

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award  
of the degree of M. Phil. in Development Studies

## **The Migration of Africa's Intellectual Capital:**

**An explorative research on the career trajectories of academics from  
other African countries employed at the University of Cape Town,  
South Africa**

submitted by

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### **COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## **Abstract**

The dissertation investigates the development of higher education in Africa and points to the phenomenon of migration of African academics to destinations overseas and more recently to South Africa. The research interest derives from South Africa's unique position on the continent to attract academics from overseas including African academics who left their home country. Therefore South Africa's universities play a significant role in return migration of these academics to the continent.

This research follows an explorative approach that aims to capture the trajectories of African academics in present day South Africa. The quantitative research provides a picture of the origin and proportion of African academics at South African universities while the qualitative research explores the trajectories of eleven African academics who were at the time of the study employed at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. The research question focuses on the question 'Why are academics from other African countries than South Africa leaving their country of origin?' and 'What motivates African academics to come to South Africa?' Among other, the research also uncovers whether academics who once immigrated to South Africa have intentions to return to their country of origin. The core part of the dissertation contains the presentation of the findings of in-depth interviews with eleven academics from the University of Cape Town. The research also includes the analysis of all 23 South African universities for the year 2011 by accessing information from the database of HEDA (Higher Education Data Analyser) with the assistance of the Institution of Planning Department (IPD) of UCT. Here the proportion of academics coming from other African countries, are presented, for the year 2011.

Drawing from the literature on higher education in Africa as well as from the interviews with eleven academics, the dissertation illustrates that in regard to the 'brain drain' of African academics, the overall post 1980s imposed neo-liberal regulations set by the World Bank and IMF which channelled public spending and foreign capital towards primary and secondary education, was an important factor leading to the degradation of African universities and consequently contributed to the migration of African academics. The trajectories of the academics illustrate that the majority of the academics left their country of origin for postgraduate studies overseas or in South Africa. However, after the completion of their studies these academics were eager to build an academic career in Africa, whereby South Africa of them became the preferred destinations. Return migration to the country of origin is in most cases only considered after retirement. Nevertheless, they are all engaged in building relationships to institutions or civic organisations in their home country as well as enabling postgraduate students from their home country to come to South Africa for further studies. The dissertation suggest further research to examine to what extent these 'knowledge exchanges' and 'educational transfers' between academic diaspora in South Africa and other African countries are fertile for development in the country of origin and in which ways, universities and academics, in their role as 'ideological leader' can contribute to socio-economic and cultural development by establishing sustainable of relationships which are of mutual benefit.

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## **Abbreviations**

B.A.	Bachelor Degree
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
engl.	English
HEDA	Higher Education Data Analyser
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPD	Institutional Planning Department
M.A.	Master of Arts
NRF	National Research Foundation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SADC	South African Development Community
UCT	University of Cape Town
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States of America

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## Introduction

*“In higher education, the recipients of the education are expected to take on the role and responsibility of contributing effectively to the solutions of Africa’s problems”*

(Lungwangwa 1991: 24)

The dissertation is originally inspired by Cooper’s work which emphasises the crucial role of universities and academic research in socio-economic and cultural development. According to him *“innovations are major drivers of international economic growth and well-being”* (Cooper 2009: 45). He illustrates throughout his research that the (third) industrial capitalist revolution in Europe and the United States after the 1970s would have been impossible without university-based research out of which new technological innovations derived. Since back then he argues, that universities have become a much more integral part in the economic development process in the industrialised ‘North’, i.e. Western Europe and North America. Cooper further argues that national economies (with industry and government as main actors) were only able to utilize university-based research because of what Cooper (2009) and Etzkowitz (2013) call the ‘First Academic Revolution’, which describes a shift from universities first academic mission of teaching (1800s till early 1900s) to universities second academic mission of research (Cooper 2009: 59).

However, Cooper argues that the northern-academic discourse was mainly focused around university-industry research linkages while the role of civil society was neglected. He demands therefore that the concept of development has to take the dimension of social and cultural development into account in a sense that it contributes to a growing *“strength of civil society social movement”* (Cooper 2009:178). Hoogvelt (1978:9) defines development in a similar way: *“as an autonomous process of societal growth and change”*. The university can play here an important role to enhance citizenship *“based on its ability to expand the discursive capacity of society”* as Delanty (2001:225) states. Buraway (2004: 7) argues that it is the purpose of ‘public sociology’<sup>1</sup> to initiate public discourses, in a sense that social scientist address the wider public (i.e. mainstream) to generate debates within and between publics. Public

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<sup>1</sup> Buraway (2004:4) defines the function of public sociology as the engagement of sociology in *“multiple publics in multiple ways.”* He divided sociology in four different dimensions: professional, critical, public and policy. However, these are only theoretical categories and a sociological practice might involve different aspects.

sociology in that way can facilitate that process of `democratisation` (Buraway, 2004). Cooper (2012:1) underlines in this context the important role of academics in terms of “*Community-Engaged Scholarship [...] to the specific role which university-based academics can and should play.*”

Considering Africa’s young national independent states, I argue that, university-based research and ‘engaged scholarship’ have to become a central part within national and international development agendas, whereby universities are taking a key position within the transformation process. Secondly, in order to strengthen the society in their capacity to perform active citizenship, academics especially (but not only) from humanities (social sciences and arts) are encouraged to establish a culture of knowledge exchange and public discourse (‘public sociology’). This requires that African universities are equipped for the second academic mission of research, which will only be possible if they have the intellectual capital in terms of socio-cultural and institutional well-integrated academics who have the capacity to perform their roles as ‘engaged scholars’.

### ***Research problem***

In Africa every year an average of 20 000 academics and other highly educated Africans leave their country of origin to migrate to ‘the North’ (Zezeza 2005). “*The African academic diaspora [...] has never been larger than it is now and it continues to grow rapidly*” as Zezeza (2005:209) pointed out (see sub-chapter 3.2.).

The migration of highly skilled people such as professionals and scientists around the world is not a new phenomenon, as Meyer et al (2002:310) states “*unbound talents no longer contained within national borders by social, organisational or other ties*“. However, while highly industrialised countries in the ‘North’ simultaneously are sending and receiving ‘talents’ from all over the world, the developing countries are losing constantly highly skilled personnel (Altbach 2013). Considering the large investment in education in African post-colonial countries, the emigration of highly-skilled emigrants in effect cost developing countries a huge amount of money every year which are additionally faced with the problem of replacing these people (see chapter 2). Particularly institutions of higher education struggle to recruit personnel for higher professional academic ranks. According to statistics, African universities will

have a shortage of 450 000 faculty members by 2015 if the trend<sup>2</sup> in postgraduate enrolment continues (Hayward, 2012:3). Mkandawire (2005:16) points out that the “*capacity to undertake cutting-edge research*” within African universities will continue to shrink, following the trend of emigration of African intellectuals.

Since 1994 South Africa has increasingly become a desired destination within Africa and created a ‘regional brain drain’ from its neighbouring countries but also drawing new migrants from all over Africa (Adepoju, 2008; Segatti & Landau, 2011). Nevertheless, since the end of apartheid, a large number of South African Ph.D. graduates have left the country which affects the research capacity of South African universities (see section 3.2.3.).

Migration of academics from African countries has to be acknowledged as a contemporary phenomenon which is inevitable in a globalized world and necessary to gain international expertise and to build a international network of academics. However, I argue that this trend is only fertile for African universities as long as a considerable proportion of these academic migrants return at best to an academic institution in the home country or any other institution in the continent to strengthen the research capacity of African universities; but also to take up a position as ‘ideological leader’ within the society and to stimulate public debate. Permanent emigration out of Africa by a vast number of African academics is in my view problematic as African universities are not be able to grow a sustainable knowledge body and thus are not able to deliver solutions for socio-economic and cultural change. In that way African countries are depend on international research institutions and development agencies from outside who have the research capacity (in terms of manpower and knowledge) to undertake research and formulate development policies. The immigration to South Africa is assumed as rather positive acknowledging that African academics return to the continent and contribute to Africa’s intellectual capital. However, it is to question that South African universities are able to absorb a disproportion number of those academic migrants who are in competition to international academics from elsewhere.

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<sup>2</sup> Currently there is a shortage of faculty members, whereby fewer than 34 % of the academics have Ph.Ds. (Hayward, 2012:2).

### ***Research interest and questions***

The actual research interest derives from the situation of South Africa's 'brain gain' of academics from other African countries. The quantitative research question of my dissertation is concerned with the number and proportion of African academics at South African universities in comparison to other international academics from overseas. Here I used the data-base from 2011 provided by HEDA and analysed the proportion of international academics and academics from other African countries at all 23 South African universities in 2011. In a second step I compared these national figures with the figures generated from UCT to get a picture of the situation from the site of research.

The qualitative research looks at; 'Why are academics from other African countries than South Africa leaving their country of origin?' and subsequently I asks 'What motivates academics from other African countries to come to South Africa?' Other sub-questions are concerned with their migratory experiences as well as their social as well as academic integration in the host country. Questions of interest are here, whether these academics holding any kind of relationship to their home country in terms of 'engaged scholarship' which stimulates knowledge exchange and strengthened the capacity of research and teaching at other African country universities. Last but not at least, I am interested to know whether academics who once emigrated have intentions to return to their African country of origin. It needs to be noted here, that my research focus lies here on 'black'<sup>3</sup> African academics, however later on in this dissertation I only refer to 'African', highlighting their indigenous position on the continent in comparison to residents with European roots (categories in South African context as 'White').

The empirical research seeks to explore the perceived reasons and motivations of academics to migrate to other destinations by applying a preliminary narrative approach. This has been done by in-depth interviews of eleven African academics who are currently employed at the University of Cape Town in South Africa (see Chapter 4 for further discussion of methodology). Acknowledging the role of particularly academics from humanities for socio-economic and cultural development in Africa (as explained above), I have chosen to select only academics from the faculty of Humanities of UCT. Thereby I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of why especially those academics

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<sup>3</sup> I use here the historical racial categories of Apartheid of white, coloured, black not to give them credibility but because they still have an impact on how people in South Africa think about and classify people in their minds – and this impacts, in complicated ways, also on the lives of black academics from other African countries, as my dissertation will explore in the next chapters.

migrated and what are their perceived preferences in terms of the place to work and to live.

The primary purpose of the research is thus to contribute to a better understanding of the academics' experiences of their career paths, and the choices they have made regarding their place of work and living (see further in Chapter 4 for this 'narrative approach').

### ***Structure of the dissertation***

The paper is divided into two parts. The first part provides a theoretical framework and background information while the presentation and discussion of the quantitative and especially qualitative research findings are the core components in the second part.

In the first chapter I discuss the concept of human and intellectual capital whereby Mincer's (1981) understanding of human capital and knowledge as its core function for transformation provides the basic argument for my dissertation of the significance of Africa's intellectual capital. In order to understand the extent of the consequences of the emigration of African academics for Africa's development, the role of universities and academics for socio-economic and cultural development has also been looked at.

In order to place the individual experiences of the interviewed academics into "*broader transformation processes*" (De Haas, 2008:11), it is important to understand the broad development patterns of higher education in Africa in general, and particularly the overall transformation of higher education<sup>4</sup> in South Africa, which both has been done in the second chapter. Emerging issues at respective times which had a fundamental impact on higher education and subsequently for migration of students and academics will also be uncovered in this chapter.

In the third chapter I discuss relevant theoretical concepts on migration and provide some statistical figures on the migration of highly skilled people in Africa and particularly on South Africa. Chapter three therefore provides the theoretical and empirical background for the subsequent chapters which present the research design and the research findings.

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<sup>4</sup> In my paper I use the term higher education to refer explicitly to universities and colleges, i.e. degree-awarding institutions which perform the role of teaching and research. However, in the context of South Africa higher education, refers to further education beyond high school, after matriculation qualification.

The chapter four of part two outlines the research design and methodological approach of the quantitative and qualitative research of this dissertation. With regard especially to the in-depth interviews, the details of data collection and analysis as well as ethical concerns have been discussed .

The findings of the research empirical research are presented in chapter five. Starting with a statistical overview of the proportion and origin of international academics at South African universities this is then compared to the data of the University of Cape Town which has served as the research site of the qualitative research of in-depth interviews. The findings of the interviews are then presented and discussed in the subsequent sections. The career trajectories of each interviewed academic are grouped in three main themes: (1) Socio-Demographic Background and Early Education, (2) Migratory Trajectories and Career Paths, and finally (3) Reflection & Future Perspectives with respect to their career trajectories.

The final chapter six gives a brief summary of the findings by placing the individual experiences of the interviewed academics back into a broader framework of the process of transformation of higher education in Africa. In addition, it discusses a few limitations of my dissertation and suggest some questions for further research. Finally I close the dissertation by giving a viewpoint on South Africa's position in higher education and the immigration of African academics.

## **PART I: Theoretical Framework & Background**

### **1. Intellectual Capital - Knowledge and Development**

In order to understand the extent of the consequences of the emigration of African academics for Africa's development, it is necessary to take a look at the concepts of human capital and intellectual capital. Furthermore, I will look at the role of universities within the society and their contribution to development, particularly in relation to academics as `engaged scholars` and also `ideological leaders` (especially in the Humanities).

#### **1.1. Human Capital and Intellectual Capital**

In "*The Economic value of Education*" Schultz (1963) describes human capital<sup>5</sup> as a stock of educated people, i.e. people who received basic education<sup>6</sup>, who can write and read and therefore will reach a higher 'value' (in terms of income) within a (capitalist) society. In contrast Mincer (1981) defines human capital as the entire human capacity (of a person, a group or a country) "*to produce new knowledge which is the source of innovation and of technical change which propels all factors of production*" (1981: X). The component 'human' is not any longer reduced to only 'function' within the capitalist system (within economic organizations) through skills and education. In his concept the 'human' becomes an active agent who evolved from 'possessing' knowledge to 'creating' knowledge and thus becomes a crucial component within the process of socio-economic transformation. Mincer's concept of human capital hence moves beyond income distribution as the core of economic growth by highlighting knowledge as the key for innovation and transformation. In that way he distinguishes between human capital and knowledge by treating knowledge as an independent factor.

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of human capital was developed within economic mainstream in the early 1960s and analysed in regard to its function to contribute to economic growth. The main concern of economist analysis was to identify the determinants of human productivity measured in (individual or national) income.

<sup>6</sup> In his later writing Schultz (1981) extended his view on human capital and considers schooling as well as work experience, the acquisition of information and skills and even investment in health as means to improve the "*Quality of Human Agents*" (p. 7) or as Becker (1962) calls it the "*economic well-being*" (p. 9) of people. While Becker looks closer at organizations and investment in workers skills, Schultz perspective refers to an overall 'population quality' emphasizing basic education for people to maximize the national productivity.

In his book “*Intellectual Capital*” Stewart (1997) assumes all kind of knowledge that can be ‘capitalized’, i.e. that can be turned into profit and hence is of value for economic purposes. Stewart (1997) speaks of “*intellectual material*” (1997:.x) and refers to different kind of knowledge such as skills, information, or scientific knowledge. In his concept of intellectual capital Stewart (1997) therefore stresses the fact that knowledge is not exclusively embedded in human beings.

In this respect the interrelation of knowledge embedded in human beings as well as knowledge materialized and hence independent from human beings needs to be taken into consideration. In that sense human capital not only creates new knowledge but also is built on materialized knowledge. Higher education and research relies heavily on knowledge (materialized and embedded in people) from which it draws new knowledge.

Mincer’s concept of human capital and the concept of intellectual capital provide the basic argument for my dissertation of the significance of Africa’s intellectual capital and therefore the need to support African academics to stay or to return at African universities to foster knowledge production on and in Africa. The neo-liberal term “capital” is used in this dissertation to emphasize the developmental role of academic knowledge which requires investment as explained by Mincer but which will eventually lead to greater benefit for society. Therefore, the term “intellectual capital” in this dissertation goes beyond the pure capitalist notion of knowledge as ‘capital’ which generates profit and leads to economic growth. It also acknowledges that academic knowledge, to be of true value, needs to be deeply rooted in the cultural context where it seeks to lead to development, i.e. ‘socio-economic-cultural’ development. Furthermore only academic knowledge, I would argue that incorporates indigenous knowledge can truly benefit the people.

Thus in the following section I look at these aspects in regard to university’s function as a knowledge producer and as institution for ideological leadership as suggested by Castell (2001).

## 1.2. Universities and their Role within the Society

Universities as social institutions perform “*basic functions that are implicit in the role that is assigned to them by society*” (Castells 2001:206). Castell (2001) identifies four basic functions which define the role of the university within the society. Firstly, he argues university play a role within the formation and diffusion of ideologies. The task of the university is it to express those often contradicting ideologies. Lungwangwa (1991: 23) emphasizes here that “*higher education institutions also encourage indigenous self-expression, conserve and adapt local traditions and values and constitute important symbols of national prestige and attainment*”.

The second function of the university is to select and (re-)produce a dominant elite in a sense that universities as social institutions have the task to socialise the new elite in regard to “*the historical and cultural characteristics of each society*” (Castell 2001: 207). The third function according to Castell is the universities task of teaching, i.e. to train the labour force such as engineers, economists or accountants. The fourth function refers to the university changing role from a purely producer of knowledge to an increasingly consumer thereof, i.e. the production and application of knowledge, i.e. conducting research (Castell 2001: 210).

Cooper explains there have been two transformations in academia. The first marked a shift from universities academic mission of teaching to universities ‘academic mission of research’, which kicked off in the early 1800s until early 1900s in Europe and was important for the second industrial revolution led by Germany (Cooper 2011: 92). The second academic transformation took off from 1980s and describes a shift from basic research to use-inspired-basic research<sup>7</sup>. I would like here to stress the interrelation between those four functions but also to highlight the role of academics within those. The university as social institution which is embedded in a specific historical and cultural context is tied to universities leading (or guiding) function within the realm of conflicting ideologies. Universities, and in this sense academics, take a responsible position within the society in a literal sense to respond to conflicts emerging in the wider society. “*The intelligentsia is expected, and sees itself as having to provide explanations for what is happening*” (Sall, Lebeau and Kassimir 2002: 5). A task which

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<sup>7</sup> Cooper argues that the “*second academic transformation, have been fundamental to the third capitalist revolution*” after 1970s led by the USA (2011: 92.).

is connected to the third function, especially in the social sciences and arts fields i.e. humanities as defined here, to provide knowledge (to teach or to educate) in a way of 'offering' an understanding of social interactions at present, but also to make predictions of future developments which subsequently will become a matter of debate themselves. In that way academics are influential in shaping public opinions through public discourses but also by the research they are carrying out about the conflicts and hence produce new knowledge. In that sense universities role in producing human capital (through teaching) is closely linked to the production of intellectual capital in terms of materialized knowledge that derives from academic research.

Taking Castells and Coopers perspectives on universities functions/ or missions in the society for socio-economic and cultural change, I identified the following three academic functions with regard to Africa's intellectual capital; (1) *disseminating knowledge (to teach)*, i.e. transmitting knowledge to the next generation to prepare them to take up responsible position within the private and public sector, (2) *producing knowledge (to conduct research)*, i.e. developing solutions and technologies for regional and national development - including socio-cultural development - to foster an integrative society and economy and finally (3) *exchanging knowledge (to outreach)*, i.e. to engage with the wider society, to stimulate public discourses hence taking a 'guiding role' in ideological debates and social conflicts.

In that way academics take a core position to translate the role of the institution into meaningful actions. Consequently, only an academic body which is deeply anchored in the cultural and historical context and thus socially as well as politically integrated within the society, will have the sense of responsibility (and motivation) to 'respond' to conflicting issues within the wider society, in the sense to engage in academic and public debates. Secondly, humanities and in particularly social sciences, need to be strengthened in their research capacity and hence contribute to the restructuring of African societies.

In conclusion, the emigration of African academics will inevitably affect African universities in a way that they are limited to perform their functions of teaching and producing knowledge with respect to the society in which they are embedded. Secondly, academics who are not well integrated in the cultural and historical context of the host

society will be limited to perform their role ‘ideological leader’<sup>8</sup> to facilitate a growing “*strength of civil society social movement*” (Cooper 2009:178)

## **2. Historical Development of Higher Education in Africa**

In order to understand the trajectories<sup>9</sup> of African academics in South Africa (SA) it is crucial to understand the development of higher education in Africa, with the 1960s being a historical period with universities opening for the first time since colonisation. The 1980s, on the other hand, will be remembered as the ‘crisis of universities’.

In this chapter, after a brief portrayal of higher education in Africa before political independency, the development of higher education in post-colonial Africa will be examined. The study will also uncover emerging issues at respective times which had (and continue to have) a fundamental impact on higher education and subsequently for migration of students and academics due to political and economic shifts during the different periods. In its final section, the transformation of higher education since 1994 in South Africa will be observed.

### **2.1. Higher Education in Colonial Africa (pre-1960)**

*“As far as education is concerned, Britain’s colonial record in Zambia is most criminal. This country has been left by her as the most uneducated and unprepared of Britain’s dependencies on the African continent”* (Kaunda cited in Lungwangwa, 1991:19).

President Kaunda of Zambia expressed his frustration with Zambia’s colonial education in 1966. At the time of independence Zambia had no universities. Education in general was a privilege during colonisation which only very few were granted. A report on Southern Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) in 1954 showed that only 16.5% of the children at school-going age were enrolled. In Kenya, the government provided hardly any

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<sup>8</sup> In Castells (2001) sense of a mediator between conflicting ideologies.

