

# The Americana <sup>\*</sup>

Does signalling “foreignness” reduce the benefit of transnational education of returnees? Evidence from Nigeria.

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## Abstract

One central purpose of overseas education for citizens from low-income countries is that it may guarantee better economic positions and jobs when migrants choose to return to their home country. Despite the premium associated with schooling abroad, seeking new employment may have a cultural and structural backlash. Studies that examine how (1) the internationalization of foreign culture, and (2) the character of the labour market shapes the economic integration of skilled returnees are rare. In a large-scale vignette experiment of 488 Nigerian firms, I explored the salience of skilled returnees signalling not only their human capital but their cultural capital when seeking their first jobs in five positions. I found that though there are returns to foreign education in what can be termed transnational roles, internalizing a foreign culture reduces the benefits of foreign education in these roles. There were no returns to foreign education in other occupations.

*Keywords:* Returns to Education; Return Migration; Embodied Cultural Capital; International Education.

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<sup>\*</sup>Americana is a word in Nigeria referring to people who either (1) pretend to be Americanized or (2) have been Americanized. The first meaning is derogatory while the other is covetous. Sometimes the term denotes both meanings.

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# 1 Introduction

Students in low-income countries are mainly motivated to receive overseas education because of higher wages and human capital accumulation than those received by non-migrants (Li, 2017; Reinhold and Thom, 2013; De Vreyer et al., 2010; Campos-Vazquez and Lara, 2012; Wahba, 2015; IIE and Academic Cooperation Association, 2004). The continuous out-migration of skilled immigrants is often feared to lead to brain drain but it can provide a "brain circulation" or international transfer of skills when migrants chose to return to their country of origin (Dustmann et al., 2011; Casey and Dustmann, 2010; Chiswick and Miller, 2009; Dustmann, 1996; Gathmann et al; 2019).

However, returnees' success in the labour market depends on simultaneously negotiating the recognition of not only their human capital but their cultural capital. Returnees' path to getting their first job can have a cultural backlash because the human capital from a foreign country also incorporates a symbolic identity that may not match the expectations of the local labour market ( Nohl et al 2014; Kôu, A., Bailey, A., 2014).

In this paper, I seek to answer if signalling the internationalization of foreign culture has a negative effect on returnees' job market success. Signalling theory argues that employers reward foreign education based on what can be observed during the application process — and make judgements by their expectations from the signals ( Simon, 1957, Deterding and Pedula 2016; Bol and van de Werfhorst 2011; Ferrer and Riddell 2008; Hungerford and Solon 1987; Spence 1973; Weiss 1995). Returnees may signal their foreign degrees on their resume for three reasons. The first is because they have to at least admit that they have a degree. The other two reasons are exclusive – that their degree is more important than those of non-migrants, and that in some cases their migration offers a new form of cultural competency. While foreign education may imply higher levels of human capital - a premium that is often favoured by local employers, it may also imply higher levels of a foreign cultural disposition which may be penalised. This paper points to these two positions.

Theories of lower return to education often argue for outgroup hostilities but new evidence shows that this may due to ingroup favouritism (Greenwald and Pettigrew, 2014; Baert De Pauw, 2014; Portmann and Stojanovic, 2022) because distinct forms of cultural capital are rewarded differently. Employers prefer to hire applicants within the same social network — especially in low-skilled jobs where applicants deploy lower levels of human capital(Waldiner and Lichter, 2003; Fernandez and Galperin 2014; Ibarra 1999; Rivera, 2012; 2015).

In the context of migration, a foreign education may be reviewed beyond the applicant's human capital. Because foreign education connotes an implicit different level of cultural competencies, it is likely to create an emotive and social backlash that leads to social closure and opportunity hoarding (Tilly, 1998; Duguid 2011).

The consequences of these social closures are often reinforcement of the employers' cultural norms and the organization. Culturally fit applicants are an increasing requirement in the workplace and returnees who have different dispositions may be seen as a cultural threat to existing norms (Cubik 2013; Cesare, 1974). I argue that the internationalization of foreign cultures has a negative effect on skilled returnees' job market success (Hypothesis 1).

Additionally, there is growing interest in the role of occupation in migration and more specifically in transnationalism (Bennett et al 2012; Connor Schisler & Polataikjo, 2002). There exist "transnational occupations" that often reflect the parallel and dualized market needs of both sending and receiving countries (Tom Lusi & Harald Bauder; 2010; Nohl et al, 2014; Portes et al 1999, Nowicka, M. 2013; Ren Liu 2019). Transnationals may be able to adjust to multiple identities by engaging in these transnational occupations — and by choosing or being required to choose these occupations, they may be able to navigate the identities of both their home and destination countries. In this regard, a segmented labour market in the home countries may advance the differential recognition & negotiation of cultural capital — which may have a higher effect on occupations or roles that are deemed transnational (Ong, 1999; Bauder 2012; Portes et al 1999).

Henry and Pinch (2000a) for example, studied a group of returnees in the Motor Sport Industry in the UK and described them as "a group of people" whose cultures of mobility take place within-firm networks and are not bounded by practice that hinders innovation. Occupation is central to migrants' transnationalism (Huot et al, 2013; Nayar & Hocking 2013) and returns to education may be negotiated and produced through a returnee's profession (Monti, 2016; Huot & Laliberte Rudman 2010; Nayar et al 2012). I argue that the effect of foreign education on the job market success of skilled returnees is moderated by the character of the occupation or roles (Hypothesis 2).

By implication, two main factors influence returnees' economic integration. The first is the character of the labour market that manifests through differential occupational outcomes and the second is that local employers may rationalize that skilled returnees have observable cultural capital that is subject to manipulation (signalling) by returnees and may reward them differently (Spencer, 1983).

I contribute to two main strands of literature. The first is new theories on migrant integration that discuss the diverse transitions in transnationalism — and that this requires migrants or returnees continuously negotiate their cultural capital (Nohl et al 2014; Kōu, A., Bailey, A., 2014). Second, cultural capital from foreign institutions that shares valuable linkages with local needs can improve returnees' integration (Trans-local elitism). Examples in Taiwan, India, and China Chaudhary and Hamdani, 2002; Gmelch, 1987; Kapur and McHale, 2005; Xu, 2010.

Using a large-scale vignette experiment in Nigeria, my key contributions are a

thematic discussion on utilizing the reverse brain drain in West Africa, strategies to support the labour market integration of returnees and exploring the importance of local-specific cultural capital on the returns to transnational education.

I begin with a discussion on the theory of cultural capital to better understand the role of the internationalization of foreign culture and how it intertwines with the returnee's human capital. I further discuss which norms associated with foreign education might be contested. Additionally, I provide a description of Nigeria's skilled migration and labour market dynamics. The subsequent sections introduce the research design and the vignette experiment. I ended the paper with the findings, a discussion and conclusion on what can be learned about the internationalization of foreign culture by returnees in a segmented labour market.

## **2 Theorizing Returnees' Cultural Capital**

In this section, I discuss Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as a tool in theorizing returnees' economic integration into the local economy.

Bourdieu described cultural capital as consisting of three parts - the institutional, objectified and embodied forms that allow individuals to negotiate their way in society. In the past decades, studies have shown the importance of the first two capital on migrants which are the institutionalized and objectified capital proxied through education, skills, experience and other symbolic capital (Hania Janta et al, 2021; Du, Z et al 2021; Piracha and Vadean 2010; Marchetta, F;2012). This capital can be transmitted into economic gains. In other words, institutional capital such as educational qualifications or acquired skills can be transmitted within the society that values such, and exchanged for economic goods such as jobs or money. By cultural capital, I refer to the cultural representation such as accents, affiliations, and social networks that stimulate solidarity and boundaries.

