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TITRE / TITLE:

SOME EMERGING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH MIGRATION IN THE GLOBAL MIGRATORY SYSTEMS : THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract:
In the field of demography, migration has generated a wide spectrum of theories that have some bearing on the internal mobility of the youth in Africa. Yet little is proposed in terms of conceptual frameworks to understand the relationships between social entrepreneurship and migration of young people across the continent. Using existing theories and empirical evidence from some recent studies, the paper proposes some theoretical perspectives on youth migration in the global migratory systems with special reference to Africa. The focus of the paper is on the migration of young people (aged between 15 and 30) across the continent and its relations with social entrepreneurship. This is conceived of accumulation of a certain amount of money through work at the place of destination in view of self-funding the costs of study in the tertiary education. In this paper, the general term ‘young’ (or the related one ‘youth’) refers, in line with United Nations recommendation, to any person between eighteen years of age and thirty five. The terms ‘young migrant’, ‘young-age migrant’ and ‘youth migration’, are interchangeably used to refer to migrants who are technically, according to United Nations definitions, of young-age thus fifteen and thirty of age. These terminologies appreciate that actual experiences of ‘youth-age’ differ across, and within space and time and that being of ‘young age’ does not necessarily mean that the young people concerned are regarded as ‘young’ in particular contexts and situations or see themselves as young people for that matter.

The issue of young people as migrant students has emerged as a ‘newly’ discovered social constituency in international migration around the globe (see for example Balaz and Williams, 2004). The focus so far has been on migration of people to developed countries (Europe and the North America) either for work. Due to a prime concern for flows and trends, migration studies have been short-sighted in generational terms. The term ‘youth’ rarely surfaces in international migration studies in Africa. Specific forms of youth and educational migration tend to be discussed in disconnection from migration studies and tend to be referred to in terms of ‘international students’, ‘young asylum seeker’, and ‘foreign students’ which blurs the actual migration element. This disconnection emphasizes ‘othering’ forms of youth migration with some problematic consequences. The practice of isolating forms of young age migration from other forms of migration risks losing sight of the structural relations, and the way in which young-age migrants as social actors engage with, resist or negotiate the structural relations embedded in the societal contexts where young people live and interact with their seniors, yet, in an often generational subordinate position. While studying abroad may be seen as relatively
benign and may be encouraged, moving to work abroad may evoke entirely different considerations. As this paper argues, these two forms of migration may have some connections. Constructing different forms of child migration as separate from each other and in disconnection to an underlying, and shared element of migration obfuscates how these seemingly different forms may well be related in practice. A closer look into the literature on intra-African migration learns that migration for study is remarkably absent in relation to young-age migration. This paper takes an explicit focus on this absent category. This focus is first of all of interest since it has so far received no explicit attention in the context of reduced international assistance to African countries in the training of young people abroad. Second, this migration takes place in the context of drastic cuts in public spending on bursaries to study abroad or at home. Third, students involved in educational migration generally do not receive support from their governments despite evidence of the existence of this migration. Fourth, this form of migration is less easily classified as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, and therefore it poses a challenge for research to rethink assumptions (or testable hypotheses) regarding young people and migration. Lastly, it is a form of migration that is interlinked with the NEPAD as an enabling continental institution and one of its main underlying principles; free movement of academia and related individuals. For these reasons, this particular form of migration is likely to increase over the years to come, rather than decrease.

Young people are increasingly pushed away from their centres of origin because of lack of tertiary educations and poor quality of training programmes able to respond to job opportunities in the globalised world. It is for example observed that although research on migration has given a prominence place to age in the selectivity process of migrants, very little conceptualization is done in regard to way in which young people process information and make decisions that determine their international moves. With the breakdown and failures in social and economic systems-markets, services, security-young people are less and less relying on their localities of belonging to meet their aspirations an terms of education and employment. Moving to other countries within the continent has increasingly become a first choice strategy among young people looking for education of quality or better employment opportunities. The existing theoretical debates do not fully incorporate the extent and models of decision making in the participation of young people in international movements across the continent in search for betterment. For example little empirical evidence has been produced to substantiate the intensification of migratory movements of young people from the central part of Africa to distant educational institutions in francophone Africa, North Africa and Southern Africa. South Africa is the main destination country examined in the paper. South Africa is mostly preferred because of
its developed educational infrastructure. This does not come as a surprise. Globally South Africa has been rated in 2009 as one of the top 10 destinations for foreign students wanting to pursue a university education away from home (Sunday Times 26 July 2009). The country, with a proportion of just over 8% international students of South Africa’s total university population of 761 000, is ranked as the eight most-popular study destination for foreigners. According to the Global Education Digest 2009 study (cited in Sunday Times July 26, 2009), one out of every five foreign students from Africa was studying at a South African University. The following table provides some figures on foreign students enrolled at 12 South African universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University (in SA)</th>
<th>Number of foreign students</th>
<th>Foreign students’ top destinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Cape Town</td>
<td>4423</td>
<td>United States 595900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Pretoria</td>
<td>3008</td>
<td>United Kingdom 351500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of KZN</td>
<td>2229</td>
<td>France: 246600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Jhb</td>
<td>2112</td>
<td>Australia: 211500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Sisulu University</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>Germany: 206900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Zululand</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Japan: 125900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the western Cape</td>
<td>1357</td>
<td>Canada: 68500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the Free State</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>South Africa: 60600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stellenbosch University</td>
<td>2731</td>
<td>Russia: 60300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Italy: 57300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the Witwatersrand</td>
<td>2189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limpopo</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Sunday Times (SA edition), 26 July 2009