<sup>9</sup> As the research took an inductive approach, the interviews were conducted before intensive literature review has been done in order to keep an open mind and avoid leading the interviewees in a particular direction. After the interviews were conducted the data revealed some pattern such as that nearly all of my interviewees left their home country to pursue a postgraduate degree outside of Africa. In order to understand this phenomenon it was necessary to look more closely at structural developments which affected individual choices. In order to locate these individual experiences in the broader timeframe a periodical analysis has been chosen to identify major changes in each period within development of higher education in Africa. Nevertheless, in the context of this minor dissertation and its limited timeframe the ‘periodical analysis’ is necessarily very brief and in effect fairly limited.

schools for Africans until the 1930s (Nkrumah, 1963:43). In terms of higher education (advanced academic education) access to universities was even more harshly restricted for black Africans, if not denied. Nkrumah (1963:43), the first president of Ghana from 1960 to 1966 as well as the first African president in Africa saw the reason behind the neglect of the provision of educational facilities for African people, as the fear of colonial authorities of an emerging intelligentsia which “*becomes the vanguard of the struggle against alien rule*”.

The Makerere College, founded in 1922 in Uganda, was the first and only institution for higher education (university, college or polytech) on the African continent at the time (Nkrumah, 1963; Mamdani, 1993). Even a country as large as Nigeria in which approximately a quarter of Africa’s population lives had only one university (Mamdani, 1993:8). Until 1955, there were approximately seven institutions as colleges or schools for further education after high school. In addition to Makerere in Kampala, three other colleges were founded in the British colonies<sup>10</sup>. South of the Sahara, in the French colonies, there was only one and, in Portuguese Africa, there were no higher education institutions. The Sudan and the Congo (DRC) each had one institution of higher education (Nkrumah, 1963:44).

In search of higher education, an elite class of Africans went overseas and often to the ‘mother country’ of the colony. Castell (2001:213) stresses the fact that the selection of a social elite for the colonial administration and later to create a political elite after independence was a practice of higher education in countries under foreign rule. Nkrumah<sup>11</sup> describes it as “*a policy of assimilation*”, through the exposure of the dominant culture of the authority with the purpose to “*avoid the rise of African nationalism in the territories under her rule*” (Nkrumah, 1963:9).

In this sense higher educational migration has been used as an integral tool by former authorities to colonise the African mind. While the African elite was exposed to western higher education, the overwhelming majority of Africans were largely excluded from any (western) education.

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<sup>10</sup> Achimota in Ghana, Ibadan in Nigeria, and Fourah Bay in Sierra Leone.

<sup>11</sup> Kwame Nkrumah (born 21 September 1909) left the Gold Coast in 1935 to study in the United States where he received his degrees in education, sociology and theology. In 1945 he went to Great Britain for further studies (Fitch, 1966:16). In that sense, Nkrumah not only confirmed his own argument of taking a leading position in the struggle against the British colonial rule but also illustrates the phenomenon of elite migration.

## 2.2. Higher Education in Post-Colonial Africa

### 2.2.1 The Expansion of Education – the 1960s to the early 1970s

During the first years of independence, the newly elected African leaders faced the task of promoting rapid economic growth and building “*national unity*” to bring about “*national development*” (Mohan, 1966:220). Among other challenges, the African leaders had to turn a state apparatus which was designed to serve an elitist minority, into an “*efficient instrument*” that would be capable of serving a historically disadvantaged majority (Mohan, 1966:220).

Considering that the new independent countries had hardly any capital, neither financial (as it was quickly taken out of African countries before and after independence) nor human capital, i.e. skilled staff, the reconstruction of the state apparatus was a daunting task to tackle (Rodney, 1972). In addition, not only was there an extreme shortage of skilled manpower in the state apparatus in terms of a local bureaucracy, the economy also suffered from a “*critical shortage of professionals*” and thus was highly dependent on “*expatriate manpower*”, as Lungwangwa (1991:22) describes in the case of Zambia. Therefore, with the event of political independence appeared an urgent need for skilled manpower for higher positions in the public sphere and the private sector<sup>12</sup>.

Considering, that there were no universities in many African countries, and if they existed they were not accessible for the majority of Africans, the demand for higher education rose steadily<sup>13</sup> with the event of political independence. Institutions of higher education such as colleges and universities became a desired public good and thus many African governments<sup>14</sup> heavily funded<sup>15</sup> university expansion (Varghese, 2013:1).

Access to higher education was viewed by government as well as by the population as key for rapid development and was celebrated as a symbolic act of their newly gained freedom (Sall, Lebeau and Kassimir, 2002; Adepoju, 2008). “*We in Zambia are immensely proud of our University. This pride is not simply that this is our first and*

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<sup>12</sup> According to David Cooper the creation of local professionals was at least partly achieved in the public sector of most African countries by 2000, but in the private sector this has still not been achieved.

<sup>13</sup> Figures of enrolment in higher education increased from 21 000 in 1960 to more than 430 000 in 1981 in the Sub-Sahara (Lungwangwa, 1991:16).

<sup>14</sup> During this period the relationship between state and intellectuals was good. “*A period of mutual tolerance and amicable co-operation between the academic community and the policy-making entities*” (Rashid cited in Makandawire, 2005:17).

<sup>15</sup> Education was also funded by foreign donors.

*only University. It is also because the University of Zambia is our own University in a real sense*” (Kaunda cited in Ajayi, Goma, Johnson and Mwotia et al., 1996:1). This quote from July 1996 is an extract from President Kenneth Kaunda’s speech as he addressed the installation of the University of Zambia. It illustrates how the physical rehabilitation of universities and the opening of the institution became a symbol of “*communal pride*” (1996:1) and “*national identity*” (Lungwangwa, 1991:16).

Nevertheless, African universities had to face their colonial legacy, including their historical linkages to universities in Europe which stimulated a debate on “*what constitutes the African University*” (Ajaya et al., 1996:1). It also raised the question of personnel recruitment which was often responded with the “*Africanising*” of the academic and administrative staff at universities (Mamdani, 1993:15). In consequence, expatriate academic staff was replaced by local staff (though not every country) even though those people did not always have the necessary education. The implication of these ‘affirmative actions’ were thus a matter of debate in regard to quality of teaching and research but also in terms of their impact. As Mamdani (1993:15) pointed out, “*De-racialisation is an important demand [...] but is not the same as de-colonisation*”. He, as well as others, criticised the fact that institutions of higher education inherited a “*Western style of civilization*” (Ajayi et al. 1996:3) and thus “*denied the interest granted to other indigenous or incorporated social institutions*” (Sall et al., 2002:13ff). In that sense the profound question was how to adopt an African culture “*so it can provide African development (and) not westernisation?*” (Ajaya et al. 1996:3).

The first years of independence were a period of euphoria for higher education which led to a “*remarkable expansion in all levels of education*”, as Mkandawire (2005:16) points out. Independent universities started to mushroom across the continent and higher education became a national good. But it also was a time where questions were raised not only with respect to ownership of the institutions themselves, but also in terms of knowledge production which is grounded in African culture to respond to African issues. The significance of producing a local professoriate<sup>16</sup> became a developmental goal for many African countries.

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<sup>16</sup> The late 1970s was when the first African professoriate emerged (Mkandawire., 2005:17).

### 2.2.2. The late 1970s to the early 1990s

The late 1970s to 90s manifested in the beginning of a political and economic crisis within the African continent (Obong Oula, 2002; Sall et al., 2002). The declining world economy in the late 1970s hit the economies of the newly independent African states harshly and cut into the budgets of young governments, which were still in the process of defining their national goals and setting up long-term developmental plans for their economies and societies.

*“Faced with growing deficits, one African state after another capitulated to the harsh regime of structural adjustment as defined by the International Monetary Fund”* (Mamdani, 1993:8). The enforcement of these policies was intended to oppose to some countries’ political agendas and thus inevitably evoked political shifts. As Shivji (2001) describes in the case of Tanzania, *“Since Mwalimu Nyerere stepped down in 1985, the various policies of his government have been reversed under pressure from the World Bank, the IMF, and the donors, particularly from Western imperialism”*. As in the case of Tanzania, many African leaders had embraced forms of socialism as their chosen path to socio-economic development in their respective countries and then were undermined by the neo-liberal regulations set by the World Bank to restructure public spending. Public investments and foreign capital were channelled towards primary and secondary education which was regarded as more effective to address poverty and inequality (Obong Oula, 2002; Sall et al., 2002). Universities in contrast were seen as elitist and too cost-intensive. It was argued that the investment in higher education yielded much lower social returns than in comparison to primary and secondary education (Chitonge, 2012; Obong Oula, 2002). The World Bank suggested that *“African countries were better off closing universities at home and training graduates overseas”* (Mamdani, 1993:10).

In consequence, African universities were trimmed and restructured to produce only market-relevant skills and had to focus on *“faculties of commerce and the professional faculties became much more dominant”* (Shivji, 2001) hence neglecting faculties such as humanities including the Social Sciences. Mamdani (1993) speaks here of the *“university crisis<sup>17</sup>”* and points out that, through these interventions from government

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<sup>17</sup> These developments were often accompanied by conflict or boycotts initiated by student bodies and other faculty members. Thus African universities were not only subject to policies but also became heavily involved in the post-conflict transitions (Sall et al. 2002:5).

and donors, academic freedom and university autonomy was no longer guaranteed, which became a matter of debate in academic circles<sup>18</sup>.

The worsening of the financial situation of universities made it increasingly difficult for them to meet the increasing demand for higher education. Declining budgets<sup>19</sup> and growing student numbers led many African institutions, “*to larger classes, declining real income for faculty and staff, and falling faculty morale*” (Hayward, 2012:2). Obong Oula (2002) describes in his research on the situation at the Makerere University in Kampala how the standard of facilities, and the quality of teaching and scholarships deteriorated drastically due to the introduction of neo-liberal reforms. Furthermore, he states that due to relatively low salaries and deteriorating working conditions, academics spent much of their time on consultancies to improve their income, left the institution completely for positions in the private or public sector<sup>20</sup>, or went abroad in search of greener pastures. As a consequence, the University of Makerere ended up employing academics at lecturer and senior lecturer levels even if they did not hold a Ph.D. degree<sup>21</sup>. Lungwangwa (1991) states that the University of Zambia has lost more than 100 Ph.D. holders since 1978 due to deteriorating conditions in higher education<sup>22</sup>.

In regard to such drastic changes, Obong Oula (2002:08) concludes that, “*Such lack of experienced and highly trained academic staff implies that research, intellectual reflection and postgraduate training and supervision are drastically affected due to lack of academic leadership*”.

The ‘university crisis’ and period of SAPs also affected graduates. The re-prioritisation of primary education clashed with the continuously increasing demand for higher education which resulted in destinations such as India becoming increasingly appealing as a place to study abroad. Between 1990 and 1991, around 48% of the total

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<sup>18</sup> A continental response to the developments in institutions of African higher education was given in November 1990, by Kampala at the symposium on ‘academic freedom’, organised by CORDESRIA, the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (Mamdani, 1993:10).

<sup>19</sup> Public spending per capita fell from US\$6 800 in 1980 to US\$1 200 in 2002, and by 2009 to US\$981 (Hayward, 2012:2).

<sup>20</sup> In the case of Uganda, the salary levels in the civil service and other state agencies were higher than those of university professors (Obong Oula, 2002:14).

<sup>21</sup> Statistics reveal the lowest share of academic staff with a Ph.D. was found at the Business School (2.5%) while the Department of Psychology had the highest share (58.3%). The highest number of Ph.D. holders could be found at the faculty of Science with 47 academics (Obong Oula, 2002:9).

<sup>22</sup> At most African universities a serious lack of materials could be found, such as textbooks, journals, laboratory equipment, chemicals and other equipment (Lungwangwa, 1991:24).

international student population in India came from over 35 African countries<sup>23</sup> (Lavakara and Powar, 2013). However, middle-class families, who used to send their children overseas for higher education, found it increasingly difficult to finance this as business and local currency decreased. Families began to seek local opportunities which were often met by private colleges financed by private investors. The role of the state became increasingly undermined within higher education, while the private sector gained more weight (Varghese, 2013).

Furthermore, an increasing influx of skilled personnel from outside the countries eroded the local employment market through international organisations, hence making it more difficult for university graduates to find a job, particularly in the social and public services sector (Sall et al., 2002). One can speculate that this, in turn, has hindered graduates from universities overseas from returning to their home country due the negative perspective of finding employment.

The 1980s thus marked the beginning of a downgrading process of higher education while simultaneously enrolments at local universities still rose. The pressing need to produce graduates was at the expense of quality which affected the quality of teaching as well the capacity for research in a negative way, resulting in large classes of undergraduates and weak research capacity.

### **2.2.3. From the late 1990s and 2000s to today**

The years of the late 1990s and 2000s have been marked by post-adjustment and political and economic liberalisation. The transition to a neo-liberal market system has been largely completed in many African economies and socialist ideas have been almost eradicated. Higher education in many Africa countries, as described earlier, fell subject to these market reforms mainly because of the imposition of SAPs policies. These stimulated a trend towards the privatisation of higher education and expansion of private institutions. In Nigeria for instance, there had only one university before independence, today there are over 100 universities (including private and public institutions) in the country.

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<sup>23</sup> However, the number of African students declined to 2 700 in 2009, forming only 15% of the international student population. Reasons can be found in Africa's development which might be enabling families to send their children to more developed countries (Lavakara & Powar, 2013).

Through the considerable expansion of higher education since the 1990s, due to an increasing number of private investors, the number of private institutions created competition between private and public institutions (Sall et al., 2002; Varghese, 2013). In the case of Kenya, private institutions<sup>24</sup> have gained considerable weight in the battle for students and academics. As Mumene (2013) describes, the government attempted to re-adjust this development by implementing a new law<sup>25</sup> on higher education which “*seeks to level the playing field in quality enforcement between public universities ... and private universities*” (Mumene 2013:1).

On the positive side of this development, universities have gained more autonomy as their financial dependency on government has decreased, according to Varghese (2013). He also states that by adopting, “*new structures of governance and accountability measures at the institutional level*”, institutions become more efficient and effective with a prime focus on local market requirements (Varghese, 2013:3). Nevertheless, he also points to the fact that the turn to market-oriented reforms of higher education institutions also raised the level of inequality whereby institutions became increasingly and exclusively accessible to those who could afford admission fees and other costs during the years of study. Such a system therefore favours a middle and upper class, such as state bureaucrats, while children from the working class and subsistence farmers will either be denied any higher education<sup>26</sup> or tend to opt for undergraduate degrees only.

Research shows that even though postgraduate education expanded in African countries since the 1980s<sup>27</sup>, only 7% of the higher education students are enrolled in graduate education (Hayward, 2012:2). This will undoubtedly lead to negative long-term consequences for the development of higher education and the research capacity in and on Africa, as there will not be enough academics trained for higher positions in academia and research. According to statistics by the World Bank, African universities

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<sup>24</sup> Private institutions often focus more on the fields of Business Administration and technical education which tends to skew towards to commerce fields and the sciences and away from arts and social sciences (humanities).

<sup>25</sup> The Universities Act 2012

<sup>26</sup> This applies especially if there are no public scholarship schemes in place to subsidise such families.

<sup>27</sup> By 2001, 82 African universities reported they offered a Ph.D. (Hayward, 2012:2).

will have a shortage of 450 000 faculty members by 2015 if the trend<sup>28</sup> in postgraduate enrolment continues (Hayward, 2012:3).

Secondly, “*the market orientation promoted entrepreneurialism in universities and academic capitalism in higher education*” (Hayward, 2012:6). The question here is whether such a trend cause institutions to view the humanities (Social Sciences and Arts) as less valuable in terms of their profitability and led to underfunding or even their eradication. If so, what will the implications be in the long run for socio-cultural development in Africa in terms of Cooper’s (2011) ‘engaged scholarship’ with the civil society?

### **2.3. Higher Education in South Africa**

Since 1994 South Africa has increasingly become a desired destination within Africa and created a “*regional brain drain*”, not only from its neighbouring countries but also drawing new migrants from all over Africa (see section 3.2.3. ‘South Africa as a new destination’). Within South Africa the University of Cape Town takes a leading position as research institution on the continent and attracts academics from all over the world (see Part II). Therefore UCT has been chosen as site of research for this dissertation to explore the reasons and motivations of African academics to come to UCT in South Africa.

In the following sub-chapter I look at the situation of higher education in South Africa before and after 1994 which marked the end of the apartheid era. This is been done as preparation for the Higher Education Data Analyser (HEDA) dataset analysis (see Chapter 5, section 5.1.) and also to locate UCT within the context of the South African higher education system as a whole.

#### **2.3.1. Historical Development before 1994**

Higher education in South Africa was profoundly shaped by policies of segregation which not only distinguished between historically ‘white’ and ‘black’ universities, but

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<sup>28</sup> Currently there is a shortage of faculty members, whereby fewer than 34 % of these have Ph.D.s (Hayward, 2012:2).

also institutionalised huge gaps in quality of education between these institutions (Badat, 2007:6).

The history of universities in South Africa can be traced back to the 1850s, when in the Cape Colony a Board of Examiners of Candidates for Government Service was established. 23 years later, in 1873, the University of the Cape of Good Hope was founded as an “*examining and degree-granting body for various University Colleges*” (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001:4). These universities were historically heavily restricted against non-white South Africans as well as women. Until 1948, colleges “*were almost entirely white male in composition*” (2001:7). Before 1945, in the ‘Union of South Africa’ (Republic of South Africa) there were only four universities and university colleges which accepted very few non-white<sup>29</sup> South African.

When the National Party gained power in 1948, university colleges for different ethnic groups were gradually established in the ‘apartheid homelands’<sup>30</sup> (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001). The National Party ironically provided, for the first time, institutions of higher education for all non-white groups in South Africa. In the aftermath of the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, three universities were established for blacks with different ethnic backgrounds; in 1959 the University College of Fort Hare (for Xhosa and South Sotho designated groups), 1960 the University College of the North (for Sotho, Venda and Tsonga groups) as well as, in the same year, the University College of Zululand (for Zulu and Swazi groups). Despite the emergence of these colleges (later in 1970s universities) Technikons were also established for the black population. In total there are seven historically ‘black’ technikons, with the first being established in Durban in the late 1920s (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001:10).

### **2.3.2. Higher Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

In the aftermath of 1994, the idealistic view focused on the developmental role of higher education institutions in South Africa. In this sense it was seen as the responsibility of universities to address social, economic, as well as political issues (e.g. restructuring the economy, facilitating the process of democratisation, social equity and inclusiveness).

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<sup>29</sup> Non-White were everyone who was according to the apartheid system classified as ‘black African’, ‘Coloured’, ‘Indian’ or ‘Asian’.

<sup>30</sup> Homelands were rural areas specifically assigned to certain designated ethnic groups.

In order to meet these developmental objectives, post-apartheid policies on higher education aimed for the restructuring of the institutional landscape of apartheid (Badat, 2007). In a relatively short period of time, universities and technikons were reduced in number through merges and closures (Cooper, 2011). Doing so was intended to reshape the segregated higher education system in such a way that it would be more inclusive in terms of historically designed apartheid racial groups, and also create an African upper-middle class including professionals for the South African economy (Badat, 2007; Cooper & Subotzky, 2001).

In his assessment, Badat (2007) regards the increased participation of the historically disadvantaged groups of all non-white and women within higher education as an achievement of the post-apartheid restructuring of higher education. A year before the end of apartheid, the proportion of non-white students constituted 52% of the student body and, in 2005, they made up 61%. There has also been some change in regard to gender equity. While 43% of enrolments in 1993 were female students, by 2005 they made up 54.5% (Badat, 2007:10). The student Africanisation, as Cooper and Subotzky (2001) explain, comes from a higher demand from non-white families who seek better life opportunities through an academic qualification. However, Cooper and Subotzky describe a tendency of students classified as non-white to enrol for technikons instead of universities and also to settle for an undergraduate qualification.

Furthermore, these students tend to choose historically desirable subjects such as law or medicine instead of subjects in applied science and mathematics such as computer science or civil engineering. Cooper and Subotzky (2001) emphasise that both have implications for the developmental goal of promoting social mobility amongst African families, as professional upper-middle class employment will remain dominated by graduates from white families due to higher postgraduate qualifications and subject choices.

Overall, institutions of higher education, even after years of restructuring, face criticism that they “*still bear their racial birthmarks in terms of dominant traditions, symbols and patterns of behaviour*”, and, as Jansen predicts, “*deep-rooted beliefs and behaviours will take some time to change*” (Jansen, 2004:311).

### **2.3.2.1. Neo-Liberal Reforms: Commodification of Knowledge and Teaching**

The process of restructuring the higher education landscape in South Africa also affected the internal structures of administration, knowledge production and teaching. The national process of minimising the number of institutions of higher education was connected to the idea of turning them into more efficient institutions in terms of cost effectiveness. Due to this, institutions of higher education became more and more subject to neo-liberal reforms.

The fewer number of universities and the free distribution of students, who could now choose their institution (without being restricted by their ethnic background) sparked competition among the institutions. As Jansen (2004:310) points out, “*Universities now have marketing directors to recruit students and sometimes staff, something unheard of in the 1980s. Large budgets are set aside for marketing, communication and publicity on a scale not yet seen*”. In this sense, higher education is treated as a commodity and became a subject of market regulations which affects the quality of teaching and research.

