape Verde. In the papragraphs that follow, the history of intellectual mobility will discussed using a number of countries within the region.

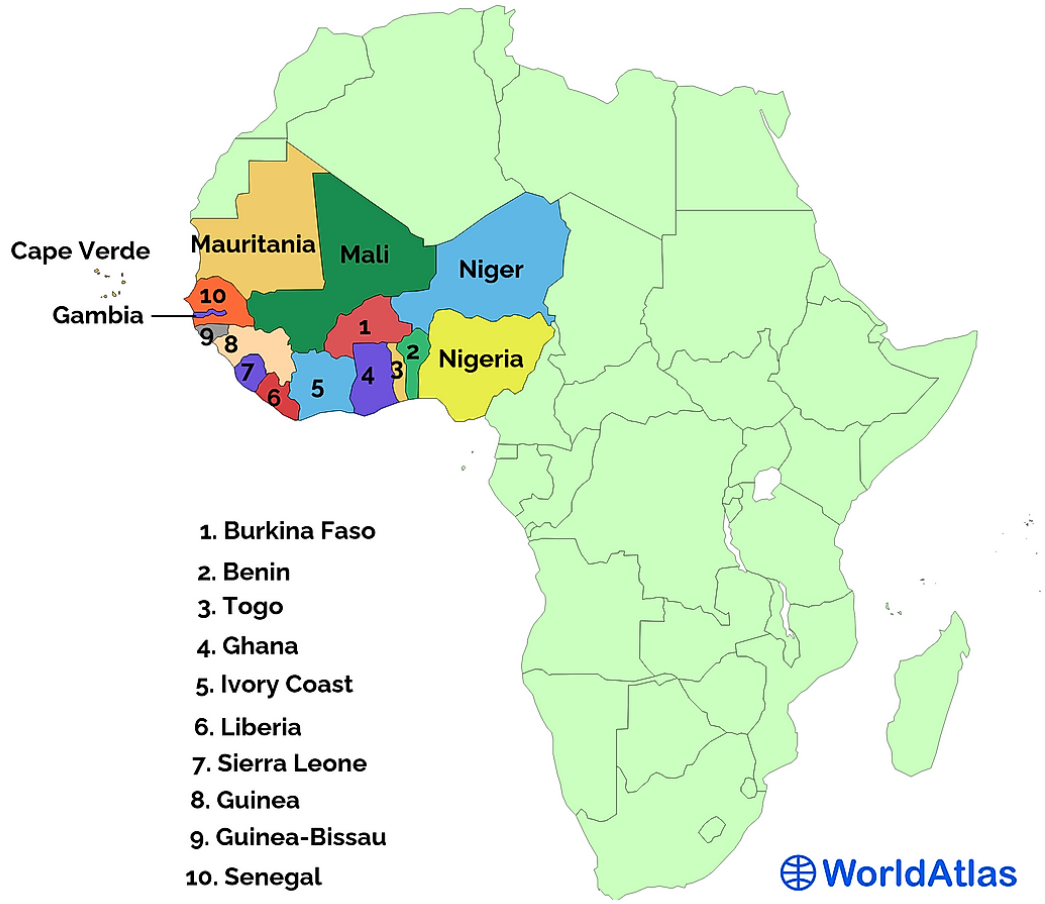

Figure 1: Map of West Africa

Source: (https://www.worldatlas.com/geography/west-african-countries.html)

The history of international student migration and intellectual mobility in the West African sub-region predates the rise of independent nations within same. Through the modus operandi of assimilation and indirect rule used in the administration of former colonies, an elite class was nurtured to solve the

administrative problems of former colonies. These elites were sent off to pursue higher education in Europe with hopes of harnessing their newly gained skills, upon their return, to rule the locals of the colonies. (Ploner & Nada, 2020). However, it was not anticipated that such intellectual mobility will give rise to nationalism amongst the elites who would return to their home countries to fight for independence from the colonialists. The Nationalist movements that sprung up in the 1950's in today's Global South were powered by international students who migrated to the countries and cities of their imperialists and were inspired by protesters who *'fought for the freedom'* of their people (Raghuram, Madge, & Noxolo, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2012). West Africa was no exception to these nationalist movements. Pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Patrice Lumumba of Congo were all products of international student mobility.

Even after independence, the tradition of pursuing higher education abroad *in West Africa* continued to grow. In the case of Ghana, there were continental and intercontinental movements where small pools of students and professionals travelled to the United Kingdom and other English-Speaking countries due to colonial links. In 1967, immigration data indicates that there were some 100 Ghanaian immigrants in Canada. (Anarfi, Kwankye, Ababio, & Temioko, 2003).

Similarly in Nigeria, a vast majority of people migrated to the United Kingdom in pursuit of higher education. After it gained independence in 1960, people continued to migrate to the United Kingdom as well as the United States, which became a new destination for migration in the era. However, after the oil crisis in 1973, Nigeria was put on a path of economic growth due to the discovery of rich oil reserves in the country. This period saw a decline in international migration from Nigeria and a rise of the middle classes of Nigeria. This era brought with it rapid industrialization and urbanization and attracted labor migrants from other West African countries such as Ghana, Gambia, and Cameroon. By 1985, Nigeria entered into a period of economic depression plagued with political unrest. International migration from the Nigeria into other parts of the world was revived. The migration of students and skilled workers to English-speaking countries continued but due to growing political unrest in the 1980's, these migration destinations had to be diversified to accommodate safety, economic and other needs. Nigerians began migrating into other parts of Europe, namely, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium as well as the gulf States. By the 1900s, Spain and Italy had also emerged as a new migration destination for Nigerians (Afaha, 2013, pp. 55-56; Black, Natalie, & Skinner, 2004;2005)

Turning to Francophone West Africa, the history of international migration in Senegal began as far back as the Second World War when several Senegalese soldiers fought alongside the French army against Germany. Many Senegalese soldiers post-war, settled in Marseille and its environs, worked, and started families. After Senegal gained Independence in 1960, emigration from the country continued as many

Senegalese migrants moved to industrial cities such as Marseille and Paris amid Europe's economic boom after the wars (Assopgoum, 2011, p. 89).

In 1985, France introduced visa requirements for Senegalese citizens making it difficult for migrants to access France directly from Senegal. Senegalese migrants sought out alternative routes and destination countries in Italy, US, Canada, Spain, and other parts of Africa that had the threshold to sustain them economically. However, France remained the first choice of destination for most Senegalese migrants (Assopgoum, 2011). World Bank Reports have revealed that there were close to 90,551 Senegalese persons residing in France as at 2006 (Ratha & Shaw, 2007). Among these migrants were those emigrating for academic purposes. According to the World Bank, the emigration rate of students at the tertiary level from France stood at 24.1% as at 2000 (World Bank, 2008). To date, France has become a major destination choice for international students from Senegal because of colonial and historical affiliations.

In the case of Burkina Faso, emigration from the country prior to its independence remained at the regional level. Burkinabés migrated to neighboring West African Regions such as Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Benin as labor migrants and for income diversification within their households. However, academic migration gained wide popularity in the period after its independence in 1960 due to the opening up of educational and technical training opportunities in France (Olsen, 2014). Le Vine (1967) posits that, by the eve of Burkina Faso's Independence from France, there were some 3000 migrants from French West Africa and Madagascar as opposed to 471 in 1953. Equipped with new knowledge from Europe, the returnees amassed political power and confidence from the people. A western education became synonymous to access to employment and political tools and led to a stratification in the social class of Burkina Faso. This led to the ascendance of a new elite constituted by return migrants. Academic migration has since then remained a standard prerequisite for elite status (Olsen, 2014, p. 5).

This historical perspective on intellectual mobility from West Africa to Europe from these selected countries in the region demonstrates the role of education in the economic, social, and political organization of the region which is evident to date. Policies governing education and migration have evolved considerably from the status quo in the pre- to- post-colonial era of the West African subregion, however, the need to pursue higher education abroad has remained static and has over the years seen a considerable expansion and transformation that transcends economic and social status. This rapid growth can be attributed to globalization and the globalization of education.

This thesis will focus on the strategies that students from the West African subregion have used to navigate policy hurdles and map the steps taken to fulfill their overall life goals through migration.

1.4 JUSTIFICATION FOR STUDY & PURPOSE STATEMENT

Research on mobility from the Global South to the Global North has been skewed towards unskilled labor migrants and other irregular forms of migrants such as asylum seekers escaping conflict and migrants who have been trafficked (Adepoju, 2005; Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2000; Kyei J. , 2021).

In spite of a long tradition of pursuing higher education abroad in West Africa, research on migration from the region has focused primarily on push and pull factors (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2000), the problematization of migration for the host and sending country (Adepoju, 2005) and migration intentions of prospective student migrants (Dako-Gyeke, 2016; Abuosi & Abor, 2015).

It is irrefutable that this focus has added on to the knowledge pool on mobility in the subregion, however, most of these studies have been restricted to few countries in the sub region with much focus on Anglophone West Africa over Francophone West Africa. Migration research that has focused on the subregion also has a limited reach on existing migration theories as juxtaposed to international student mobility from West Africa. Based on existing migration theories, the purpose of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the migration trajectories used by students from West Africa to access opportunities in the Global North. An investigation into the pathways used by students from different parts of the region will be a component of this paper.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Flowing from the aforementioned purpose statement, the main research question is:

- What patterns of migration have been utilized by West African students to access academic and or professional opportunities in the Global North?

The purpose of this question is to conceptualize the progression of their journey from the countries of origin in West Africa to the chosen destination in the Global North. By asking this question, one can draw comparisons between the patterns used in one country and patterns used in another. The factors that made one pattern preferable over the others will be assessed on a case-to-case basis.

Consequential to navigating the main research question are the following questions:

- What factors have facilitated student mobility from West Africa to the Global North?
- What motivates the choice of destination?
- How has migration propelled them towards their overall life goals or otherwise?

These questions have been summarized below:

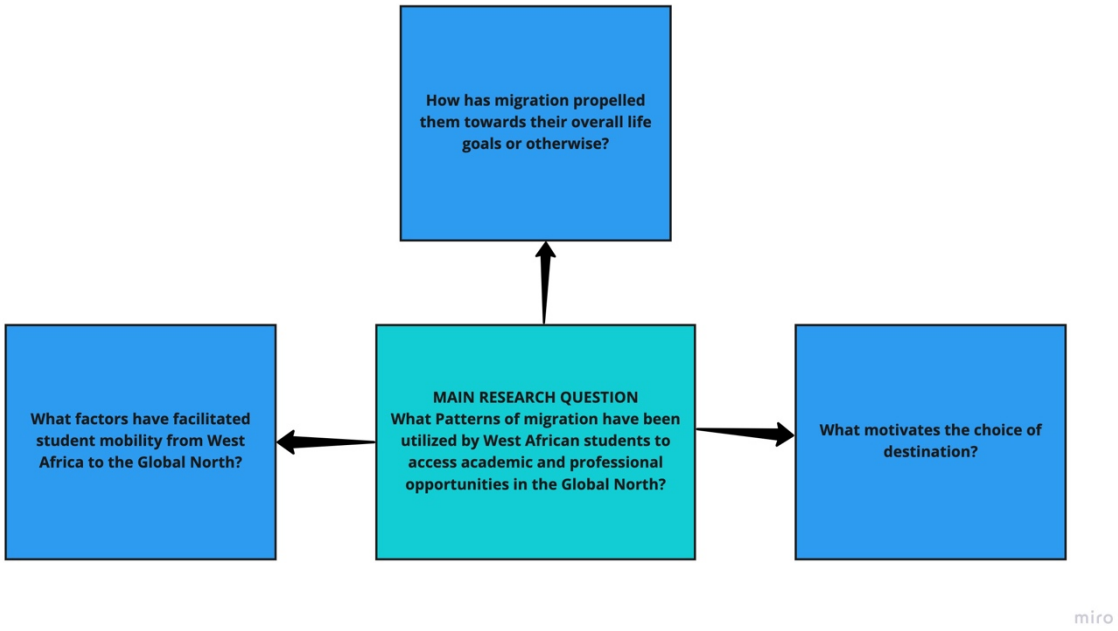

Figure 2: Summary of Research Questions.

Source: Author's own construct

The underlying reason for migration has been a subject of interest for several years in migration research (Efioyani & Piguet, 2014; Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2000). The objective of the first research sub-question is to understand the causes of student mobility from the West African subregion. This understanding is useful for ascertaining whether such causes are only linked to the conditions present in the country of origin or a deeper underlying cause subject to the subregion. Ndione(2007) has posited that a migrant's decision to migrate may be hinged on their personality and socio-economic trajectory. Through this question, we investigate this assertion.

Motivations for the choice of destination is also essential for assessing the planning stage. Which destinations in the Global North are the most preferred? Why are those destinations preferred over the others? Why the decision to study abroad?

Lastly, how migration fits into their overall life trajectories will considered as a basis for discussing the impact of migration on their personal, professional, and family lives. Has it brought development to them? Have they met their migration goals? Has migration changed or reconfirmed these goals? Are there any feelings of regret?.

To sum up, this chapter has given a background on international student mobility from the West African sub region to the Global North. It also introduces the main purpose of this research and the relevant questions that should be in focus to facilitate our understanding of student mobility in the West Africa subregion. The next chapter will focus on previous literature that have addressed these questions using perspectives from another sample group to make findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I draw on previous studies on international student migration as a basis for gaining a better understanding on the phenomenon as it occurs around the world. The findings from this review will form the foundational framework of this thesis. In 2.1, I present the nuances in the term 'international student' and how previous researchers have defined it. In 2.2, I rationalize the process of international student migration from the intention to the action stage. I draw on previous research on intentions, drivers of migration, and the experiences of West African students abroad to gain a deeper understanding of the migration process from its ideation to action stage. Additionally, I present quantitative data on the existing flows of student migrants to the Global North as a point for assessing the scale and magnitude of this form of migration. This also brings countries of interest for this form of migration into focus. Lastly, I present evidence of multiple migration among students from West Africa who migrate to the Global North for further studies. In 2.3, I establish the theoretical framework of this thesis as De Haas' (2021) aspirations-capabilities framework. I also introduce the concepts of stepwise migration, serial migration and circular migration as the conceptual framework for this thesis.

2.1 WHO IS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT?

The term international student is bursting at the seams with nuances that are associated with the varied migration experiences and conditions of mobility. *The diversity of experiences gathered together under the term 'international students' suggests that we need to critically interrogate not only the term 'student' but also the word 'international'* (King & Raghuram, 2012, p. 130). The UNESCO Institute for statistics has defined international students as students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006). This definition has been reinforced and adopted by the OECD in its reference to the student mobility discourse. The term 'foreign students' on the other hand, has been defined by same as non-citizens who are enrolled in an educational institution in a country. Non-citizens may then comprise of permanent residents and naturalized persons who have not crossed a border for the purposes of education. This according to the OECD, '*provides an overestimated proxy of actual student mobility*' (OECD, 2006, p. 285). This distinction is central to our understanding of who an international student is and who an international student is not.

The globalization of higher education has been skewed towards the acquisition of a "western education" in order to fit into the global labor market. This demand for a western education according to Findlay(2010) has led to a concentration of student flows to destinations such as England, Australia and the USA. Governments and Higher education institutions have therefore taken advantage (Waters & Leung, 2013)of this demand to optimize their economic national gains. With this motive at work, international student migration has been leveraged as a global talent recruitment platform by governments in the Global North to filter through the best talents for admission into their respective countries. The building of overseas campuses or satellite campuses according to Findlay (2010) is another economic optimization strategy used by HEIs in the Global North. Through distance education, students who do not cross any national borders can acquire an internationally recognized certificate from an HEI in the Global North. This has been referred to as transnational education franchising by some scholars and this has raised the issue of whether such students qualify as international student in the light of their in situ 'international'education (Waters & Leung, 2013; King & Raghuram, 2012). The digitalization of higher education has also found its place within the context of educational franchising. The proliferation of online universities such as Udemy, Coursera and Udacity coupled with video conferencing technologies has made 'international' education accessible by dispensing with physical attendance (Robertson, 2012; Ryan, 2013). In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of restrictions on movement within and across national borders, such technologies have been regarded as a convinience.The question however remains: Should students enrolled in such proxy institutions and digital platforms be considered 'international students'? It may be argued that such contestations do not advance research on international student mobility but only stand to make the discourse overinflated and complicated. In this paper, references to international student is limited to students who have crossed their own national borders for the purpose of higher education.

Next, current research on the positionality of the international student migrant will be dissected as a basis for unloading the nuances of the term. The positionality of the international student is complex because of the alternative identities that an international student can embody. This multifaceted identity of the international student has contributed to the 'slipperiness' of the term (Collins, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2012). In many literatures (De Haas, 2021; Hear, 2014), the international student is portrayed as a privileged individual from a wealthy or well-off socio-economic background who has access to the most legal forms of migration due to their social and financial capital. Though this may be the case for a few, King and Raghuram, (2012) have emphasized the '*need to move away from the simplistic image of the international student as a privileged individual from a relatively well-heeled backround'*. The international student must also be viewed in the light of a person who is a citizen of a country, a husband, a wife , a family member, a worker and even an asylum seeker (King & Raghuram, 2012, p. 134). Even though the literature on the intersectional spheres and identities of the international

student remains limited, this paper will incorporate the agenda of viewing international student migrants through multiple lenses of their identities in the analysis of their socio-economic backgrounds.

2.2 RATIONALIZING STUDENT MOBILITY FLOWS FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH TO THE GLOBAL NORTH

2.2.1 INTENTION

Every migration journey begins with an intent to move from one geographical destination to another in pursuit of safety, freedom, or better opportunities. Ajzen (1991) in his theory of Planned behaviour has defined intention as *a person's motivation and perceived likelihood to perform a specific behaviour. Intentions are,* therefore *a strong predicator of actual moves* (Riaño & Piguet, 2016, p. 7). When acted upon, an intention can evolve into actual migration and vice versa. *The decision to migrate is a multi-phase process which precedes the actual movement to a different country. The process is shaped by multiplicity of micro, meso and macro factors that are crucial in the decision-making of prospective student migrants, many of which are subject to uncertainty* (Kyei J. , 2021, p. 300). These micro, meso and macro factors are hinged on the availability of human and financial capital as well as access to information on how to migrate. In the absence of these resources, an intention to migrate may never come into fruition.

The social theory of planned behavior has been transposed into migration research and has been used to explain rationalizations that prospective student migrants make before grounding their decision to migrate. De Jong (2000) posits that, the intention to migrate is strongly influenced by *'behavourial constraints' and 'facilitator factors'*. He further elaborates that the *expectations of attaining valued goals in an alternative location to the home community along with perceived family norms about migration behaviour are the major determinants of migration intentions* (De Jong, 2000, p. 309). An individual's expectations of the possibility to meet their life goals in locations outside their home country grows the intention and this is further catapulted to growth by the community and family's beliefs about migration. This migration intention is also enhanced by facilitator factors such as individual, household and community capital. Besides, functionalists have theorized migration as an optimization strategy engaged in by individuals and households to access better opportunities (De Haas, 2021).

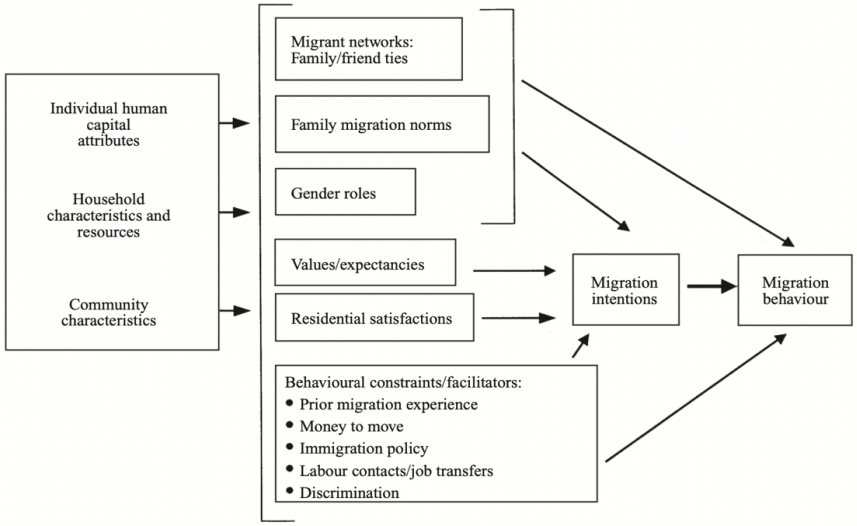

Figure 3: General Model of Migration Decision Making.

Source: (De Jong, 2000, p. 310)

In the figure above, De Jong (2000) illustrates how migration intention manifests into migration behaviour when put into action. From the illustration, the decision to migrate may end at the intention stage when behavourial constraints and facilitators such as discrimination, immigration policies and financial capital inhibit an individual's ability to move. In other circumstances, the awareness of these inhibitors does not kill the intention but festers it into action.

Kley (2011) has also proposed a framework for assessing the life course of the migration process. She provides a tripartite approach for assessing the stages of migration, namely, the pre-decisional phase or considering stage, the phase after the decision is made or the planning stage and the stage when the decision to migrate is carried out or the action/moving stage. Kley's framework is drawn from the psychological research of Heckhausen (1991) and Gollwitzer (1996). They argue that, *the operationalization of 'intentions' is crucial because the psychological and behavioural consequences of a 'wish' are quite different from those of a 'plan'* (Kley, 2011; Heckhausen, 1991; Gollwitzer, 1996). Gollwitzer (1996) and Heckhausen (1991) highlight that, the pre-decisional phase is the stage where '*preferences are set between wishes by deliberating their desirability and feasibility*'. At the planning stage, questions like "*when*", "*where"* and *"how"* are often considered as a basis for determining the next steps to be taken. At the Action/Moving stage, there is a '*determined and persistent pursuit of goal completion'* in order to realize the goal. The authors further protract the stages to a post-actional stage

where the migrant is living at a chosen destination. At this stage, there is an '*evaluation of whether a further goal pursuit is necessary and worthwhile*' (Gollwitzer, 1996; Heckhausen, 1991)

2.2.2 DRIVERS OF STUDENT MIGRATION IN WEST AFRICA

It is noteworthy that a student's intention to migrate does not occur within a vacuum. It also occurs within a setting of structural developmental issues that are prevalent in the Global South. These issues have been theorized as push/pull factors. The push/pull factors are alternatively referred to as the drivers of migration and are embedded in the functionalist theory of migration. Functionalists theorize that, migration is a '*positive phenomenon contributing to productivity, prosperity and eventually, greater equality in origin and destination societies through the bidirectional flows of resources such as money, goods, and knowledge. Especially, they interpret migration as an optimization strategy, in which individuals (and sometimes, families or households) use migration to access higher and more secure sources of income and other livelihood opportunities'* (De Haas, 2021, p. 5). This connotes a resource and opportunity disparity between receiving countries and sending countries is the main driver of migration from the Global South to the Global North. With the push and pull model drawn from the functionalist theory, scholars (De Haas, 2021; Skeldon, 1990) have critiqued it on the basis that it '*only leaves researchers with a list of factors that contribute to migration, but which lack a framework to bring together an explanatory system'* (De Haas, 2021, p. 6). Thus, push/pull factors do not consider the structural reasons of the social process of migration. In spite of this critique, Van Hear et al (2018) have expressed that instead of seeing push/pull factors as having a fixed role, it should be examined as a '*range of functions that drive migration processes*' (p. 931). They therefore explicate the correlation between the factors and drivers thus: '*We see factors as conditions that may shape migration and drivers as activated factors'* (p. 931)

From that point of reasoning, Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long (2018) have classified the drivers of migration into: predisposing, proximate, precipitating and mediating drivers.