The educational migration of young people is part of a lifecycle development in that it combines with a search of employment in the place of destination. In most cases, it is the result of failed attempts to reach Europe. The motivations behind the choice of destination, and forms it takes and the modes of educational and labour market insertion require some further theorizing on youth migration. The paper brings together migration theories embedded in social capital and
networks, human investment capital and risk minimizing to propose a way of understanding these migratory dynamics. While the migration of children under 18 is weakly facilitated by new information technologies (Hashim, 2006), the mobility of young people in search of educational facilities is amply facilitated by such communication platforms as internet, cell phones and money transfer offices through which resources are transmitted from and to the home country. For these young transnational migrants, social capital and social networks provide the channels through which costs (anticipated and experienced) associated with migration are minimized. At place of destination, getting better education is not incompatible with participating in the labour market. Some make it that way to legitimize their stay, others choose other options. As shown in the paper, it is a common practice among young migrants to be involved in the labour market (low segments) and in study at a higher tertiary institution. The underlying trajectories and channels of insertion in the host society are not adequately conceptualized in the existing theories of social capital and new economics of labour migration.

The migratory accounts reported in the paper inform that young migrants could make their decisions to independently migrate in response to a complex set of external constraints and predisposing events. Constraints and events they face vary in their salience, significance and impact, but are elements of both compulsion and choice. The views and experiences of these young migrants suggest choice worked out by circumstances outside the family circle (questioning the role of intergenerational demographic model of transfer). The biographical approach used in the paper shows that decision to move, and or where to move is embedded in a continuum of complementary adjustment phases and responses to barriers. Such young migrants are “purposive” actors (their capacity of agency) and their moves are far from being family-induced or responses to poverty as most analysts tend to frame in the push-pull theoretical framework. For some young people migration and insertion in the host society may be facilitated through the support received at home, for others it may not be the case. This differentiation is examined in detail in the paper.

A synopsis of some theoretical considerations on youth migration

From a theoretical stand point, migration has been traditionally viewed as an event associated with younger age. The propensity to move from an administrative unit to another one declines as age increases. Looking into the age patterns, migrants are generally maximal in the early years of adult life. In effect, regardless of the line of enquiry, research on migration generally corroborates the proposition that persons in their late teens, twenties, and early thirties are more
migratory than their counterparts. The interpretation is that the young are able to adapt more easily to new situations. Also, as the young are close to the beginning of their working life they are envisioned as being more readily disposing to taking advantage of new opportunities involving migration than those more aged who are apt to be restrained by a host of more permanent social and economic ties at their place of residence.

On the educational front, the findings of a considerable number of studies have added support to the proposition that while controlling for a wide range of socio economic factors, migration is highly selective with respect to education (Shaw, 1975). The rational is simply that the higher an individual’s level of educational attainment, the more likely he or she will be aware of differential opportunities, amenities, etc to be had at alternative places of residence. The migration of the more of the better educated or persons more pronounced as distance increases. This is particularly the case of migrants with university training. The significance of educational selectivity is attested to in numerous studies. Generalisation however about the impact of various levels of education attainment on migration behaviour is another matter.