With the higher number of students, more academics and other staff are required which limits available resources for teaching and academic support (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001; Badat, 2007). Faculties and academics have to undergo regular performance measurements to contest their ‘market value’ and National Research Foundation (NRF) rating which will determine promotion, remuneration and research funding. These changes will not foremost affect weaker faculties with lesser student and on the national level entire institutions which attract fewer strong (in terms of matric grades) students<sup>31</sup>. Thus such developments generate a downward spiral for institutions in terms of revenue but also in terms of quality of teaching and research capacity.

The transformation of the higher education landscape in South Africa, including the reduction of institutions, the increasing number of students (local and international) and the adoption of neo-liberal market reforms within the higher education landscape, created a culture of competition between institutions, faculties and students, and especially competition for academics, the crucial factor for research<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Additionally such institutions tend to attract students who did not perform very well during matric and fewer students from the middle or upper class.

<sup>32</sup> Jansen (2004) emphasises that the transformation of the South African higher education landscape is not a local phenomenon and has to be analysed in a global context.

Cooper<sup>33</sup>, emphasized that the South African government does not promote a policy of privatisation of institutions of higher education as it have been done in other African countries.

Statistics from the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) state that research production in South Africa remains low (Jansen, 2004:311). In this context, Badat (2007) points to the challenge to create a new generation of academics due to an *“aging, mainly white and male, academic force, which currently shoulders much of the postgraduate supervision and accounts for a growing proportion of research and scientific publishing.”*

The low remuneration of academics “generally has not kept apace with the middle and senior levels of public sector remuneration and [...] private sector remuneration”, says Badat (2007:21). This creates increasing competition for emerging scholars but also might attract established scholars especially who are in market-relevant fields of applied sciences. In the ranking of South African universities UCT was part of the five elite universities in South Africa in 2005, an assessment which based on their research expenditure, the number of researchers and PhD graduates as well as the number of accredited publications (Cooper 2011). In order to keep it position among the first five. Academics from outside the country can therefore become crucial for ‘brain gain’ at UCT but also for other universities in South Africa whereby especially academics from the rest of the continent will play a significant role in terms of knowledge body build by African intellectuals.

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<sup>33</sup> Reference: from personal conversation.

### **3. International skilled Migration: Theoretical Concepts and Findings**

This chapter is divided in two sub-chapters. In the first sub-chapter outlines the theoretical framework of this dissertation. Here some definitions and general terms for migration are described. Subsequently, concepts and theories on the motivation behind the migration of skilled people are observed. The second sub-chapter provides some general research findings on skilled migration whereas the two section focus especially on migration in Africa and South Africa in particular.

#### **3.1. Theoretical Framework**

##### **3.1.1. Migration: Terms and Definitions**

*“Migration is defined broadly as a permanent or semi permanent change of residence. No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, and no distinction is made between external and internal migration”* (Lee, 1966:49)

According to Lee (1966), whose theory on migration became a milestone within its field, every kind of movement from A to B that involves the resettlement of a person (or group), is considered migration. Oswald (2007:15) refers to *“Migration als Versetzung des Lebensmittelpunkts”* (migration as relocation of the centre of life) which affects different aspects of life, e.g. workplace, social network, family. In my analysis of the eleven academics I will therefore not only look at how the migration of academics affected their career and workplace but also to what extent other elements of life have changed and altered the decision for moving or staying somewhere. In general, theories on migration distinguished clearly between different typologies of migration such as internal (e.g. rural-urban migration) and international; temporary and permanent; voluntary and involuntary (or forced); and regular and irregular<sup>34</sup> (De Haas, 2008; King, 2012).

In my study I focus exclusively on international migration, i.e. migration that involves crossing national borders within the African continent as well as migration which lead out of the African continent. In my analysis, the latter will be referred to as ‘overseas’,

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<sup>34</sup> Immigration into another country includes the acquisition of immigration documents, legally or illegally (regular and irregular migration), whereby sometimes the migration status is not clear as immigration regulations can change over time and thus may alter the immigration status of the migrant.

and the term 'abroad' will refer to a destination outside of the interviewee's home country but within Africa.

In terms of skilled migration, it is assumed that the migrants leave their country voluntarily as well as enter another country according to legal regulations. The threshold for the statistical recording of temporary migration is usually set at one year in the host country (King, 2012:7). However, the timeframe might deviate from study to study, as temporary migration either leads to return migration (to the country of origin) or further migration to another destination. Permanent migrants are assumed to establish a permanent residence in the host country and may even seek national citizenship. In this study, temporary as well as permanent migration is included. Regarding temporary migration, it was significant whether the migration was done for career or work purposes, i.e. family visits are not of interest if not connected to any educational or professional purpose<sup>35</sup>. Considering that most of the interviewees have been living in South Africa for more than seven years (see sub-chapter 4.3. for the characteristics of the sample), their migration to South Africa can be regarded as permanent<sup>36</sup>.

The criteria for defining an immigrant are sometimes not very clear and can vary from country to country. Deviations may occur depending on whether definitions are made on the basis of citizenship (or nationality) of the parents or the place of birth. On the one hand, immigrants who adopt citizenship of the host country may not be recorded in the statistics as migrants while those who were born in the country but grew up in another might be considered as immigrants. In this context, frequently used terms in research such as 'home country' or 'country of origin' (or 'place of origin') and 'host country' or 'host societies' are used (Adepoju, 2007; King et al 2008).

In my research, the terms 'home country' and 'country of origin' will be used interchangeably to refer to the place where the interviewee holds his nationality (which is in all cases of my research the place where they grew up). The term 'host country' refers to the place of residence other than the 'country of origin'. For instance, South Africa is for interviewees the current host country. All interviewees hold a permanent

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<sup>35</sup> In one case an interviewee followed his brother who stayed overseas. However, his intention was to pursue a postgraduate degree.

<sup>36</sup> However, as it will be discussed, most participants plan to return to their country of origin for retirement.

residence permit, and are consequently still recognised by the South African immigration laws as immigrants.

Also in this context, terms which frequently appear are ‘sending’ and ‘receiving’ countries (Adepoju, 2007; Hagen-Zanker, 2008). These terms derive from macro-analysis<sup>37</sup> on migration which categorises a country which is ‘losing’ more people to other countries than gaining people into itself as a ‘sending’ country, opposed to a country which ‘receives’ more migrants than has people emigrate (‘receiving’ country).

Studies on migration look at different groups of people. In regard to labour migration, there has been a distinction between unskilled and skilled people (Adepoju, 2007). The latter may refer to professionals who are educated and trained, or even hold higher education degrees, as well as have some years of experience in their field and who have therefore acquired a certain expertise in their field. Sometimes studies also refer to ‘highly skilled’ migrants without defining this term and thus the line between skilled and highly skilled remains unformulated and often blurred.

For instance, it is not clear how to categorise students who have not yet acquired a higher degree and do not possess any professional experience. On the one hand it can be assumed that they will acquire certificates which are acknowledged in the market; on the other hand their academic degree is no guarantee of employment<sup>38</sup>. Nevertheless, skilled or highly skilled migrants often become a synonym for the ‘desired workforce’ of governments in the ‘developed north’ whereas unskilled migrants are described as undesired migrants as their economic value is regarded as low or even negative, i.e. the cost of immigration to the host country exceeds the social-economic return<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Traditionally, studies looked at north-south labour migration where developing countries of the South are regarded as ‘sending’ countries and the industrialised countries of the North are perceived as desired destinations

<sup>38</sup> Some research has shown that migrants with higher education, specifically from developing countries, could not capitalise their education e.g. in the EU or USA due to immigration regulations which restrict legal entrance to migrants from developing countries or offer other forms of discrimination within the host society so that migrants are forced to seek lower jobs or even informal employment situations. Women are often forced into informal employment such as domestic work. From the early 1980s onwards, publications revealed an underestimation of the number of women who actually migrated (Casas & Garson, 2005). The researcher emphasised that women often played a leading role in setting up migration trajectories which would lead to chain migration. Nonetheless, the ‘hidden presence’ of women in migration studies, as well as the actual integration of skilled (or non-skilled) migrants often remains uncovered in quantitative data. Therefore researchers, as well as policy makers, have called for qualitative research to gain deeper insight into the experiences, motivations and diversity of migrants.

<sup>39</sup> Assumptions of the economic value of ‘unskilled’ people are questionable as they provide the main workforce within industrial production, manufacturing and agriculture. Research over time, and on a large

In my research the focus is on the migratory trajectories of academics who can be categorised as highly-skilled migrants. However, the migration to other destinations outside of their home country has often already started during their higher education, i.e. they migrated while they were still students. However, the categorisation of ‘highly skilled’ seems justified, when one looks retrospectively at their careers, starting from their employment status today as a highly ranked academic (professor, associated professor, senior lecturer or lecturer, at UCT).

### **3.1.2. Theories and Concepts: Skilled Migration**

Explanations as to why skilled people migrate depend on the level of analysis, i.e. macro-, meso- or micro-level (King et al. 2008; King, 2012; Hagen-Zanker, 2008). The research question of this research paper aims to understand why academics migrate or, more precisely, why do they leave their country and how do they choose their destination (in particular that of South Africa). The following section discusses the core theoretical approaches to migration, how these explain the migration of skilled people and what the crucial social determinants of migration are.

*Neo-classical* migration theory regards migrants as rational actors, who decide to migrate on the basis of a cost-benefit calculation of their future. For instance, benefits such as higher income must exceed the cost of travelling and resettlement. Within the framework of *human capital theory*, migration is seen as an investment where the cost of migration will finally lead to an increase in productivity and hence to higher income and a better standard of living (De Haas, 2008). Neo-classical theories argue that the benefits of migration depend on levels of education, professional skills and personal knowledge.

De Haas (2008:10) points out that skills and knowledge have to be assessed in regard to the “*specific economic sectors where they are seeking employment both at the origin and destination*”. The concept has frequently been criticised for assuming a free flow of capital in an unrestricted (unregulated) market (De Haas, 2008; Hagen-Zanker, 2008). Here critics point to the imperfection of markets and the regulation and control of

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scale, about the economic value of unskilled labour is lacking as migrants are often illegal and not documented.

capital (including people). Of particular interest is how the flow of humans is heavily regulated through immigration regulations and national borders, as King explains:

*“Immigration controls and regulations have major implications for migrants in terms of the right to enter a country (through a visa for instance), to reside for a given length of time there, and to access citizenship rights such as education, employment, healthcare, political participation etc.”* (King et al. 2008:5). Despite these official regulations, King also points to *“linguistic and cultural barriers”* which play a significant role in international migration.

Assuming that human capital, in terms of skilled labour, will move to places where the expected benefit is at its highest in relation to their investment, market regulations which channel access to education as well as to employment, and also restrictions such as migration laws and language, all need to be included in the cost-benefit calculation.

Moreover, neo-classical theories have been criticised as they assume that migrants have unrestricted access to information on the costs and benefits of migration (De Haas, 2008; Hagen-Zanker, 2008). According to Wolpert’s stress-threshold model, knowledge is incomplete and depends on individuals’ *“personal characteristics, the environment and life-stage”* (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:11). In this regard neo-classical migration theories do not consider other aspects of life such as family or social networks as determining factors for migration (or settlement) as pointed out by Oswald (2007). Also, Browles and Browles and Gintis (1975) critiqued the human capital concept<sup>40</sup> for treating labour as a commodity and therefore ignoring social aspects such as class relations which are significant in terms of social relations and income structures.

Lee (1966), who takes a more geographical perspective of destination and origin (rather than costs and benefits) argues that *“knowledge of the area of destination is seldom exact ... Thus there is always an element of ignorance or even mystery about the area of destination, and there must always be some uncertainty with regard to the reception of a migrant in a new area”* (Lee, 1966:50ff). He further explains that it is not actually so much the knowledge about the destination, or in neo-classical terms, the expected positive outcome of migration but rather *“the perception of these factors which results in migration”* (Lee, 1966:51). The perception of benefits of migrating to another

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<sup>40</sup> Despite their critique, Browles and Gintis (1975:09) state that this concept *“rejects the simplistic assumption of homogenous labour”* by acknowledging differences between people’s capabilities and skills (Becker, 1962).

destination, so he argues, depends, among other factors, on “*the evaluation of the situation at origin*” (1966:1).

Adding Lee’s framework to the neo-classical model, migration is not only based on economic factors in terms of a cost-balance calculation but also on a benefit-benefit calculation whereby benefits of the situation at origin will be balanced against benefits in the destination country. Benefits in this regard can refer to various factors, depending on an individual’s value system. De Haas lists, for instance, “*individual freedom, safety, education, health care, paid labour, entrepreneurial activities and amusement*” (2008:10). The social-economic background of the migrants is therefore significant in order to understand the choice of destination and perceived benefits of migrating to another country. In order to capture all these aspects, I used in-depth interviews to grasp the complexity of my interviewee’s situation and their decision for migration (for more information on method of data-collection see section 4.1.1).

Despite knowledge and perceived benefits, the timing of migration has also been acknowledged as a significant aspect within the decision-making process. Within the human capital model, physical attributes such as age affect the cost-benefit calculation. Consequently, the model predicts that educated and young people are more likely to migrate than uneducated and older generations (Hagen-Zanker, 2008). Lee provides a broader concept in regard to the factor of time by pointing out that the likelihood of migration depends on “*certain stages of the life cycle*” (Lee, 1966:57). Important stages of life could be schooling, access into the university, first employment, marriage, the birth of children and, later, retirement. Interviews in my research were therefore conducted in a form of telling one’s life story, which however focused more on certain stages of my interviewee’s academic career (more about Methodology see chapter 4).

De Haas (2008:11) states that “*the propensity to migrate crucially depends on the aspirations of people*”. He emphasises that aspirations alter over time in response to the socio-economic setting (education, family setting, workplace) as well as other external factors, for instance exposure to media or personal contacts with people from a higher class. In the context of timing, it can be assumed that the aspiration to migrate may change, become stronger or weaker, or the perception of a destination and assumed benefits might be re-evaluated according to the current life stage of the individual.

While aspiration might be equated with the motivation to migrate, it does not involve a decision to actually migrate. Literature on migration emphasises the significance of migration networks as, “*sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, non-migrants and former migrants in webs of kinship, friendship and shared origin*” (King, 2012:22). These networks form a crucial support system by helping individuals to find accommodation, or even provide financial support in critical situations. In addition, King (2012:22) notes here that “*they direct migrants to particular destinations*” by providing information and contacts.

With regard to the neo-classical perspective, it can be assumed that social contacts are therefore an important source for the cost-benefit calculation and, according to Lee, social contacts will definitively affect the perception of the destination (or the general opportunity to migrate). Migration networks, as King (2012:21) argues, “*constitute the ‘crucial meso level’ between micro and macro formulations of migration*”. Migration, whether studied from a micro-perspective or macro-perspective needs therefore always to be analysed as “*an integral part of broader transformation processes*” (De Haas, 2008:11) which includes social-economic and political changes within the country of origin as well as in relation to the destination countries. To conclude, Hagen-Zanker (2008:18) states that, “*Individual decisions are made in specific social contexts that feed back into the economic and social structural environment and affect future migration choices*”.

The focus of this research is on understanding individual choices rather than explaining migration streams on a macro-level. However, as King (2012) and Hagen-Zanker (2008) point out, in order to understand the situation of an individual, changes on a macro- and meso-level need to be taken into account (see chapter 4 for Research Design).

In the following sub-chapter research findings will be discussed from other studies on international skilled migration from, firstly, a global perspective and then in the context of Africa.

## **3.2. Some Research Findings on Migration within and out of Africa**

### **3.2.1 International Migration of Skilled People**

*“The migration of skills has become multilateral and polycentric, though not multidirectional, as the flows seem to always go from the less developed to the more competitive places in the world knowledge-based economy”* (Meyer et al., 2001:309).

According to statistics from 2000, one third of all scientists and engineers who are born in a developing country work in the North, including North America, Europe and Japan (Meyer et al., 2001:317). Meyer et al. refer here to the ‘hegemonic triad’ which comprises of the upper ranks of destinations. Migration streams of highly skilled personnel are however far from a one-way road. *“Countries [are] simultaneously sending and receiving qualified professionals and researchers”*, points out Meyer et al. (2001:317). Canada, for instance, receives foreigners from developing countries while at the same time Canadian researchers leave for the U.S. In Europe, France became a destination for highly-skilled foreigners who fill the gaps of French researchers who have left for the U.S. In the case of South Africa, it has been reported that significant numbers of doctors have left for New Zealand, while on the other hand it receives scientists such as physicists (Meyer et al., 2001).

However, these flows of qualified professionals and highly skilled researches are not occurring at random. Studies point to different actors involved in the process of channelling migrant streams to particular destinations or setting up regulations to prevent ‘undesired migrants’ from reaching them. Recruitment agencies, companies, employers and the government are actively involved in this process, and in this way *“migrants are organised, selected and controlled”* (Cohen, 1987:39).

Many OECD countries have been *“promoting selective immigration approaches and policies”* as Meyer et al. (2002) noted. The U.S., for instance, has expanded the number of visa authorisations for skilled migrants in specific areas of national interest. The governments of France and Germany have put recruiting strategies in place to lure IT experts from developing countries to them. Germany set up the website ‘make-it-in-germany.com’ to facilitate the immigration of skilled people and developed the ‘blue card’ for highly qualified migrants from non-European countries. The objective of the implementation of the blue card is not only to ease the process of immigration but also,

from a long-term perspective, to hold highly-qualified workers within the country by providing residence permits for them and their spouses (Bmbf, 2013).

The regulations on foreign immigrants, however, not only target professionals and experienced researchers but also foreign graduates of German universities. The recruitment of international students has been observed as a phenomenon affecting different countries from the south and north (Altbach, 2013; Meyer et al., 2001). In his article “*Brain Drain or Brain Exchange?*” Altbach (2013) states that highly industrialised countries are increasingly concerned about skills shortages due to demographic changes. Efforts to hold international skills are not only happening in Europe but also in North America to attract the brightest talents. Efforts are made at different levels and do not only compromise the relaxation of visa regulations but also involve “*cooperation between the universities, governments, and industry*” to open up employment opportunities for graduates (Altbach, 2013:1).

According to statistics, over 80% of Chinese and Indians who have studied in the United States have remained in the country, and a large majority of doctoral recipients from developing countries plan to stay in the US after their graduation (Altbach, 2013). Studies on the migration of researchers also confirm that academics who have migrated to other destinations are less likely to return to their country of origin (Halevi & Moed, 2013). In contrast, researchers from the U.S. tend to migrate less frequently than researchers from European countries (Halevi & Moed, 2013). The U.S. is recognised as the only country with a positive net migration, i.e. receives more skilled migrants than loses academics and professionals to other countries (Meyer et al., 2001).

Nevertheless, immigration of skilled people seems to occur in industrialised as well developing countries. In general, skilled migrants tend to move mainly from less economically developed places to higher ones (Meyer et al., 2002:314). In this regard, Altbach (2013) noted that, “*the losses for developing countries are huge for academia in particular, in research and teaching talent, new and innovative ideas that might have been cultivated from overseas experience, practices in university management, and many others*” (Altbach, 2013:4).

This internationalisation skews the human capital of the developing world in the direction of the countries which have the capacity and resources to host students and researchers at world-class universities. On the other hand, Postiglione and Altbach

(2013) point out that in most western countries<sup>41</sup> “*nearly all academics are citizens of the country*” (2013:4). Moreover, Meyer et al. (2002) noted that a relatively high number of researchers are employed in the economies of developed countries. This indicates a ‘double skew’ of intellectual capital on one hand, going from the developing countries to developed countries and, secondly, from universities to the economy (in the home country and overseas). Especially in African countries, where the payment for high-ranked academics is relatively low in comparison to salaries in the private sector, highly educated people tend to be employed within the private sector (see chapter 2 for information on Higher Education in Africa).

In conclusion, and based on the above, the following assumptions can be made regarding the migratory trajectories of academics from African countries. First of all, academics will tend to migrate to the developed countries of the ‘hegemonic triad’, however, the position of South Africa, as the current host country remains unclear. Secondly, destinations of academics will be highly regulated and channelled by agents, such as universities and visa regulations. Finally, and most importantly, academics, once having migrated to a more developed destination including South Africa, will be less likely to return to their country of origin.

The next section looks at the international migration of Africans and, in particular, at the growing popularity of South Africa as a destination for skilled migrants within Africa.

### **3.2.2. Brain Drain in Africa**

Migration of highly-skilled Africans has been recognised internationally since the political independence of African countries. Research on skilled migration shows that between 2000 and 2001 around 55% of 247 497 Nigerians living in one of the OECD countries were classified as highly skilled (Adepoju, 2007:26). In regard to the 342 947 South Africans living overseas, the proportion of skilled migrants is nearly 48%. Since 1990, every year an average of 20 000 academics and other highly educated Africans leave their country of origin to migrate to ‘the North’, i.e. Western Europe and North America. Zeleza (2005:209) concludes, “*The African academic diaspora [...] has never been larger than it is now and it continues to grow rapidly.*”

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<sup>41</sup> Academics at universities in the United Kingdom are 19% non-citizens, in Canada these are 12% non-citizens, and Australia these are 12% non-citizens. Exceptions are found in small European countries such as the Netherlands and Norway (Postiglione & Altbach, 2013).