Predisposing drivers present themselves as structural disparities between the country of origin and the destination country. These disparities are further situated in broad economic, political, environmental and global processes that contribute to the widening gap between origin countries and destination countries. *Economic disparities between territories of origin and destination comprise differences in earnings, livelihoods and living standards shaped by the unfolding global political economy and its inequities* (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018, p. 931). On the political fronts, disparities take the form of the prevalence or absence of conflicts, persecution, protection and infingement of human rights.

Limited resources, soil fertility, access to water and other range of natural and climatic factors lead to a discord in the environmental opportunites from place to place leading to migration. Geographically, the proximity to desired destination may also act as a predisposing driver of migration. (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018).

Proximate drivers as the name indicates refers to those drivers that are the direct causes of migration. They emnante from the general structural issues caused by the predisposing drivers, however, they are specific to the place where immmigration or emigration occurs. In the originating countries, the present themselves as economic hardship, unemployment, human insecurity and human right abuses and even climate change. In the destination countries, they come as economic boosts, general societal development, employment opportunites, as well as new trade and educational opportunities. In some circumstances, predisposing and proximate drivers are interchangeable. '*…Any of the economic, political, and environmental disparities taken collectively, disparities in human security – may become proximate drivers as they become more acute'* (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018, pp. 931-932). To illustrate this driver, student mobility from Senegal to the Global North will be addressed. According to Brussaud et al, the low quality of the Senegalese Higher Education system coupled with strikes and training programmes that do not cater to student needs have facilitated Senegalese student mobility to France and Switzerland. On the other hand, the low cost of schooling, quality education and language transferability to France makes France a preferred destination for Senegalese students to migrate to (Dago & Barussaud, 2021; Fall, 2010). This situation in Senegal resonates with the educational sector of most West African HEIs. A 2019 Campus France Report has revealed that, students from Africa moved to France because of '*the lack of qualification of higher education teachers, the lack of doctoral programs, the low recognition of universities, teachers, and their work internationally, the low rate of professional integration of graduates due to the mismatch between the training offered and the real needs of the labour market'* (Dago & Barussaud, 2021, p. 310; Campus France, 2019). Moreover, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and in this context West Africa lack the capacity to accommodate the growing demand for higher education with the region (Kabbanji, Levantino, & Ametepe, 2013).

Student mobility in from Nigeria to the Global North presents another example of proximate drivers of migration. Some researchers (Popogbe & Adeosun, 2020; Komolafe, 2008; Okafor & Chimereze, 2020) have noted that, human capital flight from Nigeria to other countries in the Global North can be attributed to general structural issues within the country and by extension problems with its educational system. Komolafe (2008) attributes the migration of young Nigerians to Canada to the positive proximate drivers within Canada such as advanced post-secondary education, provision of economic opportunities and social empowerment. Similarly, Okafor and Chimereze (2020) have pointed out that the proximate educational problems and limited educational opportunities within Nigeria has led to the

flight of several Nigerian nurses and medical practitioners to countries with better conditions. Similarly in Ghana, nursing students leave for greener pastures because of low-income differentials, career progression and access to better healthcare education (Abuosi & Abor, 2015).

The Cameroonian case is no exception to the norm in the West African Higher education system. Mankou (2014) points out that economic regression in Cameroon has had dire effects on the education system of the country. It has led to the migration of students to the Global North and this phenomenon has been fast-paced owing to the scholarship avenues to students and researchers in the Global North. He further posits that such Global North Migrations are only a prelude to the students' journey to gain access to the labor markets of the Global North.

Precipitating drivers are those event that activate the decision by individuals or households to migrate or stay. As Van Hear, Bakewell and Long (2018) describe it, '*precipitating factors are usually tied to an identifiable event or events. They may occur in the economic sphere, such as a financial crisis, a drastic rise in unemployment, a factory closure, a collapse in farm prices, the imposition of punitive taxation or the disintegration of health, education or other welfare services. Or they may be located in the political/security sphere, involving persecution, disputed citizenship, the escalation of conflict, massacre, outbreak of war and invasion. Natural or environmental disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes and floods may also precipitate the movements of populations'* (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018, p. 932). These events, when they occur, encapsulates the push factors that trigger individuals to leave their countries of origin to search for better opportunities. Such events when crucial, force the individual to choose between survival and hardship. On the other hand, precipitating drivers may occur in positive forms that may attract migrants into the destinations in which they occur. '*On the pull side, the opening up of employment opportunities, a liberalised environment for small businesses and the temporary relaxation of immigration controls and family reunion regulations are the kind of developments that may precipitate migration*' (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018, p. 932). The authors establish that, there is a close relationship between precipitate and proximate drivers, however, they can be set apart because precipitating drivers are often '*observable, identifiable events, or developments'* (p. 932) that occur within a specific destination. Such events are usually unforeseen and can occur in both origin and destination countries on a varied scale of intensity. Although they usually occur in places of origin, they may take place in countries of destination too. Efionayi and Piguet (2014) in their work *"Western African Student Migration: A Response to the Globalisation of Knowledge*" provide a good illustration for precipitating drivers in West Africa. In their study, they fixate on university students from three West African Countries, namely, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Niger. They discover that the political crisis that struck Côte d'Ivoire between 2009 and 2010 reflected in the students'

assessment of their financial standing. This they pointed out was also reflective of the economic hardship that plagued the entire country. However, the authors were quick to point out that, most university students from more economically stable and middle-class backgrounds. Students from Côte d'Ivoire unlike their counterparts in Senegal and Niger also expressed their dissatisfaction with educational resources and the quality of teaching. This included the inadequacy of textbooks, teaching materials, computers, and lecture spaces. Students also lamented about the 'blank years' in their education stemming from strikes and political unrest from that period (Efioyani & Piguet, 2014). This is illustrative of how political unrest in the country of origin can serve as a precipitating driver for student mobility from West Africa to the Global North.

Last but not least, mediating drivers are the events or occurrences that *enable, facilitate, constrain, accelerate, or consolidate migration, and may diminish migration* (p. 932). The availability of and access to advanced transportation and communication technology as well as information can facilitate migration. Conversely, inaccessibility to information, safe transportation and resources can inhibit migration. Policies also operate as a double-edged sword in the spheres that they occur (housing, human rights, education, agriculture, climate) and can drive immigration and emigration to destinations.

2.2.3 EXPERIENCES OF WEST AFRICAN STUDENTS ABROAD

Students who see their desire to study abroad through to the action stage face a number of hurdles on arrival at destination countries. These general experiences of students studying abroad may be varied depending on the proximity of destination countries to their country of origin. For instance, students originating from Europe who study in another European institution may have ease in acculturation as compared to their non-European counterparts. This was highlighted by Triandis (1999) who observed in his study that international students from Asia had increased difficulty with adjusting and making friends with people in the host country. This, he attributed to the collectivistic nature of Asian cultures as opposed to the culture of the host country. Similarly, students who move from one African country to another to pursue higher education may have a varied experience as compared to African students who move across continents for higher education. In the case of Nigerian students who move to Ghana to pursue higher education, language and cultural differences may not even be barrier because of the similarities in both cultures through language and cultural diffusion made possible by the long history of movement between the two countries. In a study conducted by Thomas Antwi Bosiakoh (2009), "*Understanding Migration motivations in West Africa: The Case of Nigerians in Ghana*", the author pointed out that this cultural similarity between Ghana and Nigeria made Ghana a preferrable destination for Nigerians as it allowed for quick cultural adjustment. According to one of his

respondents in the study, "*There is no language barrier. We feel there is easy access to the people of Ghana. If we compare to the two intervening countries-Benin and Togo-Ghana is the most culturally conducive destination for Nigerian emigration…*"[1].

In spite of the ease that some destination countries may come with for international students, there is always a level of acculturation that must happen to help them feel at ease. Acculturation was first defined from a one-dimensional view as a process migrants undergo to relinquish their culture and adopt that of the destination country's (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). However, over the years, its meaning was reshaped into a bi-directional diffusion of cultures as a result of contact between members of the cultural groups. Berry (2005) refined it as "*the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members*" (p. 698). This psychological change poses as an "*acculturation stressor*' (Berry, 2006) because of the pressure it mounts on the migrant to adjust or adapt to the external pressure. Smith and Khawaja (2011) have adumbrated the acculturative stressors as: Language, Educational Stressors, Sociocultural stressors, discrimination, and practical stressors. Some of these stressors will be employed in this discussion of the experiences of West African Students.

Discrimination has been defined as the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, sex, or disability (Oxford Languages, 2022). International students from the Global South, especially, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East face high discrimination in their educational spheres as compared to their European and or domestic counterparts (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Boafo-Arthur (2014) quoting Bagley and Young (1988) points out that, in West African Countries, darkness of the skin is considered as beauty and is embraced by all cultures. International students from such West African countries who come to study in the USA are therefore plunged into acculturative stress as the meaning attached to their skin from their countries of origin is suddenly reversed. They face discrimination from other students, teachers, and even other international students who come from cultures where black people are treated with contempt. In a study by Constantine et al. (2005), they reported the discrimination of one of his Black African respondents by Taiwanese and Japanese roommates who asked him to move to another room because they did not want to share a room with a black person. Other European international students also expressed feelings of unsafety in the presence of the black African student (Constantine, 2005, p. 62).

[1] Charles Oluwade (40 years), a respondent from a study by (Bosiakoh, 2009)

In addition to discrimination, international students from West Africa have to face socio-cultural stressors. This is because they leave their family and friendship networks at home and have to form new relationship networks in the destination countries. These relationships must be built against '*personality variables of attachment style, trait-anxiety, and extroversion*' (Brisset, Safdar, Lewis, & Sabatier, 2010; Smith & Khawaja, 2011) which may totally prevent international students from forming bonds with others. In the study conducted by Constantine et al. (2005), socio-cultural stressors can stem from financial problems experienced by Africans as they are unable to meet all their needs for food, clothing, entertainment, and tuition. This makes it difficult for such students so interact with other locals and internationals because of a feeling if inadequacy. As pointed out earlier, cultural clashes between the culture of the international student and the culture of the destination country poses as a socio-cultural stressor. Some scholars (Okeke, Draguns, Sheku, & Allen, 1999) attribute this to the differences in worldview, societal norms, expectations, and how interpersonal relationships are built in the respective destinations. For example, Western European and American cultures are built on individualism whilst that of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Southern European countries are built on collectivism (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). This experience often leads to a feeling of loss and isolation among African international students in the Global north (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Essandoh, 1995). The issue of language is also embedded in socio-cultural stressors and educational stressors.

The diversification of destination countries for the pursuit of higher education by West African students trigger sociocultural and academic stress. Traditionally, colonial ties and language transferability prompt students from West Africa to pursue higher education in countries that have cultural and colonial ties with their countries of origin. However, the demand for "western education" in West Africa has led to a diversification of destination countries for higher education to countries that do not speak English, French or Portuguese. For example, an English-speaking Congolese student who attends university in Germany may be subject to language and academic stressors. "*In the academic domain, language barriers can impact on assignment writing, understanding lectures, oral and written examinations, and the ability to ask questions in class*" (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Chen, 1999). Academic stressors can also take the form of teaching styles and differences between the country of origin and the destination country. Whilst education in the Global North may be informal and practical, education in West Africa can be theory-intensive and may require students to commit things to memory. Adjusting to the academic environment may also be an indicator of educational stress. This may include finding one's bearing in the locality in which the campus is situated in and the campus itself in addition to adjusting to systems and technology that students from West Africa may not be exposed to (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Lastly, academic stress may be triggered when academic expectations are not met by international students. Most international student have expectations to outperform other international

students and domestic students (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Chen, 1999). These expectations may stem from the individual, family expectations or may for a contingency for receiving financial aid.

2.2.4 EXISTING DATA ON THE FLOWS OF STUDENT MIGRANTS FROM WEST AFRICA TO THE GLOBAL NORTH

Most literature on the flows of student migrants from Africa to the Global North are quantitative in nature. They measure the number of students who are outbound to the Global North, the field of education they are enrolled and the graduates that are churned out of the HEIs in the Global North. Most data presented are country-specific or provide a general overview of migration flows from the continent. Based on indicators from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022) the flow of tertiary level students from the sixteen West African countries to parts of the Global North were as follows:

Table 1: Global Flow of Tertiary Students from West Africa to the Global North

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN SELECTED DESTINATION COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL NORTH		COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN SELECTED DESTINATION COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL NORTH		COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN SELECTED DESTINATION COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL NORTH	
Nigeria	USA	13,199	Ghana	USA	3,524	Senegal	USA	513
	UK	10,796		UK	1,811		UK	64
	Canada	6708		Canada	1,017		Canada	963
	Germany	2290		Germany	1,038		Germany	162
	Ireland	577		France	310		France	10,163
	France	459		Finland	327		Spain	48
	Finland	451		Norway	162		Switzerland	103
	Norway	100		Switzerland	46		Belgium	57
Côte d'Ivoire	USA	1,469	Burkina Faso	USA	560	Togo	USA	193
	UK	156		UK	14		UK	22
	Canada	1,173		France	1,590		France	2,454
	France	6,625		Canada	547		Canada	288
	Germany	186		Belgium	72		Germany	283
	Belgium	79		Germany	42		Italy	134
	Switzerland	60		Switzerland	42		Belgium	68
	Spain	26		Spain	6		Switzerland	39
Mali	USA	307	Niger	USA	263	Sierra Leone	USA	199
	UK	17		UK	9		UK	143
	France	2,357		France	938		Canada	36

	Belgium	30		Canada	126		France	13
	Germany	27		Belgium	29		Italy	12
	Switzerland	9		Germany	12		Ireland	10
	Italy	9		Switzerland	7		Germany	25
	Canada	474		Italy	6		Netherlands	7
Mauritania	USA	81	Benin	USA	247	Cameroon	USA	1,219
	UK	27		UK	19		UK	300
	France	996		France	2,744		France	4,773
	Germany	71		Canada	417		Germany	7,214
	Spain	15		Italy	9		Canada	1,257
	Belgium	11		Switzerland	26		Italy	930
	Canada	63		Belgium	97		Finland	215
	Norway	N/A		Portugal	N/A		Switzerland	138
Liberia	USA	285	Guinea	USA	117	Guinea-Bissau	USA	15
	UK	29		UK	14		UK	N/A
	France	9		France	3,382		France	29
	Canada	6		Canada	342		Portugal	1,484
	Germany	10		Germany	186		Spain	11
	Sweden	6		Belgium	87		Switzerland	15
	Netherlands	6		Portugal	48		Italy	8
	Norway	N/A		Spain	22		Canada	6
Cape/ CaboVerde	USA	56						
	UK	6						
	France	47						
	Portugal	3,338						
	Spain	32						
	Germany	9						
	Belgium	6						
	Hungary	7						

(Adaptation from http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/higher-education)

In her article "*International Student Mobility and Tertiary Education in Africa*", Kritz (2015) highlights that an estimated 5.8 per cent of tertiary level students go outside their home country to study and no other region in the world has such elevated figures in outward flow of students. In spite of efforts to increase the number of universities on the continent, she points out that the elevated figures can be attributed to the incapacity of most African countries to meet the unrelenting rising demand of tertiary education on the continent. This is coupled with difficulty in getting admission in the most preferable programmes and the general notion that higher education abroad is better than higher education in the home country (Kritz, 2011).

In her paper, she acknowledges colonial ties as one of the contributing factors for student mobility from Africa to Europe however, she is quick to express that student today make decisions on where to study abroad based on other set of factors besides colonial ties. Push forces such as economic regression, unemployment, and educational quality differentials. She reemphasizes access to the labor markets in the Global North as another reason for student migration from Africa. However, in most cases, individuals are unable to finance the desire to study abroad in the absence of aids and scholarships and may resort to studying in neighboring countries within Africa. This was evident in the indicators provided by UNESCO Institute for statistics (2022). For example, 841 Burkinabé students at the tertiary level travelled to Côte d'Ivoire to study in 2019, 2,960 Nigerian students moved to Ghana in 2020 for higher education and lastly, 115 Cabo Verdeans studied in Senegal at the tertiary level in 2020.

2.2.5 MULTIPLE MIGRATION AMONG STUDENTS FROM WEST AFRICA TO THE GLOBAL NORTH

In spite of the wealth of data on the numbers of student outflows from Africa, there is a dearth of knowledge in the multiple patterns of migration used by tertiary students from the African continent. The literature that exists focuses on the progression of national students on their migration journey abroad with compact comparative analysis between countries at the regional level. Zufferey (2019) asserts that, the conceptualization of multiple migration did not commence at the early stages of migration research. Perhaps, it is for this reason that research on multiple migration from Africa remains limited. Rather migration research focused on return migration as the phenomenon was viewed as a temporary decision at the early stages of study (Zufferey, 2019; Cassarino, 2004). Later on, other forms of multiple migrations were conceptualized by researchers under circular migration (Hugo, Circular migration: Keeping development rolling, 2003; Valenta, 2020), serial migration (Ossman, Studies in serial migration, 2004; Valenta, 2020), stepwise migration (Paul, Stepwise International Migration: A multistage Migration Pattern for the aspiring Migrant , 2011) and repeated migration (Constant & Zimmermann, 2011). Most of these patterns gained their definitions from the projectile through which migration occurred.

In view of the varied ways in which multiple migration is assessed, Paul and Yeoh (2021) in their paper, '*Studying multinational migrations, speaking back to migration theory'* have called for the replacement of the multidinous terms in multiple migration with the term, '*multinational migration'.* The refer to multinational migration as '*the varied movements of international migrants across more than one overseas destination with significant time spent in each country'* (Paul & Yeoh, 2021, p. 3). However,

this defintion can be critiqued from the point of view that, it does not capture the patterns in which the varied movements take place but simply focuses on the time spent in multiple overseas destinations.

Zufferey (2019) has explicated that, education and skills are indispensable for the understanding of multiple migrations and how they work, however, the strategies applied differ from one country of origin to another. He points out that, '*North and South Americans and Africans were more prone to undergo an onward movement than were West Europeans'* (Zufferey, 2019, p. 86). Referring to a study conducted by Toma and Castagnone (2015) on Senegalese Migrants engaging in stepwise migration within France, Italy and Spain, Zuffery (2019) posits that social and family links in a third European country facilitated migrants' decision to remigrate.

Research on multiple migrations of West African students to the Global North remains limited. In a study conducted by Jagganath and Singh (2021), it was discovered that Nigerian and Ghanaian student chose to migrate to South Africa with the intent of onward movement to preferred destinations in Europe and USA. Those who expressed intentions to remain in South Africa expressed the desire on the contingency that they would find employment after their education. Thus, there is a record of transit migration among West African students, who use South Africa as a stepping-stone or onward mobility to the Global North.

Even though Jagganath and Singh (2021), shed light in their study pinpoint South Africa as one of the stepping stone countries used by West African students to access career and educational opportunities in the Global North, this paper aims at filling the knowledge lacuna on how students from the West African Subregion have negotiated their way to their preferred destinations.

2.3 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.3.1 ASPIRATIONS-CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

The aspirations-capabilities framework, as propounded by De Haas (2021) postulates migration as *a function of people's capabilities and aspirations to migrate within given sets of perceived opportunity structures* (p. 2). He builds the foundation of this theory on Sen's (1999) capability framework to migration and Berlin's (1969) theory of liberties. First, we will focus on how he uses Sen's (1999) capability framework to construct the aspiration-capabilities framework. Sen (1999) in his capability framework, holds that 'push and pull factors' as well as 'cause and effect' only serve as a rigid response to human mobility. Rather, human mobility should be assessed as people's freedom and capability to choose where to live and nominate whether to stay. Within this context, De Haas (2021) has drawn out the limitations of functionalist migration theory in which the push and pull paradigm belongs. Other theories that belong to the functionalist migration theory include the neo-classical equilibrium models, migration systems theory, and the migrant network theory.

To reiterate, De Haas (2021, p. 5) opines that, '*functionalist migration theories generally see migration as a positive phenomenon contributing to productivity, prosperity and, eventually, greater equality in origin and destination societies through bidirectional flows of resources such as money, goods, and knowledge. Essentially, they interpret migration as an optimization strategy, in which individuals (and sometimes families or households) use migration to access higher and more-secure sources of in- come and other livelihood opportunities*.' This signifies a co-dependency between the countries of origin and countries of destination where countries of origin can decrease poverty and inequality by trading off their skills and labor to destination countries in exchange of resources. De Haas (2021) on this account criticizes the functionalist migration theory for its '*reductionist character'* (p. 6). He argues that it ignores structural barriers such as poverty, government policies and immigration restrictions. Such barriers can drive people into exploitative and involuntary displacement and even inhibit others from migrating or leaving the conditions that suppress them. Similarly, Skeldon (1990) has criticized this theory, especially its push and pull model for leaving researchers with a set of static factors that lack an explanatory system for the social process of migration.

Another criticism leveraged against the functionalist migration theory by De Haas is its inability to justify the growing inequality that the codependence of origin and destination countries reinforce. He

argues that legal migration is more accessible to the wealthy and affluent in poor countries and to the detriment of the poor who have to choose between immobility and exploitative migration.

However, the functionalist migration theory converges with the historical-structural theory at the point where it focuses on the exploitation of the poor and vulnerable by rich and powerful elites in and between societies. Real life evidence of this situation can be identified with the collusion of employers and governments in destination countries who design policies that favor the agenda to exploit poor migrants from origin countries (De Haas, 2021; Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, & A. Pellegrino, 1998). De Haas (2021, p. 8) again dissents on this theory from the perspective that the theory paints migrants as '*pawns – pushed and pulled around by global macro forces – or as victims of capitalism who have no choice but to migrate in order to survive'*. It therefore does not acknowledge the free will or human agency in migration decisions.

Departing from his critique, De Haas invents the first leg of his aspiration-capability framework. He postulates that, '*migration aspirations are a function of people's general life aspirations and perceived opportunity structures'* (De Haas, 2021, p. 17). He utilizes Sen's (1999) conceptualizations of development and human capability and asserts that, development is derived from significantly expanding the freedoms that people benefit from. Once a human being is able to live a valuable life and has the freedom to make decisions that will enhance that life, that human being is made capable. This capability is seated in the freedom of people to control, expand, and enhance their own lives. Sen (1999) adds that such freedom has an intrinsic and instrumental chain value to people and society. To people, freedom to make their own choices adds to the quality of their lives and once this is attained (intrinsic value), it has a ripple effect on human and economic progress (instrumental value) (De Haas, 2021).