The importance of educational selectivity is better captured through a microanalysis of the more subjective elements in the migration process. Subjective considerations in the decision to migrate look into the individual’s motives associated with a possible evaluation process the concerned person arrives at. The process in question relates to factors such as social status or family attachment which may have a direct bearing on an individual’s receptivity to various migration stimuli. In this regard one may find some theoretical justification to relate youth migration with this concept of individual’s subjective perception and evaluation of his place of residence to broadly conceived motivations which may trigger the move. Three elements are worth considering here. The first is aspiring attitude; a young person perceives and evaluates migration as an opportunity towards realizing ambitions and aspirations. Such an individual is already somewhat dislocated in his association with primary and secondary groups in his or her area of actual residence. The primary group refers in most cases to the parental node or nuclei (biological or extended family at large). The secondary group may well be represented by the community or networks of persons with whom the individual is acquainted. Secondly, in the state of dislocation, the youth may passively view migration as a recurring solution to limitations of the place of origin and therefore contains the promise or pain as reflected in the above first consideration. As a result of this, migration may be perceived and evaluated as an only alternative to factors such as unemployment or as a means to realize specific and limited objectives such as educational attainment. Therefore, and thirdly, young people view migration as a means to contend with unique personal factors such as educational problems.
As Taylor proposed, the motivational approach to migration among the youth suggests a conceptualization of this event along the lines of, respectively, the degree of structural conduciveness or strain at the place of origin, the extent to which the concerned individual perceives and evaluates these two further elements (Taylor cited in Shaw, 1975). To simplify the understanding of their operation at the individual level, one may assume that they manifest themselves through the stimuli for both short (education) and long term (employment) aspirations, the presence of a feeling of dislocation (failure to achieve autonomy), the belief that conditions are better elsewhere, the feasibility of migration as a project and trigger factors which spur a decision to migrate.

In their places of origin, young people are predisposed to move as they feel deprived with respect to educational facilities, employment opportunities and other items. The move to another place outside the country of origin may be prompted by such considerations generally associated with the concept of place utility in the study of migration. This comes once again as a result of subjective evaluations of composite evaluations of utilities to be derived from individual’s place of origin in contrast to utilities to be derived from alternative places of residence. Along these lines, some young people may view places of possible relocation with differing utilities. It cannot be however implied that the individual will automatically locate at the place of highest utility. Such relocation depends on the individual’s ability to adjust to the utility profile offered at his place of residence it should devaluate either by contrast or actually. The relocation at the place of highest utility also depends on the information available (and its perceived accuracy) on the utilities to be had elsewhere. Therefore an important aspect of place utility as a central concept to research on youth migration is way in which young people perceive the utility to be had in distant environment other their own. This aspect can be to a certain degree captured through individual’s needs, drives and abilities that may constrained within the space at the time the move is being initiated. Thus one can conceptualize the space within which the migration process takes place as the physically objective world of its world. This space varies in accordance with the person’s characteristics and the changes affecting his or her environment. This is to say that the structural process of migration among the youth is strongly determined by the perception of environment they have. Such perception may result in a decision to move conditioned by stress in the place of origin and strain threshold of the potential migrant. A not-worth rewarding academic environment results in young people demonstrating little degree of resilience in regard to residential locations which generate stress due to noxious or potentially noxious conditions. These conditions interfere with an individual’s basic need satisfactions at his place of residence. To put this in context, one may look at living conditions in many African
countries as those producing the features of an environment of considerable stress capable of generating motive for mobility. From a research standpoint, an interesting question could be that of indentifying the threshold at which a young person decides to relocate. Drawing from some related works, this decision will be a function of not only of the availability of alternative residences, but the individual’s strain factor or ability to cope with stress (especially that associated with job search or the prospect of finding one). This is to say that the threshold function is an indicator of the young person’s tolerance of stress. It can be inferred that educational migration to distant locations among young people takes place when stresses overcome the strains to the point that the individuals’ threshold limit is surpassed. At that point (of saturation), what the social and physical environment could provide to the young person’s wants is not enough to refrain him or her from relocating outside the country. Stress and strain factors may operate in the accounts of preferences toward moving among students’ beliefs about their abilities to fulfill their aspirations in their home country. Most of the frustrations come from the institutional failures of the state to fulfill its mandate of providing inclusive access to education of good quality.

If submitted to empirical testing, approach to migration along the lines of stress and strain factors relates well to the concept of place utility based upon both characteristics of young migrants and their places of residence in the country. Variables such as family status, prospects of jobs, political liability, educational system density and site selection quality would account to a great extent in the generation of migration. Place utility evaluations leading to migration are likely to occur in area which is deprived in comparison to the norm of other areas of its type. Area deprivation could manifest itself in terms of insufficiency in the numbers of tertiary institutions resulting in limited admissions of students. However there is a problem in any generalization of this concept of place utility. It is deemed a function of aspirations of the individual concerning residential environment juxtaposed to the environment of its present residence. The aspirations of any young person are likely to be a function of education, family status, stage in life cycle development, etc. The orientation to family plays a critical role in the decision to migrate. Regardless of the age factor, the role of the extended family or family cohesion as either stimulus or restraint to migration has been extensively underpinned in regard to receptivity of individuals to migrate. More specifically, young people with close family attachments and tertiary educational level attainment are likely to receive financial support for migration, as the degree of persuasion and valuation is likely strong. Such young people are seen as migrating for better opportunities and with greater chances of success and in return remittances. Thus, just as it is important to consider the socio demographic and socio economic
elements in migration questions concerning the migrants’ characteristics and the causes, it is important also to consider the influence of culture system components of which ideological commitments are central; personal systems of which individual’s aspirations, identity, integrity, role performance; social system components (including socialisation practices), and levels of stress in the system.