An important component missing in studies on the economic performance of migrants and their return experience is capturing the embodied state which involves a higher degree of concealment and transmission than other forms of capital. Bourdieu argues that the embodied state takes time to accumulate and with potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form. He also suggested that the main way to legitimize buying the embodied capital is by "buying the person" because they are closely linked to them. While foreign qualifications and human capital are important components of education migration, the embodied state forms the core. What this suggests is that for returnees to fully integrate into the economy of their home country, or when they return, their disposition may be assessed. I indexed the embodied state with an accent.

Cultural capitals are relational, as their value is dependent on their recognition and the context in which it is being used - and skilled migrants who cannot develop strategies to "market" locally-recognized cultural capital in the local labour

market can be punished. For example, a returnee could be disapproved for acting “foreign”, if she speaks in an accent that was perceived to be earned in the course of studying overseas, especially in OECD countries. The process by which cultural capital is recognized can be referred to as cultural matching which determines the value and recognition of cultural capital ( Burawoy, 1978;Rivera, 2015, Árendás, Z., Durst, J., Katona, N., Messing, V. (2022).

Internationalism and foreign education are of historical importance to Nigerians and this compels returnees to switch between foreign and local lifestyles including accents. However, transnationalism in Africa is less perceived as a mixture of two cultures, but rather as a core identity upon which certain values have been superimposed ( Simon Turner Nauja Kleist). Speaking a foreign accent in Nigeria can be perceived as a signal of foreignness and it is believed to have been subjected to manipulation by returnees. Because employers believe returnees can code-switch (switch between local and foreign accents), signalling local accents may be seen as an intentional rehash or preference for foreign culture and solidarity - a trend that is common among Blacks more than among other racial groups in the USA (McCluney et al 2019). A foreign accent is known to communicate symbolic boundaries and can serve as a signal of solidarity and foreignness ( Kogan et al, Gluszek and Dovidio 2010b, Fuertes et al. 2012).

While it may be true that returnees’ skills and capital from their previous destinations are contested because they are not culturally relevant or recognized as proposed by Bourdieu and others (Eseer, 1996; Weiss et 2006), there are a substantial number of returnees that have “transnational” capital and are able to live near parallel lives and exhibit dual cultures (Portes et al 1999). They are embedded in their home and host countries simultaneously. Evidence of transnationalism has been found among Chinese returnees and Polish migrants in Germany (Nowicka, M. 2013; Ren Liu 2019). segmented market advance the differential recognition & negotiation of human & cultural capital Ong, 1999; Bauder 2012. There are others who describe the possibility of transnational roles that have embedded the local market needs of home and destination countries,

### **3 What Norms are Contested by Local Employers?**

I conducted interviews with 51 local employers across different sectors and regions in Nigeria to better understand the norms associated with foreign education that are contested. I describe the employers’ responses into two broad categories which are that they may reject any associated premium of foreign education because they perceived that (1) returnees have different work expectations that deter them from a localized approach to work and (2) the belief that returnees always have higher competency are perceived to be untrue — and employers who are aloof about the possibility of an education premium from foreign education may be eager to change the standard narrative.

I further explain the two norms categorized above. The first contested norm is that employers may believe that living in Nigeria is a skill in itself and that those trained abroad are not able to navigate the work environment and social interactions required to work locally, especially in a way that those trained locally can. This also includes unpaid overtime work and unrestrained job descriptions. I share examples from the field notes of a local employer who captured some of the work schedules and nature of work that are perceived to conflict with expectations from foreign-trained applicants. Employers believe that the local work requirements are highly flexible and working conditions may be inconsistent with what foreign-trained may adapt to. The perception that foreign work culture may be incongruous with local working norms is a source of contestation - and employers with this mindset may judge returnees as culturally unfit.

*Well on a serious note truth be told, being in Nigeria alone is a skill you have - working under pressure, and multi-tasking, especially these two characteristics, working under pressure and multi-tasking, we in Nigeria have this attribute more than people from outside the country because to them there is this level playing ground, easy access to things and doing the task on their own pace like they always have this option to work at their own comfort. - Field Note Jan 2022*

Second, is that employers believe that educated returnees should not strictly be regarded as more competent because they studied abroad and that some locally educated applicants may have higher competency or subject-matter professional skills. This simply connotes that educated returnees may not be technically different from those trained locally in specific roles. I draw an example from an employer's view that also captures the esteemed position of a locally-trained employer.

*I believe so much in our locally trained candidates, most of our locally trained students are all exported abroad through scholarship means and the like. The US, UK, and Canada are offering sweet opportunities to our people in form of fully funded scholarships. I believe this is due to the fact that they are very competent and well-trained. It's longer news that most Nigerian candidates who studied in Polytechnics are very vast when it comes to practicals. I wrote a professional exam alongside some of the people who studied abroad in 2018 and I did amazingly great even more than those that studied abroad. In my own opinion, it's not really about where you studied, it's more about your attitude to learning, so studying abroad does not guarantee a candidate will do well. - Field Note Feb 2022*

## **4 The Case - Nigeria**

In this section, I discuss the historical importance of Nigeria's returnees to the local political economy and the constraining effect of Nigeria's labour market on

returnees' economic integration.

Historically in West Africa, educated migrants were socially positioned as a leading class. They are often believed to have a cultural disposition that is different from the locals (Patrick, 2013). A home-comer is said to meet life at home to be longer accessible in immediacy because his personality has been broken down into pieces (Schütz, A, 1945). The bulk of educated elites in Nigeria in the early 1900s after the slave trade constituted immigrants from the creole culture in Sierra Leone, where most freed slaves from West Africa were diverted, and re-trained (Smitherman, 1986; Dixon-Fyle, 2006). This created opportunities for “a group of Nigerians” to have a confluence of culture and ideas that includes those earned locally and those from a new culture. These migrants are grouped into a social class and an identity that is referred to be different from locals (Patrick, 2003).

In the wake of the British preparation of Nigeria for self-government in the mid-90s, political ideas and civilization were thumped to be a haven of western ideas and adherents. Education migrants, some of which are only educated via pro-slavery institutions were deemed fit to decide Nigeria's political and social future. The early political organization, parties, and movements for pro-independence were a direct influence on foreign students. For many of these young Africans with foreign affiliations, there was a conscientious need to return home and support “locals” from the technological backwardness and failing progress that characterized the new era of European industrialization (Esedebe, 1981).

The relative advantage of returnees accentuated by pro-independence campaigns and the oil boom in the late 1960s incentivize other Nigerians to either move to Europe or send their children abroad, which has remained till today. Promising Nigerian students were accepted into foreign institutions and granted temporary visas with an inclination that they return and take up positions in burgeoning sectors. Between 1987 to 1989, locally educated professionals left Nigeria for UK, USA and Canada in tens of thousands (Adepoju, 2006). According to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the number of Nigerian students at overseas institutions of education grew 71 percent between 2007 and 2010. Today, Nigeria has the fastest-growing student population migrating to the US and consists of 40% of Africans travelling to the UK yearly HESA, 2019, IEE, 2006. Nigerians are the most educated African immigrant group in the US after Egypt.

On the contrary, the average premium of a foreign education may have reduced because Nigerians are attending less competitive schools. For example, Table 1 shows that Nigeria is one of the lowest proportions (15%) of the student population studying in the most-ranked UK universities (top 10) in 2018/19. These universities are among the lowest-rated universities in the World by the Times Higher Education ranking and are few of them are not rated because they don't meet the criteria. While some of these universities' rankings are known to be problematic, it is less likely that a school that provides comparatively premium

education would be lowly ranked, disqualified, or in some cases not ranked at all.