De Haas extends these concepts as propounded by Sen (1999) to the migration discourse. He asserts that migration should be seen '*not only as an instrumental-functional means-to-an-end to improve people's living conditions but also as a potentially wellbeing-enhancing factor in its own right*' (De Haas, 2021, p. 20). He expounds this definition by stating that the freedom to move lies in the option to exercise mobility or to stay and by extending this to migration, mobility is an intrinsic freedom that should be '*wellbeing-enhancing and empowering*' and allow people the freedom to choose between staying and leaving (p. 20). He likens 'migration as a freedom' to young people's inherent desire to seek their own adventures free from the protection and control of parents and their awareness of that option to move. He opines that, '*such freedoms do not have to result in actual movement in order to be*

enjoyed: it is the very awareness of having the option – or freedom – of staying or going where one wants that matters most' (De Haas, 2021, p. 20). This reflects the intrinsic value of migration as conceptualized by Sen (1999).

Extending Sen's (1999) instrumental concept to migration, De Haas (2021) points out that it reflects a functional dimension as migration is mobilized as a means to achieve personal life and family goals. This can take the form of better health care, better educational and career opportunities or safety from persecution and violence. Rather than '*a desperate flight from misery'* (p. 21), migration should be viewed as an exercise of an individual's aspiration to enhance their lives. This action is taken through individual and household choices to invest in migration.

The second leg of De Haas's aspiration-capabilities framework dissects liberties and freedoms and groups them into negative and positive liberties. He makes a distinction between positive and negative liberties by drawing from the work of Berlin (1969). Berlin defines negative liberties as '*the absence of obstacles, barriers, or constraints. This comes close to popular ways of conceiving freedom, which often focus on the role of governments in imposing constraints on people's freedom or even being an outright threat to people's lives, for instance through regulation, oppression, violence, or war'* (De Haas, 2021, p. 24; Berlin, 1969). Thus, negative liberties are those external inhibitors that are put in place by governments through policymaking to limit migration. Conversely, he describes positive liberties drawing from Berlin's (1969) literature as people's ability *to take control of their life and realize their fundamental purpose* (p. 24). De Haas points out that Sen's capability framework and Berlin's concept of negative and positive liberties go hand in hand as they connote a certain level freedom that allows people to control their own life narratives. Even though Berlin's concept of liberties emphasized on the freedom of people to choose their own governments for their society, it still hinged on the element of agency.

By extending Berlin's (1969) concept to the migration discourse, De Haas opines that, migration capabilities are hinged on positive and negative freedoms. He describes these liberties are manifestations of the macro-structural issues that plague the migration discourse. He explicates that, people may have migration aspirations to leave poverty-stricken environments, squalid housing conditions, poor and inadequate health care systems, or low-quality educational systems, however, without facilitators in the form of capital and human resources (components of positive liberties), such desires will become mere aspirations. To him, genuine liberty in movement is not only found in the

human right of freedom of movement but can be found when people are equipped with the resources that enables them to make choices on whether to stay or leave. He illustrates this by stating that, the granting of freedom by governments to its people is only nominal if people still lack positive liberties. Through this illustration De Haas inadvertently acknowledges the role that government and states play in their imposition of negative liberties on one hand and the role they play in the deprivation of their citizens by making positive liberties inaccessible.

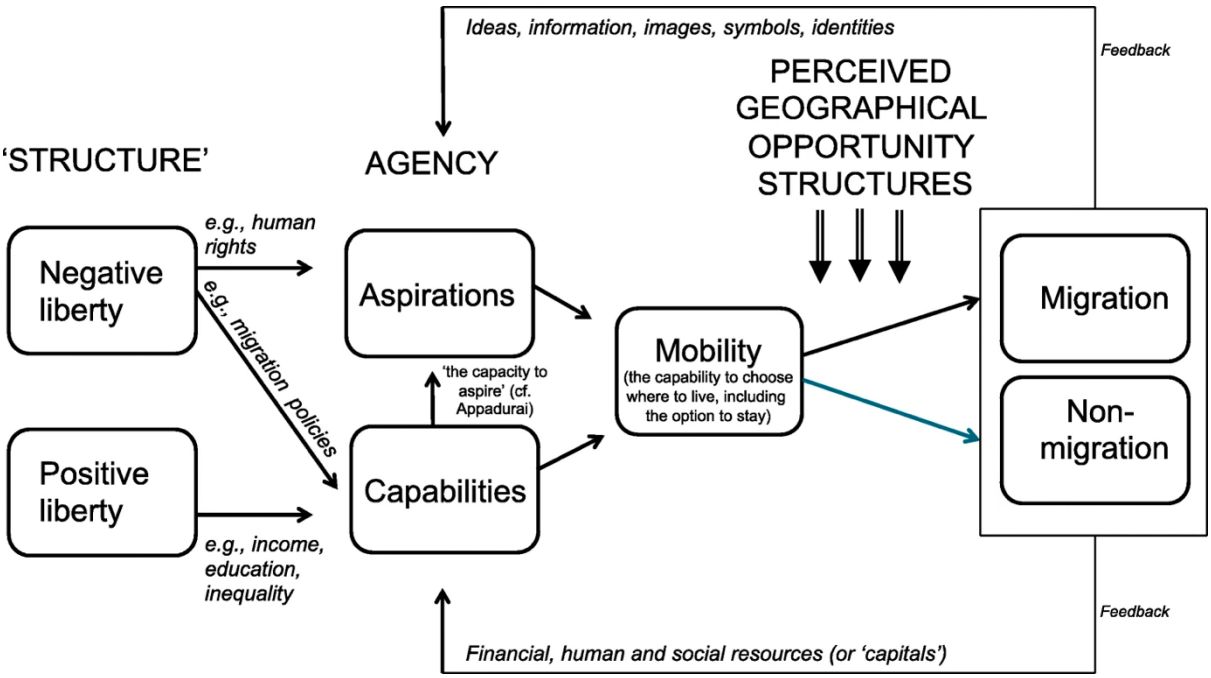

Figure 4: Expanded Aspirations-Capabilities Framework for Conceptualizing Migration Agency

Source: (De Haas, 2021, p. 25)

2.3.2 STEPWISE MIGRATION

The stepwise migration concept first appeared in the work of Ravenstein (1885)- "*The Law of Migration*". He used the concept to outline the pattern of internal mobility by individuals who migrated from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs. The concept was was later augmented by Conway (Conway, 1980) who defined the process as "*a human spatial behaviour in which individuals or families embark on a migration path of accultration which takes them, by way of immediate steps, from a traditional-rural environment to the modern-urban environment*" (Conway, 1980, p. 10). In this

definition, Conway described migration as a transition a family or an individual undergoes in their journey from a rural area to an urban area within a single boundary. More internal-single-boundary definitions of the concept were coined by Alexander (1998), Riddell and Harvey (1972).

Paul in her work, '*Stepwise International Migration: A multistage Migration Pattern for the aspiring Migrant*' (2011) redefines the stepwise migration concept but extends its apllicabilty to international boundaries. She reshapes the concept to include '*multiple stops (of substantive duration) in various intermediate locations as part of an intentional, hierarchical progression toward an individual migrant's preferred destination*' (p. 1844). By this redefinition, she ascribes four characteristics to the stepwise migration concept and these will be discussed in the subsequesnt paragraphs.

First, she describes stepwise migration as a '*multi-stage journey'* and she illustrates this characteristic using the migratory trajectory of the participants of her study. She pointed out that, though all her participants had the Philippines as their country of origin, some of them had worked in two to four countries excluding the Phiippines. She points out that other studies on migration (transit,onward, triangular, secondary, tertiary, serial) have focused on '*single-stage, point-to-point journeys'* with little to no emphasis on the intermediate stops, the length of the stops, the reasons behind the stops, or whether the stops were made by strategy or by chance. The difference in stepwise migration is that it puts emphasis on these components and even studies the order of the countries that migrants travel through.

The second characteristic of stepwise migration is that migrants move from a less preferred destination to a more preferred destination using a personal or socially constructed hierarchy. Paul (2011) illustrates this hierarchy by citing an example from her study. She points out that, out of the 30 respondents she had interviewed, 18 of them had worked in less preferred countries to mobilize capital to move to better jobs in more preferred destinations.

Thirdly, she describes the duration of stepwise migration as comparably protracted to other forms of migration. She emphasized that it may take years to complete. This is as a result of the length of time needed by migrant to accumulate resources in one destination before moving on to another. In the event where migrants have to pay off loans they have taken to embark on the migration journey, the duration of their stay in intermediate countries is longer.

She identifies that, the last characteristic of stepwise migration is based on its intentionality. She describes stepwise migration as an exercise of strategy and places emphasis on the agency involved. She opines that, stepwise international migration is not something that happens to migrants but rather a journey that migrants undertake or embark on according to a pre-conceived plan. Using these descriptors of stepwise international migration, I illustrate stepwise migration as a reflection of the strategy that international students from West Africa may take to access life, educational and career goals in the Global North.

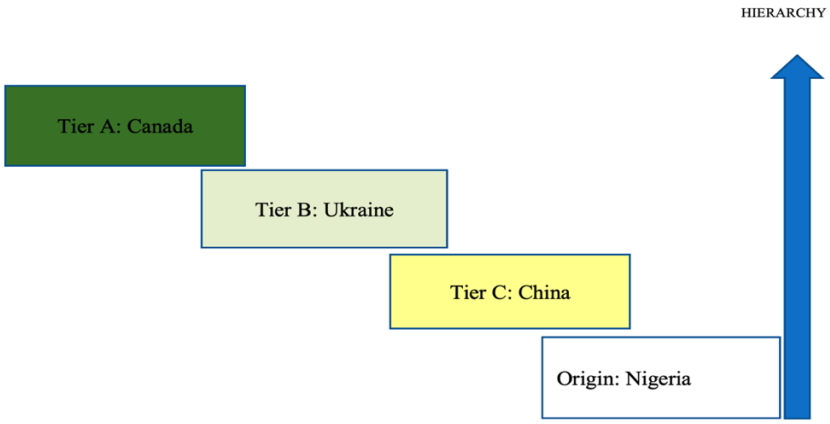

Figure 5: Illusration of Stepwise Migration.

Source: Reference from (Paul, Stepwise International Migration: A multistage Migration Pattern for the aspiring Migrant , 2011)

2.3.3 CIRCULAR MIGRATION

Circular migration has been described as '*a practice involving a voluntary and a coerced recurrent movement between one sending country and one receiving country'* (Valenta, 2020, p. 4). This implies a repeated movement between two destinations and on the international level, between the migrant's country of origin and the destination country. Circular migration has also been used to describe the movement of people at local and regional level from a region of rural demographics to a region of urban demographics (Parreñas, Silvey, Hwang, & Choi, 2019).

Newland (2009) has ascribed four descriptive dimensions to the way circular migration occurs. She categorizes them into: *spatial, temporal, iterative and developmental* dimensions (p. 9). At the spatial and geographical level, she describes the circular migrant as one who alternates between two poles- the pole of the home country and the pole of the destination country. This repeated movement is often caused by restrictive migration policies that do not allow serial migrants to permanently reside in the destination countries. The repeated movement can also be attributed to short and indefinite job contracts, family ties and other factors present at both ends of the imaginary pole (Parreñas, Silvey, Hwang, & Choi, 2019; Valenta, 2020).

At the temporal dimension, the duration of stays at the destination country and origin country are used as a measure of one orbit of circular migration. Newland (2009) points out that one orbit can be as brief as a few months whilst another can take up to several years. Such variations in the duration of stay are dependent on the purpose of the stay. Valenta (2020) cites the case of female migrants who have to shuttle between work at the destination country and family needs at the country of origin. In cases like this, he points out that family needs may require longer stays in the home country and a later return to the destination country.

The next dimension Newland emphasizes is the iterative dimension. She characterizes this dimension as the repititive nature of cirular migration. Here she establishes what sets return migration and circular migration apart. She points out that, migrants who make one orbit between the origin and destination country are return migrants. This single bidirectional movement occurs when the migration project fails and becomes unsustainable or when the migrant has acquired enough capital to guarantee a comfortable life in the country of origin (Valenta, 2020; Rajan & Zachariah, 2019). Circular migration on the other

hand, involves a '*fluid pattern of back-and-forth movement'* (Newland, 2009, p. 9) and is repeated over various life cycles or orbits.

The last dimension is referred to as the developmental dimension. Here, Newland (2009) postulates that the destination country and the country of origin both benefit from this form of migration. Destination countries that are deficient in labour resources benefit from the inflow of migrants from the origin countries. Alternatively, financial resources that may be deficient in the country of origin are acquired at the destination country and remitted to the country of origin for development. Some scholars (Hugo, 2013; Vertovec, 2007) have reasoned that people who engage in this form of migration maintain a high sense of loyalty and commitment to their countries of origin. This form of migration thus reduces brain drain and brings development to the country of origin through remittances. These dimensions may be controversial among migration researchers but provide a good description for understanding the nature of circular migration.

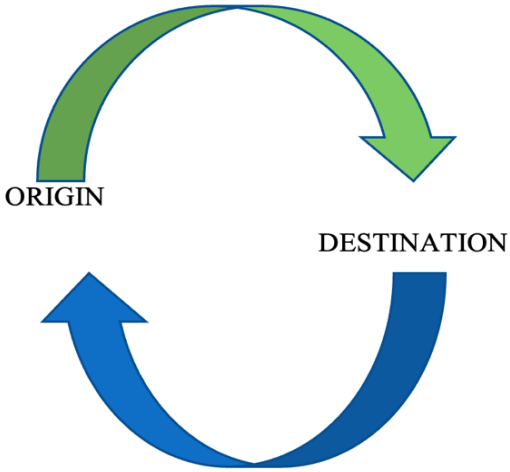

Figure 6: Illustration of Circular Migration

Adaptation of (Valenta, 2020, p. 5)

In the illustration above, the green arrow depicts the first leg of circular migration from the country of origin to the destination. The blue arrow depicts the second leg of circular migration flow from the destination country to the country of origin. One cycle of the circular migration flow is accomplished when the migrant completes both legs of movement.

2.3.4 SERIAL MIGRATION

Ossman (2004) lucidly describes a serial migrant in her work '*Studies in Serial migration*'.She describes serial migrants as people who are neither travellers, nomads or cosmopolitans but '*social actors'* and '*cultural chameleons who appear to be home everywhere but have homes nowhere*' (p. 112). This description substantiates the complexity in the movement of serial migrants. Valenta (2020) describes their movement as a sequence of '*unplanned recurrent multi-state migrations that involve several receiving countries within the same tier'* (p. 4). Countries within the same tier are countries that have the same rank in the personal or social constructed hierarchy of the serial migrant. As such, a serial migrant can shuttle between countries of low personal or social ranking or countries of high personal and social ranking.

To simplify the complex trajectories within which serial migrants move, Valenta (2020) draws distinctions in their movement. First, he describes direct serial migration as a movement from the home country to a series of receiving countries without stops or deviations to the home country. Thus, serial migration is direct when the migrant makes onward movements towards receiving countries of the same tier without returning home for even brief periods.

In the case of indirect serial migrations, Valenta (2020) posits that, the migrant moves to a receiving country for a duration but returns to the home country before changing to a new receiving country. This reflects the unplanned nature of serial migration as migrants may use the time of their return to the home country to make a decision on the next country to move to.

There is a third complex interaction between the migrant, the home country and the receiving country. In this third interaction, the migrant moves directly to new countries of the same tier for a period of time but returns to the home country at a point and migrates further to a new receiving country.

From this dissection, it is evident that serial migration requires a lot of financial and social capital - that is, money to move and settle in a new place and information about how to find opportunities and how to merge into a culture that is not one's own. Mayer and Ossman (2015) posit that, it is easy to assume the serial migrant is one who is pressed for resources and must travel to several places in search for

opportunities to make money. However, they explicate that this is not always the case. They characterize the serial migrant as someone '*socially enabled to migrate repeatedly and this calls for a good passport, sufficient wealth, and appropriate skills, including strong personal autonomy. Such resources make it possible for serial migrants to neglect economic incentives to sedentariness*' (Mayer & Ossman, 2015, p. 850)

From another perspective, scholars like (Valenta, 2020; Parreñas, Silvey, Hwang, & Choi, 2019) have studied serial migration from an itinerant labor perspective. They posit that, serial migration is a popular strategy used by itinerant labor migrants and workers in the Global South to move towards countries of a preferred destination to work. This strategy is effective for circumventing their realities orchestrated by structural blockades in the origin and destination countries. This is because most labor migrants lack the academic qualifications, level of income, and access to the option of permanent residence in the host countries.

Serial migration among students from the global south is however an understudied area in migration literature. This can be attributed to the determinate terms and conditions of higher education and the varied intentions of international student migrants for their overall life and career trajectories. However, with the outbreak of COVID and the scarcity of student job opportunities it brought, it will be enlightening to study international students who engaged in direct and indirect forms of serial migration to restart their educational plan.

In sum, this chapter has set out the theoretical and conceptual framework that will be used in our analysis of research data. The chapter that follows focuses on the methodology used in the to acquisition of research data for this thesis.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Kothari (2004) has defined research as an art of scientific investigation. He posits that, *research is a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic* (p. 2). It is this inquisition into the unknown that leads to knowledge production. He describes research methodology as *the systematic and scientific approach used to solve problems pertaining to a particular topic* (p. 2). He establishes quantitative and qualitative research approaches as the two main approaches to research. He defines the former as the generation of data on a phenomenon using numerical measurents. He defines the latter as an inquisition into how human behaviors influence the occurrence of a phenomenon. In this chapter, I contend on the features of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research and why the qualitative approach was preferred. I discuss my choice of informants for this research and draw a layout for data collection and management. Additionally, I present the form of data analysis employed in this research as a basis for potraying the systematic approach used to arrive at the findings in this paper. Lastly, I highlight the ethical framework of this thesis as proof of the ethical considerations used in retrieving and processing information from the informants of this research.

3.1 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was favoured in this thesis over a quantitative research approach. This is because, unlike quantitative research, qualitative research interacts with non-numerical data and concerns itself with '*understanding social-spatial processes and people's everyday lives in past or present contexts*' (Hay & Cope, 2021, p. 4). Qualitative research springs from a social constructivist view of science. This view holds it that, *the construction of knowledge is the product of social interaction, interpretation and understanding* of the world from the perspective of the informant and the researcher (Adams, 2006). In this thesis I seek to understand the migration trajectories used by students from West Africa to access opportunities in the Global North. Here, I identify West African student mobility as the social process and West Africa and the Global North as the spatial aspect of the study.

To understand the context within which this process occurs, we have traced the origins of international student mobility in West Africa as a basis for assessing the current trends in their migration trajectories. Hay and Cope (2021) further explicate that the qualitative research tool also provides *'new insights into*

people's experiences, lives, emotions, communities and mobilizes those insights to explore and build new theories of the human condition' (Hay & Cope, 2021, p. 4).

In this study, the lives, emotions and experiences of international students from West Africa will be in focus. Experiences and emotions have negative and positive dynamics to it and makes trust a prerequisite for soliciting accounts from students who have engaged in this process. A qualitative research approach allows the researcher to embed theirself in this experience by adding a human touch to data collection. For this purpose, Hay and Cope (2021) have posited that, data collection in qualitative research should preferably be called *data creation* (p. 7) as it requires the researcher to actively participate in the generation of data through interviews, observation or photo-elicitation.

3.2 CHOICE OF INFORMANTS

The spatial barriers associated with this research became evident at this point. The nature of the study required me to select informants who had not only a West African background but had originated from the subregion and had lived there for a substantive duration before leaving for higher education in the Global North. Other questions that needed to be answered were concerned with how many informants to contact, the mode of communication with informants and the demographics of the informants that were to be contacted. According to Hay and Cope (2021), informants are an inherent aspect of every qualitative research study, and the selection of their *identities, values, agency and practices can be widely divergent* (p. 99) but must have a bearing on the research. This requirement was reemphasized by Mason (2004, p. 4) who posited that the answer to a researcher's question about who to sample for a study should be '*driven by an interpretive logic which questions and evaluates different ways of classifying and studying people in the light of the particular concerns of the study'.* Drawing from this, I revisited the purpose of this thesis and the research questions that had been designed to elicit for answers. Based on the research questions, I identified six categories of people who would qualify as informants:

a. West African students actively enrolled in HEIs in the Global North
b. West African students who have completed their education in the Global North HEIs and are awaiting to enter the labor force in the Global North.
c. West African students who have successfully entered the labor force in the Global North

d. West African Students who have returned to the countries of origin by choice or lack of opportunities
e. West African students whose educational journeys have been cut short by COVID, illness, financial constraints etc.
f. Prospective international students in West Africa who are applying to HEIs in the Global North.

With these categories in mind, I used snowball sampling in purposive sampling to identify prospective informants. Purposive sampling is a sampling method that targets a specific group for a study because of the demographics they embody. As such, information that is gathered from this group is not only rich but relevant for the purpose of the study (Hay & Cope, 2021). Other forms of sampling known to purposive sampling are deviant case sampling, typical case sampling, maximum variation sampling, criterion sampling, opportunistic sampling, and convenience sampling (Hay & Cope, 2021; Patton, 2015). Snowball sampling was preferred over the other forms of sampling because it allowed chosen informants to recommend other people who had lived through the social experience to come forward to participate if they were interested. This element of agency in snowball sampling empowered the chosen informants to engage other prospective informants for the success of this thesis.

Snowball sampling was particularly instrumental in this thesis as I could only identify ten people from my social network at the beginning. Through phone calls, FaceTime, and WhatsApp messaging, I was able to share information about the study with them, solicit for their interest to participate, and ask them to involve others who they knew might be interested in the study. I had an approximate number of 40 informants to choose from by the end of two weeks and more numbers trickled in as data collection commenced.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

With the hoard of prospective informants, I was inundated with in the first few weeks, it became apparent that I needed to devise a strategy for collecting and managing data. I also needed to decide on how the data will be processed, retrieved, and stored. According to NSD (2022), data is any information that is traceable to an identifiable natural person or entity. As such, information solicitation, use and storage must be handled safely and ethically. Thus, a data management plan was devised prior to initiating data collection from selected informants.