The foregoing theoretical discussion inevitably leads to the critical issue of working out an approach to observing factual behaviours. Naturally a subjective approach to youth migration imposes some constraints on objective observational quantitative instruments to implement in a sociological inquiry into migration. The field of migration does not easily lend itself to measurement in the first place. An introspective into some most recent behavioural approaches to measuring and understanding migration points to the use of a biographical methodology along the lines of in-depth interviews (qualitative component) on migratory trajectories. This approach was experimented to collect information supporting this paper.

**Reading from trajectories as a method of capturing migratory experiences among the youth**

By organizing or rearranging life stories in a narrative manner one can arrive at capturing differing individual experiences in relation to migrant status, location and housing, study and livelihoods. The biographical approach aims to keep with the necessity of working with a refined recollection of the fragments of individual stories through a reconsideration of real-life practices (daily practices) with reference to the location where the person actually lives. Use systematically and coherently biographies provide a narrative framework on selected migrant’s individual experience relative to conditions of departure, accommodative arrangements, work, study, social capital and networks at different places. Understanding young migrants’ trajectories necessitates a tuning of primary material by bringing together events they have gone through in a coherent analytical perspective, as well as considering activities they have been involved in with respect to both place of previous and present residence. The intention is not to sketch a precise typology of youth motives in regard to migration decision. At the most, from biographies, a series of mere factual insights could be derived and assumptions or hypotheses proposed for possible testing in an objective model. This exercise is done in the section to come. One must also note that such hypotheses could be first assessed as assumptions to be approved or rejected through a rigorous reading of the grid of events. Consider the following case derived from the patterns brought forward in the section to come. It is for example observed that some young
people migrating to South Africa tend to be involved in trading activities (street vendors). A related assumption could be that these young migrants have some predicament for these activities due to the stress they faced in their previous physical and social environment prior to arriving in South Africa. It is also possible that access to self-employment in the informal trading sector is much easier in South Africa. In this regard, one may assume that the need for start up capital is much easier than it would be in the place of origin. In either case the place utility is of some importance.

The biographical approach to migratory trajectories suggests looking into some common behavioural traits. To do this, it is critical to identify way in which the departure was decided upon, the locality of departure, any in-transit place of residence and arrangements around relocation in the place of destination. Each of these stages can be apprehended as a process-type event, and not merely as a point-in time event. Equally important is the way in which these events take place with or without the individual acquiring an advanced educational or professional status. Taken individually, each young migrant could be regarded within the theoretical framework previously evoked as either a victim or an instrument of a process shaping a depreciation of the human capital in the country of origin. Hence in the long run a depreciation of the labour force. When pushed to migrate or displaced in that way, young people are however localizable in a temporal-spatial matrix that is relatively alien to them in the context of the place of destination (say South Africa). From an analytical standpoint, in-depth interview translated into biographies can be used to reconnect the “objective” information and provide insights into certain elements of the ideology of subject. Three significant types of discourses may be derived from the narratives. The first type is the exposé on the reasons for departure. The second type is that of the importance of links (of diverse nature) with the place of origin and the place of present stay. Finally the third type is that of projects for betterment or wellness in relation with educational and (possibly) professional achievements. To keep with the clarity required for such a complex analytical exercise, it is advisable to examine the trajectories on individual, and thereafter bring together the insights from different individual experiences into some sort of grounded theory. When necessary it is necessary to do some triangulation to validate information. The section to follow is an attempt to carry out this exercise with a special focus on the last stage. For the sake of space, individual accounts have been omitted in the presentation. The information supporting this paper was collected within a research activity looking into the migration of students in the city of Cape Town and its surroundings. Additional information was also compiled from secondary sources.
Some patterns in the socio-spatial trajectories of young educational migrants