Table 1: Proportion of Country -Student Population studying in the most ranked Universities (top 10) in the UK (2018/19)

Country	Proportion
Nepal	0.033
India	0.066
Bangladesh	0.081
Vietnam	0.089
Ireland	0.09
Pakistan	0.101
Kuwait	0.113
Sri Lanka	0.136
Nigeria	0.151
Zimbabwe	0.156
Cyprus (European Union)	0.161
Oman	0.173
Trinidad and Tobago	0.174
Greece	0.176
United Arab Emirates	0.18
Saudi Arabia	0.198
Russia	0.199
United States	0.204
Germany	0.204
Switzerland	0.219
Malaysia	0.226
Ghana	0.227
Uganda	0.237
Hong Kong (Special Admin Region of China)	0.24
China	0.253
Kenya	0.279
Egypt	0.323
Singapore	0.33
Mauritius	0.354
South Africa	0.387

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Source: HESA, 2021; Times Higher Education, 2021  
List only include 30 countries with the highest tertiary student population in the UK

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Additionally, foreign immigration policies and Nigeria's diplomatic relations have also influenced the flow of migration, the selection of migrants, and the impetus for return. For many decades, the United States was Nigeria's favourite OECD migration country. Despite more intra-regional migration between Nigeria and other African countries, the USA, Gulf countries, and OECD countries suffice historical and intellectual importance for education migrants. The United State Visa Lottery (green card) program grants 50,000 permanent visas to citizens in



the Global South showing an inclination for change within this period. Though the program targets low-skill workers, many Nigerians who accessed the visa information and applied electronically were deemed educated.

The character of the Nigerian labour market may also restrain the employment of skilled returnees. Its labour market is highly informal and employs roughly 75% of Nigeria’s labour force (IMF, 2017). The country experiences high unemployment — but firms requiring lower-level skills may be unfazed because they self-create their jobs (Bloom et al, 2006; John Craig, 1990). Returnees seeking jobs may be constrained by the effect of high unemployment and the high levels of informalities in the labour market.

Generally, the gaps between the skilled and unskilled may converge in countries whose economy is mainly driven by the informal sector. Firms are not incentivized to create and reward premium skills. The returns to skilled employment are lower and premium skills are infiltrated. The expected value for transnational skills by Nigerian skilled returnees may be regarded as overpriced - this may propel an affective negative attitude toward them from local employers.

Returnees’ skills may also be affected by increased competition from non-migrants. There has been an increase in Nigeria’s education budget, university enrollment and graduate turnout (Olayiwola et al; 2016). This is likely to also reduce the schooling gap between skilled returnees and non-migrants (Docquier, Lohest, and Marfouk, 2006a).

## **5 Research Design**

### **5.1 Survey design: sampling assignment**

Considering that employers’ choices are multidimensional, and they are often sensitive towards revealing recruitment decisions, I adopt a conjoint design. Vignette design has been classically used to provide causal explanations on fairness in the labour market (Alves and Rossi 1978; Bates, 1990), and more recently used to study implicit behaviour on issues of symbolic belonging (Schachter, A. 2016.); gendered wage-gap (Auspurg, K., Hinz, T., and Sauer, C. 2017), education inequalities (Di Stasio et al 2016) and labour market inequalities (Turper, S 2017; Lahey, et al 2017; Kübler, 2018). I benefit from embedding the survey question in a concrete scenario so that they require little abstraction from the survey respondents. This method guarantees the anonymity of employers so that they can express potentially sensitive attitudes without being identified as holding the sensitive attitude. Conjoint analysis is also unique for handling situations in which a decision-maker has to deal with options that simultaneously vary across two or more attributes.

Key Recruiting Officers (KROs) which include human resource personnel and hiring managers that are directly involved in recruiting for the selected roles as-

sessed 6 vignettes of recent graduate applicants. These applicants are competing for the same position (Associate or Manager) but differed with respect to the characteristics reported on their resumes. The different combinations of the factorial design yielded a vignette universe of 483,840 that is impossible to assign to all recruiters. For an orthogonal design across the twelve attributes that were assessed, I balanced the design effectively to 2,000 vignettes with a d-efficiency of 95%. This effectively reduced the correlations between repeated observations and eliminated implausible vignettes. The six vignettes (6 from 2,000) were randomly assigned to each KRO for every survey deployed. Each Key Recruiting Officer (KROs) evaluated the candidates based on their characteristics and individual pitch (which included candidates' accents). Recruiters scored candidates from a range between 1 to 100. I conducted additional interviews with 51 employers and 15 returnees which is less discussed in this paper.

The dimensions included in the vignette are school attended, study duration, accents (discussed in the preceding section), previous work experience, grade, extracurricular activities, professional affiliation, gender, ethnic first names, and surname. Each dimension was weighted the same except for the school attended which was half-weighted. This means every two-locally trained applicants were matched to one education returnee. The chances of an employer evaluating an applicant trained locally are twice the chances of evaluating a foreign-trained applicant which is a crude way of assigning the expected proportion of returnees applicants to locally trained ones that reflect what may be expected in the population. Transnational schools were restricted to the UK and US universities. Each employer evaluated only SIX (6) potential candidates for specific work roles to reduce attention bias.

To control the effect of prestige, I neutralize any specific association with specific institutions in the UK and in the USA. Because it is very unlikely that Nigerian recruiters are aware of the names of all foreign institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom, the school names of the educational institutions included in the experiment were neutralized. By neutralization I mean the name of the school did not exist, they also did not "sound" like a prestigious university and were cited to exist in cities where prestigious institutions are not located.

I used a crude method as an index for networks. For all professions, each candidate was randomly assigned to membership or non-membership to professional associations that are locally recognized

Important to the design of this study as previously mentioned is to examine the differential effects of signalling local or foreign dispositions when young skilled returnees are seeking their first job and I use accents as an index for foreign cultural internationalization. Each candidate's vignette was randomly assigned to a local or foreign accent with the expectation that returnees who stick to local accents during the hiring process will be preferred. The timeline of each candidate's pitch was an average of 30-secs. The pitch contained general appeals to candidates' interest

in the company and requests for the resume to be reviewed. For each candidate, the pitch contents were similar and the main differences were the accents. The sequencing allowed each candidate’s pitch to be randomized such that the chances that each recruiter will listen to the same voice across the 6 candidates are due to chance and to also make the exercise as intuitive as possible. The balance table 2 shows that the sample is well-balanced across candidates’ main attributes.

Table 2: Balance Check by School Attended

Characteristic	N	abroad, N = 831 <sup>1</sup>	local, N =1,690 <sup>1</sup>	p <sup>2</sup>
Accent	2,521			<0.001
foreign accent		411 (49%)	0 (0%)	
local accent		420 (51%)	1,690 (100%)	
Age	2,521			0.3
20-25		274 (33%)	550 (33%)	
26-30		295 (35%)	561 (33%)	
31-40		262 (32%)	579 (34%)	
Gender	2,521			0.6
female		422 (51%)	875 (52%)	
male		409 (49%)	815 (48%)	
Experience	2,521			0.3
No Exp		409 (49%)	866 (51%)	
2 year Exp		422 (51%)	824 (49%)	
Network	2,521			0.8
member of		424 (51%)	870 (51%)	
not member		407 (49%)	820 (49%)	
Degree	2,521			0.005
Bachelor’s		388 (47%)	890 (53%)	
Masters’		443 (53%)	800 (47%)	

## 5.2 Analytical Strategy

The experiment allows the ignorability assumption of causality to hold as comparing the average of vignettes that are randomly assigned allows the ignoring of potential missing or unobserved exogenous variables.