Skilled migrants from Africa can be found in different professions in the private and public sectors in Western Europe and North America. Most concern and research has been focused on the loss of health workers such as doctors, paramedical personnel and nurses. Other professions recorded are engineers, technologists, scientists and teachers. In 2003, the UN estimated that there are 100 000 skilled professionals from Africa living in Europe and North America. As Adepoju (2008) pointed out, “*This is ironically, about the same as the number of expatriate professionals employed by aid agencies [...] at a cost to the region of about US\$4 billion*” (Adepoju, 2008:29). Brain drain, i.e. the emigration of large numbers of Africans with high levels of education and skills, is a recurrent phenomenon across the continent. Emigration streams of highly qualified professionals were first recognised in numbers in the 1970s and then intensified later in the 1980s and 1990s (Adepoju, 2008:29).

Skilled people who migrate to ‘the North’ come from across the continent. Statistical data of migration has recorded streams from North-Africa such as Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. Ghana, for instance, has suffered from a massive outflow of health workers who have been trained in the country between 1995 and 2002 (Adepoju, 2007:25). But other regions such as East Africa (e.g. Uganda) or Southern Africa, including Malawi<sup>42</sup>, Zambia and Zimbabwe have also experienced an outflow of skilled personnel to industrialised countries outside of Africa (Adepoju, 2007, 2008).

The destination of the skilled labour force from Africa varies according to the country of origin. “*African migration flows to OECD countries ... remain strongly marked by cultural links and the colonial past*” (OECD, 2004:56). According to the OECD report of 2004, Africans can be found in great numbers in France<sup>43</sup>, the United Kingdom<sup>44</sup> and, to a lesser extent, in Belgium and Portugal (Adepoju, 2007). Significant numbers of skilled migrants from Africa have also been observed in North America and the Middle East (Adepoju, 2007; Shimeles, 2010). While the United States attracts more highly-skilled migrants than Europe, African migrants in the U.S.<sup>45</sup> have the highest level of

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<sup>42</sup> According to UN statistics there are more Malawian doctors practising in Manchester, UK, than in Malawi itself (Adepoju, 2008:31).

<sup>43</sup> In 2002, around 76 200 Africans entered France, 18 500 of whom came from Sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>44</sup> In 2001, the United Kingdom reported approximately 16 000 migrants coming mainly from Ghana, Botswana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa (OECD, 2004:56).

<sup>45</sup> In 2003, Ethiopians were the second largest group of immigrants to the US (Bakewell & de Haas, 2007:9).

education among all migrants (Bakewell and de Haas, 2007:17) which clearly identifies the U.S. as a desired destination for highly-skilled migrants from Africa.

Even though in small numbers, “*brain circulation*” also took place, predominantly between countries with “*shared colonial legacies*”<sup>46</sup> (Adepoju, 2007:25). The overall intra-continental emigration rate for Africa is about 52% (Shimeles, 2010:8). Popular destinations for African immigrants<sup>47</sup> are Côte d’Ivoire (16%), South Africa (12%) and Burkina Faso (6%) (Shimeles, 2010:14). During the 1990s, new destinations emerged such as Libya in the north, and Gabon and Botswana as well as post-apartheid South Africa in the South. Botswana<sup>48</sup>, for instance, which has developed economically as well as politically, attracts highly-skilled professionals from all over Africa and most of the skilled labour force is employed in the private sector as well as at the university (Adepoju, 2007:16).

Intra-continental migration between countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is at the highest with nearly 65%<sup>49</sup> and hence has become a significant region for migration within the continent (Shimeles, 2010:8). In comparison to the overall number of intra-continental migrants, however, other regions in Africa receive more migrants e.g. five million in Eastern Africa and eight million in Western Africa in 2010 (Segatti & Landau, 2011:12). However, whether these numbers are significant for the study of skilled migrants and specifically academics is doubtful, due to the rather degrading situations at African universities in terms of research capacity and salaries seeming less attractive (excluding South Africa and Botswana).

Mkandawire (2005:16) points out that an “*increasingly prominent feature of African intellectuals is their diasporic position*” which stresses the assumption that academics are still found in large numbers outside of Africa. Adepoju (2008) suggests that the emigration of academics starts from an early point during their higher education. Especially students from science and engineering who were sponsored to do their postgraduate studies abroad have remained in the host country upon completion of their studies. In the case of the emigration of Ghanaians, Awumbila et al. (2008:05) point out

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<sup>46</sup> Skilled migrants move for instance between Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria, or between Togo and Côte d’Ivoire or between Burkina Faso, Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire (Adepoju 2007:16)

<sup>47</sup> Whereby it is not clear whether these immigrants are skilled or non-skilled migrants.

<sup>48</sup> Since the early 1990s Botswana has altered its laws on residence and entry in favour for immigrants (Adepoju 2007:16).

<sup>49</sup> 65% of the immigrant population in Sub-Saharan Africa comes from another African country.

that “*the desire to improve upon knowledge and skills*” as well as the “*lack of working equipment*” contributed to the loss of Ghana’s human capital.

The impact of the of the ‘brain drain’ for sending countries therefore is estimated as huge, considering the large investment in education in African post-colonial countries. The emigration of highly-skilled emigrants cost their countries a huge amount of money every year and these countries are additionally faced with the problem of replacing these people. Especially within African universities, the “*capacity to undertake cutting-edge research*” (Mkandawire, 2005:16) will continue to shrink which will in turn negatively affect the emigration of academics to other destinations outside the continent. But Africa’s ‘brain drain’ is also “*driven by political ‘push’ at home and economic ‘pull’ from abroad*” says Mkandawire (2005:16), who states that the loss of African intellectuals “*has hit Africa hard*”.

### **3.2.3. South Africa as a New Destination**

Since 1994 South Africa has increasingly become a desired destination within Africa and created a “*regional brain drain*”, not only from its neighbouring countries but also drawing new migrants from all over Africa as well as from Bangladesh, China, Eastern Europe, and even Pakistan (Adepoju, 2008; Segatti & Landau, 2011).

The development of migration to South Africa is caused by different factors. Firstly, the political change as the end of apartheid opened up the country. Secondly, stricter immigration controls in Europe make it increasingly difficult and cost-intensive to migrate, thus South Africa becomes an alternative destination or a transitional place between the home country and the desired location in the north. Thirdly, economic development and structural changes in the economy, such as the expansion of the construction and the tourist industry, attract people and also lead to a higher demand of labour in old and new emerging sectors. Lastly, on-going conflicts and political instability in other regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and the Horn of Africa is pushing people<sup>50</sup> towards South Africa (Segatti & Landau, 2011:12). The rising number of immigrants, particularly refugees

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<sup>50</sup> People from conflicts zones are particularly vulnerable as they are often left without means. In desperate situations they become victims of human trafficking where some of them never reach their destination.

and asylum seekers from conflict zones<sup>51</sup> (e.g. inflow of Zimbabweans in 2000) placed pressure on the young democratic Republic of South Africa which eventually surmounted in xenophobic riots in the country in 2008 (Segatti & Landau, 2011).

The South African economy, nonetheless, is highly dependent on skilled labour (Adepoju, 2008). Since the end of apartheid, a large number of people with a high level of education and skills have left the country. Due to what were viewed as sceptical prospects under black majority rule, between 1989 and 1992 about 70 000 people, mostly skilled whites and their families, emigrated from South Africa, and another 166 000 emigrated from 1998 to 2001 (Adepoju, 2008:29). Since then South Africa has become a sending country of people with higher education. In total, statistics from 2001 showed that about one half of South Africans living abroad had higher-education degrees (Adepoju, 2007:26). According to international statistics, the number of Ph.D.s listed in skills networks abroad was counted as twice as high as the Ph.D. graduate population in South Africa. According to estimations from 2006, South Africa might face a net skills deficit of 1.2 million positions until 2014. However, between 1994 and 2004 only about 15 000 permits have been issued from legal immigration applications from the Southern African Development Community<sup>52</sup> (SADC) (Segatti & Landau, 2011:24).

On the other hand, Altbach (2013:05) points out that South Africa, which has, in comparison to the rest of Africa, “*a relatively advanced higher education system and pays more attractive salaries, also lures talent from elsewhere in Africa*”. In regard to higher education, South Africa is perceived to hold an outstanding position within the continent and hence attracts international academics and students (Sall et al., 2002). Since 1994, the number of foreign students from other African countries registered at South African universities rose from 12 600, to 35 000 in 2001 (Adepoju, 2007:26). However, the question will be whether those students will stay in South Africa, leave for richer countries outside of Africa, or even return to their country of origin. Considering the number of South African Ph.D. graduates who left the country (and

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<sup>51</sup> Until the mid-1990s civil conflicts in Angola, Mozambique as well as on-going conflicts in the DRC or Zimbabwe.

<sup>52</sup> Southern African states first united as a coalition of independent ‘front-line’ states under the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, which, after the end of apartheid, became the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In 1992 the SADC treaty targeted migration within the region. Segatti and Landau (2011:23) point out that “There was clear reluctance from SADC’s ‘richest’ member states (South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia) to institutionalise the principle of free movement”.

probably are going to leave), institutions of higher education will face shortages of personnel to meet their teaching and research tasks.

## **PART II: Key Research Findings and Conclusion**

### **4. Research Design**

#### **4.1. Methodology**

This research follows an explorative approach that aims to capture a picture of the career trajectories of eleven African academics in present day South Africa. Instead of testing hypothesis it is my intention to collect and analyse data in a way in which the topics will emerge throughout the research process (inductive approach). The research is divided in two methodological sections; a qualitative and a quantitative section. In each section I seek to answer different questions to draw at the end a picture about African academics in present day South Africa, with particular reference to UCT and specifically its Humanities faculty. The aim of the quantitative research is to provide some background information on the proportion and origin of all international academics at South African universities. Special interest lies here on academics from other African countries whereby the analysis includes socio-demographic attributes for the purpose of comparison of the national data with the academic data from the University of Cape Town.

As noted in chapter 2, the University of Cape Town is South Africa's oldest university and eventually is ranked as one of the best institutions on the African continent. In fact it is the highest ranked African university in international rankings of QS World and the Times Higher Education world university rankings. UCT therefore attracts international academics from Europe and America but especially academics and researchers from the continent. The interest of the qualitative research was to understand why academics from other African countries who are currently employed at UCT in the Humanities faculty left their country of origin and came to South Africa. The research focuses here is on the motivation (pull factors) and constrains (push factors) which led to their current position as permanent Humanities staff at UCT as a case study.

In the following I will discuss the research methodology for the quantitative (more limited) and then the qualitative (more extensive) approaches.

## **4.2. Quantitative Research: HEDA Database 2011 Analysis of 23 Universities**

This section deals with some limited statistics from the database of the HEDA. With the assistance of the Institution of Planning Department (IPD) of UCT I analysed the most recent (at the time of 2013) 2011 data in order to obtain some descriptive profiles. The main research interest of the quantitative research based on the following questions:

- (1) The proportion and origin of Non-South African academics, at 23 South African universities in 2011
- (2) The proportion and origin of Non-South African academics from other African regions, at 23 South African universities in 2011
- (3) Socio-demographic characteristics of academics from other African countries i.e. gender, race and age, at 23 South African universities in 2011

In this way, these three leading questions were applied to analyse the data nationwide across all 23 universities in South Africa. It was therefore also possible to compare these 2011 findings of UCT with the national data, to position UCT in the national context.

## **4.3. Qualitative Research: In-Depth Interviews with eleven Academics**

The research methodology of the qualitative research followed an empirically analytical approach, i.e. was strictly oriented to the empirical experience of a selected sample. Due to the limited sample of eleven African academics as well as the little which is known about their career path and migratory experiences, the research was orientated towards grounded theory, as it collected and analysed data from interviews using an inductive and explorative perspective.

### **4.3.1 Method of Qualitative Data-Collection**

The aim of the data-collection process was to reveal the reasons why academics left their country of origin and went abroad. In order to understand the meaning of their explanations, it was essential to acquire a more holistic picture of the interview situation.

Due to the above, a narrative approach has been applied. This approach, “*makes a biographical process and experiences in one’s life history accessible*” (Flick, 2002:11). From this narrative, I attempted to understand the deeper meanings behind the respondents’ perceived motivations and the reasons for their actions. For this purpose, the technique of ‘*double hermeneutic*<sup>53</sup>’ (Giddens, 1987:18) was applied.

Semi-structured interviews were facilitated by the design of an interview schedule (see Appendix) which contained the themes of interest and followed the historical sequence of events in the participants’ academic career path (i.e. applied a narrative approach). Each interview was divided in three main parts:

1. Socio-economic background and early education;
2. migratory trajectories and career paths; and
3. future perspective and reflections on their career paths

The interview began by requesting a family background from the interviewee, including their family’s living situation and their early experiences of school in their home country. This was followed by questions regarding the next steps of their academic career, from their entry into university up until their current position at UCT.

Using this method, I was able to ask specific questions, which were essential for comparisons, while granting respondents freedom to formulate their experiences in an as unrestricted way as possible. All interviews were audio recorded<sup>54</sup> so that the researcher was able to fully concentrate on the interviewee, ask more focused questions, and not interrupt the process of storytelling.

The interviews were aimed to retain a natural flow to the interviewee’s story but with a focus on educational and migratory stages. At the end, each story would ideally be able to be reconstructed to depict the trajectory of the interviewee’s point of leaving their country of origin to the point of them going to South Africa and applying at the University of Cape Town.

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<sup>53</sup> The researcher seeks to interpret and thus to understand the interpretation made by his/her research subject in regard to their own interpretation of the situation.

<sup>54</sup> The interviews were conducted in length (up to 2 hours) and the transcription of the interviews was done by myself, whereby the quality of the transcription could thereby be ensured. Secondly during the transcription of the interviews I was able to take a first analysis of the data and hence to identify emerging themes and patterns.

Information was collected to assess and understand respondent's motivations, in the context of each respective period of their lives, in relation to their pursuit of an academic career, and behind their migration to different destinations abroad (within Africa) and overseas (outside of Africa). In regard to their migratory experiences, the focus was placed on their expressed reasons, i.e. their reasons as perceived by them, for going somewhere and the sequence of these different destinations. Experiences abroad were only discussed to a limited degree (in order to keep the length of the interviews, on average, at one hour<sup>55</sup>) and mainly targeted the significant events which led to the next step in their career. In this way the interviews developed naturally, following a sequence of educational and migratory stages.

The final part of each interview included reflections on their own experiences which were based on the claim, "*explanatory models of sociology may [have] not only the categories of an observer included, but must be based on subjective expectations and assessments of the actors*" (Esser, 1993:82). In this sense, the final section gave the interviewees space to assess their own experiences of their past and future. Regarding the latter, preferences were perceived in terms of their career as well their preferred place to live and work. In this section respondent's beliefs of why it is important to pursue an academic career, as well as any intentions to migrate to other destinations or return to their country of origin, were revealed.

After the completion of all interviews, similarities and patterns between them were examined as well as individual differences identified.

#### **4.3.2. Method of Qualitative Data Analysis**

The data analysis followed an inductive and comparative approach. The purpose of the analysis can therefore be described in qualitative terms as to not only understand the individual situations (hermeneutics theory) and singular events (events with fixed space-time coordinates), but also to condense the results in order to emphasise commonalities across all experiences and thus identify repeated events or general trends (Esser, 1993).

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<sup>55</sup> The interview lengths ranged from 45 minutes to two hours but on average each lasted one hour.

The data analysis followed an inductive approach in a way which drew common explanations from all participants of the sample. Therefore the analyses were done individually and across all interviews. Additionally, the individual's experience was placed in the context of broader developments in an attempt to identify some general trends.

The findings of the interviews are presented in different ways in the next chapter. Applied techniques are groupings of similar experiences to highlight patterns and common issues, using quotes, as well as telling the story of a single case. The analysis therefore includes descriptive as well as analytical parts. While techniques which seek to condense information often exclude some valuable information and involve, to a high degree, interpretations by the author, storytelling gives space for readers to reach their own conclusions.

#### **4.3.3. Ethical Considerations**

Before initiating the interview process, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix) in which the topic and the purpose of the research was clearly described. All of the interviewees were informed of the researcher's intention to audio record the interviews<sup>56</sup>.

As the participants consist of a select group of highly ranked people from one institution, they could easily be identified by others including readers of my dissertation, based on their country of origin and academic field. It was therefore, for these ethical considerations, decided to avoid reference to their country of origin in the analysis section of chapter 5. Instead, in chapter 5 provides participants were grouped together by region (West, East, Central, and SADC region) to provide some information of their origin. The specific country is thus revealed only occasionally and if deemed necessary for an understanding of a specific situation, and done in a way as still to preserve anonymity. It is also worth noting that the interview transcripts were only read by myself. My supervisor, also a person from UCT, read the final analysis but it was agreed by me and the interviewers that he would not have access to the actual transcripts. In order to conduct the interviews with the academics I presented my

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<sup>56</sup> None of the interviewees declined to be audio recorded.

research in front of an ethical committee which then granted me access to UCT data to draw my sample.

In addition to this concern to maintain anonymity, other ethical considerations including that the disclosure of some sensitive information which might threaten the position of the academics within the current or a former institution<sup>57</sup>. Therefore too sensitive issues have been excluded purposefully in order to protect the interviewees as a group.

Last but not at least, ethical considerations must be acknowledged regarding the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Here different theoretical power dimensions were present which may have influenced the outcome of the study in one way or another. One of these may have existed due to the relationship between me, as a student at UCT, and the interviewees, as lecturers and professors at the same institution.

In two instances, I knew the interviewee prior to the study through the attendance of university courses. It could be assumed that the interviewees may have excluded information to me due to their former authoritative role in this relationship. Despite not being able to control this aspect, these participants were perceived by me as being open and responsive in regard to my questions. Considerations also need to be directed to socio-demographic differences in regard to gender, age, race and origin. Me, myself a 32 year-old white woman from Germany, could perhaps by some of at UCT be considered to physically embody the complete opposite of the interviewees. The question of concern is to what extent did this difference in demographic characteristics influence responses, i.e. tell the story in an altered way which they assume a foreigner, non-black and woman would understand, or whether they intended (perhaps even unconsciously) to create a certain image of themselves (aspect of social desirability) and thus omitted relevant information. On the other hand, it could also be assumed that in some cases respondents easily disclosed information, opinions or views, as they did not expect social-cultural judgment from the researcher.

The crossover analysis of all interviews and experiences was a helpful technique to identify hints of social desirability. By analysing the meaning of individual experiences and then comparing these to others' experiences, similar situations and hence different

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<sup>57</sup> For instance, if some persons gave very negative responses regarding their current UCT position this could threaten this group in terms of UCT's overall perception of their attitudes to their employment if included and discussed in the findings.

subjective interpretations were identified. Though, to what extent the way of storytelling was consciously altered or was situational cannot be calculated with certainty.

#### 4.3.4. Qualitative Research Sample

The sample was purposefully drawn from UCT's Foreign Academic Humanities Staff Data-Set<sup>58</sup> of July 2013. The selection is based on the theoretical conception of African academics, i.e. black academics from other African countries than South Africa, who are involved in the different roles of universities such as teaching, research and outreach (outlined in chapter 1, see especially the discussion on Castell's concept of universities role in society). Therefore the participants have been selected according the following criteria during 2013:

- The participant originates from an African country other than South Africa, i.e. they held the nationality of another African country and their country of birth is other than that of South Africa<sup>59</sup>.
- The academic has been categorised according to the UCT Foreign Academic Humanities Staff Data-Set as 'African' in the category ethnicity. Despite African the category included; White, Indian, Coloured, Not declared and Other.

The participant held a permanent<sup>60</sup> position as lecturer, senior lecturer or professor. My selection criteria using 'permanent' UCT staff was based on the assumption that an academic who is employed in the status of 'permanent'; firstly has been working for the institution a number of years or if the person just got recently employed as 'permanent' had a reason for long term intentions to stay; secondly UCT 'permanent' staff are assumed to be more integrated in the institutions and involved in the universities functions of 'teaching', 'conduct research' and 'outreach' in a sense of 'engaged scholarship' as in comparison to academics who are only employed as researcher who

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<sup>58</sup> The process involved the presentation of the research proposal to a committee for ethical clearance. Furthermore I had to sign a form to access UCT staff for research purposes.

<sup>59</sup> From the UCT staff data I selected therefore academics whose 'country of birth' as well as their 'nationality' was another African country as South Africa. In this way only those considered as immigrants by the legal South African system were selected.

<sup>60</sup> Permanent academic staff members (including those on probation to obtain tenure/permanency after 3 years of appointment) are those academics whose funding comes from the core UCT funding called "GoB" (General Operating Budget) while other non-permanent academic staff like full-time researchers, even those with say 20 years of work at UCT, are funded from what is called „soft –money“ of funding raised from non-UCT sources.

are then employed as non-permanent staff. In addition to these categories from the dataset other criteria have been included in the sample such as gender, age, marital status and date of employment at UCT. With reference to the Figure 4.3.1. an overview is given of the characteristics of the selected sample.

**Figure 4.3.a.: Socio-demographic data of the sample of Humanities Faculty academics of UCT**

year of birth	Gender	Marital Status	Region of origin	Ethnicity	employment status at UCT	Ranking	years in South Africa
1982	Male	Single	Eastern Africa	African	Permanent	Lecturer	3
1961	Male	Marrrd	Middle Africa	African	Permanent	Professor	8
1978	Male	Single	Middle Africa	African	Permanent	Lecturer Senior	4
1965	Male	Marrrd	SADC	African	Permanent	Lecturer Senior	4
1973	Male	Marrrd	SADC	African	Permanent	Lecturer	10
1973	Male	Marrrd	SADC	African	Permanent	Lecturer Senior	16
1975	Male	Marrrd	SADC	African	Permanent	Lecturer Senior	11
1957	Male	Marrrd	Western Africa	African	Permanent	Lecturer	4
1958	Male	Marrrd	Western Africa	African	Permanent	Professor Senior	10
1965	Male	Marrrd	Western Africa	African	Permanent	Lecturer Senior	1
1967	Male	Marrrd	Africa	African	Permanent	Lecturer	5

Source: UCT Foreign Academic Humanities Staff Data-Set for 2013

In total, eleven academics from the UCT Faculty of Humanities met all the criteria set for the research. All eleven academics have been included into the sample. A striking feature is the fact that all of these participants are male. None of the female staff met the criteria of being ‘permanent’ and ‘African’. The small number of ‘African’ female academics among the higher ranks (senior lecturers, professors) is a phenomenon which is not an exception of this faculty when compared to other institutions nationwide (see for the analysis of all 23 South African universities sub-section 5.1.1.).