South Africa is a new destination for most young migrants looking for educational facility. This is particularly the case of the migration of young people from the so called francophone Africa. Most of them arrive around 2005. Going beyond that date, some indications suggest a social phenomenon that has grown in importance from the inception of post-apartheid South Africa. One can recall that soon after 1994, an intense movement of traders took place between these countries and South Africa with Johannesburg being the main supplying place for goods. These trade-related movements possibly contributed to the imagery associated with South Africa as a destination country. The country is seen as an alternative to traditional destinations such as France, Belgium or some other prestigious African countries. Despite the language barrier and costs involved in the relocation, young people from the francophone zone choose to migrate to South Africa for study motives. Nationwide, the number of these young migrants is not exactly known. It is however estimated that in their big numbers, hundreds of young people attempt each year to enroll in South African tertiary educations. There seems to emerge some sort of unanimity in the motives for migration in that most of them are pushed away from their country of origin by the poor prospects for income, lack of career perspectives, and lack of appropriate tertiary institutions. Even with the few that still operate, the poor quality of education offered as well as some considerations on the fitness to specific jobs based on qualifications are supplementary push factors. Pursuing studies in South Africa or in some other rich African countries (Morocco, Ivory Coast) is one of the major reasons driving migration among the educated youth. This is part of a personal ambition of getting an enabling education for gaining access to job in an emerging global economy. The interviews conducted reveal that the dysfunctional tertiary education in the country of departure played a critical role in generating migration. Thus the choice of South Africa is strongly associated with the desire to improve their marketability through better education. When asked if studying in English is not an impediment to success, those with no prior fluency in the language stated this was not the case. They rather pointed out that improving skills communication in English is part of the strategy used to boost their prospects for job in the country or elsewhere they may find it. In fact, for some the possibility of English becoming an obstacle was already evaluated at the time migration was initiated. Some respondents stated that they attended English courses before the move.

Migration for study to South Africa is part of the objective of finding a job after graduation. This objective is not automatically achievable in the context of their countries of origin. Some of them
stated the numerous cases of students who have failed to find employment despite tertiary qualifications. Others stated that their decision to migrate in South Africa was strongly motivated by friends or relatives who gained access to local employment after studying in South Africa. They facilitated not only their search for information on educational institutions but also their accommodation upon arrival. Such statements somewhat lend support to the operation of social capital or social networks embedded in the presence of prior migrants at destination. This social capital is especially for those young migrants originating from regions with a strong culture of migration. This was for example observed among young migrants from the western regions of Cameroon. From the interviews, young Cameroonians mostly indicated that prior arrival in South Africa they had some knowledge of alternative schooling places or labour markets. Some of them were aware of the relative ease with which they could find an educational institution, or alternatively the possibility of working as casual employee or petty traders. Home visiting migrants represent an important source of prime information for candidates to migration. These visitors consolidate the perception among young people that elsewhere life is much better. Consequently, many students struggle on daily basis to find work and educational opportunities at home. Destinations such as South Africa become attractive particularly for those entering the post-graduate cycle while at the same time beginning to settle down on their own. This explains why the pursuit of formal post-graduate education (Honours and Masters) emerges as a major reason given by most of the young people interviewed.

To what extent are these young migrants relying on social networks to accomplish their educational objectives upon arrival in South Africa? The data gathered suggest a choice of destination guided by the presence of this element of social capital, but also a search for a place that can offer economic, educational and cultural possibilities. Thus the major cities offering prestigious universities are of first choice for young migrants from francophone Africa. In their majority, respondents stated they were able to secure admission in those universities prior to moving to South Africa. For most, this was accomplished through internet which is readily available and accessible in the many cyberspaces (Internet café in French of their countries of origin. Although the major cities offer comparable advantage, the choice of a particular city is greatly influenced by the stock of information communicated to them by previous migrants about the quality of life in the area. To some Cape Town, for example, is preferred to Johannesburg because, according to the respondents, foreigners are less harassed by the police in the streets. Others stated that in Johannesburg it is more difficult to find a casual job or to run a business than it is Cape Town even if one is academically qualified. From those respondents who had previous stay in Johannesburg, it transpired that living in Johannesburg comes with a lot of
harassment by the police. Besides, the city is reputed for its administrative hurdles imposed to foreigners when applying for residence or work-related documents in the department of Home Affairs. These considerations on what one would see as friendly urban environment are of major importance as they dictate informed choices among young migrants as to where to relocate in South Africa.