The results are tested across four models. Model 1 below represents a linear model where  $Y_i$  is the score from grading an applicant on an interval scale of 0-100 — which expresses an employer’s intention to hire an applicant. Recruiters scored candidates from a range between 1 to 100. This linear outcome was logit-transformed serving as the dependent variable termed - intention to hire. Table 7 shows the labels and the rationale for each attribute.

(1)

$$Y_i = \alpha + \gamma_1 ForeignEdu_i + \gamma_2 LocalAccent_i + \gamma_3 LocalProfNet + \phi_i HumanCap_i + \beta_i EmployerX_i + \iota_i Region_i + \kappa_i Z_i + \varepsilon_i$$

$\gamma_1$ ,  $\gamma_2$  and  $\gamma_3$  are the anticipated treatment effects of foreign education, local accents and affiliation with locally recognized professional networks — which are binary variables that are marked as 0 for applicants locally trained, foreign accent and no affiliation to professional networks respectively.  $\phi$  is a vector applicant’s human capital that includes the year of work experience, performance in school and level of education.  $\kappa$  is a vector of employer-related characteristics such as age, ethnicity, and years of experience in the role evaluated.  $\beta$  represents employer-related characteristics which include employer fixed effect and firm level of operations (multinational or local).  $\iota$  is the region fixed effect.

Model 2 is a linear model without the employer-fixed effect. Model 3 is the random-intercept effect from multivariate linear regression accounting for differences in employer characteristics. For example, recruiters who are trained in foreign countries might tend to reduce any potential bias for transnationals. Model 4 is a logistic model in which the dependent variable is the binary question of whether an employer will hire or not, which is independent of the initial score attributed to applicants.

The control variables include uncorrelated control items (extracurricular activities) that are unlikely to apply to one recruiter. Uncorrelated items reduce the likelihood that respondents will satisfice (make hiring decisions mainly to satisfy survey requirements) because they are unlikely to interpret the survey as a scale measuring one concept. (Kuklinski et al. 1997).

### 5.3 The Experiment

The experiment started with a pilot in August 2021 covering 49 employers in Abuja. Our main fieldwork commenced Oct 2021 and ended in March 2022. Firms chosen were expected to have more than five staff to avoid aggregation of small businesses that transnationals may not likely work. The scope of work covered four main metropolitan and ethnic subregions in Nigeria - the South-South/East (Port Harcourt), South-West (Lagos), Northern (Kaduna), and the country capital (FCT) which is a representation of all regions in Nigeria. I worked with four research officers who coordinated work in each region/state and a central field manager.

The main challenge in designing an online experiment within the control of the researcher is to ensure the quality of the responses. Previous vignette experiments often require that the subjects are physically present. To avoid having a web link that can be completed by anyone, the link was only available to the project coordinator while field staff only had to provide detailed information about the Key Recruiting Officer willing to enroll. We requested that each state officer meet interested employers in person at their offices, though a few employers were contacted online. State officers explained the research objectives and the requirement for completing the survey and requesting the employer’s emails. The coordinating manager then sends an email containing the one-time web link to employers directly.

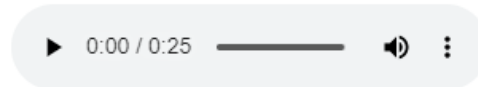
The web survey link was sent to recruit Key Recruiting Officers (KROs) in five job positions. The positions are Communications, Software, Administration, Research (Teaching Non-teaching), and Finance. An example of a vignette for a computer engineering position is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Snapshot of Vignette

CANDIDATE 2

Olisa-George is also applying for the same role of Software Engineer. Olisa' has no significant work experience; and has little practical experience in building and maintaining backend APIs and services with Python and JavaScript runtime. With a top 10 percent academic record, Olisa received a Bachelor's degree in Software Engineering at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Olisa is aged between 26-30, is single and prefers to spend weekends volunteering. Olisa, a male, speaks English fluently, and enjoys playing football. Olisa is a member of the IEEE Computer Society

Please listen to Olisa-George's appeal for consideration



To achieve a representative sample of job positions in Nigeria, I extracted vacancies from an online job site <sup>1</sup>. I scraped over 2,247 vacancies<sup>2</sup> across three months duration and extracted the top open positions. The result of the extracted data is shown in Figure 3 using web scraping techniques <sup>3</sup>. I expect that positions with higher vacancies will include the skills acquired by both returnees and non-migrants. I initially sourced data on the degree programs of educated migrants in the US and the UK but jobs locally available are more likely to inform return decisions than skills learned abroad. There is evidence that over-education and skill mismatch is more common among returnees than among non-migrants

<sup>1</sup>www.jobberman.com is the most popular job site in Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>The graph of all jobs scraped are available in the Appendix

<sup>3</sup>Web scraping is the process of extracting or mining data from the World Wide Web

(Visintin et al; 2015).

As regards the randomization of accents, previous studies from social psychology that manipulate accents use the matched-guise technique (Lambert, 1967). They recruit the same tester for different accents. This makes it possible to control the effect of para-linguistic features such as the speaker’s tone and pitch that may affect hiring outcomes. Despite its advantage of controlling for speech confounders, this approach is also known to have a low level of external validity. While I do not adopt the matched-guise technique, I overcame any potential bias in three ways. (1) I ensured that the pitches for the accents are only based on general appeals of acceptance and precluded competence-related content. A detailed composition of the accent content is available in the Appendix. (2) I ensured that both the competence contents which are contained in the vignette and the accent pitches had dissimilar levels of randomization. The probability that an employer will evaluate a candidate’s competency based on a specific type of accent is reduced to random chance. (2) and I also ensured that the duration of the accent was very short and not more than 30 secs focusing mainly on the signal of foreignness.

## 6 Results

### 6.1 Main effects (H1): Does Foreign Education Matter?

First, I present the characteristics of the firms and the employers which I refer to as the Key Recruiting Officers (KRO). About two-thirds ( 60%) of the firms have more than 10 employees, 31.5% of the KROs are female and 9.1% of the firms were in the public sector. The median age of the KROs is 33 years old and the average number of years they have in evaluating applicants for all positions is 6.9 years.

Additionally, 99.1 % of the KROs have completed at least a Bachelor’s degree and 33.7% have at least a Master’s degree. It would also be important to know the proportion of local employers that schooled abroad in the sample. The results show that only 5.1% of the employers received a Bachelor’s degree outside Nigeria — of whom 28.6% attended the UK, 4.6% attended USA and 36.4% attended schools in other countries. For Master’s degree, 4.9% of employers schooled abroad — of whom 60.4% attended UK, 4.8% USA and 24% in other countries. I asked employers to rate how the survey experiment mirrors their organization’s selection criteria which resulted in a mean score of 71.5%.

Table 3 shows that the intention to hire foreign-trained applicants increases by 4.8% compared to applicants that are locally trained in the pooled sample. In other words, on average, across all the roles considered, foreign education has higher returns than a local one. The result is consistent across all models but the margin dropped drastically and was not statistically significant in the logistic model where employers had to choose whether they would hire an applicant or not.