The age of the interviewees ranged from 31 to 56 while five out of eleven were in their 40s (between 40 and 48). The rest were equally distributed within their 30s and 50s. Thus, some interviewees were still at the beginning of their academic career while others had already established an academic profile and worked in other institutions before (more information on the findings in chapter 5).

As aforementioned, the disclosure of the specific country in the analysis in chapter 5 had to be rejected due to concerns of anonymity. I am aware that in consequence this will lead to the inability to contextualize within the broad category of African academic migration, but reason of the ethics established within the interviewees have made this necessary. In total, the academics were from seven different countries, with countries from the SADC region and Western Africa being dominant.

## 5. Key Research Findings

### 5.1. Background: Some Statistical Data for 23 South African Universities in 2011

#### 5.1.1. International Academics at South African Universities

In order to get a picture of the situation in the whole country I looked at all South African universities by accessing information from the database of HEDA (Higher Education Data Analyser) from 2011 with the assistance of the Institution of Planning Department (IPD) of UCT. Here I am mainly interested in examining the proportion of academics coming from other African countries compared to other parts of the world, and how can they be characterised in terms of gender, race and age.

In 2011 South Africa had 23 universities (since 2014 there are 25 universities, the analysis only included the 23 of 2011, see the list of all universities in the appendix). Across all 23 universities there are 28,778 employees who are classified in the ranks of professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, lectures and junior lectures<sup>61</sup>. According to the statistics, only 8.6% (2,476)<sup>62</sup> of these academics possess a nationality other than South African<sup>63</sup>. Considering that South Africa is facing a deficit of highly skilled people and especially Ph.D. graduates (see sub-chapter 3.4. and 3.5) to fill position at universities the number seems implausible low. The question here is whether South African universities generally do not attract academics from outside or whether international academics have difficulties to get a position at a higher rank at university.

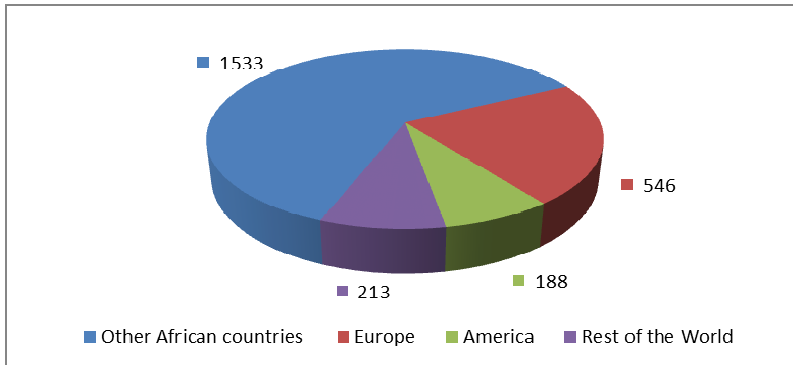
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<sup>61</sup> In HEDA they are grouped under *Instruction/research professional*: A position in which (a) at least 50% of time is spent on instruction and/or research activities, and (b) the position requires a higher education qualification equivalent to at least 4 years of higher education study./ Other ranks which are categorised in this group but are not included in my analysis are ‘Below junior lecturer’ and ‘Undesignated instructional/research professionals at universities’.

<sup>62</sup> As this number seems relatively low the following aspects need to be considered; of 801 (2,8%) academics the data on the nationality is ‘missing’. Of another 358 academics there is ‘no information’ available, which might be the case when the data hasn’t been collected in the respective survey. For another 443 academics the information is categorised as ‘unknown’. The reasons for that can only be speculated, for instance the respective academic doesn’t have a South African nationality or their status hasn’t been clear at the moment of the data collection (e.g. in the case of application of citizenship). Which brings us to the second aspect that there also might be a number of academics who have acquired South African citizenship but held originally another nationality. However, as this remains all subject to speculation it has to be kept in mind that the actual number of foreign academics across all universities might be slightly higher than the given number here.

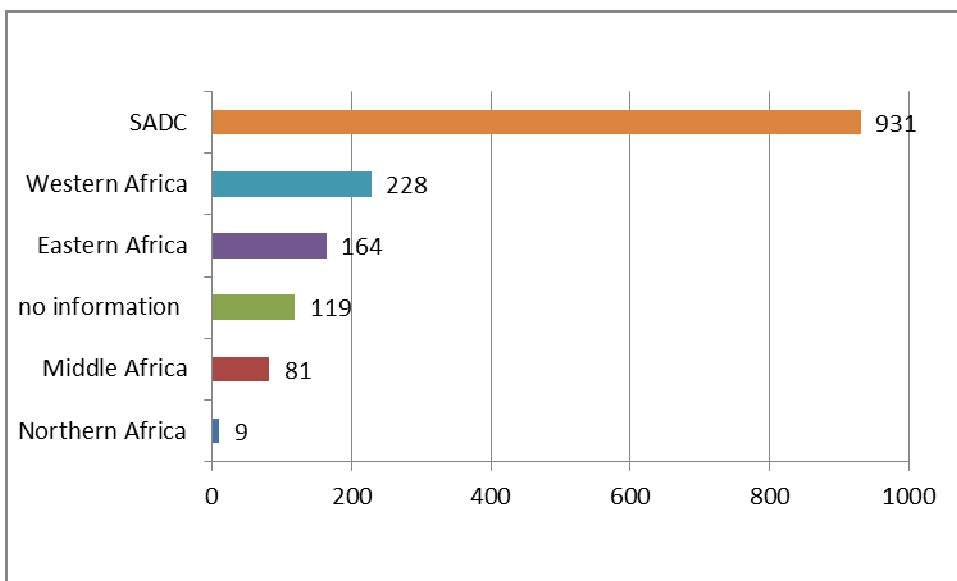
<sup>63</sup> It does not mean that those who hold South African citizenship are born and grown up in South Africa, i.e. the number does not reveal who has adopted the South African citizenship.

Figure 5.1.a: Origin of Non-South African academics



A majority 1,533 (62%) of the international academics who were employed in 2011 hold a nationality of another African country (see figure 5.1.a) which confirms the trend to international migration within Africa (intra-continental migration). The second largest group (546, 22%) of international academics held a nationality of a European country followed by academics coming from Asia, Australia or New Zealand, categorised here as ‘rest of the world’(213, 9%). Academics who originate from America, are the weakest group (188, 8%) among international academics. The strongest sending countries overseas are U.K with 172 academics, U.S. with 128 academics from there and India with 111 academics working at South African Universities.

Figure 5.1.b: Origin of Non-South African academics from other African regions



The South African Development Community<sup>64</sup> (SADC) is the strongest sending region of international academics at South African Universities (see figure 5.1.b). The majority of the academics (541) were from Zimbabwe, which is followed after a huge gap by Botswana (69), Zambia (68) and Lesotho (66). Academics from other boarding countries such as Swaziland (26), Namibia (23) and Mozambique (12) are only represented in small numbers at South African universities.

From Western Africa<sup>65</sup>, the largest group of academics are coming from Nigeria with 168 academics. The majority of academics (110) who come from Eastern Africa hold the nationality of Kenya. Cameroon dominates as a sending country for academics in Middle Africa (62).

Nearly 88% (1347) of the academics who came from an African country other than South Africa were racially classified as 'African'<sup>66</sup>. Only 2.5% (39) were classified as 'White' under the category race. However, of 7% (110) of the academics there is information of their 'race' available. It might assumed that citizen of African countries which are classified as 'White' are more likely to migrate overseas to Europe or the United States due to former colonial ties.

In terms of gender, 22% (331 all race, and 290 only 'African') of the academics were women who hold the nationality of another African country, i.e. 78% (1202 all race, 1057 only 'African') are men. As shown in Figure 3.5.c women (61%) and men (57%) are predominantly found in the rank of lecturer. However, men are stronger represented in the higher ranks of associated professor and professor with accumulated 14% (170) while only 4% (14) of the women are found in those ranks. The reason as to why black female academics are underrepresented among academics from other African countries needs to be explored in the context of South African higher education and also in regard to the migration of academics<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Member states: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

<sup>65</sup> The regions, Western Africa, Eastern Africa, Middle Africa and Northern Africa, are classified according to the United Nations classification of major region of the Africa. SADC countries are not included.

<sup>66</sup> HEDA Race category description: A code indicating a person's race according to the categories used for the 1996 Census. Classification: A African, C Coloured, I Indian, W White, Z no information

<sup>67</sup> Questions of interest here are to what extent women enter higher education in other countries and whether female academics also migrate, where they migrate to, and in what positions they can be found.

Figure 5.1.c: Gender proportion of academics from other African countries

Gender	Female	Male
Professor	4	79
Associate professor	10	91
Senior lecturer	52	236
Lecturer	201	691
Junior lecturer	64	104
<b>Total</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>1202</b>

The majority (41%, 627) of the 1,533 academics coming from other African countries were between 30 and 39 years old, which seems to correlate with the ranking as lecturer as strongest among men and women. Nearly 31% (473) were in 2011 between their 40s and 49<sup>th</sup> birthday and only 14% (211) were older than that (up to 71 years old). The strongest age groups, in terms of numbers per age group, were found from 30 years up to 45years, which make 64% of population.

In conclusion academics from other African countries who were employed at South African Universities in 2011 were predominantly ‘Africans’ from Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Kenya, male, between their 30s and mid-forties and found in middle rank positions such as lecturer or senior lecturer.

### 5.1.2. International Academics at the University of Cape Town

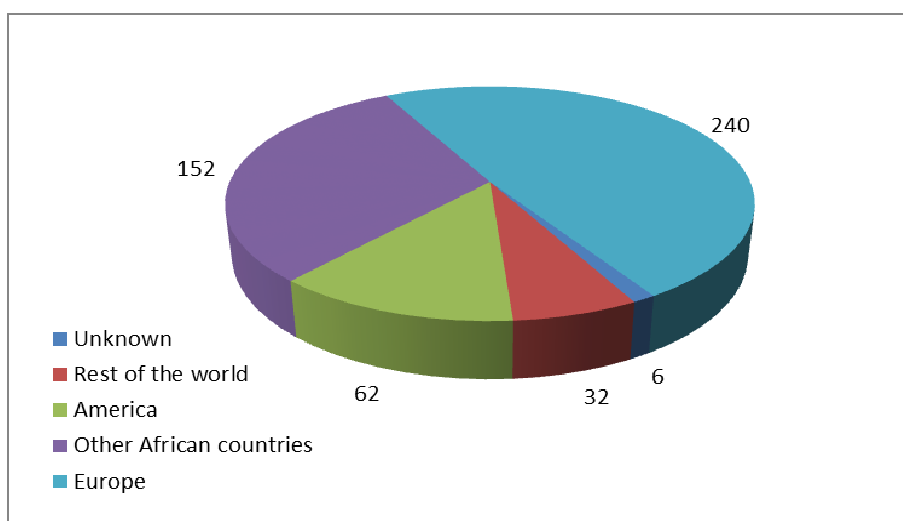
At the University of Cape Town were in 2011 according to this same HEDA database 2,485 academics<sup>68</sup> employed. 80,2% (1,993) of these were of South African nationality. Thus the share of nearly 20% (492) of the academic staff coming from other countries than South Africa lies over the national share of 8.6% (as noted above).

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To answer these questions, it is important to get a holistic picture of academics in Africa as well as to foster a strong academic base in Africa.

<sup>68</sup> Ranks: Professor, Associated Professor, Senior lecturer, Lecturer and Junior Lecturer.

Figure 5.1.d: Origin of Non-South African academics at UCT



The share of academics who are coming from other African countries, however, is in comparison to national statistics (62%) lower with 31% (152). The dominant sending region is Europe with 49% (240) which lies significantly over the national share of 22%. Equal to the national statistic SADC is also here the dominant sending region (68.4%) with most academics 56 (37%) coming from Zimbabwe. The second largest group holds the nationality from a country from Western Africa (15.1%), then Eastern Africa (9.2%) and only a small number of academics originate from Middle Africa (5.3%) and Northern Africa (1.3%).

83% (126) of those coming from another African country were racially classified as 'African', 7.9% (12) as Indian and the rest were classified as white (4) and colored (3). 31% (47) of the 152 academics from other African countries were women which therefore lies over the national share of male and female academics from other African countries. Here as well women (64%) and men (47%) are dominantly found in the rank of a lecturer position. However, men are found more in numbers and proportion in the higher ranks, such as senior lecturer with 25% (26) to 15% (7) of the women. Only one woman at UCT from another African country was in 2011 employed as a professor and only 5 men.

The age group between 30 and 39 is the strongest with 55 academics (36.2%) while the age group between 50 and above is the smallest group with only 21 academics (14%) which indicates that UCT seems foremost attractive to academics who are at the beginning of their academic career. However, it also shows that either UCT on one hand

fails to attract more established African academics or that young academics maybe also leave the institution early and either go into the private sector or migrate to other countries either within Africa or overseas.

In comparison to the national analysis UCT attracts more academics from Europe than from other African countries. Among African academics Zimbabwean represent the strongest group of international academics who are mainly found in the ranks of lecturer and senior lecturer. However, the general small number of academics from other African countries as well the underrepresentation of professors among male and female academics as well as the relatively young age group of academics indicates that UCT has not significantly established a Pan-African body of intellectuals.

## **5.2. Key Interview Findings of 11 Academics from Humanities Faculty at UCT**

### **5.2.1. Socio-Demographic Background and Early Education**

Empirical studies have found that beneficiaries of higher education in Africa are explicitly from families of upper socio-economic statuses (Lungwangwa, 1991). Previous studies on higher education in Africa have either ignored the social origin of students, or assumed these students to be “*elite-based without empirical evidence*” (Sall et al 2002:14). The interviews with the selected sample of eleven Humanities faculty academics has, however, illustrated an existing combination of determinants which play an important role in early education and the way into higher education.

Growing up in a rural setting and working on a farm was, for the majority of interviewees, part of their childhood experience. In terms of parental occupations<sup>69</sup>, their fathers were in most cases formally employed whereas their mothers primarily stayed at home, looking after the children and sometimes also working on the farm. Nevertheless, most of the parents (or other relatives) hadn't received any higher education despite professional training or going to colleges, e.g. for teacher training. Being a teacher was one of the desirable professions for black Africans during the period of colonial authority and was thus associated with a higher socio-economic status. Another participant whose father was a mine worker explained that working for

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<sup>69</sup> It must be considered that the parents of those interviewed still lived under colonial authority with very little opportunity for social-economic mobilisation. Many only received primary education up to secondary or high school. Some received occupational training at colleges, such as teacher training. Some of the parents were school teachers.

the mining company was perceived in his country as a privilege<sup>70</sup>, because it meant a secure job with additional amenities such as access to so-called ‘mining schools’, which guaranteed better education in comparison to other public schools.

Describing his childhood, one participant stated during his interview that he felt privileged<sup>71</sup> in comparison to others, as *“I didn’t realise people were so poor. I was quite privileged. My parents were quite, they were teachers, they could afford things”*. However, in this study it must be considered that all interviewees came from fairly large families with more than three, and up to eleven, siblings. This means that in some families the available income had to be shared and due to this sometimes not all of the children benefited. As one interviewee explains, *“those days my parents didn’t see the need for everybody to go to school, they had too many children and needed the children to work as a labourer on the farm”*. He adds, *“I was the only lucky one!”* as he received the privilege of attending school.

In all cases there was an extended family situation which played an important role in the provision of emotional care as well as in terms of financial support. Sall et al. (2002) point out that research on higher education often ignored the aspect of *“solidarity networks”* which students *“mobilized to gain access to higher education”*. The outcome of the interviews, illustrated that the financing of the education of children was an extended family effort. As one interviewee explains, *“There was an extended family situation for us ... they were also contributing to my welfare, to my education. So I had a whole support system.”*

The majority of interviewees attended school after their country gained political independence, so only their first years of schooling were attended when their country was under foreign authority<sup>72</sup>. As one describes, *“I was one of the first to actually get into mix-schools and that school that I went to in high school was formerly a ‘White-only’ school”*. This indicates that higher education was then still only for the minority who were actually able to pursue an academic degree (postgraduate and higher).

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<sup>70</sup> During this participant’s youth, mining (or a greater share of mining) was in the hands of the government. Nowadays mining is privatised and amenities such as schooling for workers are no longer included.

<sup>71</sup> This respondent came from a family where the parents were teachers, and the uncles also had positions in schools and university. Becoming a teacher was one of the desired professions during the period of colonial authority for black Africans as it was associated with a higher socio-economic status.

<sup>72</sup> Before this the school system was stratified by race which would classify schools into *“Black Schools”*, for black Africans and *“White Schools”*, accessible only for children from European families.

Attending a missionary school as well as boarding school was a common experience during the first years of education for nearly all of the respondents. In some cases they attended schools which they labelled as “*prestigious*” or “*elite*”, as the following quote exemplifies; “*It was one of those elite boarding schools that had been set up by government, specifically for that purpose of making sure that they would produce the next generation of educated (people). So while you were there it was taken for granted that you were going to go to higher education.*” The experience of boarding school, which was in most cases during secondary or high school, was for many interviewees their first experience of ‘being away from home’. Many developed their interest in learning here as well as the idea of attending university.

Nearly all interviewees were the first generation, after their parents, to go to university<sup>73</sup>. Nevertheless, when asked why they decided to attend university, it was often responded that “*everyone was doing it*”. Hence, going to university was experienced as a collective choice among their peer group which emphasises the importance of boarding schools, at which peer groups played an important role. Despite the interviewees experiencing it as a natural process to go to university after high school, higher education was still not accessible for everyone as the following excerpt illustrates.

Question: *So was it normal at your time that everyone would go to university?*

Interviewee: *No, no, no. I mean there is no normal for everyone, for parents to compete to have their children go to school. It is normal for them to do their best to have them go to primary school, it is normal to see the value of school. It is normal. But it is not normal that everyone would go to the university [...]it is normal that everyone would want to go the university, but it is not normal that everyone ends up in the university.*

Some interviewees emphasised that they were the only one in their village to attend university, which indicates that, even though there was a common aspiration for higher education, it was still the minority who actually pursued a degree (postgraduate and higher).

However, after the years of independence, access to higher education was less a matter of socio-economic status than expected. Some interviewees stressed the fact that, at their time of entering university, governments were ambitious to raise the level of

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<sup>73</sup> Most participants went to university straight after high school/secondary school.

quality of education<sup>74</sup> and to expand the school system. As one states, “*For my class, things were beginning to open up*”.

The newly elected government also invested heavily in education. In many cases interviewees described a situation where the government subsidised their higher education by providing grants or bursaries as well as making loans available to students. It was a “*fantastic system*”, as one interviewee says, which opened up opportunities for the formerly disadvantaged population. “*I think during our time [...] that system enabled very poor people from very poor backgrounds who couldn’t have afforded to go to university, they were really poor people*”. Evidence of this statement was provided by interviewees who said that their families wouldn’t have been able to afford their higher education but could do so because they received a scholarship to go to university.

Some interviewees experienced a second shift when, at school or at the university, fees were introduced. One of the interviewees from Southern Africa explains:

*“By that time my country was going through difficult times with the IMF and World Bank. So economically the country was not doing well and that also affected the pay for the teachers [...] the other side is they started introducing fees [...]. At high school we started paying. I remember in one of these years we had to go on the streets, demonstrating against the introduction of school fees, because that was an IMF idea, saying you have to recover money from the user fees”*

In some cases, as in the above, interviewees were involved in demonstrations against the introduction of fees. These were sometimes followed by the closing of the university for up to a year or longer. In one case an interviewee could not finish his studies at a university as it was not clear when it would re-open. In another instance, the participant continued his studies at the same institution after a one year break.

#### **5.2.1.1. Some Conclusions about the Background and Education**

In the debate on higher education, the argument that higher education would only benefit the elite was often used in favour of primary education. Consequently, students of higher education were considered as ‘a privileged group’ (Castell, 2001; Sall et al., 2002). Privileged groups are assumed to have access to capital (income or property).

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<sup>74</sup> One respondent’s parent was actually a school inspector who would monitor that the standards of quality set by the government were met at the schools.

Some interviewees certainly enjoyed an upper socio-economic status in terms of access to material wealth and of an income above the average<sup>75</sup>. Lungwangwa points out that, “students from such families experience very little opportunity costs especially in terms of income forgone because families are economically well off” (1991:13).

However, as other examples illustrate, there was no real ‘privilege’ which referred to actual capital. The perception of ‘being privileged’ was drawn from a comparison to a specific reference group from a close environment, e.g. siblings, fellow students, other families from the village. Considering that the majority of interviewees grew up in rural settings after independency where the majority of the rural population was involved in subsistence farming, small differences such as access to income or, as in the example above, access to schools, was perceived as a ‘privilege’. In such cases I like to use the term ‘symbolic privilege’ as the value is more symbolic than the actual material value.