One would expect students to return home after completing their studies due to the possibility of becoming undocumented, irregular or illegal migrant outside any kind of official support such as welfare benefits or social security from the host country. But this expectation is unlikely to materialize because, for one, such young migrants may be unwilling to return home to face possibly even more fragile and insecure employment conditions in their own country. As some sources show, the propensity of foreign African students applying for work permit after graduation is high (see for example The Sunday Times 26 July 2009). For these students coming to South Africa, the country does not simply offer an interesting study-abroad option with connected to it the possibility of becoming a resident, but also, quite simply, an opportunity to work. The South African legislature allows foreign students with “study permit” to work on or off-campus a maximum of twenty hours per week. Usually students have a number of rather clear reasons for wanting to work while studying. Most had come to South Africa with only a limited amount of pocket money which they usually used on books, rent and transportation within the first couple of months; after that, as they often pointed out, they were on their own. Working besides studying is, thus, simply necessary to pay for living expenses. Some migrant students said that they were involved in sending money home. As few students explained, this is also part of the bargain from the beginning. The family had helped in getting the necessary funds but the idea was that one day a return on investment would be made in the form of remittances. Most of these students operate in-between legal and illegal spheres. They regularly admitted to be working more than twenty hours per week, also finding this quite normal in the sense that on the one hand they were perfectly aware that they were not supposed to do so, but on the other hand also arguing that they simply needed to and that ‘everybody else’ was doing so as well. In this sense they argued certain ‘normality’ about what they were doing. This normality does not only relate to the financial pressure they were under themselves but also to what they see as ‘being’ normal for a migrant. Temporary migration for work is the most likely form of young-age student migrant. Due to this temporary character and informal nature of student migrant work, there tends to be significant underreporting for tax payment. A case was reported of a female student from Mauritius working for 40 hours a week in a consultancy firm without being registered with the South African Revenues Services. There are many similar cases of this type.
Observations drawn from some other countries in Southern Africa suggest that this possibility of finding temporary job under the study permit does not exist. In Swaziland for example young Congolese (from DRC) pursuing their studies find it difficult to pay for their study with the money they receive from their impoverished families in the Congo. The immigration regulations have made it difficult for study permit seekers by requiring foreign students to pay the full tuition fees up front before being allowed to register a Swaziland university. This rule also applies for senior students who want to continue with their study the following year. The relocation of the UNHCR office in Pretoria South made it also difficult to obtain funding for study. Many undergraduate Congolese students have had to give up their studies in Swaziland. Some used any means at their disposal to get to South Africa or Europe, and preferably to England or North Europe, where they hope to be able to work during day time and study in the evenings. Thousands might have travelled overseas using such means (Tati, 2006).

With no exception, young people clearly suggested from their responses that they chose to migrate for personal reasons and were quite positive of having experienced this relocation. Migration has allowed most of them to develop skills in educational fields that either are not available or difficult to enroll in their own countries. As one of the respondents put it “Here (in South Africa) you can study in such prestigious disciplines as engineering, computer science, medical and pharmaceutical studies or business with no problem as long as you have the minimum requirements and a bit of money to pay registration fees”. Others emphasized the possibility to earn income (through work study) while studying to pay for education. The return to home country is not part of their plans in near future. Thus migration results is a permanent residential relocation. Interestingly most of them mentioned the parental approval of staying abroad as it brings a strong promise for remittances in future. This is an indication of inter-generational contract where interdependence and autonomy coexist, albeit the relationship is unequally balanced in favour of parents. As stipulated by Hashim (2006), such a contract benefits both the young person, involved in the migration, and her or his relatives at home to achieve some degree of equilibrium. A somewhat unanimity emerges from respondents’ statements that they were not forced by parents or any other relatives of reference to migrate for study. This is no to say there were no apprehension of any kind from the parental side. The choice to migrate however had to be negotiated either with parents or other relatives in order to secure the necessary material support or simply put the parental blessing in the adventure. As put by one interviewed person:

“My parents have to act as mediators in persuading my cousin
in South Africa to facilitate my migration. In the first place he was opposed to it saying he had no money to cover the costs. In fact it’s the problem of accommodation. He was sharing a two-bed room flat with five other persons and could not therefore provide for accommodation. I had many problems finding accommodation upon arrival until I got one in the students’ hostels”