Table 3: Main Effects of Foreign Education and Accent on Intention to Hire Returnees: Pooled

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<b>School Attended (Ref: Foreign)</b>				
Locally trained	-0.048** (0.019)	-0.049** (0.021)	-0.046** (0.019)	-0.017 (0.021)
<b>Accent (Ref: Foreign )</b>				
Local Accent	-0.003 (0.024)	-0.005 (0.027)	-0.006 (0.024)	0.001 (0.027)
<b>Work Experience (ref: little or no)</b>				
two years	0.167*** (0.014)	0.165*** (0.014)	0.165*** (0.014)	0.180*** (0.015)
<b>Local prof. network (Ref: Member)</b>				
Not a member	-0.035** (0.014)	-0.034** (0.016)	-0.034** (0.013)	-0.022 (0.015)
<b>Degree (ref: Bachelor's)</b>				
Masters'	0.037** (0.015)	0.032** (0.015)	0.026* (0.015)	0.014 (0.017)
Observations	2,521	2,521	2,521	2,521
R2	0.470	0.094	0.355	
Employer Fixed Effect	✓	No	✓	✓
Mixed Effect	No	No	✓	No
Binary Dependent Variable	No	No	No	✓

Model 1 is the linear model with the employer-fixed effect and Model 2 has no employer-fixed effect. Model 3 is the random intercept model. Model 4 is a logistic model which is the binary question of whether an employer will hire or not, which is independent of the initial score attributed to applicants. Ethnic names, vignette order, quadratic vignette order, firm level of operations (multinational or local), Key Recruiting Officer (KRO)'s ethnicity, gender and age, and KRO's years of experience are controlled for in all models. Included are the interaction of institution \* sector, and institution and job roles. Standard errors are in parentheses. \*Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.00

When I further seek to understand how the effect is moderated by occupation, Table 4 shows that foreign-trained software and financial analysts are strongly preferred to locally-trained applicants but not in other occupations. Foreign-trained software and financial analysts are 17.2% and 7% preferred to non-migrant applicants respectively. On the other hand, foreign education does not increase an applicant's chance of selection in admin, research and communications roles. These results point to hypothesis two that occupation is central to migrants' transnationalism (Huot et al, 2013; Nayar & Hocking 2013) and that returns to education may be produced or reproduced through the returnee's occupation (Monti, 2016; Huot & Laliberte Rudman 2010; Nayar et al 2012).

To further examine what other factors may drive hiring decisions and how they interplay with the location where education was received, an interesting and consistent selection criterion across all occupations is the preference for candidates with two years of work experience as against little or no work experience. Em-

Table 4: Heterogeneous Effects of Foreign Education and Accent on Intention to Hire Returnees by Roles

	(Soft)	(Comm)	(Admin)	(Research)	(Finance)
<b>School Attended (Ref: Foreign)</b>					
Locally trained	-0.155*** (0.057)	-0.012 (0.056)	0.023 (0.036)	-0.031 (0.044)	-0.122*** (0.043)
<b>Accent (Ref: Foreign )</b>					
Local Accent	0.040 (0.074)	-0.022 (0.067)	-0.004 (0.047)	-0.059 (0.054)	0.030 (0.057)
<b>Local prof. network (Ref: Member) of</b>					
	-0.084** (0.042)	0.031 (0.038)	-0.045 (0.027)	-0.003 (0.031)	-0.057* (0.032)
<b>Work Experience (ref: little or no)</b>					
Two yrs experience	0.282*** (0.043)	0.069* (0.039)	0.157*** (0.027)	0.155*** (0.031)	0.219*** (0.033)
<b>Degree (ref: Bachelor's)</b>					
Masters'	0.078* (0.044)	0.029 (0.038)	0.056** (0.023)	0.054 (0.031)	0.055 (0.032)
Observations	396	504	796	393	432
R <sup>2</sup>	0.283	0.200	0.102	0.246	0.263
Employer Fixed Effect	No	No	No	No	No

"Soft" is software engineer roles, "Comm" is communication roles, "Admin" is administration roles, "Research" is Research roles and "Finance" is Finance Analyst. Ethnic names, vignette order, firm level of operations (multinational or local), quadratic vignette order, Key Recruiting Officer (KRO)'s ethnicity, gender and age, and KRO's years of experience are controlled for in all models. Included are the interaction of institution \* sector, and institution and job roles. Standard errors are in parentheses. \*Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.00

employers' intention to hire candidates with two years of work experience is 17 % higher than candidates with no work experience — for applicants seeking their first job. The effect of work experience on hiring software engineers and finance is 26.4% and 20.6% respectively which is relatively higher than applicants in the other three positions. These margins of the effect of work experience are quite strong and suggest that on average, candidates' work experience or "ability to do the job" are quite important factors than the location of educational training — either foreign or local.

Further research can identify whether the higher returns we observe for software and finance positions are suggestive of hiring evaluation of the premium accrued for gaining related work experiences abroad than in local firms. There is also a need to further examine whether roles that yield no returns to foreign education are due to the perceived lower relevance or skill premium in the work experiences gained either locally or abroad as well. In the survey, we did not test for the



effect of the country where the work experience was gained but we observe that roles that returnees, where preferred, had corresponding higher work experience margins. What we do not know is whether we will observe a similar or consistent result if we control for the effect of the location where work experiences were acquired — either foreign or local.

The result suggests that the roles that returnees seek when choosing to integrate into the labour market have significant implications. The concept of labour market segmentation which in this context is the removal of cross-border boundaries by occupation is likely to favour returnees in software and finance roles. For example, research shows that Egypt and Albanian returnees are more likely to be successful than non-migrants when they are entrepreneurs (Piracha and Vadean 2010; Marchetta, F, 2012). It is very unlikely that foreign skills are valued for all roles in the labour market in the same manner.

I also examined the heterogeneous effect of the two types of local institutions covered (private universities and public universities). I did not include this in the analysis because it complicates the findings and does not change significantly what we should expect about the differences between those trained locally and abroad.

## 6.2 Does Foreign Cultural Acculturation Reduce the Returnee's Job Success?

I re-coded the variable such that the effect of each category of accent can be parsimoniously observed. By this I mean 3 bins were created that included (1) Candidates who schooled abroad with local accents, (2) candidates who school abroad with foreign accents and (3) those who school locally with local accents. This result is presented in Figure 2