Regarding the socio-economic status of each interviewee’s family, this was only partially responsible for their way into higher education. What was significant, according to analysis, was a combination of events and attributes which can be differentiated according to their occurrence on the analytical levels:

*On the macro level:*

- Political shift after independence which led to accessible, free, or at least government-supported educational systems.
- National aspiration for higher education and thus support (even if just symbolically) from communities.

*On the meso level:*

- ‘Real’ higher socio-economic status, e.g. parents were working for government or in higher ranks in the economy, or ‘symbolically privileged’, e.g. parents possessed historically privileged professions such as teacher, miner etc. In both cases education was valued by the parents and acknowledged as key for a higher living standard.
- An extended family: access to shared childcare provision and financial support to send children to boarding school.

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<sup>75</sup> For example, in one case the participant’s father worked for the government and the interviewee described a situation of financial security and privileged amenities.

- Boarding school as first experience of ‘being away from home’ and positive peer pressure at school in regard to learning and seeking higher education.

*On the individual level*

- Excellent educational outcomes at high school as a prerequisite to entering university.
- Ambition to attend university, and the perception of going to university as a ‘natural process’ following success at school.

Thus the way into university was not just an individual or structural matter, but was influenced by political aspects, socio-economic status and individual aspirations which all influenced each other and eventually led to the individual’s pursuit of higher education.

### **5.2.2. Migratory Trajectories and Career Paths**

As mentioned in the research design, the interviews were conducted applying a narrative approach which requested interviewees to describe their individual educational history and career path up to their point of employment at UCT. The aim of this section is thus to reconstruct the trajectories of the interviewees by identifying significant determinants which led to their emigration from their country of origin and finally to their immigration to South Africa.

This sub-chapter is divided into two sections. The first part aims to explain why interviewees left their country, i.e. what are the perceived reasons for migration to another country. The reasons and circumstances which are perceived to be influential when leaving a country will be observed.

In the second section, it will be examined why interviewees initially decided to come to South Africa, what their motives were and at which stage of their career path they were during that point of movement..

### 5.2.2.1. Leaving the Country of Origin

Excluding one person<sup>76</sup>, all participants acquired their postgraduate degrees, including Ph.D.s, somewhere other than in their home country. Consequently, migration to another destination was already part of their higher education. Interestingly, all interviewees<sup>77</sup> commenced their undergraduate studies in their home country but studied their postgraduate degree in another, either within Africa (abroad) or outside of Africa (overseas).

The majority (six out of ten) left their home country to begin a master's program at a university outside of their home country. All of those who did their master's at a foreign university also acquired their Ph.D. abroad or overseas. Only three academics left their home country after having completed their master's degree to do their Ph.D. at a foreign institution. Thus, among interviewees, international migration (or intercontinental migration) was a common experience which suggests that the migration of interviewees was to a great extent a structural matter rather than an individual decision.

The majority of interviewees went overseas, i.e. outside of Africa. Destinations where an academic degree was pursued were those which Meyer, Kaplan and Charum (2002) call "*the hegemonic triad*", referring to Western Europe, North America or Japan. Altbach (2013) argues that, due to demographic changes, the rich countries of the north experience a skills shortage and thus try to attract international students from developing and middle-income countries.

However, despite destinations being available outside the continent, some interviewees also pursued their higher education in countries within Africa, namely Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe<sup>78</sup>. In regard to Botswana<sup>79</sup>, Adepaju (2007) observes that the country became a major destination<sup>80</sup> for immigrants from the continent in recent years.

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<sup>76</sup> This participant received all his academic degrees in his home country, but went overseas for one year to conduct some research for his Ph.D.

<sup>77</sup> In one case, the participant commenced an undergraduate programme at a university in their home country but wasn't able to finish it and had to leave the country. As a consequence, he received all his academic degrees abroad.

<sup>78</sup> The interviewee who went to Zimbabwe restarted an undergraduate programme, as he wasn't able to continue his studies in his home country. Zimbabwe at that time (1996) was a stable country with a flourishing economy. The University of Zimbabwe was a respectable institution with high standards.

<sup>79</sup> Botswana was the destination of choice for three interviewees. One acquired an academic degree and two others worked there, one as a teacher another as a professor at the university.

<sup>80</sup> However, he also points out that Botswana is also a migrant-sending country, not only attracting skilled professionals but also skilled migrants who leave the country for other destinations (Adepaju, 2007:30).

Contributing to this phenomenon is rapid economic growth, stability and relaxed laws on residence and entry which were introduced in the early 1990s.

Adepoju states, that, *“highly skilled professionals have found politically transformed post-apartheid South Africa and the booming economy of Botswana attractive alternatives to Europe, North America and the Gulf States”* (Adepoju, 2007:27). This is especially true of South Africa which has generated a regional brain drain by attracting skilled migrants from its neighbouring countries since 1994 (more information on South Africa as new destination see section 3.2.3 ).

#### **5.2.2.2. Economic Crisis, Political Conflicts and Institutional Change**

The causes of Africa’s ‘brain drain’ is argued to be *“driven by political ‘push’ at home and economic ‘pull’ from abroad”* (Mkandawire , 2005:16).

Interviewee (A)<sup>81</sup>: *“You could be a graduate and still couldn’t find a job [...]the economy was not expanding. It couldn’t absorb the graduates so I applied to so many universities. I remember that year I got a scholarship to go to the university of Oslo in Norway. I also got a scholarship for Canada and for Japan”.*

Interviewee (B): *“Because of the conflict [in my country] and Botswana was doing well, the economy was strong. I mean teaching wasn’t that kind of job [...] the government pays you minimal and you can’t get yourself out of poverty even though you have an undergraduate degree. So it was the only way. But I also believed I had the potential for postgraduate studies. There were hardly postgraduate studies in my home country, so my main motivation was to do a master’s and Botswana was offering master’s”.*

In both cases a negative perspective of the job market as well as at the political situation in the home country pushed participants to look for other opportunities to continue their studies abroad. In the second case the interviewee also mentions the lack of postgraduate studies which will be discussed in the next sub-section.

In the case of interviewee (A), despite a weak economy the political situation in his country was stable. In contrast, the situation for interviewee (B) was quite different. He explains that, at the time he was living there, rebels were fighting the government and

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<sup>81</sup> The analysis and presentation of the findings include all 11 interviewees. The labelling A, B; C and so forth is used to distinguish the different interview excerpts in each sub-section. Therefore the labels can refer to different persons, i.e. do not indicate one and the same person across the whole chapter 5.

put the country into a very politically and economically unstable situation. Due to the marginal payment he received from the government he found himself in an economically insecure position where his capacity to act was very limited. Nevertheless, he exploited what was accessible to him in the form of his aspiration for a higher degree and a friend (who left the country earlier due to the conflict) who helped him go to Botswana.

In another instance, an interviewee described a situation whereby a fairly well-functioning educational system in the form of a university which existed in his country, initially funded by government during his undergraduate studies, was later closed down.

*“They were closing because students were rioting. There was violence because they wanted more money, they had a bursary system where the government pays you money but then they said they are not going to pay anymore. So they closed the university and so of course it was a year of elections so they couldn’t open it because they knew when they open it they bring trouble for students. So the whole year [...] so I skipped the border and I went to [a neighbouring country].”*

Institutions of higher education were clearly dramatically affected by economic crisis and political shifts in several ways, such as through the recruitment of academics<sup>82</sup> as well as general staff payments which in turn affected the quality of teaching (as well as the quality of their management) and therefore the enrolment of students, which clearly affected lower class students at most institutions and reinforced a more unjust educational system.

As shown in chapter two, from the late 1980s onwards African governments were forced to align their education policies to the doctrine of an expansion of primary education at the expense of higher education. In the case of Zambia, as well as in many other countries, the World Bank endeavored to stop the expansion of student enrolment *“to avoid costs of university education”* (Chitonge, 2012:47). Thus, the situation for universities changed drastically after the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which placed institutions of higher education in a disastrous financial position. Obong Oula, in his research on the University of Makerere in

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<sup>82</sup> As mentioned in chapter two, African universities first went through a phase of Africanisation which involved the recruitment of black African academics. Later, during the years of SAPs and economic crisis as well as political unrest, academics and intellectuals (both black and white) went overseas to follow their relatives while others were forced into exile.

Uganda, pointed out that as a consequence of the new policies, “*so much concern has been placed on generation of revenue and reduction of spending to the extent that teaching, learning and scholarships have been neglected in favour of explicitly quantifiable and valued educational objectives*” (2002:11).

Due to various crises of a political-economic nature, followed by international interventions and SAPs, the deterioration of the educational system became a condition with long-lasting effects in those countries as in the case of West Africa and Southern Africa.

### **5.2.2.3. Lack of Postgraduate Programmes**

The lack of postgraduate programmes at home universities was a central reason why students decided to study at a foreign institution. Thus, leaving the country after undergraduate studies were completed seemed to be perceived as the ‘norm’ especially for those coming from small countries in which only one or two universities existed at the time. For example:

Question: *Was there no opportunity to do your master’s in your home country?*

Interviewee (A): *No, not really. Because you would do general sociology and not rural sociology, that’s what I was interested in. That combined, that was interdisciplinary. Besides I was not interested to do a local program, I was always interested to go outside the country. Because the subject I was doing, they [the home university] were not doing it, in terms of research but in terms of the courses. Ja, that’s why I went elsewhere.*

The reason why this participant attended a foreign university is argued in relation to the research he wanted to conduct but which wasn’t conceivable at his home university. However, even though he went overseas for his master’s degree and Ph.D., in both cases he conducted field research in his home country, returning from overseas several times<sup>83</sup>. His perceived wish “*to go outside the country*” for further studies was therefore

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<sup>83</sup> Nearly all of those interviewed wrote their master’s or doctoral thesis on a subject relevant to their home country.

motivated by a lack of postgraduate programmes (especially interdisciplinary programmes) rather than an interest in exploring another country<sup>84</sup>.

A major aspect of this development, or lack of development, of teaching programmes was the introduction of SAPs in the late 1980s, which withdrew public funding from African universities but also proposed neo-liberal reforms (Chitonge, 2012).

As explained in chapter two, these policies in universities were imposed with cost-savings which came at the expense of quality teaching and learning and, as Obong Oula pointed out, “*transformed the university more into a revenue generating, rather than a knowledge producing and transmitting institution*” (2002:3).

Undergraduate studies are, first of all, more general and unspecialised than advanced postgraduate studies which are more intensive in supervision (lower student-to-lecturer ratio). Secondly, postgraduate studies often require advanced equipment to conduct basic research. One of the interviewees described their experience when initially studying medical science:

*Interviewee (B): “When I went there they didn’t have any equipment. So it was very discouraging ... Most of the things you learnt about it they would say, ‘this is on the market now but you only get it if you go to America, Germany or England’. In my home country it was all in books [...] laboratories were not well equipped.”*

Particularly in science, research can become frustrating if the right equipment is not available and this can stimulate the idea of going abroad for further studies<sup>85</sup>. It can be argued that teaching and research in humanities are less expensive and this department should thus be less affected by these policies, but the contrary is the case as emphasised by Oula (2002). As explained earlier, African universities were adapted to produce more market-relevant skills and thus focused on faculties such as commerce and business administration. Humanities was not a priority for funding which meant that institutions lacked money to acquire literature and to pay academic staff such as professors and lecturers (Oula 2002). Considering that postgraduate training is much more capital intensive in regard to physical capital (e.g. advanced equipment, literature, facilities) and human capital (professors for supervision) than undergraduate studies, master’s and

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<sup>84</sup> After his studies, this participant returned to his home country and only reluctantly came to South Africa due to political upheavals.

<sup>85</sup> In this case the interviewee could not continue his studies as the university closed for a year.

particularly Ph.D. programmes were not available at some universities or only offered for a few select courses as in the case of interviewee (A).

The focus on undergraduate studies rather than postgraduate, and foremost Ph.D., programmes at African universities was a very significant aspect for the migration of my interviewees. Leaving the country after the undergraduate studies were completed became a perceived 'norm', as the following interview excerpt illustrates.

Interviewee (C): *"It's always good to go out. Once you did your undergraduate [studies] some people prefer and I really bind to that, if you do your entire undergraduate [studies] somewhere go and do your postgraduate at another institution, if it's the same country or another country. That was always the practice. You go somewhere and then you can go back if you want to."*

The perception of this participant of going away as 'normal' was stimulated by other lecturers and professors from his university in his home country. Some students went abroad or overseas to pursue further studies (master's degree or Ph.D.) but then returned to the institution. Whereas interviewee (C) only commenced his studies in 2002, his supervisors must have studied ten or even twenty years before this, during the time which Mamdani (1993) calls the "*university crisis*".

As the interviewee described, the situation still persists in his country due to economic downturn and political instability. This makes it likely that students will seek the opportunity to pursue their desired education and career path elsewhere. As in the case of the interviewees, opportunities were found overseas where they received very good supervision (many interviewees emphasised their good relationship with their supervisor), an enabling work environment, very well-equipped libraries (one interviewee went overseas especially because of the impressive collection of African literature at an overseas university), and also computer-related resources such as access to internet.

#### **5.2.2.4. Contacts and Funding**

Movements are "*demand-driven by the recruitment countries*" argues King (1998:269). He points to the different actors involved within the migration process, such as companies, employers and the government, who regulate these migrants (Cohen, 1987;

King 1998). According to the perspective of the interviewees, contacts and access to funding played a significant role in their career paths.

Regarding contacts, the following pattern emerged. Relationships are established through personal contact, for instance student fellows, friends, academic staff or other people inside or outside the home university (e.g. colleagues, former teachers) who are related in some way to an institution abroad (university or funding organisation). Meyer et al. (2002) find that “*scientists from the academic research sector move through quite personal networks*”. These people have two main functions:

1. They inform the person about the destination abroad as well as about the institution (or a certain faculty) and provide knowledge about the procedure behind the application for admission and/or funding.
2. They establish contact with the institution or set up contact with other key persons abroad.

After they applied to their selected universities<sup>86</sup>, the final decision was in most cases based on funding. In some cases the preferred university could not be attended due to a lack of funding<sup>87</sup>. The following interview excerpt illustrates the importance of contacts and funding.

*Interviewee (A): “I planned to do my Ph.D. in England ... but they were looking for scholarship funding and before the funding could come a different thing came up which was easier, in fact I did my Ph.D. in [another country in Europe] simply because I didn’t have to look for funding. I would be employed so I would have some income to do my Ph.D. in-between [...]. So when that came through I forgot about England. So the funding was ready available. It wasn’t circumstantial, it wasn’t deliberately a decision of choice, I have to choose between three universities, no it was simply a very pragmatic decision [...] the money was there ... the provision of a position as research assistant which included doing fieldwork in certain research locations. The focus was on Africa, they would do fieldwork in Africa ... so it was a lot easier for me. Language wasn’t a problem, because everything was done in English.”*

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<sup>86</sup> In most cases either the home university provided information on universities abroad or the person contacted the local embassy to get information.

<sup>87</sup> Sometimes a scholarship was granted for tuition fees but when no funding for living expenses was offered, the choice was given to attend the institution with a full scholarship.

This interview excerpt illustrates that a combination of different reasons led this participant to a certain destination. The access to financial means is emphasised as the most significant consideration when selecting a certain institution abroad. The research focus on Africa as well as the absence of a language barrier was considered not as decisive, but rather convenient. However, these aspects can be linked to the existence of contacts with people linked to certain institutions. Relationships are built on a common language as well as common areas of interest. In this case different contacts were established with people from academia who have similar research interests (e.g. a focus on Africa) and who are linked to certain institutions and thereby provide access to this institution by establishing links to key persons, i.e. holders of key position within the institution. In this way language and common interests (or area of expertise) function as prerequisites for the establishment of contacts while funding remains as the last determining factor.

However, in the excerpt the participant further explains that he initially planned to go to a different country abroad, which he got in contact with during his studies in his home country as well as during research journeys to Europe. As in this case, many of the interviewees hold contacts at more than one university and their final decision was often based on the availability of funding. Funding, therefore, determined which university interviewees attended despite contacts in other institutions. Nevertheless, contacts are important because they often initiate the idea of studying at a foreign institution. The first contact is often in the home country and is a professor or fellow student who studied outside the country (or conducted some research there) and then functions as a positive 'role model' when going away.

The observation of contacts also indicates to some extent the return migration of academics, as one interviewee describes: "*some of my teachers, they left when I was in first year, they went there to do their Ph.D.s [...] by the time I was finishing they are actually coming back to take up positions*". Some of them studied abroad in places such as South Africa, the United States or in Germany, as emphasised by an employee, "*So it was not uncommon to go and come back*". In this instance the interviewee comes from a fairly economically and politically stable country containing more than 20 universities. Return migration can be lesser expected in small countries which have very few universities and/or where the economic-political situation is uncertain.

However, even visits (a return for a short period) from academics to their home institutions could inspire students to follow the footsteps of these people who have had positive experiences of certain destinations and acquired respected positions abroad/overseas or in the home country, for example, a professor, dean or even vice chancellor.

Considering that some of the interviewees' postgraduate studies were not, or only to a limited degree, available, especially in small countries with only one or two universities, going abroad or overseas was a common practice which led to a kind of chain migration, i.e. students or academics who migrate to foreign destinations set the path for the next generation.

Meyer et al. (2002) states that the “*mobility of high skilled people is everything, but the simple result of push and pull factors operating at a global scale [which are] intermediary actors and mediators – human as well as non-human – make the transfer possible*”.

Countries, especially from the hegemonic triad, have the capacity to easily attract students with their adequate funding programmes, particularly those from countries which are economically as well as politically unstable. From this perspective, institutions of higher learning in Africa which lack the means to provide a postgraduate programme as well as scholarships to support local students lose the competition of preserving their students and lose them to other foreign institutions.

In the context of ‘brain drain’, Meyer et al. (2002) point out that the outflow of skilled people (here academics), will hit small countries (e.g. Zambia) harder than bigger countries<sup>88</sup>, who have the resources and can more easily compensate for the outflow of skilled individuals by attracting skilled labour from other countries.

### **5.2.3. Coming to South Africa**

As mentioned earlier, it will now be examined why interviewees came to South Africa. Firstly a brief overview will be given of when they arrived and from where they came.

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<sup>88</sup> Additionally, emigration of skilled persons often also leads to an outflow of private wealth. Meyer et al. (2002) point here to Sub-Saharan Africa with large migration flows of skilled and middle-class people, where an estimated 34% of its wealth is abroad.

All of the interviewees in this study migrated to South Africa after 1994, the earliest being in 1998, to take up a position at a South African university. The last to move did so to South Africa at the beginning of 2013 to undertake a lecturer position at UCT. The majority of the interviewees arrived between 2003 and 2006, some of them to take up a position. Others came to South Africa to study and then stayed on.

The reasons and time of each participant's movement to South Africa differs, but commonly all attended university either as a student or a member of the academic staff. It has been mentioned here that not all participants were previously employed at a university; some were working within the private sector or were employed as a researcher at a national organisation. It is also worth noting that nearly all of the participants stayed in the country after coming to South Africa. Only two of those interviewed returned to a previous destination<sup>89</sup>, where they took up a position for one year. After that they returned to South Africa.

From this information South Africa seems attractive for those who wish to pursue an academic career as it offers positions for people with higher educational degrees (Ph.D.s). Considering that post-1994 many members of the highly-skilled South African labour force immigrated<sup>90</sup> to other destinations overseas, the demand for people with higher education has increased (Adepoju, 2007). Secondly, South Africa has become, for some interviewees, a second home where some of them have lived for more than fifteen years (and on average seven years). Thus, South Africa is for the interviewees not experienced as a transition country, serving as a destination between Africa and those overseas. Contrary to this, all interviewees from overseas did not return (to their overseas destination) but instead remained in South Africa.

The following sub-section will describe the different perceived reasons and motivations behind the interviewee's decisions to come to South Africa.

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<sup>89</sup> One of these returned to a university in Europe where he pursued his doctoral degree, the other took up a contract position at an international organisation in East Africa, where he did his post-doctorate.

<sup>90</sup> Adepoju, states that about one half of South Africans (mostly 'white' South Africans) living abroad has higher-education degrees (2007:26).

### 5.2.3.1. Escaping Economic-Political Crisis

In a few cases interviewees expressed their reason for coming to South Africa because of unrest and political instability in their home country. This is illustrated in the following two interview excerpts.

Interviewee (A): *“Most of the universities were closed because this was a period of military dictatorship. There was an election and they [the military] refused to hand over power [...] there were always strikes and demonstrations and in 1996 the university was closed for ten months of the year [...] I worked for a newspaper house and after that I just decided to come.”*

In this case the interviewee acquired all his postgraduate studies in his home country (West Africa) but went overseas for a year to conduct research.

Interviewee (B): *“They were looking for someone [...] but this friend of mine came literally to my house and said ‘hey you can be a billionaire in Iraq but what does it matter’. So in my home country things were turning to the worst, so he said ‘what are you doing, come’. Ja. It was an income lost for me but intellectually it made sense and my wife also pushed me ‘let’s go, let’s go’. That is why I came to South Africa.”*

In this case, interviewee (B) studied overseas but returned to his home country (in Southern Africa) after completing his Ph.D. In 2003, when he left his country, he was working for a respected research institution.