The situation of this respondent is quite similar to others. At destination, young people experience at varying degree specific problems (overworking, wages below the statutory one, illegal residential status, xenophobia, inappropriate accommodation). But against all these backdrops, almost all the young people interviewed stated they preferred the South African environment. Some viewed life at home as being much harder compared to the problems faced in the host environment. Such a view may suggest a positive evaluation of real and potential opportunities that migration might offer to them. Comparing with costs of study, some respondents stated that although studying in South Africa costs more than what it is at home, the educational environment is a “much easier one” for academic success. The reasons were not clearly spelled out. What transpired from probing is the ease with which they get admitted into some prestigious disciplines in the higher educational institutions provided they can afford payment of fees. Students with some good background in mathematics particularly give preference to such disciplines as engineering, business studies and natural science provides as they provide greater chances of getting employment upon completion. This prospect of employment is reinforced by the experiences of country fellows or other foreigners who have managed to do so in a regular way. One must admit that the transition from study to employment is not as barrier-free as one might think of. Employment is subjected to getting proper documentation especially a valid work permit. The policy in place makes provision of the possibility of changing one’s residential status from study permit to work permit, but this is highly regulated and restricted. It is only under specified circumstances this change is possible. This is one the reasons why foreign African students view post-graduate programmes, beyond the Licence (Bachelor level) degree, as carrying greater chance of finding employment than staying at home. Also the increased competition for admission at post-graduate level in the country of origin, prompt some young people to migrate and access higher education or a vocational training. Some respondents said that they covered the costs either by earning the income necessary to pay for it, or by providing a relative or someone known to them with labour in the hope of support with studying costs. Some interviewed young persons acknowledged that migration abroad came with some hardships associated with being away from one’s family and
cultural environment. To others, these disadvantages and potential dangers were often considered to be more than offset by the potential benefits, tangible or otherwise.

It is significant to point out here the case of those students whose decision to move was strongly motivated by an offer of financial assistance of whatsoever type from the institution to which they applied. Increasingly the South African education has come in practice to function as an industry. Their recruitment strategies tend to advertise this type of offer, raising high the expectations of financial support amongst the potential migrant students. Upon arrival, some students have been disappointed by not getting what they were promised before migration. As explained by a female student (E.J. holder of a DEA in mathematics) from Cameroon:

I was admitted at UCT for doctoral studies in mathematics. At the time of admission, my supervisor agreed to support me financially with a studentship. When I arrived in South Africa, he instead told me that I should apply for a doctoral scholarship within a special NRF programme for African students. I did it but failed to get a scholarship. I decided to look for another institution with the hope of getting some financial aid. I ended up by joining the Mathematical African Institute.

On the students’ side, not every step however is taken in a fair and acceptable manner in the path of accomplishing one’s ambition. Tactics are at times frequently used in order to circumvent the formal procedures. It was gathered from indirect sources that some foreign students strategize in order to gain access to higher education in South Africa. A great deal of diversity emerge from these strategies and these include fake certificates, unsupported applications for refugee status, bribes to home affairs officials, arranged marriages to name but a few. Students find appropriate to use tactics and unlawful strategies on the justification that the legal framework around residential permits is constraining and bureaucratic in procedures.

**Some concluding comments and implications for future research**

The foregoing review of findings in the patterns of departure and relocation among young educational migrants informs that they have strong incentive to migrate. This is so because to many migration offers the most viable alternative to long-term deprivation. Taking on responsibility for personal expenditure such as educational costs is part of a migrational decision
to pursue one’s own desires of being independent and escaping from a difficult environment. Migration is also seen as a channel through which they may fulfill the expectations the parents have of them materially and socially through promises of remittances and other forms of transactions. At destination, university attendance does in most cases not preclude engagement in work or migrant work. University time tables are in most cases flexible enough to undertake work. Moreover, it is often seasonal or night economy work that requires the additional labour of students. Under the guise of learning or studying, one finds in a clear work component. This indeed blurs distinction between migration for work and migration for study.

What theoretical insights can be drawn from this synopsis of trajectories? The patterns examined suggest that the meaning of an individual’s migration or relocation decision is situated in his or environment at home, rather than just in the moment when the decision is made. When asked about their reasons for moving, young migrant’s responses provide some unambiguous, though limited, statements of their motivations. The responses revealed how relocation or migration decision was embedded in the dislocation feelings developed over a certain (if not entire) period of life course, rather than being linked only to some circumstances in the period immediately prior to departure.

Equally reflecting in the trajectories is on the one hand the developing meaning of migration to the individuals involved and on the other hand the multiple social influences shaping their perception of places. Personal objective of being independent of parents tend to juxtapose with perception of a happier life elsewhere. This juxtaposition in the end makes migration an option worth considering. The trajectories and the biographical accounts also reveal a complex web of cultural values which one can interpret as favouring migration. The sources of social influence are also present in the shaping of migration. Family environment, educational attainment, kinship ties and country fellows contributed, at a varying degree, to the construction of the desirability of relocating elsewhere. These social influences were nested in the individual’s general socio-economical milieu.