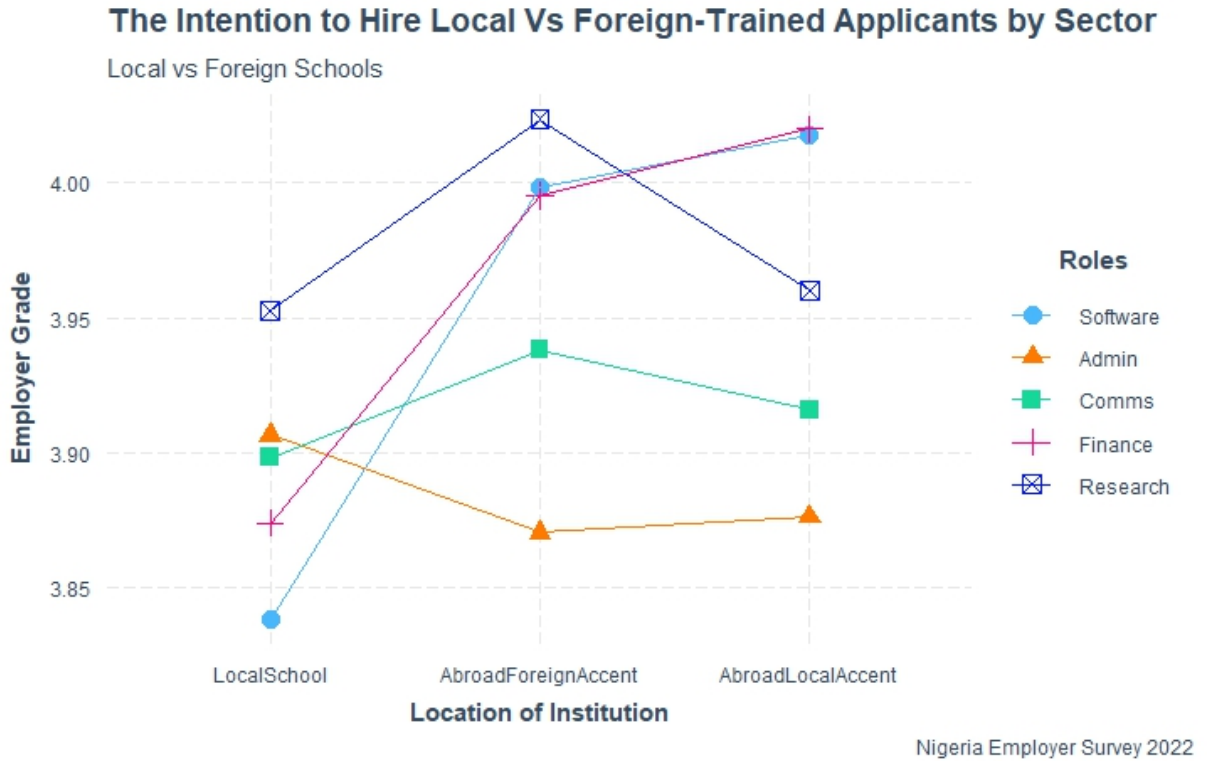
I found that signalling a local accent does not overturn the intention of employers to hire foreign-trained applicants in any role (deducting the effect of local accents from the effect of foreign education), but it does increase the chances of hiring foreign-trained applicants in software and admin positions. As shown in figure 2, foreign-trained applicants seeking these two positions (software and finance) have higher returns for signalling local accents. The intention to hire foreign-trained software engineers who signal local accents increases by 6.4% and admin officers by 2.5% (both results are not statistically significant). In the employer fixed effect model in Table 8, the benefit of local accents remained for software roles and local accents also increased chances in the administrative roles by 2.5% — but these effects dissipated for the financial analyst role in this model<sup>4</sup>. In both models 1 and 2, software engineers received higher benefits for signalling local accents.

From figure 2, we can observe four main patterns. The first is that there are

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<sup>4</sup>The Employer Fixed Effect Model are shown in the Appendix. I present here Model 2 which did not include the employer fixed effect model.

Figure 2: Effects by Accents and Institutions Combined



higher returns to foreign education in software and finance positions than in others — and the rewards are even higher when candidates signal foreign accents. Second is that returns for foreign accents in both software and finance roles are similar and consistent. Third, figure 2 shows that there are roles where locally-trained applicants are preferred. Locally-trained applicants are preferred in administrative roles over those who schooled abroad and there is no difference for foreign-trained admin applicants that signal either a foreign or local accent. The last pattern observed is that speaking a foreign accent is the only difference between schooling abroad and schooling locally in communication and research positions. I further examined why this may be the case for communication and research positions in a quasi-mediation analysis which I will present in the subsequent chapter.

The research shows that different job roles have different penalties for foreign accents. The penalties are likely to be due to the salience of transnationalism. This result shows the nature of the roles is highly predictive of whether the effect of the accent of foreign-trained students will be observed.

As an additional test of the importance of internationalization, I used a crude measure to determine whether employers may intend to hire candidates with stronger connections with local professional networks. I adapted the professional network to a local-specific professional network for the five job roles. I found that

professional networks are locally valued for all positions except in communication roles.

### 6.3 Robustness Check: Mediation Analysis

I checked whether the initial specification discussed above is robust in two different mediation analyses. I identified four mediators which are 1) innovation 2) competency and 3) sociability and 4) accents (already discussed as a moderator). KROs scored each applicant from a range of 1-100 for each outcome identified here as mediators (except for accents which were arbitrarily assigned)

The first analysis is to examine whether speaking local accents mediated the effect of foreign education on hiring intentions. The randomization of accents makes it more likely that the standard strong ignorability assumption required for mediators is satisfied though this analysis has its shortcoming. Because I did not test the effect of foreign education on returnees' accents — and only presumed that a certain proportion of returnees will have specific accents (local or foreign), the mediation analysis is conditioned on the assumption that foreign education increases the chances of signalling foreign accents by about 50%. The assignment of accents across each role was nearly equally proportionate by each category of local or foreign accents. A more precise estimation of the number of foreign-trained applicants that were signalled local accents shows 50% for software roles, 53% in finance, 53% in administration, 44% in communication and 47 % in research roles.

Table 5 shows that about half or more than half of the effects of schooling abroad are mediated by signalling local accents in both communication (63.3%) and research (49.3%) positions — which are positions where there is no clear preference for foreign-trained applicants. When controls were added, accents mediated almost all of the effect of foreign education in communication roles (90.4%) and about two-thirds in research roles (66.1%).

Table 5: Mediating Effect of Signalling Local Accents on Foreign Education

Role	Total Effect of Schooling Abroad	P. Value of ACME	Prop. Mediated by Local Accents	Prop. Mediated by Local Accents (No Controls)
Research	0.03	0.24	63.3%	66.1%
Comms	0.01	0.77	49.3%	90.4%
Admin	-0.02	0.94	-9.1%	36.5%
Software	0.15	0.60	-11%	-1.1%
Finance	0.12	0.84	-4.6%	-7%

[ **Note:** The table includes both the proportion mediated by local accents on foreign education with all controls and without controls]

On the other hand, local accents did not have a mediating effect on foreign ed-

ucation in software and financial analyst roles — which are roles where returnees are preferred.

In summary, a significant portion of the effect of schooling abroad is mediated by signals of local accents in roles foreign-trained are less preferred except in administrative roles. This suggests that local accents influence the relationship between foreign education and the intention to hire skilled returnees in communication and research roles under the condition that about 50% of foreign-trained applicants will signal local accents when applying for jobs. In practice, this proportion may not be true and these results are only a pseudo representation of what might be likely.

The second mediation analysis was whether other outcomes mediated the effect of foreign education on hiring intention which includes: 1) innovation 2) competency and 3) sociability. The question that was asked was using a grade of 0 - 100, where 0 is the lowest, and 100 is the highest, indicate how you believe in the following statements. "Co-workers in our organization will enjoy collaborating with Candidate A", "Applicants like Candidate A are usually more competent than others", and "Applicants like Candidate A are usually more innovative than others". This exercise was only carried out in one region and not all four regions which means the results are less representative. Nonetheless, this approach can estimate the underlying or alternative causal paths that may influence hiring decisions. The result shows that the effect of the mediators (not presented) was very correlated with the school attended and the pathway from the mediators to hiring intention was not important. The average causal mediation effect (ACME) was low and had no significant effect. The result shows that a candidate's academic profile (schooling abroad or not) is a strong determinant of the intention to hire and that competency, social acceptability and innovation are not exclusive when hiring decisions are made.

## 7 Discussion

Following Rivera (2012), recruitment is a type of social ritual and cultural matching — which returnees and related employers are obliged to adhere (Nohl, et al 2006). Social closure implicitly creates a system that helps to enforce control of expected norms among workers (Waldiner and Lichter; 2003). Employers reward applicants within their broader social networks that stem from groups and categories they belong (Fernandez and Galperin 2014, Ibarra 1999). These rewards stem from the need to hire applicants with similar cultural capital.