In both of the above cases the situation in the home country worsened politically and economically. Both interviewees were also reluctant to leave the country but were convinced by a friend who was already working at a South African university and, through this person, they gained employment. Contrary to the neo-classical main argument of migration higher income was not the determining factor in regard to their choice of the destination. Instead, the wish to stay in the continent as well as the perception of South Africa as a stable environment, were more prevalent among the interviewees.

The outflow of intellectuals from a home country was described on a bigger scale by other interviewees. For example:

Interviewee (C): *“What was happening is that we lost a lot of skilled lecturers, that was when there were a lot of political problems and people were moving out. So most of our professors were relocating, some were going to Australia, some to England, some came*

*here [South Africa]. So I was doing my studies but then my supervisor went away, so I had to stop and look for some stable place to do my studies.”*

Interviewee D emphasised that his country “*lost their intelligentsia and educated middle class*” during the time of political unrest. This is a process which still continues as the situation of this country has not yet improved. As this participant states, “*that’s quite sad, because you lose this intellectual investment. [The country] invested a lot in my generation and now to lose it to the world is quite sad.*”

In regard to the study, the loss of intellectuals from other African countries turned out to a `brain gain` for South African universities which received highly skilled people. Nevertheless - as it will be seen in sub-chapter 5.3. - professional relationships of the interviewees to the home country at least to a small extent compensate the lost of these intellectuals.

#### **5.2.3.2. Job offer from UCT**

In six cases the interviewees came directly to UCT when they moved to South Africa. All had previously been outside of Africa for study purposes.

In one case an interviewee had completed his Ph.D. in Europe and held a lecturer position at the same university. When asked why he came to South Africa he responded that he always wanted to teach in Africa. He admitted having applied to the university in his home country but not having received a position<sup>91</sup>. His perception of UCT’s reputation as “*the best university*”<sup>92</sup> led him to apply there when a position became available and he was encouraged by his supervisor (from the university in Europe).

A similar situation is described by another interviewee who lived for over eight years in Europe (completing his master’s degree and Ph.D.). When having nearly completed his Ph.D. he looked for a position in Africa or Europe<sup>93</sup>. He emphasises that he wanted to return to Africa and didn’t hesitate when he received an offer from UCT.

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<sup>91</sup> No reason was stated for this decline of position, but as mentioned at another time, he was previously perceived as too critical at his home university and too radical in his thinking, an aspect which may have influenced the application selection.

<sup>92</sup> Later this respondent argued against the reputation of UCT as the “best university”, stating that his income as well as academic support is not as great as he expected and not satisfactory.

<sup>93</sup> The interviewee received an offer to work at a respected university in London but decided against it in favour of UCT/South Africa.

In three cases, interviewees were working in Africa (in a country other than their home country) at the time of their application to UCT. Below are two interviewees' descriptions of how they came to South Africa.

Interview (A): *“When I was thinking of finally retiring back to [home country] just reasserting myself again, then comes a phone call from UCT: we are headhunting for a professor and your name has come up and we would really like you to apply [...] then I send in my application reluctantly and came for an interview and the next day they say you’ve got a job. You see how they ... don’t allow you to settle.”*

Interviewee (B): *“I glaringly wanted to come to South Africa [...] there was no way I could go back [home country], there was still conflict [...] so If I am in the continent I could be monitoring from the horizon, seeing how things finally go, I wanted to go back.”*

Interviewee (B) did his entire postgraduate studies overseas. After he finished his Ph.D. he could have remained overseas, as part of his family was there, as well as opportunities for him to work. Despite this, his desire to return to his home country was strong, so he took up the opportunity and did his post-doctorate in East Africa. After this, as illustrated in the interview excerpt, he was looking for a position in Africa and South Africa became a desirable alternative to his home country in which the political situation still was unstable.

Interviewee (A) returned to his home country after completing his Ph.D. in Europe and began work at a university. Before coming to South Africa he had several other employments in different African countries. So, in contrast to interviewee (B), he already had an established academic/professional profile. Nevertheless, UCT was once again able to gain him for a highly-ranked position.

Interviewee (C): *“Lesotho is a small country, and I knew that I needed to come. In fact, from Lesotho I almost went back to the US. The year I got here I also got the option to go back to Japan but then I had two kids. I thought about it, but you know sometimes, if you reach a certain age your movements are controlled by your family. So they told me the English schools are very expensive, so I looked up my salary and 50% of my salary would go into school fees and this was not a particularly good idea. In South Africa I wouldn’t bother about the language of instruction, it is English, so that also made me to choose here.”*

In this case, interviewee (C) also came from overseas to Africa, where he did his post-graduate studies. However, in contrast to the other examples he wanted to stay but couldn't find a job there. Postiglione and Altbach (2013) point to the myth of internationalisation and argue that, in most western countries, “*nearly all academics are citizens of the country*” while the percent of non-citizens are in the single digits. Therefore they state that the “*academic profession globally seems to be less internationally minded than might be expected*”. Thus the likelihood of finding employment as an African academic<sup>94</sup> overseas at a university seems rather small which makes it difficult for academics to stay overseas and pursue an academic career.

In the case of interviewee (C), who went to Lesotho, his intention was not to come to South Africa but to return overseas. However, different reasons led to the migration to South Africa. His wife convinced him to stay in Africa and the expected cost of school fees were much higher overseas. He also raised concerns about visa applications, explaining that he once tried to bring his wife overseas while studying but experienced major difficulties. His wife, who had already moved from his home country to Lesotho, also wasn't eager to go through the same process and convinced him to stay on the continent<sup>95</sup>. Migration with family involves responsibilities which require consideration in terms of costs-benefit for its different members; in addition, it becomes a matter of negotiations with the spouse and the other family members who are involved. Consequently, in the case of interviewee (C), coming to South Africa (UCT) was opted as the alternative to going overseas due to the high cost of migration (including visa applications, schooling for children, income reduction and emotional costs) and due to the preference of his partner.

Reasons for coming to South Africa may thus differ between individuals and according to each participant's personal family situation, stage of career and current location. Nevertheless, all of these African academics experienced a strong attraction to South Africa from within and outside Africa. UCT in particular was able to attract academics due to its reputation as a respected university within Africa and due to its recruiting

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<sup>94</sup> All interviewees who went overseas for their Ph.D. did not remain there longer than a year. From this it can be assumed that they did not receive an attractive job offer from an institution. However, it is also unclear whether they intended to stay in the country as many of them emphasised a wish to return to Africa.

<sup>95</sup> Bringing a spouse into their country of abode was also mentioned by other interviewees as a matter of difficulty which is connected to administrative struggles and a painful experience of separation.

power (as illustrated through the contacts of academics who came before them to South Africa). UCT was also in the fortunate position of having the financial resources to employ academics as well as to organise their migration to South Africa<sup>96</sup>. Altbach (2013), who emphasises that in South Africa, where the higher education system is relatively advanced in comparison to other African countries, universities who are able to “pay more attractive salaries, also lure talent from elsewhere in Africa<sup>97</sup>”.

On a macro level contributing factors are, in comparison to other African countries, the economically and politically stable environment in South Africa. In comparison to other destinations outside of Africa, a fairly affordable well-structured public service sector (education and health care were mentioned by interviewees) could also be attractive,

### **5.2.3.3. In the Pursuit of Higher Education**

The Economist states that, “the number of foreign students from other African countries registered for degrees in South African universities rose from 12 600 in 1994 to 35 000 in 2001” (The Economist, 13 August 2005 in Adepoju 2007:26).

Three of the interviewees in this study came to South Africa to pursue their postgraduate studies. Two began their master’s and one their Ph.D. While two of these students studied at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (Wits), another commenced his degree at the University of Natal, today called the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), located in Durban. In all three cases, the interviewees arrived from other African countries with the intention to complete their degree and then return to their home country.

In two cases, the interviewees were working in their home country as professionals before going to South Africa to study. One left his job to deepen his expertise in a certain field. His country at that time only had one university which only offered very few postgraduate studies and, consequently, as he said “for master’s at that time people

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<sup>96</sup> As one interviewee emphasised, UCT covered all of his expenses to come from Europe to South Africa. Considering that students overseas are funded with very limited financial means, such financial support is very attractive and lures academics back to the continent. However, institutions from other African countries might not be able to cover such expenses and therefore lose in the competition for their own former students.

<sup>97</sup> A development which would be interesting to observe over a longer period would be to see whether there is a trend over the last years for academics to come to South Africa and whether this exists across faculties or is only a partial phenomenon.

*went outside*". He believed that "South Africa was much cheaper than to go to UK" as he would be financing himself and funding wasn't available. Additionally, he learnt about the postgraduate programme at a South African university which was of great interest to him. The lack of postgraduate programmes within home countries was discussed earlier, but in this instance it illustrates South Africa's popularity in contrast to a destination in Europe.

In the other case, the interviewee left his job and went to the United States for six months on a fellowship program. While he was there his former supervisor contacted him from South Africa and asked him to submit a Ph.D. proposal. When he returned to his home country, the political environment became, as he describes, "increasingly reckless", so when he received positive feedback from his submission and was asked to come to South Africa, he decided to leave his home country.

In the third case, the interviewee was still studying at his home university when advised by academic staff to do his postgraduate studies in South Africa.

In all three cases, coming to South was linked to a certain institution (university) through contacts, i.e. people who held a position there or used to study there and are still linked to the institution. Secondly, their coming to South Africa was connected with financial loss and an initial downgrade of their standard of living until they could only improve their economic situation by taking up second jobs. However, coming to South Africa did grant them advanced higher education within an enabling environment (i.e. economic and social infrastructure within a close proximity).

#### **5.2.4. Reflection and Future Perspectives on their Career Trajectories**

Considering that all of the academics being interviewed held a permanent position at UCT at the time of the study, the underlying assumption is that they plan to stay in South Africa for the near future, of five to ten years, depending on their career plans. In this sub-chapter, the question is twofold. In the interviews, academics were asked whether they originally planned to stay in South Africa long-term. The answers show that many perceived their stay in South Africa as temporary before staying longer. Consequently, the question of interest here was to understand what changed since their arrival to extend their stay in South Africa and what were determining factors.

The second question of interest featured a discussion of their relationship with their home country and their perception of themselves in terms of their future work place as well their role as an academic inside (or outside) Africa. It was also of interest to see to what extent they practice ‘engaged scholarship’ with regard to their home country and their host country. In both sections, the question of identity, i.e. how the participants perceive themselves in regard to their home country (or Africa, depending on their location), played a central role. However, while the first question asked for a reflection on their experiences, the second question takes a hypothetical notion, i.e. it looks at how interviewees see themselves in the future.

#### **5.2.4.1. Staying: Identity and Integration**

*“When I came, just like many other Zimbabweans who came at that time, my sense was this is temporary. Eventually one will get back home and stay there for longer permanently”.*

All of those who were in their home country before they came to South Africa regarded their stay in South Africa as temporary. In particular those who came because of an unstable economic situation or political crisis in their home country assumed they would return to their country sooner or later. However, those who moved to South Africa in order to do their postgraduate studies also perceived their stay initially as temporary.

Interviewee (A): *“I came to do my master’s, that was what I came to do. It was tunnel vision ... I didn’t know that I was going to do my Ph.D. [...] maybe go back home and start teaching, get a tutorial position.”*

Interviewee (B): *“When I was doing my Ph.D. my thing was to go back and to teach in [home country]. And I desperately wanted to go and contribute through teaching and in actual fact when I was doing my Ph.D. they (the university from his home country) started calling me, saying when you have finished your Ph.D. come and help us.”*

Both of these interviewees were considering returning to their home country either after their master’s or, at the latest, after they finished their Ph.D., to commence an academic career in their home country.

The question of interest is therefore why these interviewees stayed in South Africa, even though perceived opportunities to return home were there. When attempting an understanding as to why academics (as in the case above as well as others) who initially perceived their stay as temporary remained in South Africa, two aspects prevail: firstly, a successful academic and social-cultural integration within the institution as well as within the wider society, and secondly, their perception of UCT as an enabling environment within which to build an academic career. Both aspects are elaborated subsequently.

#### **5.2.4.2. Social-Cultural Integration – ‘feeling at home’**

The decision to remain in a country is connected to the extent to which a person is social-culturally integrated within a specific society. A significant indication of social integration is the existence of an emotional relationship. In this study, one interviewee mentioned that, after he graduated, he received a job offer from his home university but did not accept it, as he explains: “*I just couldn’t do it. I declined [...] I wanted to give the relationship a chance*”. In both cases the interviewees met their life partner during the period of their Ph.D. programme in South Africa. Thus, throughout their stay at the same university in South Africa they became increasingly socially as well as academically integrated; building relationships with academic staff at their institution through teaching and their research, as well as socially, i.e. finding a partner and building a social network with people outside of the university.

In contrast to those who went overseas for their studies, these interviewees were in some cases already in a romantic relationship when they left their country. In two cases interviewees tried to bring their partner overseas but failed due to visa regulations. In both cases the separation from their partner, as well as the application process, has been described as traumatic, which negatively influenced their view of the host country. For those who came to South Africa after their studies, bringing their partner with them was less difficult<sup>98</sup>. Those who came directly to UCT emphasised the support they received when migrating to Cape Town and settling in to the institution.

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<sup>98</sup> One interviewee confessed that he experienced the whole process of applying for a work permit as frustrating, especially in regard to his wife who had difficulty finding a job. Nevertheless, there was no long-term separation of spouses and them and children, thus it was easier to ‘bring’ the family ‘down’.

The successful integration of a person into a society or institution is dependent on the degree of openness that society (including the institution) has towards foreigners, as well as the openness and capacity for adoption by the foreigner himself. Considering that the university is the place where the most of the academic's time is spent, the social-cultural environment of the institution is especially important for the determining of the stay.

Academics who studied overseas and then came to South Africa were academically as well as culturally socialised into western society through the institution they previously attended. Thus fellow students and academic staff played a central role in the life of interviewees. Overseas universities were often described as very international, i.e. consisting of students from different countries. Nevertheless, negative stereotypes or ignorance of Africa (and being African) was a common experience by interviewees which stimulated their 'Africaness', in a sense fostering a conscious feeling of belonging to Africa and particularly to their home country.

Interviewee (A): *"I became more defensive of my country, because when I was in America, I thought the Americans, they were very nice people, but uninformed, they knew very little about the world out there. So I found myself supporting our president many times, something I would never do at home"*<sup>99</sup>

As a consequence of such experiences, some interviewees who had been overseas described a situation where they found themselves 'isolated' from the activities of local fellow students and outside of the institution, which reinforced their desire to return to Africa. The interviewees described this phenomenon in reflection on it as 'romanticising home'.

Interviewee (B): *"I think you start to romanticise a lot of things about your background when you are in a foreign environment. Things that [have been] overlooked could be music, types of food, they really start to become some meaning and that's what happened and that probably is part of the nostalgia when you are in foreign societies."*

Despite a rather unsuccessful socio-cultural integration, interviewees described a positive academic integration within the institution. They built close relationships with

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<sup>99</sup> In reality this participant was very much against the politics of his president at the time and had even previously been arrested in his home country for disclosing information that was critical of the state. This example illustrates the magnitude of confrontation, in terms of negative stereotyping, which he experienced during his stay in the United States.

their professor or supervisor and adopted the standards of the western institution in terms of technologies (e.g. computers) and facilities (e.g. well-equipped libraries).

However, those who went home for a visit, or after completing their studies, recognised that their perception of their home country had been skewed towards a very positive view which overlooked negative aspects of their country, particularly as a place to build an academic career.

Thus two aspects became prevalent through the interviews: firstly, the stimulation of identity, i.e. the feeling of belonging to a home (in terms of the home country or continent) and, secondly, socialisation into a western academic institution. Together these created an ambiguous relationship between an African identity and an institutional westernised socialisation which South Africa, and particularly UCT, seems to provide a space for both 'ideologies' to exist.

In conclusion, the socio-cultural integration within the institution and outside of the university, in terms of a social network as well as the presence of a partner, was a determining factor for the stay of interviewees in South Africa.

#### **5.2.4.3. Academic and Institutional Integration – 'building a career'**

*Interviewee (A): "It almost became natural that I had to go and do my Ph.D. afterwards and when you are registering for your master's people ask 'what next are you registering for? Your Ph.D.?', so you start thinking already."*

The interviewee quoted above describes a situation in which many interviewees found themselves; a situation where they had to decide whether or not to continue their studies and pursue a Ph.D. and thus pursue an academic career. In contrast to those who studied overseas, interviewees who studied in South Africa acquired their master's degree and Ph.D. at the same institution. In nearly all cases, those who studied overseas went to a different destination<sup>100</sup>. Consequently their relationship with the destination was limited from the beginning. In contrast, those who studied in South Africa often held an academic job at the university or outside the institution and thus were more independent from external funding and more integrated into the society.

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<sup>100</sup> The main reason for this was funding. Considering that scholarships are often restricted to one study program, interviewees had to apply for another scholarship or to another institution to fund their studies, thus they ended up going to another country.

Building an academic career was not only an objective for these interviewees at the beginning of their academic career, as those who came to South Africa later in their career path emphasised their objective to establish an academic and research profile. An enabling and supportive workplace was stressed as a criterion which finally convinced them to stay longer than planned.

Interviewee (B): *“After I had come and found that the teaching didn’t include a lot of undergraduate classes, I thought, OK, I could stay here for a while and then go back. But then after staying here for five years [...] then you know how it is, after a few years you keep saying ‘Ah a few years’ and then somehow I stayed on.”*

While teaching<sup>101</sup> seemed more accepted by young academics, senior lecturers and professors argued strongly against teaching, to focus more on their research. Overly heavy teaching loads, as illustrated in the case above, were stressed as an argument for or against a certain institution or destination<sup>102</sup>. A balance between teaching and research was emphasized as important for establishing a research profile by many of the more established academics, i.e. the publishing of research articles and books, and thus determined the attractiveness of an academic position. UCT as a workplace was, in general, appreciated for its supportive structure when building an academic career. In this context, comparisons have been made to illustrate their argument.

Interviewee (C): *“In a lot of ways UCT is very similar to any European university, I think, and at the same time it is different. It has that mix, it’s not what you would find typically in African universities and there is a lot of benchmarking against European universities here. But at the same time we don’t have the human and material resources to actually match what we are finding in the West.”*

Interviewee (D): *“I had been studying in the US so when I first came here for that conference I checked out the facilities. I thought, ‘wow, okay’. The library at UCT is even better as [a university in the U.S.], in terms of infrastructure. So the motivation*

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<sup>101</sup> As explained earlier, in other African countries the focus of universities is often on undergraduate studies which involves a higher degree of teaching than at postgraduate or at the Ph.D. level. This example illustrates the perverse effect of the development of higher education in Africa; due to a lack of postgraduate studies, students who are performing well and have access to funding leave their countries for other destinations overseas or abroad to pursue higher education. On the other hand, academic staff at African universities also find themselves in difficult situations where they are limited in building a research profile due to the high teaching load.

<sup>102</sup> For instance one of the interviewees argued that he would not like to go the US because the teaching load is very high there (as he heard from a friend/colleague).

*was to be somewhere that is closer to my home country, so I can do my work effectively, I cannot go to any university in the country where you hardly can have your computer working. So the motivation about South Africa was about that.”*

Both interviewees perceived UCT as an institution which is comparable to institutions overseas and has a higher standard than other African universities (or compared to the universities in their home country). As interviewee (D) emphasised, he wanted to work in Africa and perceives South Africa, or UCT in particular, as an enabling work environment where he can build a research profile under conditions which he is used to from his former institution overseas.

As the previous two interviews also illustrate, South Africa has become an alternative to staying overseas or in the rest of Africa. UCT here clearly takes a key position which provides a bridge between African universities and institutions at overseas destinations in terms of an enabling environment to establish an academic career. In this regard, staying in South Africa is connected to the interviewees’ own career plans. Thus, as they became increasingly academically integrated within the institution, i.e. by taking up teaching positions and research projects, ‘staying in South Africa’ became less of a question and more of a reality.

Interviewee (E): *“My future plan is to establish a solid academic profile, I am not planning to move any time soon because I think UCT has the incentive for you to establish that profile. So I am taking advantage of that. I don’t know how long that will take. I am not at a point where I am looking for a job, because I have a permanent position, and my kids are going to school here and my wife is also working here. So that gives me a bit of stability.”*

As mentioned earlier, the interviewees are also socially integrated, thus the partner or family play an important role in the decision to migrate. As explained earlier, the more socially integrated into society people are (in terms of work and social networks) the less likely they are to migrate. In this study, nearly all of the participants were married at the time of the interview and also all have children, hence considerations regarding migration also have to take into account the social integration of other family members (e.g. workplace, school, friends and colleagues).

## 5.2.5. Returning: Perspectives and Engagement

### 5.2.5.1. Retiring Home

Question: *Can you imagine going back home?*

Interviewee (A): *Yes, of course, and I did it before and as I said no matter how long a crocodile stays in water it never becomes a fish. There will come that point where I say well it's time to go home.*

Many interviewees stressed their nationality in response to the question of where they feel they belong to (in terms of a country). As interviewee (A) most interviewees agreed that they have intentions to return to their home country. Thus going back home is considered as going to occur at some point by most of the interviewees.

Nearly all interviewees emphasised a plan to return home after retirement when they won't be academically active at the university anymore. An earlier return was, in their perception, not possible, due to the situation in the home country, e.g. in cases where the political-economic situation is still not stable (or there are conflicts) a return at present seems impossible, or as, mentioned earlier, because of their career plans and social integration in terms of partner and children.

A lack of academic or professional opportunities has also been listed as a reason why a return to an earlier point is not realistic. Some argued that they would consider going home if there were professional opportunities, e.g. to work in national research organisations.