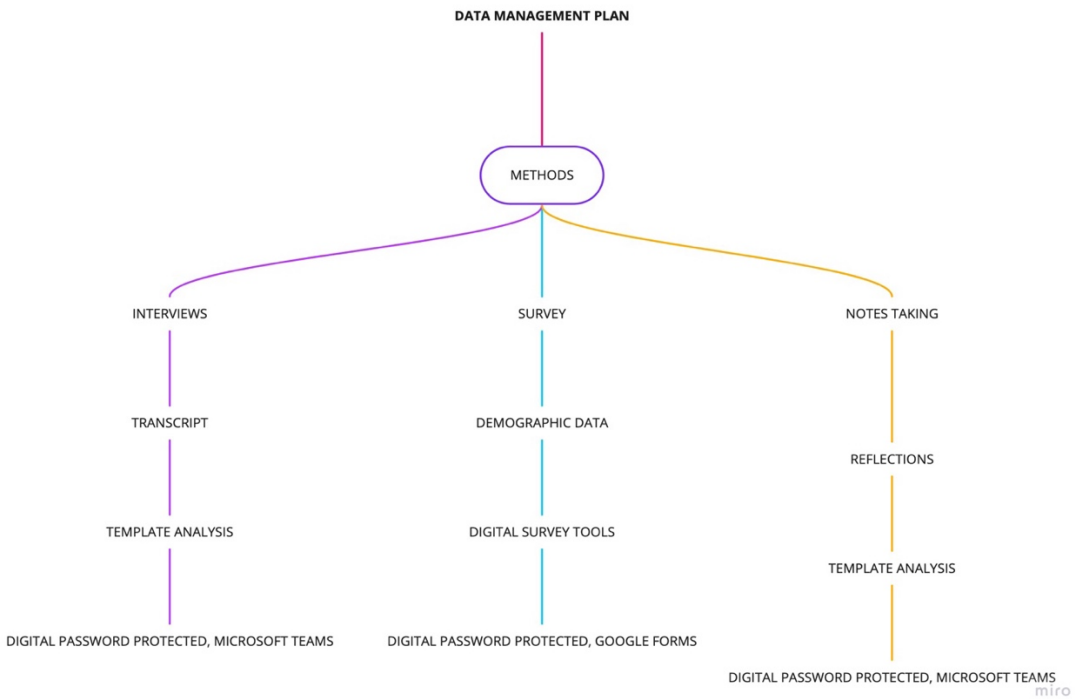

Figure 7: Data Management Plan

Source: Author's own construct

Next, I had to reflect on the time limitation and resource constraints for this study as it necessitated that I cut down the number of informants to interview. I made first contact with the prospective informants that had been referred via email. In this email, I notified them about the purpose of this study, their rights under the relationship that would tentatively be established, and the mode of data collection if they were selected. I then attached a google form survey that was aimed at collecting information about their age, countries of origin and destination, duration of their stay in the Global North and their reasons for migrating. I also made second contact with the ten chosen informants from my social network via email and attached the same google survey. I also solicited for their availability in the impending weeks and gave notice on how long the interviews would tentatively take. They were also made aware of the duration of and options for (e.g., Email) follow up sessions if it became necessary. Issues on consent, privacy and confidentiality were discussed with all informants via email. These protocols were also repeated for the referred informants.

A standardized survey was used in this study to allow for coherence in the data that was collected about the demographics of the prospective informants. This allowed me to limit the study within parameters such as age, spoken language and the number of countries the prospective informant had ties to in the Global North. It also provided a starting point for our conversations during the interview and corroboration of the background information provided by informants. Lastly, the survey ensured that the chosen informants reflected the diversity in the West African subregion. According to Hay and cope, surveys '*are useful for gathering original data about people, their behavior, experiences and social interactions, attitudes and opinions and awareness of events'* (Hay & Cope, 2021, p. 244; McLafferty, 2016). Hay and Cope (2021) further point out that, surveys pose as one of the most practical, flexible, and economical research tools that allow for the collection of data from a geographically dispersed sample which is the case of this study. Another advantage that grounds its preference in this study is the ease with which it can be combined with other qualitative research tools. Lastly, surveys are efficient for drawing out themes, metaphors, concepts, and hidden meanings in a study (Hay & Cope, 2021; McGuirk & Dowling, 2011).

By using the survey, the number of informants were cut down from 40+ to 20 informants. Their attributes are illustrated below

Table 2: Demographics of Selected Informants

AGE RANGE		GENDER		MARITAL STATUS		EDUCATIONAL LEVEL		SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND		COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	
Below 18	0 (0%)	Male	11 (52%)	Single	17 (85%)	High School Education	0 (0%)	Upper Class	3 (15%)	Ghana	8 (40%)
18-25	3 (16%)	Female	9 (48%)	Married	3 (15%)	Bachelor's or equivalent	4 (20%)	Upper Middle Class	5 (25%)	Nigeria	3 (15%)
26-35	17 (84%)					Diploma	0 (0%)	Lower Middle Class	6 (30%)	Benin	3 (15%)
35 and above	0 (0%)					Master's or equivalent	14 (70%)	Working Class	6 (30%)	Senegal	2 (10%)
						Doctorate or equivalent	2 (10%)	Poor	0 (0%)	Togo	2 (10%)
										Côte D'Ivoire	1 (5%)
										Burkina Faso	1 (5%)

Source: Author's own construct from Google Survey

Another qualitative research tool that was employed in this thesis was interviews. Interviews were formerly defined as '*face-to-face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons'* (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954, p. 499). However, Hay and cope have pointed out that, with the advancement of technology and the advent of digital platforms for interviews and calls, the element of direct contact with interviewees has been dispensed with. Interviews were employed in this study because of the variety of information it elicits from people about events, experiences, and opinions. Hay and Cope emphasize that the varied responses of informants may stem from *the different classes they belong to, their age, gender, sexuality, and disability* (Hay & Cope, 2021, p. 149). Interviews are also a useful tool because they investigate complex behaviors and motivations, shows respect for, and empowers the people who provide the data. Lastly, they fill the knowledge gap that other methods are unable to measure up too (Hay & Cope, 2021, pp. 149-150; Valentine, 1997; Krueger & Casey, 2014). This was particularly useful for gathering more meanings, experiences, and motivations besides the survey in this study.

Next, I designed an interview guide to ensure that all themes to be discussed in the interview were included. Hay and Cope (2021) refer to interview guides as a less structured list of issues that an interviewer wants to discuss during the interview process. They are often used in combination with semi-structured interviews to enhance credibility in data collection and rigor in interview practice (p. 151). The interview guide also served as a flexible reminder or prompt to allow interviews to flow as naturally as possible.

In order to maintain the flexibility and the natural flow of the interviews, a semi-structured form of interviewing was preferred over the other forms interviews. Semi-structured interviews, according to Hay and Cope (2021) also follow a '*degree of predetermined order and topical prompts but maintains flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant'* (p. 149).

Open questions were mobilized during the interviews to allow informants to settle into the questions and provide answers at their own pace. They were also made aware of the option to ask for time to reflect on their answers. Based on the answers that were given, follow up questions were asked to motivate informants to elucidate the answers given. Hay and Cope have admonished that, a good interview guide should be a mix of '*primary questions'* and '*follow up or secondary questions'* (Hay & Cope, 2021, p. 153).

Apart from the asynchronous email exchanges, the interviews for this study were held digitally on zoom video conferencing. By looking at the demographics of my informants, it had become apparent at an early stage that spatial and temporal issues had to be resolved. Whilst I was located in Trondheim, some of my informants were in Hong Kong, Cambridge, and Lagos. Hay and Cope (2021) have posited that, digital interviews allow access to people living in remote locations, people who have mobility inhibitions and people who live abroad. Additionally, it guarantees a high degree of privacy during interviews since the interviewer does not need to invade the personal space of the interviewee. Looking at it from an ethical perspective, the interviews were conducted during the outbreak of the omicron variant of COVID-19. Using digital interviews reduced the risk of spreading an infection to the informants and to myself. Lastly, using digital interviews were convenient and cost effective as interviews could be held in the comfort of my home and the residence of the informants.

One disadvantage of using digital platforms for interviews is that it has the ability to minimize the rapport that is built between the interviewer and the interviewee since it is not face-to-face like the traditional form of interviews (Hay & Cope, 2021). To reduce the effect of this disadvantage, I began the interviews with warm up topics about how the informant's day went, the weather and what they did for hobbies. For informants that I knew from my social network, I used the interview session to catch up. Gardner et al. (1983, p. 131) , have argued that '*the success of an interview (when measured by the degree of relaxation of all those present and the ease of conversation) generally depended on the*

amount of warm up (chit-chat, introductions etc.)'. I discuss my role as an nterviewer and in the positions of an outsider and insider in details in subsequent paragraphs.

Furthermore to build rapport, zoom video conferencing was preferred over the plethora of video conferencing platforms available. This is because the platform allows for video calling, recording, screen sharing, transcription and end-to-end encryption features that makes it more secure, reliable, and dependable. In spite of this effort, there were instances where the informant elected to turn off their video accessibility and this made it difficult to catch non-verbal cues or access the impact of each question on their demeanor.

Hay and Cope (2021, p. 179) have also added that, digital interviews are '*only appropriate for study groups with widespread internet access and digital literacy*…'. Students generally belong to a sample group that are tech-savvy or abreast with the latest technology. This is because technology is leveraged on in many HEIs to enhance the teaching and learning experience. Moreover, during the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent restrictions that were placed on mobility, many lectures were moved online. Zoom video conferencing was the most popular tool that was used for teaching and learning globally. Thus, using zoom for the digital interviews was embraced by the informants of this study.

In spite of the advantages of digital interviews that I have outlined above, there were some problems I experienced that I could do nothing to curtail. For instance, technical internet failures led to lost connections mid-interview. Inaudible audio transcripts and technical noise also made continuing with some interviews on the same day unsustainable. In one instance, an interview had to be rescheduled to a month later because of the unavailability of the informant after the first attempt. All interviews were recorded with the consent of informants and transcribed for subsequent analysis.

Note taking was employed during interview sessions to record personal observations, musings, and non-verbal cues. As Hay and Cope (2021, p. 164) admonish, '*Do not let something pass by that you do not understand with the expectation that you will be able to make sense of it afterwards*'. Mental notes could easily be lost, as such, written note taking was employed as a supplementary prompter to ask questions about things said, that were unclear during the interview.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Hay and Cope (2021), have emphasized that a researcher's job is one of synthesis and translation. The researcher's role is to observe the world: events, places, and people, and represent the observations in data that is coherent and meaningful. Many a times, the data that researchers collect through participant observation, interviews or focus groups can be overwhelming en masse. There is therefore the need to

organize data into manageable chunks. Through the organization process, the researcher is able to explore themes, generate theories and reduce data to its most relevant content. With the advancement in technology over the years, computer assisted technologies have been developed to aid researchers in the data reduction process. Some of these technologies include CAQDAS, NVivo, QualPro and MAXQDA. In spite of the abundance of these software programs, many scholars (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Davis & Meyer, 2009) have advocated for the retention of the human or manual element in qualitative data analysis. This is because computer-based software has the capability to separate data from social context which distorts the meaning of the lived experiences of informants.

In this study, I adopted a manual approach of data analysis. The audio recordings of the interviews were replayed after each session and transcribed into digital text documents. The transcripts that were generated manually were repeatedly read through as the audio recordings replayed to ensure coherence in the data and to identify missing content. The notes that were taken during each interview session were also incorporated into the transcript. It is noteworthy that, though Zoom Digital Conferencing has an advanced caption tool, the different accents of my informants made zoom generated transcripts difficult to work with. The interviews were therefore transcribed manually. Once the transcription was finished, each transcript was given a pseudonym. The date for the interview and the duration of the sessions were also recorded. Manual transcription ensured that I paid attention to the details of the interviews. In certain instances, follow up questions that I had missed during the main session were asked via email. Inaudible parts (owing to intermittent internet failures) of the audio were also shared with the informants for further explanation and clarity.

Once the transcripts were proofread for coherence, I explored the best alternatives for organizing the data. At the first stages of my analysis, I considered a thematic approach and a story analysis approach, however, a thematic analysis was subsequently preferred over a story analysis. According to Cassell and Bishop (2019, p. 196), a thematic analysis allows the researcher to '*look for themes within the data and code excerpts of the data accordingly into those themes*.' The themes that are developed allow for a structured approach to interpretation, through the analysis of the codes and themes.

Specifically, I chose a template analysis as it offered a systematic approach to the organization of the whole data set. This according to Cassell and Bishop (2019) allows specific questions to be asked and corresponding answers, derived from the template. Additionally, template analysis was employed because it provides an overall picture of informant experiences as it relates to each question. This

provides an avenue for the comparison for informant experiences and the location of common patterns. The comparative aspect of the analysis is central to this thesis as one of the research goals of this study is to identify the different migration patterns mobilized by international students across the West African subregion.

Story analysis was less preferred because it draws attention to the emotional aspect of informant experiences by sequencing how they occur. Thus, it focuses on the performative aspects of the experiences rather than the structured identification and comparison of patterns in the experiences.

Template analysis in this study was done by deriving and defining themes and organizing them into categories. All twenty transcripts were read and manually coded according to the defined themes and categorizations. As the coding progressed, new themes were identified, and the template was updated to reflect this. Figure 10 below is an illustration of the first manually coded interview for this thesis.

Table 3: llustration of Thematic Analysis for One Selected Interview.

INTERVIEW	CODE NUMBER	CODE	THEMES	CATEGORIZATION
1. "Augustus"	1	Frequent travels and exposure to the Europe, USA	Prior travel experience	-Within Global South -Within Global North*
	2	Family support for migration decision	Family Support	-Low -High*
	3	Economic conditions in the country of origin	Economic conditions	-General: Good, Poor* -Subjective: Good*, Poor
	4	Decision to leave country of origin, choose study	Choice	-Personal* -Family

		programme, return to country of origin after COVID		
	5	Difficulty in gaining admission in country of origin	HEI inaccessibility	-country of origin* -country of destination
	6	Family connections in origin and destination country	Capital	-Human capital* -Social capital*
	7	Financial support from family	Socio-economic background	-Upper Class -Middle Class* -Working class
	8	Visa Acquisition Process	Visa Acquisition	-Difficult* -Easy
	9	Receptivity in destination country based on identity	Receptivity	-Racism -Discrimination -Acceptance*
	10	Cheap tuition in destination country	Cost of Tuition	-Cheap* -High
	11	Studies cut short due to COVID	Return Migration	
	12	Migrating between countries post-COVID	Circular Migration	

Source: Own compilat

1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND	3.CONDITIONS IN ORIGIN	5.FUNDING FOR STUDENT MIGRATION	7.FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CHOICE OF HEI	9.MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES
1.1 Upper-middle Class 1.2 Lower-middle Class 1.3 Working Class 1.4 Poor	3.1 Poor Economic conditions 3.2 Income dissatisfaction 3.3 Low standard of living 3.4 Course unavailability 3.5 No admission in HEI in origin country 3.6 Disinvestment in education system 3.7 High unemployment rate 3.8 Lack of opportunities	5.1 Family Support 5.2 Scholarship funds 5.3 Loans 5.4 Salary from jobs 5.4.1 Jobs in origin country 5.4.2 Student jobs or jobs in destination	7.1 Affordable tuition 7.2 Absence of competitive exams for admission 7.3 Scholarship programmes and waivers 7.4 Availability of preferred course 7.5 Language of instruction	9.1 Stepwise Migration 9.2 Serial Migration 9.2.1 Direct serial migration 9.2.2 Indirect serial migration 9.3 Return Migration 9.4 Circular migration -Due to COVID
2.DECISION TO MIGRATE	**4.CONDITIONS IN DESTINATION**	**6.ACQUISITION OF MIGRATION INFORMATION**	**8.CHALLENGES IN DESTINATION COUNTRY**	
2.1 Family Decision 2.1.1 Diversification of family income 2.1.2 Returnee success stories 2.1.3 Prestige (Intrinsic) 2.1.4 Family migration strategy	4.1 Better standard of living 4.2 Higher income advantage 4.3 Good economic conditions 4.4 Career opportunities after school 4.5 Favourable immigration policies 4.6 Favourable educational policies	6.1 Travel agencies 6.2 Friend and family connections 6.3 Self search 6.4 Government educational bodies within origin	8.1 Receptivity 8.1.1 Racism 8.1.2 Discrimination 8.1.3 Acceptance 8.2. Language 8.2.1 Immersion and Exchange Programmes 8.2.2 Self-acquired	
2.2 Individual Decision 2.2.1 Returnee success stories 2.2.2 Intellectual curiosity (intrinsic) 2.2.3 Diversification of education 2.2..4 New social connections (intrinsic) 2.2.5 Prestige (intrinsic)			8.2.3 Language transferability 8.2.4 Fluency of locals in other spoken language 8.3 Adaptation and Integration 8.3.1 New environment and weather 8.3.2 Teaching and learning style 8.3.3. New social life 8.3.4 New culture 8.4 Student Visa Policies	
			8.4.1 Difficult visa process 8.4.2 Yearly visa renewal 8.4.3 Student job restrictions 8.4.4 Taxes on student income 8.5 Expectations 8.5.1 Individual Expectations 8.5.1.1 Misinformation 8.5.2 Family expectations 8.5.2.1 Remittances	

Figure 8:Thematic Template for Analysis

Source: Author's own construct

Figure 8 provides a systematic scheme for presenting data retrieved from informants in this research. Numbers 1 to 9 are the broad themes derived from our analysis. 1.1 to 9.4 represent the categories under each theme. Using point 5 as an illustration, the question "*How do West African students acquire funds to pursue higher education abroad?*' can be answered. The answers are: Family support, Scholarship funds, loans and salaries from jobs.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Every researcher has a duty of care owed to their informant in every study. O'Connell-Davidson and Layder (1994) have defined research ethics as '*the conduct of researchers and their responsibilities and obligations to those involved on the research, including sponsors, the general public and most importantly, the subjects of the research*' (p. 55). It can be inferred from this definition that the duty of care is not only owed to the informants but to the general public, stakeholders of the research and to an extent the researcher as a person or body in itself. Such obligations include but are not limited to privacy and confidentiality, negotiation with power relations, consent and protection against risk or harm.

3.4.1 REFLEXIVITY AND POSITIONALITY

Reflexivity and positionality are derivatives of the concept of power in knowledge production. Hay and Cope (2021) have posited that, a researcher is an embodiment of the effect of power and this power informs how knowledge is produced. This is because the positionality of researchers in society intersects with their identity, their biological characteristics, social location, social status, and formative experiences (Catungal & Dowling, 2021). These axes of difference shape the questions that are asked during research and influences how data is interpreted. Similarly, informants in a study may come from same backgrounds as the researcher or from a different and or a minority and marginalized group in society. Power relations can therefore be referred to as the relationship between the researcher and the researched along the axes of different or similar societal status. In the collection of data for this thesis, I took notice of an unbalanced power relation between myself and some of my informants. Prospective international students who were resident across West Africa at the time of data collection felt obliged to participate with the hope of getting pointers for their study applications to HEIs in the Global North. Even though it was within my power to help them, I had to balance the power relations by making them aware I would still help if they refused to participate in the study. I was able to identify this power dynamic through critical reflexivity.

Catungal and Dowling (2021) point out that critical reflexivity does not begin when the researcher curtails the effect of these power relations but when they recognize their '*situatedness*' and how it affects the research. Recognizing one's situatedness is an exercise of reflexivity that requires the researcher to objectively study their intersectionality and its effect on their research. The authors further state that, research practice is only responsible when the researcher accounts for their own race, gender, class and influence and its impact on the research process.

With this reflexive research practice in mind, I had to engage in constant *self-conscious scrutiny* (England, 1994) of my positionality. I related to this study as an outsider and then as an insider. Catungal and Dowling (2021, p. 21) have defined insider research as '*a mode of research where particular kinds of similar identities and experiences, rather than differences, enable a researcher to relate to participants in particular ways'*. I was able to mobilize my identity as a Ghanaian international student currently living in Norway, to build rapport and gain access to informants within this space. In cases where informants were also Ghanaian, a solid relationship was sparked at the onset of the interviews based on ethnocultural ties. We could switch from English to Akan, Ga, Ghanaian pidgin, or other common languages spoken in Ghana. This insider position enabled informants to speak openly and free of inhibitions as I was substantively 'one of them'.

However, my insider status did not absolve me from the nuances of power relations. Catungal and Dowling (2021, p. 22) have discovered that, '*insider research can pose its own challenges, as taken-for-granted norms or loyalties might erect further barriers to research'*. In my case, it was unwillingness to participate because of fear of public exposure and how the interview might affect their status. I found one Ghanaian informant from my social network who was unwilling to participate in the study because of the fear of being vulnerable. Her decision was therefore respected on ethical grounds.

Catungal and Dowling (2021) have described outsider research on the other hand as conducting research in a context in which researchers have no personal involvement. As an outsider, interviewing informants who were not from Ghana or from Anglophone West Africa came with learning and studying issues that I previously did not have any connection to. Certain urbanisms and slangs common to other West African Countries such as "Dzakpa" (from the Yoruba language in Nigeria) were foreign to me. The education system in Francophone West Africa was also differently structured from that of Anglophone West Africa. Critical relexivity for me, required a process of learning and unlearning and objectively situating myself in relation to my informants as an unbiased researcher throughout this research

3.4.2 CONSENT, CONFIDENTIALITY AND ASSESSING POTENTIAL RISK

Catungal and Dowling (2021) have opined that, qualitative research requires the observation of people, and inquisitions about their personal lives. The information derived from these observations and inquisitions are then processed into knowledge that is consumed by the public. It is for this reason that

ethical bodies are set up in research fields to safeguard the interest of informants and to protect their interest. In Norway, the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) is responsible for the management and archiving of data. To ensure I was working within data protection laws, the particulars of this study was presented to the center for approval. Once approved, an information letter was generated for sharing with informants. This information letter addressed issues such as: Why the study is important, who will be responsible for the study, who should be contacted in the case of an ethical breach, how the data retrieved from informants will be stored, processed, and archived. A consent form was also generated for the informants' stating obligations of the researcher and the duty of confidentiality they were owed in the research. Consent was acquired in writing and was retrieved electronically prior to each interview session. The rights of the informants were also repeated before each interview session to serve as a reminder to myself and the informant.

Due to this duty of care owed to the informants, all data I collected were saved and published in pseudonyms to ensure absolute anonymity. I also switched current locations and countries of origin to make the data untraceable to their identities. The informants were also informed before recording started and ended and information divulged outside the interview sessions were not included in this study without prior permission.

Catungal and Dowling (2021, p. 35) have expressed that '*your research should not expose yourself or your informants to harm-physical or psychological/social'.* This ethical consideration was central to this study as interviews were conducted during the outbreak of the omicron variant of COVID-19. As such, in cases where informants were in close proximity to my location, I insisted on using digital interviews according to the data plan. Catungal and Dowling (2021) have also pointed out, risk can also present itself in a psychological way. In my digital encounter with some informants, discussions about racism, job search frustration and family separation triggered emotions. I therefore empathized with informants and reminded them of their option to defer the session.

In sum, this chapter has addressed the methodology used in this thesis. It draws on ethical considerations such as consent, confidentiality and asessement of risk to discuss the ethical framework of this paper. It also captures the data plan and management strategy, used in the production of this work. The next chapter is the discussion section of this thesis. It draws on the theoretical and conceptual literature in the literature review chapter to make findings from the interview data retrieved in this thesis.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

In Chapter 4, I delve into the intrinsic and instrumental factors that have influenced student migration from the West African subregion to the Global North. I assess the intrinsic factors that influence student migration at the individual and household level. At the instrumental level, I delve into the factors that influence the decision to study abroad, the factors that determine choice of destination and those that affect the choice of HEI. From the factors that are derived, I place the West African student in De Haas' new migration categories.