The interesting question would be why we find a positive effect of accents in some roles and not others. I argue that transnational education is mainly assessed in relation to occupations that may be deemed transnational. The effect of transnationalism which connotes the ability to live a dual identity is observed in

transnational occupations and not others. Local employers play a strong emphasis on transnational occupation and are more interested in rewarding candidates that identify with a local-specific cultural capital in a transnational context. In roles where the effect of accents was not observed, the idea of transnationalism or transnational education is weaker. Generally, in roles where there are higher chances that returnees are hired which can be termed "transnational occupation", there are a corresponding higher chances that the effect of the local accent will increase hiring intentions.

A critical examination of the roles may provide additional insights. Again, most of the roles scraped from popular job sites that were scraped for this paper reflect the average job description expected for such roles at that time. The job description of software engineers and financial analyst roles often reflect similar descriptions across different countries. For others, they are often more directed towards local needs. Though these occupations are advertised within a specific country, occupation scientists believe that nation-states are not confined within a territory and they are divisive categories that migrants navigate through their occupations (Vertovec, 2009). Transnationalism which is identified in specific transnational occupations may force local recruiters to identify and subsequently punish signals of foreign cultural internationalization.

While this paper does not address the reasons returnees select into specific roles, research shows that resource-dependent occupations might be an elite practice which reproduces which certain returnees may have lesser access in their country of migration because of pre-migration constraints. (Skop 2016; Waldinger, 2015) . However, what is intuitively clear is that software engineers and financial analyst positions may require more time to complete due to their heavy professional requirements - which may have been less attractive to households with lesser resources. Additionally, the lower supply of foreign applicants in specific roles may reduce the occupational closure in these roles more than in others. For example, there might be fewer software engineers and financial analysts trained abroad — and conversely, more foreign-trained students in admin, communication and research occupations that retains the roles as less transnational — since applicants in those occupations are often not a rare find.

There is strong evidence that elite occupations are associated with social background and mannerisms (Friedman and Laurison, 2020). While students from disadvantaged background select roles where access to jobs are perceived to be easier and offers immediate financial stability (see, e.g., Millett 2003, Hoffer et al. 2003, Walpole 2003); students from privileged backgrounds are able to stay in occupations with a lower payoff if they believe that have higher career prospects (Ollion, and Algan 2015). This suggests the returns to foreign education may be driven by occupational closure within the system of social inequality that may not be observed by the current financial payoffs in each occupation. Further research is to be done to know whether applicants in software engineers and financial analyst positions are in elite occupations and whether transnational migrants who possess

skills in the roles have disproportionate access to the resources required.

## 8 Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to improve the under-researched role of the different forms of cultural capital and the labour market's characteristics that influence returnees' economic integration using Nigeria as a case study. The impact of foreign education on the local economy in developing nations can be significant when the effect of cultural capital and the character of the labour market is decomposed.

Previous research has shown examined the importance of institutional and human capital in the job market success of returnees (Piracha and Vadean 2010; Marchetta, F;2012) but not whether returnees' "embodied" state affect their economic integration – which I argue can not be separated from other forms of cultural capital. Returnees that signal foreign internationalization which is indexed as foreign accents reduces their employment chances. However, it is important to note that this penalty does not overturn the benefit of foreign education in these roles.

Returnees have different forms of cultural capital that may be rewarded or punished in the labour market. As expounded by Bourdieu, capital may be (1) institutional which is the premium gained from being formerly affiliated with a foreign institution, can be (2) gained from the skills learned abroad and (3) because a returnee chooses to share a specific embodiment in her homeland. Historically, a homecomer is said to meet life at home to be longer accessible in immediacy because his personality has been broken down into pieces (Schütz, A, 1945). Ayandele (1974) refers to Nigerian returnees as a deluded hybrid - that though born black have the cultural and social ambition of the whites.

Additionally, I contribute to previous evidence that there is heterogeneity in the returns from foreign education that include the length of stay in host countries, type of degree earned and region of return (Hania Janta et al, 2021; Du, Z et al 20210). I found that foreign education is preferred in specific occupations (software and finance) and not others. These preferred roles can be referred to as "transnational occupations" where social fields are multistranded and can be sustained across countries of origin and destination (Basch et al 1994). This result suggests that not all potential field of study and career prospect empowers the returnee (Laliberte Rudman et al 2014).

Reintegration programs in Taiwan, India and China (Chaudhary and Hamdani, 2002; Gmelch, 1987; Kapur and McHale, 2005; Xu, 2010) have focused on local-specific cultural capital and labour market realities. Cole and Kelly (2000) show that locally constructed discourses actively shape the labour market dynamic of Singaporean returnees via the Foreign Talent program.

This paper opens the bar for a few pertinent questions. Are educated re-

turnees more likely to be integrated when they are seeking jobs in occupations that have lesser cultural constraints — which include whether they are better integrated as innovating intrapreneurs or entrepreneurs than as job seekers? Studies in other contexts already show that Albanian and Egyptian returnees are more likely to start their own businesses than non-migrants (Piracha and Vadean 2010; Marchetta, F, 2012).

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## A Text of Candidates' Pitches

*Candidate 1* In addition to my resume that you just read, I would like to say that I am very imaginative and inventive. I am ready to implement new approaches. I also want to say that I admire this great institution, and I look forward to working with other team members. I believe that my education and skills have prepared me for this job. I am hoping to receive from you soon. Thank you!.

*Candidate 2* Thank you for reviewing my resume. I have followed the achievements of this institution for years, and it's been astounding. I will be very delighted to work with you. I have proven records for being super creative. I am a team player. I do have great work ethic. I am confident that my current knowledge and skills have prepared me for opportunity. I look forward to a response from you..

*Candidate 3* I appreciate your time in reading my application. I would also like to add that I have profound experience in introducing novel projects. I am a great manager and people-oriented. My previous experiences reinforce my qualifications and aptitude to compete for this job, in this great institution. I look forward to doing inspiring work at your institution..

*Candidate 4* In addition to what you have read, I will bring to your institution what I have done in the past. I am highly rigorous, detailed and I am known for thinking outside the box. I am also a good listener and team player. I believe I will be a good fit for this institution. I will look forward to discussing my qualifications further. I find this role very interesting and challenging.

*Candidate 5* I will appreciate the opportunity to contribute innovative ideas to current work and projects in this highly respected institution. I believe I am a perfect fit for the role. I have well-rounded experience and the zeal for personal and team achievements. I will be happy to respond to further questions and clarification considering my experience - thanking you once again..

*Candidate 6* I will like to add that I look forward to an opportunity for a personal meeting. I am confident that I will be an asset to this institution, and look forward to providing newer approaches to current procedures. I am known for excellent performance and for implementing best practices. I have the right skills, the team-spirit, and qualifications for this job. Thank you for taking the time to read my application, and I will be happy to hear back from you soon.