The trajectories are not linear but they serve to illustrate the long time sequence involved in the generation of migration, be it involuntary. One problem affecting their narratives is that practical consciousness. Understanding the motives behind the different trajectories becomes a complex task when one is seeking to establish what these young persons knew about the implicit social conditions of their actions and values, but which they cannot express discursively, that underpinned their spatial mobility. To bring individual’s practical consciousness to a discursive level, the in-depth interviews sought to scrutinise the practical consciousness which underlies their mobility by asking them to report on the social and economic activities they were involved
in at various stages in their trajectories. As reported in this paper, the activities the individuals engaged in and the time period allocated to them to some extent reflect the importance of these activities in the particular social milieu in which they were situated. A set of values around which most collected narratives concur or intersect is the significance of professional achievements or betterment in one’s life. To some of the migrants, such achievements appear to be a central goal in life. Through the reported narratives, mobility is closely linked to the desire to advance materially or in wellbeing terms. The biographical accounts demonstrate the link between individual’s move and the motive to achieve.

By way of concluding this chapter, it must be cautioned here that a comprehensive analysis of the practical consciousness of these young migrants would require more detailed documentation of incidences of temporal social interactions, and analysis of actions and conversations in which they were involved. However, such an analysis would demand more space than was available to this paper. Within the limitations of this study, it is not intended to claim that the different trajectories have revealed in detail all aspects of the practical consciousness of the interviewees. Rather by approaching the issues from some different angles, it has been able to begin to trace the taken for granted values which shaped the meaning of their mobility decisions.

From an information gathering standpoint, the discussion above has highlighted the need to capture actual experiences and stories that each single migrant represents. This capturing is particularly crucial in order to gain a more informed opinion about this unknown, and highly, delicate social reality on youth migration. The dominant ideology of youth life sees young people’s place in higher institutions of learning at home, and not in the arena of independent educational migrant. The kind and amount of information currently available on young-age migrant students in the context of Africa makes it impossible to understand at large scale the specific dynamics taking place on country or evidence-based arguments. A greater availability of statistical data on young migrants studying in various countries of Africa, and particularly in disaggregated formats would be very helpful indeed. However, as it appears from most official statistics, there is a real limit to what quantitative data in this respect is able to tell. Using quantitative data makes it difficult, if not perhaps impossible, to capture in a comprehensive way the hidden forms of trajectories as young people are most likely to be engaged in. This type of data does not reveal much about actual processes, experiences of, and meanings attached to migration for education by young people. Yet this latter kind of information is needed in order to get beyond very sticky normative, views of what is ‘good education’ for young people, and what they should thus be doing or not be doing to get it outside the country of citizenship. As Thorne
(1987) observed that qualitative and interpretive approaches (for example the type suggested in section 3 of this paper) ‘are especially helpful in uncovering experiences and forms of agency that have been suppressed by dominant ideologies’. Thus continuous reflexivity is needed regarding representation in order to refrain from imposing assumptions which hinder appreciating alternative and varied experiences. This is not a way of saying that young people are simply a main resource that can be mined using qualitative (such as those of participatory nature) methods. The point to make here is that qualitative methods may lay bare how those young people contemplating migration for further education outside their own country negotiate, engage with or resist social realities in ways that either conform or challenge widely held normative views. A great scope is offered by subjective qualitative methods though issues of representation and other specific problems remain, as do dilemmas of young people’s agency versus structural relations.

Starting such a thought process is urgently needed since following past economic and social performances, and in view of current and future economic crises, the Africa continent will increasingly be characterized by growing levels of uneven development between member-states. The sector of higher education will likely reflect this uneven development. Only a handful countries including South Africa will emerge as the main beneficiaries of what some analysts have come to name export education industry (Baas, 2007). In such a socially diverse landscape there is an urgent need to go beyond globalised normative understandings of ‘a responsive educational system’ at the national level and instead gain a greater understanding of how young people from different genders and backgrounds perceive, experience and engage with images, challenges, opportunities and vulnerabilities of an expanding and ‘Africanizing’ (this word is mine as I did not want to use globalizing) educational system. Moreover, migrations cannot be seen in isolation from underlying processes. This was emphasized in the subjective or motivational theoretical discussion (section 2 of this paper). Yet little is known about qualitative dimensions of youth in fast changing socio-economic contexts as exemplified by the NEPAD and African Union member-states. How is, for example, NEPAD regional frameworks, its associated projects of ‘mobility of scientists or academics’, as well as the roles for youth organisations it presents, perceived and experienced on an every day basis by various young people looking for further education? Thus far, very few studies accurately depict what it means to grow up in an African state with a dysfunctional educational system and a non-responsive government, and how young people see their lives relating to the risks and opportunities an (not necessarily regionally) integrated Africa presents. Those questions and many others not
explicitly raised in this paper deserve careful attention for researchers dealing with youth-related issues.

**Selected references**


*Sunday Times* 26 July 2009 “Foreigners flock to South Africa Universities”.