4.1 EXAMINING THE INTRINSIC FACTORS OF MIGRATION FROM THE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL PERSPECTIVE

Literature on migration decisions and its facilitators have been centered on structural and functional discourses in the country of origin and the country of destination (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2000; Bosiakoh, 2009; Efioyani & Piguet, 2014). De Haas (2021) has referred to this dimension of migration as the instrumental aspiration dimension because of its utilitarian and functionalist nature. Instrumental aspirational values of migration have been studied within the context of labor and student migration as it concerns itself with the means migrants use to access better standards of life in other geographical regions. However, there is another dimension of migration facilitators that has been given little probative value in migration research especially in the context of student migration. This dimension is in the intrinsic value of migration. This dimension is often attributed to lifestyle migrants who engage in migration as an adventurous and explorative experience '*such as the joy and pleasure derived from exploring new societies, seeing the 'bright lights' of the city''* (Harris & Todaro, 1970, p. 126) In spite of the indispensability of the instrumental factors of migration to our research on students from the West African subregion, we begin this chapter by focusing on the intrinsic factors that facilitate the migration decision for individuals and households in the aforementioned region.

On the individual level, Kyei (2021) has pointed out that, a rationalization exercise begins when a prospective student realizes that their aspirations and life goals are not likely to be met in their country of origin. He posits that, this exercise is done within the backdrop of cost-benefit calculations and are further articulated by push and pull forces. According to De Haas (2021), such arguments resonate with the historical-structural view and ignores the element of human agency. He further defines agency as '*the limited- but real- ability of human beings (or social groups) to make independent choices and to impose these on the world and, hence, to alter structures that shape and constrain people's*

opportunities or freedoms' (p. 14). Per this definition, De Haas points out that, it is this element of human agency that bends opportunities in favor of the individual and or the household albeit structural restrictions and not the other way round. The structural restrictions range from economic, social, political, and cultural barriers. This reverse perspective of the historical structuralists posited by De Haas calls for moving away from the narrative that individuals '*are pawns being pushed and pulled by global macro forces'* (p. 8). The narrative that they are victims of capitalism who must escape from the misery in their countries of origin in order to survive must also be dismissed.

The migration agency coincidentally places value on the intrinsic importance of migration to the individual and their households. De Haas points out that, individuals do not always see migration as a flight from hardship to survival. Migration agency therefore dispenses with the functional aspect of migration and places focus on the subjective value of migration as function of people's desires. Such desires and intrinsic values include '*wanderlust, curiosity, and an innate desire to break free and discover new horizons'* (De Haas, 2021, p. 15). In our interaction with student informants from West Africa, the intrinsic value for migration was a predominant theme of discussion. The values that resurfaced in our discussions ranged from intellectual curiosity, love for a city and its lifestyle, prestige, the need to explore the world (exposure) and the unrelenting search for something new.

In the case of Benedict, 32, a Ghanaian living in Hong Kong, the main reason for switching cities every few years was hinged on the feelings of boredom and being tied to one place. In his case, he first moved from Ghana's capital Accra, to Beijing on a quest for intellectual adventure. Even though he was doing well financially in Ghana, he did not want to waste his youth not doing something he loves – acquiring knowledge.

> *'I found myself hopping from one company to another because at the end of the day someone could ask "Hey how much are they paying you? I am going to double it". So I had a lot of motivation to stay in Ghana and most of these companies were start-ups that looked very promising. But I felt like being a trailblazer, I felt it was a good time to explore how much I could learn before I ran out of years to learn[2]'*

[2] Benedict-32 years-Ghana

He also emphasized on his innate desire to discover new things, get new experiences, and meet more people. In his opinion, that was the only way to broaden his scope on the world and how he viewed and appreciated it. It is this desire that encouraged him to switch cities from Beijing after his master's degree to Hong Kong for his PhD. His desire was to switch cities even though he had the option to stay on in Beijing.

Similarly, our conversation with Gamada, 26, reflected her innate love for the city of London because of its multiculturality and dynamism. Even though she had relocated back home to Nigeria after her studies, she likened the city to home as one could casually find Yoruba and Twi speakers on the streets of London.

> '*I mean, to be fair, it is a multicultural place and I love London. I wouldn't lie. If I had my way, I will move there. I love the city. It just calls to my spirit'*[3]

Gamada's love for the city has since her return to Lagos, prompted her to keep searching for opportunities in the city with the hope of being able to move there permanently.

In our interviews with other international students from West Africa, another intrinsic theme at the individual and communal level was the desire to diversify educational certificates. It can be argued strongly that this desire is dual faceted in nature as it is necessitated by the demands of the labor market and the globality of higher education on one hand and the prestige associated with an international degree on the other hand. The former is extrinsic in nature, however, the individual or families' choice to diversify certification because of prestige is a manifestation of the intrinsic value of migration for the purposes of higher education. The subjective value placed on an international education in West Africa is historical in nature. As pointed out earlier, a western education in the colonial era was associated with access to power and knowledge. Academicians who obtained degrees from the West were able to navigate their way to the top of the West African social and class stratum and became the elites of their time (Olsen, 2014). To date, the acquisition of foreign certificates in addition to certificates from local HEIs is associated with prestige at the individual and family level. And more importantly, the acquisition of certificates from prestigious western HEIs informs society to hold the individual and the

[3] Gamada-26 years-Nigeria

family they come from in high regard. Families therefore participate in this venture by investing and encouraging young individuals to study abroad.

Scholars such as Findlay et al (2012); Waters (2007); Parazeres (2018) have also pointed out that, students view themselves and the degrees they acquire abroad as a mark of distinction. This distinction in certificate distinguishes them from their peers in local institutions. Such international education opportunities grant them an exclusive ticket to a membership of privileged individuals within their societies and their chosen career paths.

This was illustrated in our interaction with some international student informants from West Africa. Some of the reasons for the diversification of educational certificates were dependent on the prestige associated with the HEI in the destination country and the prestige associated with international study generally. We interacted with informants in Ivy League schools in the USA and Europe. Informants pointed out the ranking of the school, and the name the schools had made for themselves as some of the reasons that influenced their decision.

In our interview with "Cornelia", 30, who was reading her master's degree in one of the highly ranked schools in Europe, she pointed out how her choice of school and destination country was not only influenced by academic ranking. Her choice was influenced by the school's ability to put her at the top with others in her field.

> '*The University I applied to had top tier …programmes which are high ranked in the world. And choosing this… over any other will not only advance me academically but will put me among the best in my field*'[4]

It can be argued that research on the student mobility is generally skewed towards the instrumental dimension because of the emphasis placed on unearthing the developmental aspects of migration. By extension, the limited study on the intrinsic value of pursuing higher education abroad for students in

[4] Cornerlia-30 years-Ghana

the West African subregion has its roots in the inequality between the Global South and Global North. The economic rift between these polar regions has led to the generalization that students from the Global South use intellectual mobility as a façade to escape from the harsh economic realities of the systems they originate from. While this may be the case for some students from West Africa, others use intellectual mobility to realize intrinsic goals that have no bearing on the functional aspects of migration.

4.2 THE INSTRUMENTAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WEST AFRICAN STUDENT MIGRATION

De Haas (2021) has elucidated that intrinsic and instrumental aspirations of migration can co-exist and enhance each other's meaning in the life of a migrant. He refers to instrumental factors in migration as a functional means to an end. These factors are reflective of how migration is employed as a tool by individuals and their families to tap into better standards of living, access better health care and income and within this context, better education. De Haas (2021) argues that the instrumental value of migration can be found in its capacity to enhance the livelihood of migrants by providing them with an increased access to resources. It is therefore not the absence of these resources in the country of origin that triggers migration but its deficiency and or the growing aspirations of migrants due to their exposure to what a "good life" is. It is within this background that students from West Africa enroll in HEIs in the Global North with the hope of making their aspirations to a 'good life' a reality. As De Haas (2021) further points out, '*improved education, increased media exposure alongside the regular return of the 'migrant role model' and exposure to their relative wealth …contributes to rapidly increasing material and social success that many youngsters have become virtually obsessed with leaving'* (p. 17). This 'good life' is within their grasp when they are able to tap into educational, career and job opportunities in the Global North that enhance their lifestyles and lead to the achievement of their life aspirations. These instrumental aspirations therefore influence the West African international student's choices in three ways. First, in the choice to study abroad, the choice of destination country, and the choice of HEI to study in. In this thesis, the instrumental factors that instigate student mobility from West Africa to the Global North will be assessed in reference to De Haas' aspiration and capabilities theory.

4.2.1 INSTRUMENTAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE CHOICE TO STUDY ABROAD

In his theory, De Haas (2021) postulates a framework through which all forms of migration should be assessed. He defines migration as '*a function of people's aspirations and capabilities to migrate within given sets of perceived geographical opportunity structures'* (p. 17). These aspirations people possess can become capabilities in the presence of positive liberties and negative liberties. He refers to negative liberties as the absence of structural and political hurdles put in place by governments to inhibit migration. He then refers to positive liberties as the ability to take control and find one's purpose in life. This theory therefore presents a conflict between an individual's exercise of agency and the constraints placed in their way by structural issues at the macro level.

The West African student embodies a person who is capable of engaging in voluntary mobility to realize their life aspirations because they are equipped with positive liberties that come in the form of resources. These resources are not always financial but present themselves in social and human forms. Access to information on student visas, student to worker transitions, scholarship programmes, immigration policies are all made possible through their own ingenuity acquired through education, family, and friend networks. It is within this background that King and Raghuram (2012) have argued that the international student should not be portrayed as someone from the wealthy classes of society, as this may not always be the case. The common denominator for this group of migrants, however, is their access to social and human resources to facilitate the realization of their migration goal.

In my interaction with student informants from West Africa, I inquired into why they made the decision to migrate to study abroad. I also inquired into how they gathered information about their migration decision. The former question was asked to acquire insight into the structural dimension of the decision to migrate and how it coincides with or inhibits their overall life goals as students. The latter question was asked to probe into the element of agency employed by students and or their families to proactively make their aspirations a reality. It is this agency that distinguishes De Haas' (2021) theory of migration from the functionalist and historical structural theories. The former question on why students chose to study abroad will be discussed from the instrumental perspective.

It was revealed at the preliminary stage of this thesis that, students chose to move from the West African subregion mainly to acquire international certificates at the Bachelor's, master's, and PhD levels. They

also chose to study abroad for better professional prospects, to help their family network in the countries of origin and to achieve higher standards of living. These answers were derived from a standardized google survey given to participants prior to the interview stage. It was therefore expedient to probe further into other underlying reasons for student migration from the West African subregion.

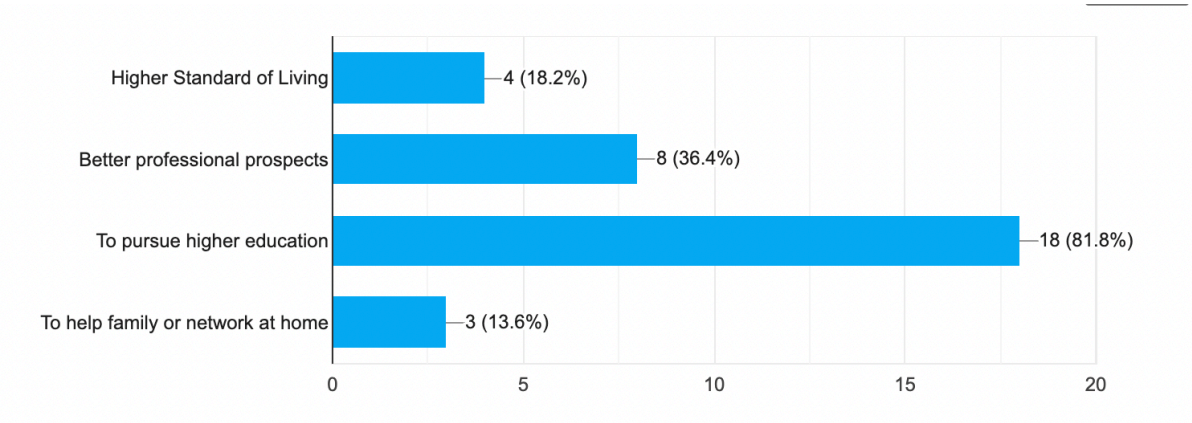

Figure 9: Reasons for Student Migration from the West African Subregion (STUDY 1)

Source: Results from Google survey

At the interview stage (study 2), structural issues emanating from resource deficit in the country of origin were cited as a further cause for migration decisions in the Subregion. In our thematic organization of the interviews, the prevalent structural issues cited by informants were categorized as 'conditions in the origin country', that is, conditions that have facilitated international student mobility from the West African subregion to the Global North. These conditions were showcased as the general economic downturn in the country of origin and its antecedents – high unemployment rates, low standard of living, income dissatisfaction, disinvestment in the education system and lack of opportunities. These conditions were contrasted with the conditions in the destination countries or the notion of conditions in the destination countries revealed by students and prospective student informants. Informants cited better living conditions, access to better health care, favorable educational policies and investment in the education system, access to a plethora of career opportunities after school, higher income advantage as reasons for choosing to study abroad. It is within this context that nursing students from Ghana, for example, leave for greener pastures because of low-income differentials, career progression and access to better healthcare education (Abuosi & Abor, 2015)

In an interview with Kobina, 29, from Burkina Faso, his reason for migrating from Burkina Faso aligned with the aspirations he had for his life. He wanted to trade a lower income for a higher income and travel the world. In his own words,

> '*I think being exposed to other cultures and how people behave in other countries when I was doing my masters in Senegal, I had professors from all over the world coming to teach us. The experience there was nice, and I realized just staying in [… …] was not enough. I started dreaming of travelling. And I realized that, if I have to do all these, I have to go on holiday and travel. But if I should stay here, I will continue to earn a low income and that will not be enough to travel around. So, I said, ok then moving to somewhere where I can really achieve my dreams will be nice. And here in the Netherlands or in Europe, when you work, you are paid. The income here is not bad'*[5]

Similarly, Cornelia, 30, a practicing lawyer from Ghana, cited low-income range as an underlying reason for choosing to study abroad. It was her hope to leverage on her impending international educational certificate and part-time jobs to acquire better career and financial prospects abroad. She stated that:

> '*If you are working in Europe, the economy and the standard of living is great. The money and the standard of life you can enjoy puts you in a better placed as opposed to where I come from. Because, as I was telling you, even though being a lawyer is supposed to be a lucrative profession, the money you can earn as a junior lawyer is abysmal as opposed to other people who are even doing odd jobs in Europe. They can earn something worth writing home about. So, if I should get a part-time job, it will put me in a better place to improve my standard of living here. Even with the basics I can afford here in the Netherlands, from where I come from, they are not so basic'*[6].

[5] Kobina-29 years-Burkina Faso

[6] Cornelia-30 years-Ghana

Another instrumental factor that grounded the decision of West African students to study abroad was related to unemployment. The uncertainties of securing a job after school, the idleness of the wait for employment and lack of opportunities in the country of origin to earn a living were also cited as factors driving student migration from West Africa.

Jomo, 25 years from Benin expressed her view on unemployment thus:

> '*first of all when you see the rate of unemployment in my country or even other West African countries you see that it is really really high. And you understand that people are going to school every day, getting their diplomas, finishing university and some people even have PhDs but are forced to be taxi and motorcycle drivers and when you look at that, you ask yourself : Why am I going to university? And you finally understand that in the whole society it is the people who have or are wealthy that are able to make it. If you are poor and you have nobody, nobody in the big societies, somebody to pull you in, then you never get a chance. No matter how good or brilliant you are, you won't make it. There are very rare cases of people who are brought up poor and who are super brilliant who made a name for themselves in society. With all the rest, you just have to have connections because no matter how brilliant you are, you will ever succeed on the path you set out to take. It is something we have been living through back home and generations and generations of people have been living through it'*[7]

In the case of Pelumi, higher education abroad was also preferred over the difficult job search and uncertain job conditions in her country of origin after her first degree. She pointed out that,

> '*… it was the next obvious thing at the time I was a Teaching Assistant. I had tried also to look for jobs. But I felt like going back to school would be a better option because it might be difficult getting a job. Furthering my studies seemed like a better option than staying home and not knowing what to do with the time I was using to search for a job*'[8].

[7] Jomo-25 years-Benin

[8] Pelumi-29 years-Nigeria

Similarly, Lamisi had this to say about unemployment and job search in Ghana:

> '*I would say I have about a 20% chance to find a job back home. There are so many graduates in the system who are doing better than what I am doing here in France and yet are not finding jobs. So when you think about all these things, you feel a form of fear. The fear of having no job security back home contributes to our decision to stay back here in Europe*.'[9]

It is this fear of unemployment that encourages students from West Africa to pursue higher education abroad with the hope of attaining better professional opportunities upon the completion of their studies.

Another noteworthy instrumental factor for student migration from the West African region was rooted in the inadequacy of the educational system. Informants cited proximate drivers such as disinvestment of the government in education whilst, the unavailability of progressive courses in the educational curriculum and the poor educational structure in the country of origin. Others also cited the theory-based rigidity of the courses offered in the countries of origin as a reason for choosing to study abroad. For example, Dago and Barussaud (2021) mentioned how the Senegalese educational scene was characterized by strikes and educational programmes that did not cater to the needs of students. They argued that the inadequacy of qualified HEI lecturers, and the disorientation of educational training offered to students viz-a-viz the demands of the global labor market made higher education in the West African Region unattractive for students. This was opposed to positive proximate factors that made education abroad more attractive. Komolafe (2008) singled out Canada as one of the major destinations for Nigerian students who desire to study abroad. He attributed the desirability of Canada to its advanced post-secondary education, economic opportunities, and the social empowerment it affords its citizens and residents. For example, in this thesis, Folake, 24 years from Nigeria opined that:

> '*People believe the West is a panacea for all problems and it is perfect and all of that, but I don't buy into that stereotype. But when it comes to academics, I believe it is more structured and up to date. It provides more expert in the field I am interested in, and it provides more*

[9] Lamisi-28 years-Ghana

exposure for me to be able to build my talent and showcase my potential as a person who is interested in this field.'[10]

From the aforementioned factors, it became evident that the present conditions in the West African subregion did not coincide with the overall life goals of students from West Africa. These life goals leaned favorably towards the conditions present in the destination countries and their access to information made this informant group fully aware of alternative lifestyles and opportunities in other geolocations. De Haas (2021) captures these conditions prevalent in the country of origin as positive liberty deprivation. He argues that when people do not have access to resources in their cultural, social, and economic forms, they are unable to realize their aspirations or life goals. He further explicates that, an increased capability to access social, economic, or cultural resources increases one's capacity to aspire. This is because the availability of such resources makes people aware of alternative lifestyles and opportunities elsewhere and further enhances their conviction that such lifestyles are within their reach through migration. De Haas (2021) further illustrates this theory using the instance of students. He points out that, '*acquiring a school or university degree is likely not to increase knowledge about opportunities elsewhere but also to instill the belief and self-confidence that it is actually possible to find a job, to live in a strange place or to secure a visa'* (p. 26).

The sharp contrast whether real or imagined, created by opportunity structures in the country of origin and in the destination, may encourage individuals and households and in this instance, students to migrate. The decision to migrate is however subjective in nature. How individuals view the conditions of negative and positive liberties through their social, cultural, and personal perspectives may encourage them to migrate to another country, stay in the origin or return to the origin after a period of time.

This subjectivity was expressed in the opinions of student migrants from Nigeria. In our interactions at the interview stage, the term 'Jakpa' was repeated by informants. Upon further enquiry, Folake, 24 years revealed that:

'*Jakpa is actually a word in one of the major languages in Nigeria and it means to escape, which is interesting because many people think when you "jakpa", you've escaped the system.*

[10] Folake-24 years-Nigeria

When you go abroad you have people calling or texting you to say, "Oh you don jakpa". It is assumed you have gone to the better world. I work in the travel sector, so I know the number of people who are just 'jakpaing' through my company alone. For me, it is just sad because that is a lot of brain drain. It is something that breaks my heart whenever I hear it. It is not a good thing, and I am afraid it is going to get worse. People really want to get out of Nigeria. Because if you ask me, I will say I wish I was acquiring all this knowledge from Nigeria. It would make more sense to me. But it is what it is and people are still leaving as we speak and I don't blame them'[11].

Folake's displeasure with the 'Jakpa' movement however did not discourage her from pursuing higher education abroad. However, unlike others who viewed intellectual mobility as a way to escape from the harsh economic and structural realities in the country of origin, she viewed intellectual mobility as an opportunity to skill up and return to improve conditions back home.

In contrast, Gamada, 26 years from Nigeria expressed her support for the 'Jakpa' movement. For her, in spite of the hardship in Nigeria, people still needed to improve their livelihoods. The constraints in Nigeria did not exclude people from improving their lives elsewhere even if it meant trading one set of problems for another.

'Especially for someone like me who has lived in two different cities and in two different countries, I get the allure to be quite frank with you. It is the need for a better life that drives people there. Life is not necessarily perfect anywhere. Here in Nigeria, you will face Traffic and security problems but, in the UK, and Canada, you may face racism and classism. "Jakpaing" is like trading one set of problems for another set of problems. It is like choosing your battles or the problems you want to fight. You may not want to fight having access to 24-hour electricity, but you may be able to fight the racism and micro-aggressions that come to you. I don't blame them'[12].

[11] Folake-24 years-Nigeria

[12] Gamada-26 years-Nigeria

Thus, whilst some student informants viewed intellectual mobility as an opportunity to return and circulate acquired skills and knowledge in the country of origin, others viewed it as a one-way ticket to achieve their aspirations.

The element of agency in students' decision to migrate for studies will now be discussed. The answers that were gathered from the transcripts on this question were themed 'Acquisition of Migration information'. Under this theme, four answers were derived, namely: Self Search, Friend and family connections, Government educational bodies and Travel Agencies. The dominant approach however was through friend and family connections with a combination of one or two of the other forms of information acquisition.

In the budding stage of the aspiration to migrate for higher education, student informants cited gathering information about the prospective destination and HEI from referrals from friends or people in their social network. Once this information was derived, further self-search was done on the internet to gather extra information about the referred HEI and the country within which it was located. In some instances, this self-search led them to government educational bodies which acted as a liaison between the students and the immigration bodies of the destination countries. A popular example cited by student informants in this thesis was Campus France.

Hanani, 30, from Benin, pointed how he went to Campus France in person to gather information about the migration process after being referred by a friend.

> *'Well, they have a process called campus France, so if you follow the procedure they recommend, then the process is pretty straightforward. I went to their office for them to explain the process to me. I then went to their website and created an account and followed the instructions on how to upload the paperwork'*[13].

[13] Hanani-30 years-Benin

Similarly, in the case of Lamisi, 28, from Ghana, He pointed out how instrumental Campus France had been in his migration process to France after the institution was introduced to him by his friend.

> '*Campus France is an organization that was established by the French Higher Education institute. They organize programmes in Ghana where they tell students about studying in France, and some of the opportunities you get when you study in France. When you want to study in France, they give you some guidelines and everything you need to process the visa. One thing I like about campus France is, you are not alone so they guide you through the process, they will tell you all the things you will need for you to be able to get the visa so before you send your application to the embassy, they do a double check to make sure you have everything*'[14].

Again, Esinam, 29, from Ghana emphasized that:

> '*First of all, after my bachelor's studies I decided to further my masters but definitely out of Ghana. But I did not have [……] in mind initially until someone recommended it for me. So, I applied and got in…. The guy who recommended [… ...] to me helped me in a way. Because many at times I asked questions about some of the processes in the application and he guided me. But aside that, I had a fair idea previously*'[15].

Lastly, Quansah, 30, from Ghana similarly pointed out the role his social network played in equipping him with information about the application process to Harvard.