## B Summary Statistics

Summary Statistics by School Attended  
Local vs Foreign Institution

Characteristic	N	abroad, N = 831 <sup>1</sup>	local, N = 1,690 <sup>1</sup>	p <sup>2</sup>
Employer Grade	2,521	70 (50, 80)	60 (50, 80)	0.002
Age	2,521			0.3
20-25		274 (33%)	550 (33%)	
26-30		295 (35%)	561 (33%)	
31-40		262 (32%)	579 (34%)	
Ethnic Names	2,521			0.7
HausaNames		365 (44%)	719 (43%)	
IgboNames		247 (30%)	499 (30%)	
localaccent		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
YorubaNames		219 (26%)	472 (28%)	
Gender	2,521			0.6
female		422 (51%)	875 (52%)	
male		409 (49%)	815 (48%)	
Accent	2,521			<0.001
Foreign Accent		526 (63%)	0 (0%)	
Local Accent		305 (37%)	1,690 (100%)	
Language	2,521			0.8
English and pidgin		405 (49%)	833 (49%)	
English only		426 (51%)	857 (51%)	
Academic Performance	2,521			0.3
a top 20 percent		265 (32%)	577 (34%)	
a top 10 percent		293 (35%)	546 (32%)	
an average		273 (33%)	567 (34%)	
Work Experience	2,521			0.3
has no significant experience		409 (49%)	866 (51%)	
two years work experience		422 (51%)	824 (49%)	
Network	2,521			0.8
Member of		424 (51%)	870 (51%)	
Not a member of		407 (49%)	820 (49%)	
Civil Status	2,521			>0.9
Married		435 (52%)	889 (53%)	
Single		396 (48%)	801 (47%)	
Degree	2,521			0.005
Bachelor's		388 (47%)	890 (53%)	
Masters'		443 (53%)	800 (47%)	
Country Level	2,521			0.7
One State in Nigeria		438 (53%)	908 (54%)	
Multiple States in Nigeria		214 (26%)	410 (24%)	
Transnational		179 (22%)	372 (22%)	
Ethnicity	2,521			
Bini/Esan		51 (6.1%)	94 (5.6%)	
Efik/Ibibio		29 (3.5%)	66 (3.9%)	
Hausa/Fulani		34 (4.1%)	69 (4.1%)	
Ibo		185 (22%)	376 (22%)	
Ijaw		57 (6.9%)	123 (7.3%)	
Nupe		2 (0.2%)	4 (0.2%)	
Others		124 (15%)	266 (16%)	
Yoruba		349 (42%)	692 (41%)	
Years evaluating role	2,521	6.0 (4.0, 9.0)	6.0 (4.0, 9.0)	0.5
Sex	2,521			0.064



Female		238 (29%)	557 (33%)	
Male		591 (71%)	1,130 (67%)	
Others		2 (0.2%)	3 (0.2%)	
Firm size	2,521			0.049
1-10		348 (42%)	658 (39%)	
101-200		18 (2.2%)	42 (2.5%)	
11-20		121 (15%)	295 (17%)	
21-50		135 (16%)	266 (16%)	
51-100		71 (8.5%)	192 (11%)	
above 200		138 (17%)	237 (14%)	
Sector	2,521			0.4
Private sector (entertainment and arts only)		63 (7.6%)	150 (8.9%)	
nonprofits		40 (4.8%)	67 (4.0%)	
Private sector(others)		617 (74%)	1,274 (75%)	
Public sector		111 (13%)	199 (12%)	
Region	2,521			0.2
Multiple States		93 (11%)	199 (12%)	
North		164 (20%)	374 (22%)	
South East/South		289 (35%)	602 (36%)	
SouthWest		285 (34%)	515 (30%)	
Unknown		0	0	

<sup>1</sup>n (%); Median (IQR)

<sup>2</sup>Pearson's Chi-squared test; Fisher's exact test; Wilcoxon rank sum test

## C Candidates Attributes

Table 7: Survey Attributes

S/N	Variable Names	Recoded Names	Categories	Rationale
1	Schooling profile	School Abroad	Belington College after a three-year degree program in Worcester, UK	The name sounds like a foreign school but it doesn't exist. This is to remove the effect of prestige that may be associated with any foreign school. "After" was used to emphasize that the schooling was abroad and not online
			Willfield College after a four-year program in Chichester, USA	Same as above
		School Locally	University of Ibadan (UI)	Nigeria is divided into three broad regions (North, South and West) UI is located and associated with Southern Nigeria. Leading Institution in Northern Nigeria.
			Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) University of Nigeria, Enugu (UNN) Covenant University (CU)	
2	Gender	Men Women	Men Women	
3	Age	Young age	20-25	It does not seem plausible that a college graduate will be less than 19 years of age
		working age	26-30	
		working age	31-40	It does not seem plausible that recent college graduates will be above 40 years of age
4	Marital Status	Single Married	Single Married	

**Table 7 continued from previous page**

S/N	Variable Names	Recoded Variable Names	Categories	Rationale
5	Degree	Master's	Master's	PhD was not included due to other attributes that might be associated with the holder.
		Bachelor's	Bachelor's	
6	Experience	Low work experience	has no significant work experience; and has little practical experience in	Recent graduates are more likely to have no work experience
		High work experience	main experience has been two years' work experience, with practical expertise in	Recent graduates are more likely to have less than two years of work experience, either locally or internationally
7	Grade	Excellent	a top 10 percent	Top 10 percent is likely to mean one of the best. Top 30 percent is likely to mean close to the best. I did not include those who graduated with below average grades because in most cases they do not include this attribute in their resume.
		Very Good	a top 30 percent	
		Average	average	
8	Language	Pidgin English	Speaks English and Pidgin Fluently	I expect that those who can speak in pidgin are more accustomed to the local culture.
		No-Pidgin English	En- Speaks English Fluently	
9	Hobbies	Neutral	playing football	Nothing specific
		Neutral	playing tennis	Nothing specific
10	Network	Member	Member of	Binary outcome

**Table 7 continued from previous page**

S/N	Variable Names	Recoded Variable Names	Categories	Rationale
		Non-member	Not a member of	Binary outcome
11	First Names	Yoruba-ethnic names	Opeyemi	Gender-neutral
		Yoruba-ethnic names	Mayowa	Gender-neutral
		Hausa-ethnic names	Auta	Gender-neutral
		Hausa-ethnic names	Kaka	Gender-neutral
		Igbo-ethnic names	Ugochukwu	Gender-neutral
		Igbo-ethnic names	Amadi	Gender-neutral
12	Surnames		George	English/Colonial names(neutral)
			Edward	English/Colonial names(neutral)
			Sawaba	English/Colonial names(neutral)
			William	English/Colonial names(neutral)

## D Robustness Check

Table 8: By Role

	(Soft)	(Comm)	(Admin)	(Research)	(Finance)
<b>School Attended (Ref: Foreign)</b>					
Locally trained	-0.172*** (0.053)	-0.008 (0.069)	-0.012 (0.037)	-0.034 (0.054)	-0.07* (0.041)
<b>Accent (Ref: Foreign )</b>					
Local Accent	0.064 (0.069)	-0.010 (0.088)	0.025 (0.053)	-0.037 (0.071)	-0.036 (0.053)
<b>Local prof. network (Ref: Member)</b>					
Not a member	-0.101** (0.038)	-0.006 (0.034)	-0.020 (0.021)	-0.016 (0.028)	-0.042 (0.028)
<b>Work Experience (ref: little or no)</b>					
Two yrs experience	0.264*** (0.041)	0.107** (0.037)	0.146*** (0.021)	0.161*** (0.029)	0.206*** (0.029)
<b>Degree (ref: Bachelor's)</b>					
Masters'	0.078* (0.044)	0.029 (0.038)	0.056** (0.023)	0.054 (0.031)	0.055 (0.032)
Observations	396	504	796	393	432
R <sup>2</sup>	0.482	0.383	0.468	0.421	0.467
Employer Fixed Effect	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

"Soft" is software engineer roles, "Comm" is communication roles, "Admin" is administration roles, "Research" is Research roles and "Finance" is Finance Analyst. Ethnic names, vignette order, firm level of operations (multinational or local), quadratic vignette order, Key Recruiting Officer (KRO)'s ethnicity, gender and age, and KRO's years of experience are controlled for in all models. Included are the interaction of institution \* sector, and institution and job roles. Standard errors are in parentheses. \*Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.00

Figure 3: Result of job roles scraped from jobberman.com from June -Aug 2021