Interviewee (B): *"I would like [to work there] because it is purely research, you know and they pay. But international NGOs, these are limited. You know which ones you can work for. Because I want to be involved in something that engages me [...] not that management type stuff."*

Institutions of higher education in particular have been criticised (as mentioned earlier) in regard to their culture of management that runs against the principles of academic freedom, i.e. interviewees feel they would be restricted in their research as well as teaching in these places. A poor infrastructure was another reason mentioned against employment at a university in a participant's home country

Interviewee (C): *"For me it's the research infrastructure. You are working and then your internet is not working, there are no mechanisms in place. So it's difficult. I see*

*South Africa like an entrepreneur base [...] I am based here and reaching out to the different parts of the continent. Just like there are a lot of businesses they come and make their head offices in South Africa and reach out because of the infrastructure.”*

As the interviewee emphasises, South Africa offers an enabling environment for him where he can pursue his research ambitions without compromising his connection to the rest of Africa.

Halevi and Moed (2013) found, in their study on global migration that only a small percentage of scholars return home after migrating to a more developed country. Instead researchers are more likely to move permanently. The negative perspective of opportunities in the home country, as well as considering that all of the interviewees hold a permanent position at UCT, makes returning home during their academic active period rather unlikely.

Interviewee (D): *“I am still really Zimbabwean, I don’t really feel South African, I can stay here its fine, I mean I like it. It’s a very beautiful environment, but in my heart of hearts I am still Zimbabwean. I play Shona music in my car, when I drink then I like to drink with guys who speak the language that I speak, most of my friends are Zimbabweans, also academics here, but at the same time I am in Cape Town and I am enjoying it. It’s a state of being Zimbabwean but being away from Zimbabwe.”*

This interviewee, and many others, describes a strong emotional connection to his home country. However, as explained earlier, such feeling bases on a conscious ‘romanticisation’ of the home country (or a particular place in the home country e.g. the rural area). The perception of home seems to be associated with childhood experiences, family and friends as well cultural traditions (e.g. music and food). The celebration of traditions and well-defined social activities (e.g. skypeing with family members, having a drink with fellows from the same country) are therefore important practices to create a feeling of home in the host country. However, the question is to what extent it limits their social integration within the society and their academic engagement outside of the university, in terms of Coopers ‘Third University Mission’.

### 5.2.5.2. Academic Engagement and Conclusion

Interviewee (A): *“I am still involved in a couple of things there in my home country, activities there, not political I can assure you! I sit on a board of a civic organisation, I also do consultancies in a civic society organisation, just finished a report [...] for an organisation [...] so I am really involved.”*

Nearly all of the interviewees emphasised that they hold some kind of professional/academic connections to their home country. Some of them emphasised that they are eagerly building long-term relationships with other African academic institutions, setting up transnational research projects, or planning exchange programmes which enable students from an institution in their home country to pursue their academic degree partly in South Africa. In this sense these academics perform what Postiglione and Altbach (2013) stressed as strategic role of the professoriate in internationalising academic institutions but also in terms of ‘outreach’ to civic organisations whereby the focus lies clearly on establishing (or keeping) relationships to the home country rather than the host country.

Interviewee (B): *“I personally feel that being on the continent is what I want, working from the continent and being able to negotiate myself to other continents but from the position of my continent [...] go for a fellowship somewhere, spend six months, one year, come back. But I always felt it is what I need – to be in the continent.”*

Interviewee (C): *“No, I don’t think I am going. If I am going anywhere then it is probably Australia. I went there and I loved it (laughs). But I don’t think I’ll even go to Australia, I’ll stay on the continent. I believe in contributing to the continent, building research capacity.”*

Like those two interviewees many others expressed their belonging to Africa and their ambition to play an active role in the development of Africa in their position as an academic, where South Africa takes a key position in terms of their socio-economic as well as regional placement between Africa and the rest of the world. Nevertheless, intentions to explore other places (outside of South Africa) were also expressed, especially among the younger generation of academics, who perceive themselves as “global citizens” as one of my interviewees called himself.

Interviewee (D): *“We, as academics, we recognize ourselves, not just in person but if there is someone you read or have been reading for a while so you know their work it*

*doesn't matter whether they are in a different continent, [because] we all speak the same kind of language. So wherever you are you find a home an academic home at least."*

The interviews of the sample of eleven Humanities faculty African academics from other African countries illustrated that the majority of the academics left their country of origin for postgraduate studies overseas or in South Africa. However, after the completion of their studies these academics were eager to build an academic career in Africa, whereby South Africa became the preferred destinations. Return migration to the country of origin in most cases is only considered after retirement by these eleven academics. Nevertheless, they are all engaged in building relationships to institutions or civic organisations in their country of origin as well as enabling postgraduate students from their home country to come to South Africa for further studies. The dissertation suggest further research to examine to what extent these 'knowledge exchanges' and 'educational transfers' between academic diaspora in South Africa and other African countries are fertile for development in the country of origin and in which ways participating actors (universities and academics) can contribute to establish sustainable of relationships which are of mutual benefit.

However, as the findings of the interviews have illustrated the migration of the selected number of these eleven African academics is not bound to one event but rather caused by a complex interplay of several factors. As De Haas (2008:11) emphasised migration, studied from a micro-perspective needs always to be analysed as "*an integral part of broader transformation processes*".

In the following concluding sub-chapters I am placing the findings of my interviews in relation to the development of higher education in Africa and relate the findings to the assumption of human capital and intellectual capital and its implication for socio-economic and cultural development in Africa. I also point to a few limitations of the dissertation and suggest some questions for further research. Finally, I give a brief personal viewpoint of South Africa's position in the context of the development of higher education in Africa and the immigration of African academics.

## **6. Conclusion – Africa’s Intellectual Capital**

### **6.1. Summary: Key Arguments and Findings of the Dissertation**

On the basis of the concept of intellectual capital, the dissertation illustrated the significance of constant knowledge production for socio-economic and cultural development and highlighted the significance of academics in their role as ‘teacher’, ‘knowledge producer’ and ‘ideological leader’.

The investigation in the development of higher education in Africa pointed to the phenomenon of migration of African academics to destinations overseas and more recently to South Africa. The research interest on South Africa and more specifically on academics at the University of Cape Town (UCT) derived from the recognition of South Africa as a new destination within Africa and UCT’s leading position on the continent to attract academics from all over the globe and from other African countries.

Drawing from the literature on higher education in Africa, it was argued that in regard to the ‘brain drain’ of African academics, the neo-liberal regulations set and imposed by the World Bank and IMF, which channelled public spending and foreign capital towards primary and secondary education led to the degradation of African universities and consequently was one of the contributors to the migration of African academics.

#### **6.1.1. Higher Education in Africa and Migration**

The most serious incision for the development of higher education in Africa can be traced back to the late 1970s to 1990s which manifested the beginning of political and economic crisis within the African continent and which was followed by international interventions, most prominently by the World Bank and IMF. Neo-liberal regulations set by the World Bank and IMF which channelled public spending and foreign capital towards primary and secondary education contributed to the limitation of African universities postgraduate programmes and consequently their research capacity. Thereby the significant function, of what Cooper (2001) called universities second ‘academic mission of research’ has been neglected within development frameworks of international actors, such as the IMF and World Bank and hence degraded African universities very much to their ‘first academic mission’ of teaching. Through the respective policies which limited universities financial means, African universities

could no longer maintain their support structure for students as well as to pay for teaching and research facilities which contributed to conflicts on campus and subsequently to the migration of postgraduate students as shown in the interviews. Undergraduate teaching became the prime focus of African universities which in consequence struggled to attract postgraduate students and foremost doctoral students. My interviewees who pursued an academic degree during the time of ‘university crisis’, between 1970s and 1990s made use of international funding to get into postgraduate programmes at foreign institutions overseas. Wealthy countries from the ‘North’ benefited therefore from the World Bank/ IMF inflicted ‘university crisis’ to channel excellent postgraduate students from Africa into their universities. By the end of 1990s/ beginning of 2000, as shown in chapter two, there were only 7% of the higher education students enrolled in graduate education (Hayward, 2012:2).

From my interviews the lack of postgraduate programmes affected African universities in two ways;

- (1) it reinforced the migration of African students to other destinations, mainly overseas or later after 2000 to South Africa and
- (2) it prevented academics, i.e. post-doc students and lecturers to return to universities because of the high teaching load and the lack of research capacity (mainly in terms of human capital).

Considering the significance of socio-professional network between ‘outgoing’ postgraduate students/ academics and students/ academics in the home country, these dynamics seemed to establish at African universities a ‘culture of migration’ whereby ‘going out’ of the country became normalized or even idealized. This circle of the migration of ‘talents’ can be expected to result in limited human and intellectual capital, in form of a lack of experienced academics as well as materialized knowledge (‘intellectual material’), which are essential for African university to perform their three functions of teaching, conducting research and outreach (‘engaged scholarship’).

Drawing from the literature on higher education in Africa as well as the interviewees of the eleven academics trajectories, I argue therefore that in regard to the ‘brain drain’ of African academics, the overall imposed restructuring of the educational system and the induction of neoliberal policies at African universities have been at least complicit for the emigration of African academics and may also partly be held accountable for the

absence of returning academics to Africa or more specifically to their country of origin in Africa.

### **6.1.2. Human Capital and Migration**

*"The host countries benefit from an immense amount of intellectual capital from some of the brightest young people from the developing world. At the same time, the losses for developing countries are huge—for academe in particular, in research and teaching talent, new and innovative ideas that might have been cultivated from overseas experience, practices in university management, and many others"* (Altbach 2013:4).

The common assumption of human capital theorists is the association of human capital as investment, i.e. expected costs and benefits (Becker 1962, Mincer 1981, Schultz 1997). Considering the large investment in higher education of African post-colonial governments the emigration of academics (and postgraduate students), so it can be speculated, cost African countries a huge amount of money every year. Host countries on the other hand benefit from the influx of academics from Africa and the knowledge they carry with them and produce at institutions such as universities or research centres.

In order to create human capital large investments, in terms of financial and physical capital are required (Mincer 1981). Weak economies, as seen in the interviews, struggle to hold their 'produced' human capital which is needed to stimulate socio-economic and cultural development. As Mincer (1981:16) points out human capital *"is both a condition and a consequence of economic growth"*. He also emphasizes the connection between physical capital and human capital, i.e. physical capital in terms of technology and equipment which is required to exploit the labour power of human capital. As some of my interviewees emphasised, sometimes required equipment was not available at universities to conduct efficient research.

Additionally, in countries with political unrest the academic campus becomes a place of struggle over resources and power. Considering that public universities are financed and controlled by the state, academics and students are positioned in an ambiguous position, seeking academic freedom on one hand and being financially dependent on state power on the other hand. Universities and academics, as seen in the interviews were always directly affected by political shifts in regimes. The intelligentsia is more likely to leave the country during political turmoil and economic crisis than unskilled people. First of

all, academics are more mobile than other people due to a wide social network outside the country of high school and university friends (who are likely to be in higher position overseas) as well as through contacts from socio-professional networks<sup>103</sup>, as seen in the interviews. Secondly, recruiting agents such as international student funders and 'head hunting' faculties are luring Africa's intelligentsia into foreign establishments.

### **6.1.3. Africa's Intellectual Capital and Personal Viewpoint**

*“Knowledge matters for a range of socio-political issues that play out in public sphere – an informed citizenry, independent media, a space for public intellectual debate, the forging of social networks that facilitate cooperation and collective action, the forging of a ‘human rights culture’”* (Sall et al. 2002:21).

Academics, as knowledge holder, have a responsible position in public discourses to strengthen democratic citizenship. As seen in my interviews academics demonstrated eagerness in building relationships to institutions in their home country as well as enabling postgraduate students from their country of origin to come to South Africa for further studies or research. They use South Africa's local position on the continent to put themselves in an advantaged position to keep close contact with other African academics on the continent. Specifically UCT functions as a platform for meetings and collaborations between African institutions and academics from overseas. In that sense the interviews indicated South Africa's central position in the facilitation of academic networks throughout the continent. Meyer et al (2002) point here to the phenomenon of knowledge exchange as well as transfer of training through academic diaspora networks. Nevertheless, the question remains, whether those activities of academics tend to be sustainable for long-lasting effects with regard to the research capacity and the management of postgraduate programmes at those African universities<sup>104</sup>. Unfortunately, this question couldn't be answered in the interviews with the eleven academics from UCT as the design of the interviews didn't incorporated this aspect as it the significance of this part of their career trajectories only revealed during the

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<sup>103</sup> Especially academics move through quite personal networks as they *“have their own ad hoc networks, where cognitive proximities and prior social contacts are crucial”* (Meyer et al 2002: 316).

<sup>104</sup> As long as the students stay abroad and other academic staff is not involved it can be suspected that significant contributions may remain marginal at African universities.

analysis<sup>105</sup>. It therefore requires further research<sup>106</sup> to examine to what extent these ‘knowledge exchanges’ and educational transfers between academic diaspora in South Africa and other African countries are fertile for development in the country of origin and in which ways participating actors (universities and academics) can contribute to establish such kind of relationships.

Another question which could not be answered by the interviews I have conducted, is to what extent these academics practice ‘engaged scholarship’ or what Buraway (2004) calls ‘public sociology’, in terms of stimulating public debates in their host country, i.e. in South Africa. So far, it can only be speculated that these academics are not strongly involved in such activities due to their position as ‘foreigner’<sup>107</sup>.

As highlighted in the introduction of my dissertation the historical-cultural background of academics plays an important part in their ability to communicate knowledge and ideas in public. Especially academics from the humanities are requested to bring ideas of ‘Pan-African higher education development’ forward. The analysis of the database of HEDA from 2011 confirmed South Africa as a desired destination within Africa for academics since the majority of the international academics who were employed in 2011 at the 23 South African universities originating from another African country. The South African Development Community<sup>108</sup> (SADC) was found to be the strongest sending region of academics from Africa and hence underlines the significance of intra-continental migration between countries in Sub-Saharan Africa within the continent, as other studies have shown (see 3.2.2. above ‘Brain drain in Africa’).

In summary academics from other African countries who were employed at South African Universities in 2011 were predominantly ‘Africans’ from Zimbabwe, Nigeria

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<sup>105</sup> In retro-perspective the interviews would have been designed in away to focus less on the background, i.e. early education in the home country and to give more weight on the current position of the academic and their scholarly engagement on the continent.

<sup>106</sup> It also the question of the nature of these exchanges, whether they go beyond knowledge in terms of access to material (e.g. research papers etc.) or whether they also facilitate postgraduate programmes at other African universities as well as provide leadership training for high-ranked positions in the academic and administrative field.

<sup>107</sup> All of my interviews still hold their national identity, i.e. they haven’t adopted the South African citizenship and are therefore still recognized by the South African immigration law as ‘immigrants’.

<sup>108</sup> Member states: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

and Kenya, male and between their 30s and mid-forties who were found in middle rank positions such as lecturer or senior lecturer.

In comparison to the national trends UCT attracts more academics from Europe than from other African countries. Among academics from other African countries, Zimbabweans represent the strongest group of African academics at UCT. However, the generally small number of academics from other African countries as well as the underrepresentation of professors among male and female African academics as well as the relatively young age group of academics indicates that UCT has not been able to attract intellectuals from other African countries to the same extent as other South African universities were able to.

However, in total there are only around 1,533 academics from other African countries according to the HEDA statistics from 2011, who make up 62% of all international academics in South Africa. If South Africa's universities seek to provide innovations for socio-economic and cultural development, intellectuals from the continent need stronger to be included. In my view, instead of 'siphoning' off academics from universities from other African countries, South African universities should rather build on short term exchange programs, where not only students and academics from other African countries come to South Africa but also South African scholars and students go to other African countries. In that way contacts are built mutually on both sides which will contribute to a pan-african network of scholars in a long run.

Secondly, African-based universities should establish joint research centres which bring together academics from all over the continent and which focus on research on the continent. These research centres could provide research places for postgraduate students and especially doctorates from universities all over the continent. Especially for universities which struggle to offer postgraduates students, the support structure to conduct their research could benefit from such establishments. In general I think that African universities need to pool their resources in an efficient and sustainable way to bring their intellectual capital in form of people and hence knowledge back to the continent. In that way they not only strengthen their own research capacity, they will become more independent from research establishments (and funders) outside of the continent; moreover they also provide an enabling and desirable environment for graduates from African universities and thus build the next generation of African academics.

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## Appendix

### A1: List of all 23 South African Universities

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- 1 Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- 2 Central University of Technology
- 3 Durban University of Technology
- 4 Mangosuthu University of Technology
- 5 Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
- 6 North West University
- 7 Rhodes University
- 8 Tshwane University of Technology
- 9 University of Cape Town
- 10 University of Fort Hare
- 11 University of Johannesburg
- 12 University of KwaZulu-Natal
- 13 University of Limpopo
- 14 University of Pretoria
- 15 University of South Africa
- 16 University of Stellenbosch
- 17 University of the Free State
- 18 University of Venda
- 19 University of Western Cape
- 20 University of Witwatersrand
- 21 University of Zululand
- 22 Vaal University of Technology
- 23 Walter Sisulu University

In 2014 two new universities opened in South Africa; the University of Mpumalanga and Sol Plaatje University (both universities are not included in the data analysis of the quantitative research).

## A2: Interview Schedule

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**Marital status:**

**Children:**

**Current Profession at UCT:**

**Nationality/ Country of birth:**

**SA Citizenship or Permit Residence:**

note: only if information is not provided from the database

### ➤ *Socio-demographic background*

**Please before we start can you give me some background information such as where you grew up and your family?**

- where did he/she grow up; rural or urban area,
- how did he grew up?
- what kind of child he/ she was (interest, friends)
- how was the situation at that time in the country

### ➤ *Higher Education and academic career*

**Let us now talk about your academic career. Please start from the point you decided to go to university, what motivated you and then describe in chronically order where and what you studied. I am particular interested in your reasons and motivations**

#### ➤ *Reason/ Motivation for Higher Education*

- What or who influenced him/ her e.g. parents, friend, career aspiration etc.?
- Has it been clear to him/ her that he/ she wants to remain in Academia?

#### ➤ *Higher Education in home country*

- Was it difficult to get access to university (competition/ restrictions)?
- How was the academic landscape at that time in the country?
- Could he/ she study what they wanted to study?

#### ➤ *Higher Education abroad*

- Reasons/ motivations to study abroad e.g. Did he/she experience any difficulties which hindered him/ her to study in your country?
- What he/ she perceived as advantages to study abroad?

### ➤ *Migration to SA*

**Please describe now how you came to South Africa. Please start from the first time you were thinking about coming to SA , please describe chronically from the first time you came here until you immigrated to SA..**

- Was South Africa an Alternative to another country or was SA the preference ?

- Has there been any kind of connections to SA before?
- How difficult was it for you immigrate here in SA (visa etc.)?

➤ *Academic career in SA / at UCT*

**Please tell me now how did you come to UCT? I am now interested why you decided to come to UCT?**

- Was UCT his/ her preference in SA?
- Did he/ she applied somewhere else in SA?
- How did he/ she work for UCT, e.g. got advice from someone to apply, got to know someone here at UCT?
- When was it clear for him/ her that she wants to stay longer in SA/ have a permanent position at UCT?
- How does he/ she perceive the career opportunities/ to do what they value in his/ her profession as academic (in comparison to the other places he/ she has been)?
- Does he/ she perceive any constrains as foreign academic in South Africa/ at UCT?

➤ *Reflection*

**In reflection on all of your experiences abroad how important has it been for your academic career to leave your country?**

- What he/ she perceives as greatest gains to go abroad?
- What role do academic connections from abroad played in his/ her career?
- Does he / she also have academic connections from his/ her home country?
- Is he/ she sometimes working in his/ her home country?
- Could he/ she imagine if he/ she would get an interesting job offer to go back to his/ her home country? / Under what circumstances would he/ she go back?
- What he/ she perceives as the greatest constrains to pursue an academic career in his/ her home country?
- From his/ her perspective has the situation in his/ her country changed to better or worse for academics?
- Does he/ she thinks he/ she as academic has any influence of the situation in his/ her country of origin/ in South Africa?
- How does he sees his/ her academic future (in 5/ 10years)?

**Recorded Interview END**

### **A3: Informed Consent Form**

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**Information and Purpose:** The Interview for which you are being asked to participate in is part of a Master research study that focuses on exploring the reasons and motivations of African Academics to leave their home country and to come to South Africa and eventually take up here a permanent position at one university in South Africa. The purpose of my research is to explore how many academics from other African countries are coming to South Africa and why they left their country of origin and to come to South Africa.

**Your Participation:** Your participation in this research will be consist of an interview lasting approximately one hour. You will be asked open questions about your background and experiences in education with focus on your academic career. You may reject questions that make you feel uncomfortable or you don't want to disclose for any other reason. At any time you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop in the interview either to continue another time or to withdraw completely from the study. You also will have the right at any time after the interview to withdraw from the study.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Your name will not be recorded and I commit herewith that the record will only be listened by myself. Even my supervisor David Cooper, Head of the Sociology Department will have no access to the audio files nor the written transcripts. The analysis of the interview will also only be done by myself. The analysis will be done in a way which ensured that sensitive information are treated carefully and presented without to harm the person. The researcher will avoid any form of bias which will mainly ensured through discussions with the supervisor. However, the discussions with my supervisor will happen without exposing name, nationality or academic field in a way in which the reader might identify the person.

By signing below I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information.

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Signature

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date