> '*As for the application, two of my friends had been to Harvard and two years ago, I asked for the application process, so I knew a lot about it, even though I had not done it before. I knew that they would ask you to write some essays and fulfil some requirements…I knew. So when it was time for me to apply, I didn't need to go to a lot of people to ask questions*'[16].

This highlights two elements of agency. One, the role of social (family and friends') network in providing information to prospective student migrants from the West African Subregion. In some cases, like that of Quansah, some of these friends were people who had already made their way to HEIs in the Global North or were on their way out. The second form of agency is at the individual level. This was showcased in the lengths the students went to gather information from educational institutions and the

[14] Lamisi-28 years- Ghana

[15] Esinam-29 years-Ghana

[16] Quansah-30 years-Ghana

time invested in getting information about prospective HEIs online. Individual agency was showcased even in the cases where travel agencies were used.

In the instance of travel agencies, most informants expressed disdain in their approach to assisting them in the migration process. In some instances, where the travel agencies did not give student informants the amount of information required or access to their preferred HEI, students took matters into their own hands to realize their migration goal.

Citing the example of Gamada, 26, from Nigeria again,

> '*And when it comes to social capital, my parents and I had someone on standby. But at a point in time, I just got frustrated about her service and ended up taking over everything myself to be frank. I think the only reason she was brought into the picture was out of sentiments because I wanted to go to the UK and she was more inclined towards getting me to America'*[17].

Similarly, Augustus, 29, from Ghana had to gather information about the travel and visa process to his HEI in Europe even though he had paid an agency to be a liaison.

> '*There were issues with the agency which eventually saw me do majority of the work I had paid them to do. I am not sure what went wrong but emails which had to be going to the agency somehow made their way to me. So I had to be responding to the emails and I pretty much did most of the work myself even though I consulted the agents when things that I did not understand came up…'*[18]

These instances from the interviews portray the element of agency in the aspiration to pursue higher education abroad, and the lengths student informants went through to make their aspiration to pursue Higher Education in the Global North a success. The migration agency therefore takes into cognizance the preferences of students to choose their own destination country and obtain an education in a preferred study.

[17] Gamada-26 years-Nigeria

[18] Augustus-29 years-Ghana

4.2.2 INSTRUMENTAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE CHOICE OF DESTINATION

Beech (2019) has posited that an international student's choice of destination for higher education is predicated on economic reasons. By association to this statement, we also argue that access to economic and educational opportunities for the international student, in the destination country, is predicated on a set of socio-cultural and political derivatives. These factors play a significant role in the international student's decision to move to a specific geographical location for the pursuit of higher education. In the paragraphs that follow, I assess the functional influences for study destinations using international students from West Africa. It is however noteworthy that, these functional influences in focus are those that affect the choice of destination directly and not the choice of HEI.

Language is a key tool used by international students from West Africa for assessing opportunities in the Global North. The influence of language in the decision of the West African student can be assessed from a dual-pronged perspective. First, students must assess the language in which their chosen study is taught in. Secondly, they must assess the language spoken by the country within which their chosen HEI is located. For the purposes of this chapter, the latter will be discussed.

Hayes and Lin (1994) have posited that, the '*inability to speak the host language fluently is an inhibitor to becoming socially involved in the host society'* (p. 9). Societal involvement includes but is not limited to social interaction with the local people in a community, participation in communal activities and contributing to the development of the community through work. For the international student, language is a means to an end for acquiring part-time or full-time student jobs, participating in social activities outside of school hours and for negotiating a place among a new friendship network within the community. For international students who aspire for better job opportunities through student switching after the completion of their study programmes, language becomes an indispensable tool for securing a job in a competitive global labor market.

In this thesis, language transferability was a predominant theme in our interviews with student informants from West Africa. The West African subregion due to colonial influences from Europe has three official languages, namely, French, English and Portuguese. In making the choice of destination decision, informants cited the stress of learning a new language as a reason for preferring English, French or Portuguese countries over others. The stress of learning a new language according to informants, came with the pressure to interact with locals and local students. This stress was also derived

from the pressure of and competitiveness in finding part-time jobs that dispensed with local language requirements. More importantly, the language stressor also presented itself as the pressure of finding full time jobs after school upon which the student's residency status was contingent. To avoid this pressure and stress, international students from West Africa gave precedence and priority to countries that allowed for language transferability in cases where there were no financial or other constraints. This coincided with findings by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022) in **Figure 4**. From the table in **Figure 4**, Nigeria, an English-speaking country in the West African subregion had the largest number of student outflows to the UK (10,796) and US (13,199) between 2018 and 2021. Its non-English speaking counterparts in the Global North such as Germany and Norway received only 2,290 and 100 students respectively. Similarly, Portuguese speaking Cabo Verde had only 6 student outflows to the UK and 56 to the USA between 2018 and 2021. Conversely, Portugal received 3,338 students from Cabo Verde.

In our interviews with informants, Lamisi, 28 years from Ghana emphasized that:

> '*The thing with Ghanaians is that we want to dodge languages because we are more comfortable with English, and we would always want to choose an English-speaking country. When you speak to a Ghanaian about migration it is always USA, UK or Canada they want to go to. So it is the same for me. I didn't want to go to a place where I would have to learn the language and now try to adapt. It will be a challenge for me so that is why I chose Canada'*[19].

In his case, Canada was his most preferred choice for higher education because of language transferability, however, this destination had to be substituted for another because of financial constraints.

Hanani, 30, from Benin expressed the ease of social interaction with the French people because of the language transferability from Benin to France. When asked how hard it was to integrate in France, he stated that:

> *'Hard in France? No. In France, as long as you can speak French you don't have any big problems. Aside being an African, there are no other problems. You know when you are African, they look at you the way they usually do but once you show them that you are willing to show up to do the work and you are willing to interact with them, then they become amiable'*[20].

[19] Lamisi-28 years-Ghana

[20] Hanani-30 years-Benin

Dede on the other hand, expressed how hard her social life in Poland was as she could not speak Polish. She therefore kept to her friends from Ghana for social support. She mentioned that:

> '*Here, apart from my course mate and other Ghanaians in the school, I don't know anyone…*
>
> *Communication is a very big problem here. Sometimes, you are always translating, and their language is one of the most difficult languages to learn. Apart from that, they are very nice people'*[21].

As in the instance of Lamisi, some students had to reprioritize their destination choices due to financial and other constraints. In such cases, international students from West Africa chose countries where locals were fluent in the English, French or Portuguese. In other instances, they chose countries where they had previous language contact with through exchange and immersion programmes.

This was illustrated in the case of Benedict who visited Shanghai, China for a year on an exchange programme. This one-year period not only allowed him to form cultural and social ties in China but fast-tracked his Chinese language acquisition skills as a student of the Chinese Language. China became his first choice in his choice for a destination country within which to pursue higher education. In our interview with Benedict, he added that, speaking the language of your host country increased acceptance into the host society and reduced the perception of racism. He narrated that:

> '*I started studying Chinese in the University of Ghana and as part of that programme it was required to study abroad in the country your language of study is from. It was an immersion programme so to speak. I went there for one year and graduated and after that, I felt like going back to do my master. After my masters, I wanted to broaden my scope and know more about the African China relations…*
>
> *Up till now, there several people you will meet in real life in China who cannot speak a word in English so the ability to communicate with them alone heightens the possibility of your acceptance*'[22]

Cornelia, 30, from Ghana in our interviews also stated that, her decision to move to the Netherlands for Higher education was grounded in the fact that Dutch people are fluent in English. She could therefore dispense with language in the aspect of social interactions with the locals and local students. However, she added that, language was a prerequisite for obtaining a good job in the Netherlands after school.

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[21] Dede-28years-Ghana

[22] Benedict-32 years-Ghana

Another functional dimension to the choice of destination for higher education is related to its immigration policies. Schneider (2000) has pointed out that, governments and policy makers in the Global North have made substantive changes to educational policies in their respective countries as a means of attracting international students into their HEIs. Higher Education has therefore become a competitive industry in the global market requiring tact in policymaking to attract students into the 'market'. Riaño and Piguet (2016) have revealed that, countries in the European union are constantly navigating a balance between closed policies and open policies. They posit that, '*closed policies are legitimized by security issues as well as the fear that foreign students might crowd out natives from graduate programs and ultimately become competitors in the labor market. Open policies aim to increase the number of highly skilled workers but also follow the idea that student migration is correlated with entrepreneurship, international trade, and investment*' (p. 14). This argument resonates with that of King and Raghuram (2012) who cite the security concerns raised after 9/11 as one of the contributing factors for such political dilemmas. In spite of this concern, international student migration from West Africa to the Global North is still on the rise. Some of the student immigration policies that have been adopted by countries in the Global North will be highlighted briefly in the subsequent paragraphs.

Hawthorne (2012) cites the case of Switzerland as one of the pioneers of an open education policy in Europe. By 2010, its education sector became aware of the growing importance of international students from developing countries and adopted a modification of its Alien Law. The new law allowed international student graduates to switch from higher education to the labor market, allowing for a high retention of such student for their labor force after its passage in 2011. This strategy has now '*become increasingly common among certain European countries, converging to the solution Switzerland enacted at the beginning of 2011 with a 6-month extension of the residence permit in order to allow former students to find a job'* (Hawthorne, 2012, p. 430)

The Netherlands is an example of such countries that followed the approach of Switzerland. In March 2016, the Dutch government introduced the orientation year visa for highly educated migrants seeking employment. This open policy allows student migrants to return home and apply for the one-year visa within three years from their departure. Students also have the option to apply for this visa after graduation (Government of the Netherlands, 2022).

In the cases of Norway and Germany, students who have attended HEIs within the country have the option to apply for a one-year job search visa, before the expiration of their student permits. This is however subject to proof of personal funding (UDI, 2022; Senatsverwaltung für inneres und sport, 2022).

Within this background, students from West Africa whose aspirations extend to moving into the labor market after graduation choose destination countries with open student policies for migration. In this thesis, the recurrent destination cited at the interview stage was Canada. Student informants generally expressed the certainty of legal residence, the availability of job opportunities, career, and training programmes as the attractive component about studying in Canada. These opportunities are also made available to the spouses and children of students.

When asked during the interviews why Canada was the most preferred destination for higher education, Cornelia and Said expressed respectively:

> *'Canada! Once you get to Canada, migration for you and your children become relatively easy.You can obtain permanent residence and convert it to citizenship later. With a Canadian passport, you can move freely across the world'*[23].

Said, 30, from Togo also cited Norway as one of the countries with an open student immigration policy. He expressed that:

> '*…my initial country I wanted to be in was either the US or Canada. I have only heard about Norway once in my life before the period I started applying for the admission. I came to Norway because the immigration policy was friendly in terms of the free education. That was the particular reason that made me come to Norway. Because they had free education'*[24].

In the absence of policy constraints in the destination countries, student migrants from West Africa are able to pick out destinations that feed their instrumental aspirations for migration.

Closely linked to the instrumental factors of destination country decisions are other social factors such as cultural proximity to the destination country and family and friend ties at the destination country. These considerations were also cited in our interaction with informants.

[23] Cornelia-30 years-Ghana

[24] Said-30 years-Togo

4.2.3 INSTRUMENTAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CHOICE OF HEI

In this study, the choice of HEI for West African students was dependent on a number of instrumental factors, namely, the availability of funding, waivers, and scholarships, free or cheap tuition, the availability of preferred courses and the dispensation of standardized tests. Other non-instrumental factors included the language of instruction of the preferred course, the reputation and ranking of the school as well as the quality of education provided. In the paragraphs that follow, the instrumental factors that affect the choice of HEI in the Global North for students from West Africa will be expounded.

The marketization of higher education has led to the creation of educational policies that stand to maximize profits for those supplying and regulating it in the Global North. These policies tend to '*represent international students in terms of the amount of money they will spend in the country not only in terms of tuition fees, but also in terms of income from expenditures in the local community, such as housing and food and even job creation'* (Stein & Andreotti, 2015, p. 231). Thus, the decision to pursue higher education has several financial dimensions from tuition to cost of accommodation that must be pondered over by the international student. However, the widening economic gap between the Global North and the Global South makes resources scarce for a large number of people living in the Global South. An individual and family aspiration to pursue higher education in the Global North for the West African student is therefore dependent on their own financial stability or that of their family network. In the absence of such, students from West Africa have had to pool resources using a combination of donations and loans from credit facilities.

This was the case of Said, 30 years from Togo. He pointed out that:

> '*In terms of money, my elder brother had to get a loan from his company to be able to give me this money in addition to the 2 million [in my country's currency] or the 40,000 NOK I had saved. In the end, the money was not enough because we had to deposit another money for [accommodation]. We had to call friends in the end to borrow money. A lot of borrowing here and there, this person could give 5000 NOK another, 2000 NOK and that is how we gathered the money to come here. At the end, the money was actually not complete, but we had to send what we had to be able to see how it goes. And to get that money was hell. It was constant prayer and constant pleading with family members to be able to get that money'*[25].

[25] Said-30 years-Togo

This financial struggle for some students from the Global South prompted several governments and educational institutions to set up policies aimed at helping needy students from through scholarships and fee waivers. However, some scholars (Stein & Andreotti, 2015; Beck, 2012) have argued that such policies are '*tinged with the drive to improve and help those seen as backwards, needing help, and seeking improvement'* (Beck, 2012, p. 140). Governments in the Global North are therefore engaged in a balancing act of making policies that have the propensity to maximize the benefits of supplying higher education and policies that enforce Western dominance and benevolence. In spite of this dilemma, some scholars (Stein & Andreotti, 2015; Brown & Jones, 2013) have noted that there is currently a decline in government funding for higher education in Western Countries.

Thus, for the West African student who cannot fund higher education abroad, the decision to study abroad is highly functional and dependent on the availability of scholarships, waivers, and funding in the HEI. This makes access to such HEIs opportunities competitive.

In this thesis, our interaction with student informants reemphasized this functional aspect of the HEI decision for the West African student. In the case of Lamisi, 28 years from Ghana, he expressed that he did not want to go to country where he had to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture. He therefore chose a school in Canada for his master's education. Unfortunately, even though he got admitted into his preferred study programme, the tuition fee was exorbitant. His application for scholarship and funding was also declined. This prompted him to accept his second offer from an HEI in France where tuition was free.

Similarly, Majeed, a 20-year-old prospective international student from Togo discussed his personal ambition to travel abroad for higher education during his interview. In his case, he desired to pursue his bachelor's studies in France, however, he was struggling to get funding at the bachelor's level because of the competitive nature of such scholarships.

On the other hand, students who are able to access funding for higher education expressed how convenient it was for the payment of rent, feeding and day-to-day expenses. In the case of Pelumi, she got access to funding for her master's programme from KAAD and expressed that:

'Everything was catered for. I got stipends every month which I could use to pay my health insurance, accommodation and taking care of myself. It was fully funded'[26].

Closely linked to the availability of funding in the HEI is its Standardized Test policy. In our interviews with informants, it was revealed that HEI institutions that dispensed with competitive standardized tests such as IELTS, TOEFL and GRE were more desirable HEIs for West African students. The functional

[26] Pelumi-29 years-Nigeria

aspect of this desire was rooted in the cost of such standardized tests. Informants pointed out that such exams cost between 250 to 350 USD and expired after a two-year period. Once expired, students had to retake these standardized tests in order to be considered for admission in preferred schools. Additionally, prospective international students who were working to save up money for education abroad found such examinations impracticable. This was because their working hours did not allow them the freedom to attend preparatory classes or revise effectively for the exam.

In the case of Said, 30 years from Togo, he expressed that:

'*…And for some of the requirements, you have to write GRE or IELTS. And I could not prepare for these because I was working. So those requirements for these schools are very tedious and it takes time for you to actually finish it because you also have to get some documents which is not very easy. But when we compare it to Norway and [my HEI's] requirement is very easy, we had to choose Norway'*[27]

Other HEI policies that students considered were application fees and free tuition. West Africa students preferred HEIs that dispensed with application fees and tuition for international students. This made choosing HEIs within the EU advantageous over HEIs in the US, UK, and Canada as tuition at the higher education level in public HEIs in the EU are often waived.

The availability of preferred courses was another point of consideration for West African students. As pointed out earlier, most students migrated from their countries of origin to HEIs in the Global North because of the unavailability of courses that were at par with modern labor market trends. The migration aspiration for most West African students in this study was to find better career opportunities after graduation. Specializing in particular courses in the best HEIs that offered them, guaranteed the most professional credibility at the job search stage.

This was the case of Lamisi, 28 years from Ghana, he pointed out that:

> *'As I was working as a teaching assistant [after my bachelor's], I enjoyed the work of being a lecturer, so I wanted to further my studies. But the thing is, the kind of programme I wanted to do was nowhere to be found in Ghana or even in Africa. I wanted to do something specific in Smart grids and also buildings which was difficult to find but I found one in [an HEI in] France and discussed it with my parents'*[28].

At the time of the interview with Lamisi, he had completed his master's programme and had secured a job in a Software company that paid him a lucrative salary. For Lamisi, his migration aspiration had

[27] Said-30 years-Togo

[28] Lamisi-28 years-Ghana

been fulfilled through his decision to study that specialized programme. This resonated with a number of informants in this research. Cubillo et al (2006) have argued that the ability of an HEI to offer a study programme that increases a student's marketability on the global job market highly influences it desirability over other HEIs.

4.3 PLACING THE WEST AFRICAN STUDENT IN DE HAAS' NEW MIGRATION CATEGORIES

Based on his theory of positive and negative liberties, De Haas (2021) theorizes four new forms of migration namely, '*improvement migration', 'Precarious migration', 'Distress migration', and 'free migration'*. He defines improvement migration as a form of internal or international migration that is made possible by the pooling together of family resources or networks or recruitment to '*create a condition under which migration can be a successful way of achieving upward socio-economic mobility'* (p. 28) either for the individual or the household. In contrast, precarious migration involves short distance and often internal migration engaged in by the relatively poor who may be subject to exploitation whilst in transit. This form of migration captures poor-rural-to-urban migrants, undocumented labor migrants and people who have been displaced internally. Free migration also involves unconstrained mobility engaged in by wealthy people or people who move in between wealthy countries. This category of migration captures lifestyle migrants and skilled workers. In the opposite, distressed migration involves the 'deprivation *of mobility freedom through the absence of a reasonable option to stay'* (p. 27). This category of migration captures refugees escaping conflict but who have the resources to negotiate for a legal status abroad. The place of the West African student within these categories will be examined subsequently.

In spite of the access to information and legal migration opportunities available through higher education, there are instances where positive liberties to pursue higher education abroad for West African Students are constrained by financial resources. In this instance, family members of the student may come together to pool together resources to help push the student out of the country of origin. In return, the student must generate remittance and provide support for the family in the country of origin. This was true for Said, 30 whose family and friends pooled resources for his education abroad from their savings and through loans. In return, Said was responsible for catering for his immediate family back home through remittances. During the interview, he expressed that,

> '*…the time I will consider myself successful in this country is when I am able to remit all the money I brought here completely back home. If I am yet to remit everything then it means I am not yet successful here. But right now, I still support my family in the village'*[29]

De Haas (2021) points out that, this strategy resonates with functionalist theories which '*conceptualize migration as a risk sharing strategy by households, aiming to diversify their income…*' (p. 28) however, the theory fails to acknowledge the agency involved in the migration process. Improvement migration unlike the functional and historical structural theories highlights the real agency of students and their families through the risk taken to improve their livelihoods through migration.

Per the aforementioned definition of improvement migration, resources are also pooled through recruitment. Recruitment for the West African student takes the form of scholarship opportunities made accessible by HEIs in the country of destination and the governments of same. Through scholarships, waivers and funding, students who apply for study opportunities compete for a place in the HEIs in destination countries and only the successful are recruited. This, according to King & Raghuram (2012) reveals why many countries such as Denmark admit students into the science, math, technology and engineering courses in their HEI in higher numbers than the social sciences. The policy of attracting the most talented students is often with the hope of recruiting them later for the labor market in the destination country.

Improvement migration is therefore an ideal categorization for the type of migration engaged in by West African students. After the interviews for this thesis, it became evident from the data retrieved that 13 out of the 20 informants in this study were enrolled in science, mathematics and engineering courses in various HEIs in the Global North whilst 4 were enrolled in social sciences. 3 informants were however prospective international students whose desires were to study social sciences in HEIs in the Global North. Additionally, 7 students lived on stipends from scholarships whilst another 8 enjoyed free tuition or part waivers as incentives to attract them to study in the destination countries.

Another theoretical migration category that the West African student fits into is free migration. Stein and Andreotti (2015) have argued that International student tuition or fees are often unregulated in Western countries and are often higher than that of domestic students. This is because a western form of education is imagined as a superior or golden chance that guarantees work, opportunities and residency. International students must therefore buy their place into such institutions to access these opportunities. Such purchasing power is only possible when the student comes from a wealthy background or has access to credit facilities. Though this may not be the case for all students originating from West africa, those from economically stable backgrounds are able to negotiate for mobility

[29] Said-30 years-Togo

through the HEIs in wealthy destination countries. In such instances, mobility is unconstrained for the West african student and they can be classified as a 'free migrant'.

In this thesis, free migration was illustrated in the case of Augustus, 29 years from Ghana. He expressed that:

> '*…the prospect of financial gain is a big reason…why people travel. Aside from that, there is also the desire to escape hardships that they might be facing in their home countries. A person who may not have a lot of prospects here or may have a very hard life here in Ghana might see travelling as a way to turn their life around. However, for me, I don't have a hard life in Ghana. I have access to travel and even if I want to move permanently, it is something I can do easily. Traveling for me is not an exit from something terrible here in Ghana. My life in Ghana is not bad at all. I am not rushed or pushed to relocate'*[30]

The range of choices available to Augustus also resonated with Hanani, 30 years, Benin, whose middle class status exposed him to the option to stay in his country of origin or to reside in any other destination of his choice. However, in Hanani's case, he chose to leave his comfort zone and live a life separate from his parents. He therefore chose to move to France to make a new life for himself. This resonates with De Haas' (2021), argument that young people have a strong desire to live independently of their parents as a "*rite de passage*", marking their transition from childhood to adulthood (p. 15).

Improvement and free migration both portray migration as a function of the West African student's aspirations and capabilities. They highlight the aspiration of the West African student to move towards opportunities in a geographical location. Such opportunities may have a functional utitlity purpose for both the individual student and their family as in the case of improvement migration. Other opportunities are perceived as intrinsic in nature such the students' need for independence from their parents or to see the world. However, both forms of migration take place within structures that may speed up the migration process (as in the case of students with access to credit facilities or financial support from their families) or tardy the migration process. However, the west african international student must navigate these positive and negative liberties within their socio-economic spaces to meet their life aspirations.

It is also important to note that,the multiple identities the international student can embody, do not make these two migration categorizations fixed for students from West Africa. As De Haas (2021) posits, '*migrants can shift categories over time- for instance, if a restrictive turn in policies or increasing*

[30] Augustus-29 years-Ghana

racism turns 'improvement migration' into 'precarious migration' (p. 29). This switch in categorization was exemplified during the early onset of the Russian-Ukranian crises where student migrants from West Africa who had travelled to HEIs in Ukraine as improvement migrants, switched to distress migrants as they faced racism and were prevented from crossing the borders in spite of their legal status in Ukraine (DW, 2022). Similarly in the USA and Canada, international students (of which West African students are inclusive) were required to vacate their campuses when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Inspite of the legal status of these students, their status as improvement or free migrants was threatened as they were forced to return to their countries of origin on short notice (Dickerson, 2022).

In summary, this chapter has highlighted the factors that have influenced West African students to migrate from the subregion to countries in the Global North. It has argued that, most researchers have dwelled on instrumental factors that have influenced migration in the subregion. This has therefore placed meagre emphasis on the intrinsic value of international student migration from the subregion. In this chapter, I have identified some of the intrinsic values as: Wanderlust, change in environment, prestige, and intellectual curiousity. Using the intrinsic and instrumental factors influencing student migration in West Africa, I place the West African student in De Haas' new migration categories as 'improvement and free migrants'. The next chapter will introduce the patterns along which West African students have migrated.

CHAPTER 5: EXAMINING THE MIGRATION PATTERNS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM WEST AFRICA

In this chapter I examine the migration patterns that have been utilized by West African students to access professional and or academic opportunities in the Global North. These patterns will be investigated in the light of the experiences of student migrants from West Africa in their HEI destinations. Through this investigation, I explore the negative and positive experiences of student migrants that have informed them to migrate along a specific trajectory in search of opportunities. These positive and negative experiences will be discussed along the themes of receptivity, language, adaptation or integration and immigration policy realities at the countries of destination. An investigation will also be made into how migration has propelled student migrants from West Africa towards their overall life goals or otherwise. Using Figure 13 below, the chosen migration trajectory of West African students will be examined alongside their experiences in one or varied destination(s).

Table 4: Migration Trajectories of Informants

West African Student	Age	Trajectory including years spent in the countries	Plans/Dream Destination
Augustus, Ghana	29	Ghana (26y)- USA (3m) -UK (1y)-Ghana (1y)	UK or Ghana
Benedict, Ghana	32	Germany(8m)-Ghana(25y)- China(6y)	To move towards opportunities in the GN
Cornelia, Ghana	30	Ghana(28y)-Germany (8m)- Netherlands(1y)	Canada
Dede, Ghana	28	Ghana(25y)- Sweden(1yr)- Poland(2y)	Ghana
Esinam, Ghana	29	Ghana(26y)-France(1y)- Sweden(2y)	To move towards opportunities in the GN
Iman, Ghana	28	Ghana(24y)-France(4y)	Ghana
Lamisi, Ghana	28	Ghana(25y)-France(3y)	France or Canada
Quansah, Ghana	30	Ghana(29y)-USA-(1y)	Ghana or USA
Majeed, Togo	20	Togo(20y)	France
Said, Togo	30	Togo(28y)- Norway(2y)	Canada
Folake, Nigeria	24	Nigeria(17y)- Turkey(4y)- Hungary(6m)-Norway(2y)	UK or Germany
Pelumi, Nigeria	29	Nigeria(25y)- Germany (4y)	Nigeria
Gamada, Nigeria	26	Nigeria(24y)-UK(2y)-US	UK

Rabiu, Côte D'Ivoire	23	Côte D'Ivoire(23y)	France or Canada
Hanani, Benin	30	Benin(17y)- US(6y)- France(7y)	Benin or France
Jomo, Benin	25	Benin(16y)- US(8y)- France(1y)	Benin or Canada
Oumou, Benin	27	Benin(24y)-France(3y)	Canada
Kobina, Burkina Faso	29	Burkina Faso(24y)-Senegal(2y)-Netherlands(3y)	Canada
Noel, Senegal	30	Senegal(30y)	Canada
Tariq, Senegal	34	Senegal(21y)-France(9y)-Sweden(2y)-Netherlands(2m)	To move towards opportunities in the GN

5.1 EVIDENCE OF STEPWISE MIGRATION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM WEST AFRICA

In Paul's (2011) definition of stepwise migration, she draws out four features that characterize this form of migration. She first describes stepwise migration as a 'multi-stage journey' involving two or more intermediate stops of considerable duration. In this theory, she emphasizes the need to focus on the nature of the intermediate stops, the reasons behind them and whether these stops have been chosen by chance or as part of a grand strategy for meeting one's migration aspirations.

In this thesis, our interaction with student informants revealed the prevalence of multiple stops within local boundaries and across international boundaries in the Global North. These multiple stops were necessitated by difficulties with integration, language barrier, homesickness, and the inability to assess opportunities within the duration of legal residence. In assessing these stops it became that the distinguishing factor between the stops was subjective to the migrant. This emphasized the second characteristic of stepwise migration as postulated by Paul (2011). In defining stepwise migration, Paul (2011) argued that migrants who engaged in this form of migration moved along a system of hierarchy from one destination to the next. This hierarchy is therefore subjectively envisaged according to the prestige and the desirability the migrant attaches to a particular destination. Thus, migrants move from one destination to another until they access their most desired destination.

In the alternative, migrants who attached the same level of desirability to each destination or stop they migrated to in this study to were classified as serial migrants. However, unlike stepwise migration, serial migration was unplanned.

The case of Folake, 24 from Nigeria, exemplifies the stepwise migration pattern. In our interaction with Folake, she revealed she had lived in Turkey for four years whilst pursuing a Bachelor's in Politics. This destination was not her most preferred destination for higher education, however, it provided a cheaper cost of migration- low tuition and a lower cost of living as compared to studying within the EU. She expressed that:

'There is a lot of difference. The cost of living in [Turkey] is cheaper, the accommodation, daily expenses and every other thing is quite cheap as compared to [countries within the EU][31]

Owing to this, she strategized with her family to first pursue her bachelor's in Turkey and move on to pursue a masters and a PhD within the EU. In her experience, living in Turkey came with acceptance and a sense of social belonging even though she was miles away from home.

In the final years of her bachelor's studies, Folake began applying for a master's programme and gained admission into a school in Hungary to study her first-choice programme. However, in a series of unfortunate events, what began as a direct stepwise migration strategy led her back home to her origin in Nigeria. Valenta (2020) has argued that even though '*multistage migrations may be an attempt to climb a hierarchy, such paths may involve direct and indirect changes in the receiving country both within and between tiers'* (p. 4).

Folake's case is that of an indirect change in stops. She pointed out that:

> '*I started a masters in [Hungary] but due to a series of unfortunate events, I was unable to complete. I was misinformed by a fellow Nigerian. I saw on the […] consular portal that I needed to have a resident permit before entering the country. However, I was in contact with another Nigerian on the course who told me that, I could come on a visitor's visa and have my residence permit processed in the country. When my 3 months visitor's visa expired, I tried to have it renewed only for me to be told I would have to go back to Nigeria to do the application and wait for the answer. I was devastated but I came home, back to Nigeria and after a year, I began looking for other opportunities to study [my preferred course]'*[32].

Folake was unsuccessful with her strategy due to misinformation from another student who was studying in the institution she applied to. However, this did not deter her from the grand plan. After a year, she began looking at other alternatives to pursue higher education in her preferred programme in another country. Her search landed her with two admission offers from Finland and Norway. She

[31] Folake-24 years-Nigeria

[32] ibid

pointed out that, Norway was chosen over Finland because of its free tuition policy. She also added that the university that granted her the admission was one of the most reputable in the world and she wanted what was best when it came to studying abroad.

This led to an enquiry into whether her migration goal and aspirations had been met. Folake revealed that, the most desirable component of studying abroad for her was not only in the course of study. To her, it also involved finding and building new relationships which was lacking in Norway. She opined that:

> '*In the other countries where I studied, I had more friends in my class but here it is very different. I don't know why. I don't find the relationship…I don't see myself building the same relationship that I built in other places which is quite sad because I have spent some time here and you know relationships are also part of the process of studying abroad. I moved to Norway instead of completing the studies online hoping I will get to interact and build relationships and connections. But I don't see myself getting that in full here like it was in [Turkey] and [Hungary] and I don't think I can give a detailed answer as to why it is like that because I am experiencing it right now. I have been trying to ask a lot of people and get answers. I keep asking whether it is because I am black or from Nigeria or something you have to deal with just because you are here'.*

From this experience, Folake seemed to have achieved her migration aspiration to study within the EU. However, this aspiration was short lived because of the difficulty of integrating into the Norwegian society. This exemplifies the prevalence of socio-cultural stressors in the form of a cultural clash between the student migrant's country of origin and destination country. Okeke, Draguns, Sheku, & Allen (1999) attribute these stressors to the differences in societal norms and how interpersonal relationships are built. In Folake's case, the society in Norway is built on individualism a sharp contrast of what she has known from her country of origin which is communal or collectivist in nature. She described a general sense of loss and unhappinees as she personally measured her standard of living by the level of happiness she could attain in a place. Folake expressed it thus:

> '*I was happier in Nigeria. For me, that is the first perspective for standard of living. I was way happier in Nigeria I would say that so if we should measure my standard of living here with happiness, I would say that my standard of living in Nigeria was higher'*[33].

[33] ibid

Due to this reality of living in a destination that should have helped her meet her migration goals, Folake pointed out the need to re-strategize and find a more meaningful study destination that could help her build better relationships and have a sense of belonging. Her new aspiration was now to study in the UK or Germany after her studies in Norway were completed.

It can be argued from Folake's experience that, student migrants prior to living in and experiencing the country of destination have certain expectations that may or may not be met in same country. Irrespective of how preferable such destinations may be on their hierarchy of destination countries, there is the need to reinvent what their notion of a preferred country is when those expectations are unmet. This was also true for Said who came to Norway from Togo to study. Apart from education, he came to Norway to find a lucrative job and conditions that would facilitate him to support his family back home. Assessing the successful lifestyles of returnees and that of those still resident in the Global North through social media heightened his expectations.

> *'Well, in my country generally, I can't marry or raise children with [the money I was earning at work]. It is highly impossible. I told you if I was paying house rent at the time, there was no way, I could have saved such money. So the reason I decided to emigrate… it was not in my original plan because I see migration to be very big for someone from my background because of the money involved. So, I migrated because I was doing a lot in my country... You work more than you earn. So I needed a better life. I needed a life that at least I can get the worth of what I am working for. It is not like I am lazy. I just wanted a job that could show me that this is what I have been working for for all these years. But one of the things that encouraged us to come abroad was because we have people who have been here and how they have grown so fast within a couple of years. And If they had remained in that condition that they were in my country, there was no way they would have gotten to where they are. You hear of some people who are already married, who have a PhD and are working in good companies and are earning good money. They are even building houses in their villages and the cities and you would even be their tenants. So all these things motivate you.You look at yourself and you say, this I can do, I have the brain, I have the knowledge and the capacity but how do I get to this place? So, the better life is what actually encouraged us to come to this place and also the better knowledge you can get. This is because in my country, they value you more when you go abroad to study than when you study in the country. Because they believe there is a better education system abroad than what we have in our country'*[34].

[34] Said-30 years-Togo

Unfortunately for Said, his job hunt was constrained by the economic downturn that had raptured the world due to COVID. This resulted in company dropouts, layoffs, and fewer job opportunities even for citizens within the destination countries.

For Said, this economic downturn was coupled with the pressure to provide for his family back home and repay loans his family had borrowed to facilitate his migration. Additionally, he was weighed down by an aspect of the student immigration policy in Norway that he had failed to consider prior to living and studying in Norway. He pointed out in the interview that:

> *'I still support my family in the village. My mother is still a farmer so some salaries my company was owing me before I left, when they pay me the money sometimes, I send it to my parents, my brothers to help them financially... I have a target to meet which was placed on us by the Norwegian government. But I am doing a lot…to be able to get to that point as soon as possible. But for the COVID-19, I think it was going to be possible sooner'*[35].

With respect to the student immigration policy in Norway, Said expressed that the yearly renewal of student visas required that students proved funds of 124,000 NOK for each renewal. He expressed that:

> *'The duration of the visa [is short] because you have to give more attention to how to renew your visa over studies. Because the same money you brought from your country, you still have to show that same money before your visa is renewed. And that means, you have to be friends with people who are rich, so that they can help you or you get a good job to make money as fast as possible. When you are in class, that is what you are thinking about... It's not like we can even spend all of that money in a year. It is a trap. Even 50,000 NOK as a student, I don't think I can spend it because I don't go for parties, I don't buy much so I do not know why the money is so large. It is now a stress for international students. We are not paying money for tuition but the pressure the documentation of that money is putting on us is even more difficult than if we were paying school fees'*[36].

He compared this policy to that of Germany where students are given residence permits for the whole duration of their studies. He expressed that:

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[35] ibid

[36] ibid

'That is why sometimes people consider Germany in spite of the language barrier. It is because of the visa duration. It encourages students to come there more. Because two years is given straight away, and it is reasonable for a master's programme'[37].

Said also cited the restrictive 20 working hour policy as an inhibitor to the functional aspiration of his study abroad. He added that, the tax rate on earnings of students was too high and impracticable because students were still required to document proof of funds at the end of every year.

'... The 20 hours restriction for work is harsh because it is not all students that have classes throughout the week. Some students are really good. They do not need to go to class to assimilate what is taught in class... The tax rate of student income is something that is a trap as well. Because you want me to get money to document every month and you are taxing 25% of that money? It is really a burden. If we had known all this before, we would definitely have had a second thought'[38].

These policy realities and unmet functional expectations in the preferred destination led to a general sense of loss in investment for some of the informants I interacted with for this thesis. In the case of Said, the new plan was to gather resources in Norway to facilitate his move to Canada after graduation. This characterizes Paul's (2011) third component of stepwise migration. She describes it as a form of migration that involves a protracted stay in one destination or another. As such, stepwise migration may take years to complete and in certain instances as in that of Said, migrants use the period to gather sufficient resources in one destination. These resources are then used to negotiate for access to a preferable destination along predefined or new hierarchies.

Last but not least, Paul (2011) ascribes a high level of intentionality to the stepwise migration process. She emphasizes the agency of individuals and households in designing strategies that enable them to access their most desired destination. This characteristic was exemplified in the case of Cornelia, 30 from Ghana. As a family strategy to access opportunities in the Global North, specifically Canada, she first entered the Netherlands to pursue a master's program in law. This was to enable her gather information and resources to apply for her daughter and husband to join her in the Netherlands. The strategy was that, applying for opportunities in Canada from the Netherlands gave her and her family a better point of negotiation as they already had access to the Global North. She would also have the requisite skills from a reputable HEI upon graduation thereby enhancing her chances of securing a job

[37] ibid

[38] ibid

opportunity in Canada. This strategy for the family was not void of difficulties. During our interviews, Cornelia described the feeling of homesickness and how being away from her immediate and extended family had taken a toll on her academics. However, she insisted this preconceived plan was necessary to follow as strategized to afford herself, her daughter, and her husband a better life. To her, her migration plan had proved successful because of the favorable policy regime for students studying in the Netherlands. The preconceived plan also reflects the agency in migration decisions of migrants as postulated in De Haas' aspiration-capabilities framework.

5.2 EVIDENCE OF SERIAL MIGRATION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM WEST AFRICA

The dynamicity of student migration has evoked several questions from scholars (King & Raghuram, 2012; Carlson, 2013). King and Raghuram (2012) for instance have asked whether *the desirable outcomes of migration and hence the motivation for migration is always shifting for students because of their youthfulness, and or because of their explicit acquisition of knowledge? Are students more labile subjects, prone to alter their views on migration because of this?* (p. 133). This inquisition into the nature of student migration was transposed into this research on student migrants from West Africa. It was revealed that, students who were not saddled with spouses and or children were able to migrate at liberty towards opportunities in several destinations in the Global North. Moreover, findings in this thesis reflected King and Raghuram's argument that some '*students do not not come ready packaged with pre-set ideas, but alter their ideas about migration and their life-plans through the course of their study abroad*' (p. 133). In the absence of such pre-set ideas, it was discovered that a number of students from West Africa came for studies and moved towards unplanned destinations in search of opportunities and in a few instances, for a change in environment.

This was especially typical of students who entered their most desirable destination country or regions at the their first migration attempt. It was further revealed that, students who did not access the most desired destination at first entry began to engage in serial migration within local and across national boundaries once they accessed a country or region that was preferred on their hierarchy.

In this thesis, such students who moved towards unplanned destinations were categorized as serial migrants. Valenta (2020) has defined serial migration as a series of '*unplanned recurrent multi-state migrations that involve several receiving countries within the same tier'* (p. 4). Destinations that belong in the same tier are ranked at the same level of desirability by the migrant. He further posits that, the serial migration process is one that is plagued with complexity as it may manifest in direct and indirect forms.

In direct serial migration, the migrant moves serially to destinations of the same tier of desirability without deviations to the country of origin (Valenta, 2020). This form of serial migration was exemplified in the case of Tariq, 34 from Senegal. In his case, he was encouraged by his father to pursue a bachelor's degree in France to gain social and cultural capital as well as better economic opportunities. France was his most preferred country due to language transferability and eas of accultration. After his bachelor's he did a combined masters and PhD studies in the same country but within different localities. He expressed that:

> *'My expectations before moving to France was to finish my masters and pursue a PhD. My masters took two years to complete after which I got a PhD position […], also in France. The PhD was difficult but at the time, I wanted to go into academia and [my area of study] was interesting to me, so I survived. The PhD took seven years in total… I just wanted to do a PhD because it was the next necessary step to take, and I got in*'[39].

Even though his master's study was self-funded, his PhD was funded by the French government. He pointed out, stipends for his PhD position were sufficient for his livelihood and lifestyle in France. However, Tariq recounted how things took a different turn after his PhD in France came to an end. He narrated that:

> *'It was after the PHD that things took another turn. I struggled to find a job in academia because I was about two publications short of getting to teach at a good university. I think if I had pursued that path, I could have gotten into a school as a lecturer, but it wouldn't have been a prominent or a good school. I got a little research position in an institute in France after my PhD, and I worked as a researcher for about a year. I realized I was not learning much because research in [my field] can get very crowded easily. There were no new areas to get into and all the research presented nothing new. It was then that I began to look for opportunities online and in other European countries'*[40].

With no plan on which European country to migrate to for opportunities, Tariq spent months collecting information and applying to prospective destinations in the same tier as France. He found a post graduate position in Sweden that was similar to his field of study in France after eight months of searching. He pointed out that:

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[39] Tariq-34 years old-Senegal

[40] ibid

'I found a Post Doctorate opportunity in [Sweden] and even though it was in a similar field as my PhD study, it was quite different. It was leaning more towards technology. It was like switching into a new field. I received an email for my first interview […]. When I was selected for the next stage interviews, I was asked to come on-site. I thought to myself that, this will not have been easy if I had applied from Dakar. Don't get me wrong, the company presented everyone with equal opportunities but if I was outside of the EU, it would have involved the strenuous process of getting a visa to come to [Sweden] for the interview. From [France], I just needed to pack my bags and get on a train. I remember a colleague of mine from Turkey had a strenuous process during those interviews. Turkey is not part of the EU so the company had to secure him a visa before he could show up on-site'[41].

This emphasizes Mayer and Ossman's (2015) assertion that a serial migrant is one who is socially equipped to migrate constantly as a result of their proximity to resources such as wealth, skills, a Western citizenship and in Tariq's case, access to live in the EU.

At the time of our first interaction with Tariq his time in Sweden was almost coming to an end but he did not have a solid plan on which country to migrate to next within the EU. He expressed that:

As it stands now, my time here is almost coming to an end since my contract has ended, so I am searching for another job within the EU. I have been on unemployment benefit for the past 3 months… For my prospects of migration, I cannot really say for sure because I am unmarried and without kids, so it makes movement around easy for me. I am currently looking for opportunities in Europe and I have done 10 interviews already. Hopefully, an opportunity in Germany or any other European country will not be bad. I am also not opposed to staying on in the [Sweden].

Tariq's case is one of success within the aspirations-capabilities framework as postulated by De Haas (2021). This is because his interview reflects a favorable outcome in navigating negative liberties and hurdles placed in the way of student switchers to inhibit mobility within the Global North after studies. This culminates with the positive liberty to aspire to mobility and the capability to acquire mobility using inherent resources available to students from West Africa. This mobility gives the student migrant the capability to choose where to live, including the option to stay in one destination or another within the Global North.

In my last update interview with Tariq, he had moved towards a new job opportunity in the Netherlands and was settling into it.

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[41] ibid

Another example of direct serial migration in this thesis was countenanced within the administrative boundaries of mainland China and the Special Administrative district of Hong Kong. In the case of Benedict, the desire for a change in environment prompted him to move from the mainland to Hong Kong after his masters to pursue a PhD. He pointed out that, he also wanted new connections and diversify his education. He pointed out that:

> '*I got the option to stay but having spent 3 years [in mainland China] I felt it was time for a change. And continuing to study, I thought doing everything in one place doesn't look so good especially on your CV. Also in terms of experiences and networks, I needed something new, a change in environment because when I continue to stay in one place for more than four years, I start getting bored. I therefore decided to move to Hong Kong Hong Kong is also generally connected to the global network of academia, that is, the Global North than the mainland. For instance, the language of instruction is in English here so mobility to the Global North is easier*.'[42]

When asked what the future holds, Benedict did not have a concrete plan. His plan was to move along opportunities as and when they came.

Valenta (2020) has also described indirect serial migration as movement towards a receiving country for a protracted period with a long period of return to the origin before migrating towards a new receiving country. He argues that the unplanned nature of serial migration is reflected in the returns to the country of origin where migrants decide on where to move to next. He also adds on to this form of indirect serial migration. He posits that, migrants can move directly to several receiving countries within the same tier before returning home at a point to plan a further migration to another destination. The difference between these two variants of indirect serial migration is that the former involves one destination country before a return to the origin whilst the latter involves several destination countries before a return to the origin.

The former type of indirect serial migration was exemplified in our interaction with Gamada. In her case, her aspiration to study in the UK was realized when she got into a master's programme in her desired HEI and destination country. After living in the UK for two years, her functional aspiration to move towards career opportunities within the Global North after graduation was marred by the COVID 19 pandemic. She pointed out that though she began searching for opportunities prior to graduation, she was unsuccessful and had to return home to plan her next move. She expressed that:

[42] Benedict-32 years-Ghana

> *'I did a project topic that allowed me to do about 6-7 months training in the NHS. I was probably the only student in my whole cohort that worked with patients directly. But it wasn't enough. Despite all the interviews I got, I carried myself through the inner roads of places I had never heard of that only looked familiar on the map, but I wasn't able to secure a job. And that broke me… From June, which was when I had finished with the core component of my course and I was working on my dissertation, up until February, I was just applying, trying to get jobs... I was sending out applications like the way I would drink water, but it didn't work out and I had to move back to [Nigeria] in February [the next year]*[43].

When asked what the future held, she expressed her wishes to return to the Global North as a PhD student or as a worker. Even though she had started working in a good company in Nigeria since her return, she was still looking out for new opportunities to return and had got her extended family involved in finding her information on new opportunities. She answered that:

> *'Who knows? To work in the UK could be considered but I am learning not to box myself in one area anymore. I think life is to be lived in different dimensions. I am enjoying life as it comes. Would I go back if an opportunity presents itself? Well, if it is a good offer and is reasonable, why not? I wouldn't mind living in the UK. If it is in London, even better. It will be my dream'*[44]

Even though Gamada was open to any opportunity that guaranteed access to the Global North, her preferred destination was the UK, and this reflected in the information she had gathered on her return to enable her regain access to the Global North. However, an update interview revealed the contrary. She had obtained a PhD position in the USA and was preparing to leave Nigeria.

The latter form of indirect serial migration would have been the case of Tariq had he not found another opportunity in the EU. Prior to the update interview, it was asked what the future migration plan was if he failed to come into new opportunities in the Global North. He answered that:

'If I do not find employment in the next few months, I will probably go back home and activate some other options'[45].

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[43] Gamada-26 years-Nigeria

[44] ibid

[45] Tariq-34 years- Senegal

I therefore argue that the unplanned nature of serial migration makes its incidence labile. What can begin as a serial form of migration may evolve to a circular form of migration or even a return migration depending on the destination the migrant returns to or the conditions that prevail in the country of origin upon their return. This coincides with Valenta's (2020) argument that multistage migration can occur in more complex interactions that may combine serial-stepwise-circular alterations.

5.3 EVIDENCE OF CIRCULAR MIGRATION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM WEST AFRICA

The most uncommon pattern of migration cited in this thesis was the circular form of migration. Valenta (2020) defines circular migration as '*a voluntary and coerced recurrent movement between one sending country and one receiving country'* (p. 4). There are four descriptors for this form of migration according to Newland (2009), namely, the spatial, temporal, iterative and developmental features.

The spatial and iterative nature of circular migration involve repeated movement of the migrant between the country of origin and one destination country in several cycles of movement. However, it is the iterative feature of circular migration (occurring within various life cycles) that sets it apart from return migration.

These features were encountered with students whose educational plan had been interfered with due to COVID. Such students were forced to shuttle between the origin and destination country since they had to study at one end of the circular migration pole and study or work at the other end of the circular migration pole. This was the case of Augustus. After several failed attempts to get into a law programme in Ghana, he applied for and was granted admission to a prestigious HEI in the UK. He was almost at the verge of completing his first year of graduate school in the UK when COVID hit. Teaching and Learning moved online and overtime, it became unsustainable to continue to live and study in the UK as rent prices had been increased and job opportunities had become difficult to find. He therefore returned to Ghana to complete his education online. He pointed out that:

> '*… after COVID hit, school was transferred online. We were no longer going to campus. So after my first year out of the two years, I realised that what I was doing in [the UK], I could pretty much do the same thing from Ghana since everything was online. So I made the decision when I was on holiday in Ghana to complete the course here. My stuff are still in [the UK] with some family members since I hadn't planned to move back to Ghana for a long time. But I have*

been here since the start of 2021 and I can get to follow the course from Ghana without having to pay rent'[46].

What began as a cut-short migration plan evolved into a circular form of migration by the beginning of the following year. On his return to Ghana, Augustus had reapplied for the professional law programme in Ghana and had been granted admission. He therefore had to combine studies in Ghana with studies in the UK and shuttled between Ghana and the UK to complete the final year of his studies.

Newland (2009) has also described circular migration by the length of the duration of stays at each end of the migration pole. He argues that such orbits can be as brief as a month or can take up to several years. In the case of Augustus, orbits between Ghana to the UK took between a few days to about two weeks on each visit. Such short orbits are also characteristic of students in the Global North who go back home briefly to visit family ties during vacations and during family emergencies. It was also encountered with West African students who had spouses and family ties at either ends of the pole. However, categorizing the case of Augustus and other students who go back and forth for brief family visits under circular migration raises several questions under the developmental dimension as postulated by Newland (2009).

Newland (2009) has argued that circular migration has a developmental dimension to it. This is because both destination countries and countries of origin benefit from labor and financial flows. As migrants remit financial resources to their countries of origin, countries of destination benefit from the skills such migrants bring into the labor market.

This feature of circular migration when transposed to the case of student migrants can be controverted. This is because this feature diverts into the functional benefits of migration. In all other forms of migration (stepwise, serial, onward) a bidirectional flow of resources can be substantiated between the country of origin and the country of destination when the functional aspirations of the migration process are met. This establishes that the developmental feature is not only typical to circular migration but all other patterns of migration. In some cases where students are unable find jobs at the destination country, visiting family ties in or returning to the country of origin over a period of time does not take away from the pattern of migration being engaged in.

To sum up, this chapter has identified three patterns of migration among West African students, namely, stepwise, serial and circular forms of migration. The pattern of migration chosen is dependent on a number of factors or conditions in the country of origin or in the country of destination. The next chapter gives a summary of this thesis and highlights the main findin

[46] Augustus-29 years-Ghana

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter summarises chapter one to five of this thesis. It also highlights the findings and contrasts the migration patterns used by students from different parts of the West African subregion. Finally, this chapter proffers solutions that will make international student migration safe and beneficial for all actors involved.

6.1 SUMMARY

The focal point of this thesis is to examine the migratory patterns used by West African students to access educational and career opportunities in the Global North. The justification for this focus is rooted in the emphasis migration research has placed on labor migration over other forms of migration in the South-North migration discourse. There is therefore the need for migration research focused on the West African subregion to give priority to other migrant groups as well as their movements. This has the potential for further theorization and or the provision of a standard framework for the better understanding of mobility patterns along pre-existing theories. It is within this context that international student mobility from the West African subregion to the Global North is assessed within the aspirations-capabilities framework as postulated by De Haas.

In Chapter one of this thesis, I trace the history of intellectual student mobility in the West African subregion. I cite relevant examples from Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Burkina Faso as a means of demonstrating the central role intellectual mobility has played in the development and independence of countries within the subregion. I also assess the reasons for intellectual mobility in the colonial and post-colonial regimes of the subregion. I identify these reasons as colonial administrative needs, socio-economic mobility, prestige, a high demand for western education and for the purposes of assimilation.

In chapter two, I draw on existing literature to introduce the nuances embodied in the term ‘international student’. This serves as a basis for establishing the boundaries of the characteristics of the sample group for this thesis. I define the term ‘international student’ within the scope proposed by the UNESCO institute for Statistics as students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their countries of origin (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006). I also establish the distinction between an international and foreign student.

Next, I use existing literature to establish that, international education continues to be 'west centric' because of the marketization of and high demand for same. Such high demands emanate from globalization and the globalization of higher education which has facilitated student flows and aided the supply of 'west centric' education. I point out that, the globalization of higher education has taken the forms of educational franchising, distant learning, and exchange programmes.

In the section that follows, I utilize existing literature to rationalize the migration process for the west African student from the intention to the action stage. Referencing scholars such Riaño & Piguet (2016); De Jong (2000); I argue that the decision to migrate is a multi-stage process that begins at the stage where an intention is formed. It is at this stage that questions of "when", "why" and "how" are answered by the prospective student migrant. I further argue that, such intentions do not emanate from a vacuum but are contingent on several drivers at the country of origin and the country of destination. Using Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long's (2018) classification of drivers I categorize these drivers under predisposing, proximate, precipitating and mediaing drivers. I then esctablish that, a culmination of these drivers encourage West African students to migrate from their countries of origin to the Global North.

In the next stage of this chapter, I discuss the experiences of West African student using evidence from pre-existing research and literature. These experiences bring to bare the issues of discrimination, cultural shock, racism, language and socio-cultural barriers experienced at the HEI destination by students. I then argue that, in spite of these stressors and difficulties experienced, students engage in multi stage migration in order to meet their life goals and aspirations.

The main theory I draw on in this thesis is the aspirations-capability framework as propouded by De Haas. I use this theory to investigate the dynamics of the migration decision: the agency involved at the household and individual level, the negative and positive liberties that accumulate as sturctural facilitators or inhibitors of the migration decision and the opportunity structures whether real or imagined that migrants are drawn towards. I also define the concepts of stepwise migration, serial migration and circular migration as they are instructive for our analysis of the patterns used by student migrants to access opportunities in the Global North.

The third chapter of this thesis focuses on the methodology used in the collection of data. I leverage on a qualitative approah to research as it is a useful tool for understanding the socio-spatial context of experiences (Hay & Cope, 2021). I identify six categories from which to pool my prospective informants. I adumbrate these categories as: West African students actively enrolled in HEIs in the Global North, West African students who have completed their education in the Global North HEIs and are awaiting to enter the labor force in the Global North, West African students who have successfully entered the labor force in the Global North, West African Students who have returned to the countries of origin by choice or lack of opportunities, West African students whose educational journeys have been cut short by COVID, illness, financial constraints and prospective international students in West Africa who are applying to HEIs in the Global North.

Through snowball sampling, twenty informants from different parts of West Africa are identified as informants. Before first contact, I create a data collection and management plan to facilitate and safely collect data from informants. Interviews, surveys, and notes taking are then identified as the three modes of data collection for this thesis. A semi-structured mode of interview is used to elicit information from informants. Due to spatial constraints, zoom video conferencing is used as the platform for engaging in interviews, The interviews are recorded within the parameters of consent and the duty confidentiality to informants. I also draw on critical reflexivity to examine my positionality within this research to eliminate issues of bias and power within this thesis.

The audio recordings from the interviews are manually transcribed and converted to password protected files. Information from notes taking and surveys are also added to the file of each informant. The data collected is analyzed manually and a template is derived using codes and categorizations for recurrent issues. I argue in this thesis that, a template analysis was preferred over other forms of data analysis as it provides a systematic and overall picture of informant experiences under various themes.

In Chapter four, I discuss and present my findings as it relates to the research questions for the thesis. I identify the intrinsic and instrumental factors that have influenced student migration from the West African Subregion to the Global North. The instrinsic factors are identifed under the themes of from intellectual curiosity, love for a city and its lifestyle, prestige, the need to explore the world (exposure) and the unrelenting search for something new. The instrumental factors intersect at three points, namely, the instrumental factors the facilitate the decision to study abroad, the instrumental factors that influence the choice of destination and the instrumental factors that influence the choice of HEI.

In this thesis, the instrumental factors that influences the decision to study abroad for West African students rotated along the axis of unfavorable conditions in the country-of-origin as opposed to the favorable conditions present in the destination country. The unfavourable conditions were identified as: general economic downturn in the country of origin and its antecedents – high unemployment rates, low standard of living, income dissatisfaction, disinvestment in the education system and lack of opportunities. The favorable conditions that were present in the destination country whether real or imagined included: better living conditions, access to good health care, favorable educational policies, investment in the education system, access to career opportunities after school and higher income advantage.

The instrumental factors that influence the choice of destination country were also identified as language transferability, ease of acculturation and friendly student immigration policies. The instrumental factors that influence the choice of HEI were also coincidental to the factors influencing the choice of destination country. The factors included: the availability of funding, waivers, and scholarships, free or cheap tuition, the availability of preferred courses and the dispensation of standardized tests by the HEI.

Finally, using these intrinsic and instrumental factors, I identify student migrants from West Africa as improvement and free migrants according to the migration categories propounded by De Haas (2021).

In chapter five, I delve into the patterns of migration identifiable among student migrants from West Africa. I trace their journeys from the origin to one or several destinations in the Global North as a basis for conceptualizing their movements under the stepwise, serial and circular forms of migration.

6.2 HIGHLIGHT OF FINDINGS

The findings in this thesis will be recaptured under the research questions below.

What factors have facilitated student mobility from West Africa to the Global North?

In this thesis, we discovered that the globalization of higher education has increased demands for "Western education" in the West African subregion. This is as a result of the proliferation of homogenized higher education through educational franchising and exchange programmes. This has therefore increased the demand for the diversification of educational certifcates to guarantee marketability in the global job market. It was also discovered that meeting the local and global labor demand through European standard education allows West African students to compete with other students for a spot on the labor market.

Inspite of this desire to diversify educational certificates, it was revealed that economic and structural disparities between the Global North and the Global South have made this aspiration burdened with other functional considerations for the West African student. The functional consideration involves an increased aspiration to migrate in search of better career and job opportunities alongside educational opportunities. In some cases, households strategize to invest in education abroad to enhance future earnings for the family. This has been classified as the instrumental dimension of migration.

In the alternative,wanderlust, change in environment, prestige, and intellectual curiousity were identified as the non-instrumental influencers of student migration. This was classified as the intrinsic dimension of migration for West African students.

Apart from the globalization of education, it was also identified that globalization in itself has enhanced access to education abroad for West African students. This has led to an increased access to information on legal ways to migrate. We argue that, the West African student embodies a person who can utilize information, a corollary of globalization, to their advantage. In the same vein, globalization has also enhanced the quality of teaching especially in the Global North. This has enhaced the desirability to study specialized courses abroad because it guarantees education that is at par with modernity. Globalization has also enhanced transportation services and has made the world a global village that is within the reach of any person who can afford to travel.

What motivates the choice of destination?

The choice of destination can be assesssed at the country level and the HEI level. At the country level, it was discovered that the ease of acculturation influenced the choice of destination. This covers issues of language and cultural integration. The colonial heritage of the West African subregion influenced West African students to choose HEIs in former imperial destinations. For example, Senegalese and Burkinabé informants chose France as their most preferred destination countries for higher education. Nigerians and Ghanaians on the other hand chose the UK and USA as their most preferred destination country for higher education. Most informants were ad idem on Canada as a first choice destination because of the plurality of spoken languages in the country.It was also revealed that, students who studied European or Asian language courses chose the country in which the language is spoken for higher education.

Another motivation for the choice of destination was also dependent on the flexiblity of student and work immigration policies of a particular country. For example, some student informants in this thesis chose Germany and the Netherlands for higher education because of the sound student immigration policies in both countries. In such cases, a flexible immigration policy took precedence over language and accultration needs.

At the HEI level, the policies within the HEI pertaining to student admission played a mojor role in the decision making process for West African students. The withdrawal of the requirement of standardized tests such as GRE, TOEFL, and IELTS increased the desirability of the HEI as a choice of destination. Similarly, the withdrawal of application fees from the pre-admission process increased the desirability of the HEI. Additionally,the availability of funding, scholarships and tuition waivers influenced the choice of HEI among West African students. Lastly, the availbility of preferred study courses in a familiar language of instruction also influenced the choice of HEI.

How has migration propelled West African student migrants towards their overall life goals?

From the data collected in this thesis, It was found that the educational aspirations of 19 out of the 20 informants were met. Except for one informant who opined that education in the Global North was eurocentric or westcentric and had little to no relevance to the realities in the Global South. Owing to this finding, we argue that there is the need for the educational curricula of HEIs in the Global North to

cater to the developmental and structural needs of the Global South. This is because western education can be far removed from the realities in the Global South and appear as abstract and dense for the West African student.

It was also discovered that he intrinsic value of studying abroad was also met for most informants. This is because studying abroad provided a change in environment and satifed the intellectual curiousity of informants. Wanderlust was also facilitated through easy travel policies such as the schengen agreement between many European countries.

However, the functional aspirations for West African students were unmet in some cases due to COVID and unfavorable policies in the destination countries. In some instances, student informants faced depression because of the nature of jobs available for sustenance.This was particulary difficult for students who were professionals in their country of origin.

What patterns of migration have been utilized by West African students to access academic and educational opportunities in the Global North?

The Stepwise pattern of migration was identified among students who were constrained by structural limitations at the destination country and the country of origin. At the country of origin, financial constraints led to individual and household strategization. Such students accessed destinations at the peripheries of the desired region or country of destination. Such destinations were used as stepping stones to access educational and career opportunites in the preferred destination. On the other hand, where the country of destination proved difficult in terms of policies or inadequate opportunites, West African students strategized to amass resources to migrate to a preferrable destination in the Global North through education or work.

The preconceived plan that is characteristic of stepwise migration can be hatched at the point of origin or at the first point of destination in the context of negative experiences at such points. This can result in direct stepwise migration or indirect stepwise migration

Furthermore, it was discovered in this thesis that serial migration was practiced among students whose first point of entry was their most preferred destination. Serial migration was used to access educational

and career opportunites within countries of the same tier or within localities of the same country. This form of migration was common among Francophone West African students whose respective countries have good bilateral visa regulations with France. This made France more accessible as a first choice destination as compared to their Anglophone counterparts. The serial migration pattern was also discovered among students who used the stepwise pattern of migration to access the topmost destination on their hierarchy of preferences for destination countries. In instances where two or more countries are prioritized as the topmost destinations on the hierarchy under the stepwise migration, serial migration is employed to access opportunities along the top hierarchies.

Lastly, the circular migration pattern was the least encountered in this thesis. However, it was traceable to student migrants who had spouses or family responsibilities at either side of the migration poles (country of origin or country of destination). It was also identified with an informant whose education in the Global North was interrupted due to COVID. He had to shuttle between the UK and Ghana to attend classes at both ends of the poles. However, without financial resources or capital, this form of migration can be ostentatious for students.

It is evident from the findings above that, in spite of the policy interventions made to ensure that international student migration is safe and beneficial to all actors involved, international students may be exposed to exploitation at the destination country and the country-of-origin.

At the country of origin, exploitation can take the form of high financial demands from family members and this may pressurize the student to engage in risky enterprises or jobs at the country of destination.

With respect to the country of destination, indicator 10.7 of the SDGs advocates for the facilitation of orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people through the implementation of planned and well-managed polices. (IOM, 2022) Closed educational and labor policies within the EU may encourage students whose functional aspirations are unmet to explore unsafe alternatives to remain in the Global North. Policies that put a strain on the educational purpose of migration such as high taxes for student workers and yearly proof of funds should be replaced with policies that help student migrants focus on their study abroad.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Link to google survey: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1YSaqKMKr30hVhXDTsQIW-XLC5ZHTiAyTzfsrdL-T7CQ/edit

Google Survey:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. Which country and city are you currently resident in?
4. What is your country of origin?
5. Which city in your home country did you migrate from?
6. What is your highest educational level?
7. What is your socio-economic background?
8. What is your current profession or work (if any)? This includes part-time jobs or short contract jobs.
9. Do you have any dependents? eg. Parents, siblings, spouse or child? Please specify.
10. What influenced your decision to migrate?

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview guide:

1. Basic information about their age, gender, professions (refer to questionnaire)
2. Upbringing environment
3. Family situation or socio-economic class
4. Basic, secondary, or tertiary school history
5. Work and prospects in the home country after school
6. Previous travel experience
7. The idea to study abroad
8. Influence from family and friends studying abroad
9. Migration process: Where, how, when?
10. Information gathering
11. Funding for migration
12. Visa process
13. Choice of destination according to personal hierarchy
14. Choice of HEI
15. Study subject
16. Receptivity to immigrants
17. Pros and cons of living in destination
18. Preconceptions about living abroad
19. Goals to achieve whilst abroad and success rate
20. Standard of living
21. Self-identity
22. Dependents and Remittances
23. Future migration plan

Appendix C

NSD Approval

Assessment

Reference number
808972

Project title
CONCEPTUALISING CIRCULAR, SERIAL AND STEPWISE MIGRATION FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)
Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for sosialt arbeid

Project leader
Marianne Garvik

Project period
30.08.2021 - 15.06.2022

Notification Form

Date
30.08.2021

Type
Standard

Comment
Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 30.08.2021, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES
If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION
The project will be processing general categories of personal data until 15.06.2022.

LEGAL BASIS
The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn. The legal basis for processing personal data is therefore consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA
NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS
Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

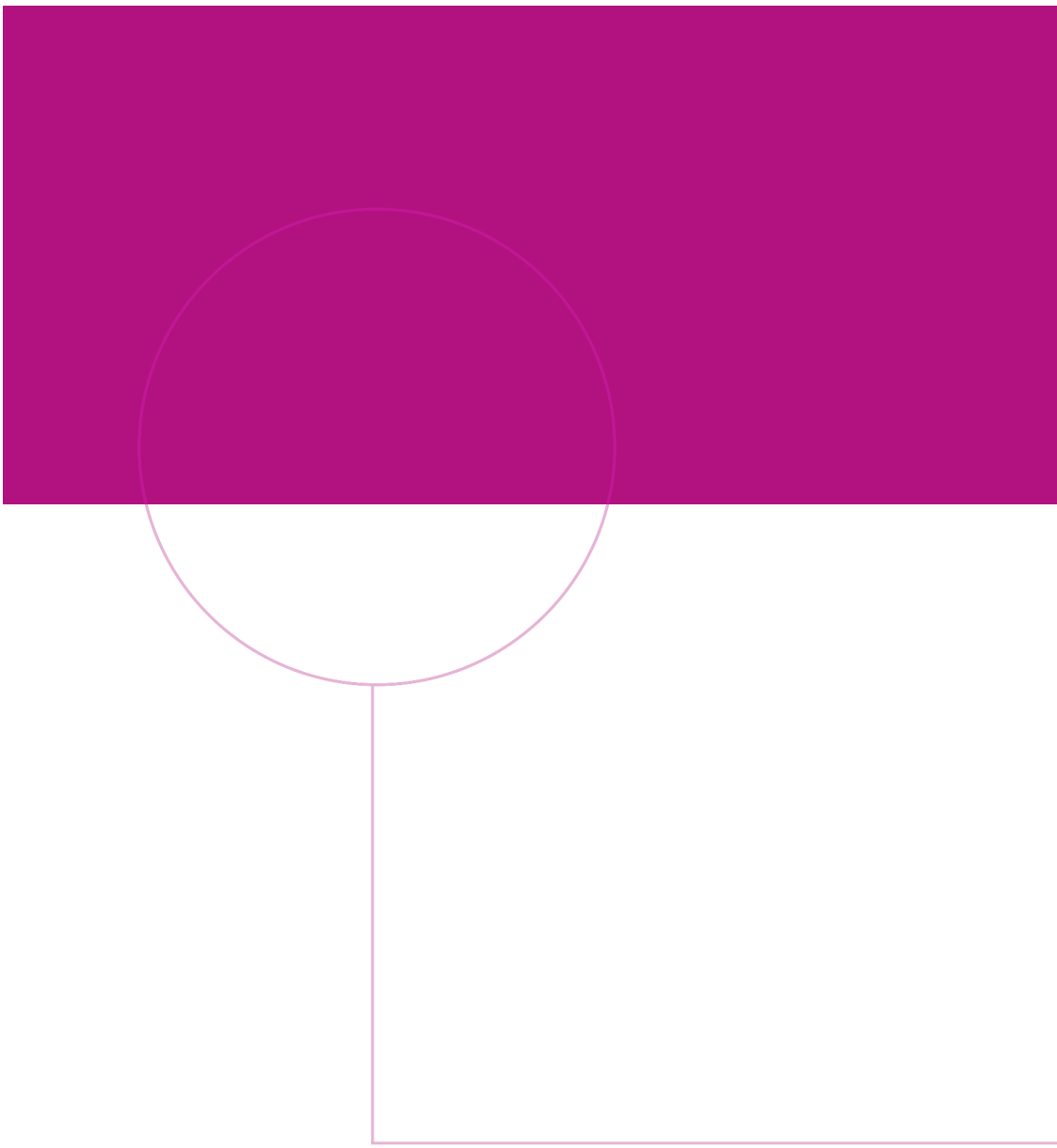
FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES
NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT
NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)



NTNU

Kunnskap for en bedre verden