International Education in the United Kingdom: The Challenges of the Golden Opportunity for Black-African Students

Denis Hyams-Ssekasi[1], Christine P. Mushibwe[2], and Elizabeth Frances Caldwell[2]

Abstract

For the last 40 years, the number of international students aspiring to obtain a qualification in U.K. universities has been exponentially growing. However, such growth has been contested. What seemed to be a "golden" opportunity for Black-African students to pursue their education in the United Kingdom is met with challenges that impact the whole process of adjustment. This article examines these challenges using a qualitative empirical study of Black-African postgraduate students, carried out in three U.K. universities. The methods utilized were observations, focus groups, one-to-one interviews, and a case study to help identify and analyze the issues. The participants reported significant financial pressures and difficulties in understanding and integrating into the culture of U.K. universities. In some cases, these challenges left the students feeling disillusioned and cynical about the value of an international education. Universities must endeavor to tailor their recruitment, orientation, and support programs to the needs of Black-African international students or face damaging their reputations as world-class education providers.

Keywords

Black-African postgraduate students, international education, international student, adjustment, social and economic

Introduction

The movement of African students and the influence of Western higher education is not a recent phenomenon. In 1946, around 200 students from the "Colonial Empire" in Africa were studying at British universities on scholarships, made available in the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (Keith, 1946). Since then, African students have been coming to the United Kingdom in significant numbers, to earn a higher education qualification and then return to Africa (ICEF Monitor, 2013). During the period when universities and medical schools were being established in Africa, students were encouraged to study in the United Kingdom as a form of colonial aid (Keith, 1946). However, during the 1950s, the British government sought to restrict the numbers of Africans studying in the United Kingdom due to concerns about the export of communist influences common on campuses at the time (Leney, 1999).

Following the end of colonial rule, Lee and Rice (2007) summarize the main focus of the policy of encouraging international students as "diplomacy, state development and building cultural and political ties" (p. 383). As Manyika (2001) and Hyams-Ssekasi (2012) point out, some of Africa's most prominent political leaders, scholars, and professionals have been educated in Britain. Up until 1967, international students at U.K. universities were charged the same fees as domestic students and "in this period they were seen as contributors to international relations and development, as an enrichment of student life, a source of students for vacant places, and 'lastly' a source of revenue" (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008, p. 75). However, in the 1970s, fees for international students started to rise, which caused a corresponding reduction in students from "poor" countries such as Kenya and India (Wedderburn, 1979). In 1979, the Conservative government raised fees for non–European Union (EU) international students to between 6 and 15 times the domestic rate, causing diplomatic rifts with many countries and a dramatic fall in international student numbers (Chandler, 1989). By 1983, scholarship programs for students from countries with historic ties had been introduced, but as Chandler (1989) points out, the "historic tradition of educational obligation based on the bonds of Empire and the links of Commonwealth had been transformed into an economic opportunity for buyers and sellers of educational services" (p. 1). By the late 1980s, international student recruitment had recovered,

[1]University Campus Oldham, UK
[2]University of Huddersfield, UK

Corresponding Author:
Denis Hyams-Ssekasi, University Campus Oldham, 1 Cromwell Street, Oldham OL1 1BB, UK.
Email: dhs59@hotmail.com

although there was an overall reduction in the numbers of students from the developing world (Chandler, 1989).

In 2012, there were 34,160 African students studying in the United Kingdom (Higher Education Statistics Agency [HESA], 2014), with the majority coming from Nigeria (ICEF Monitor, 2012). African students make up around 8% of the international student body in the United Kingdom and are the third largest group after those from the EU and Asia (HESA, 2014). While much research has been conducted on other groups of international students, literature on the experience and impact on international Black-African students is limited. This is despite the fact that evidence is emerging to suggest that Black-African international students have different issues with adjusting to studying abroad, compared with the more commonly studied groups of students from Asia and Europe (Boafo-Arthur, 2014; Warren & Constantine, 2007). There have been a number of studies done on African students studying in the United States (Adelegan & Parks, 1985; Boafo-Arthur, 2014; Irungu, 2013; Lee & Opio, 2011; Nebedum-Ezeh, 1997; Pruitt, 1978), but their experiences of studying in the United Kingdom is an area that has received less attention (Carey, 1956; Hyams-Ssekasi, 2012; Khapoya, 1998; Maringe & Carter, 2007).

A number of authors have questioned the usefulness of considering "Africans" together as a group, considering the cultural and linguistic diversity in a continent of 53 countries (Beoku-Betts, 2006; Maringe & Carter, 2007). In addition, in using such a grouping, we may be reinforcing a misconception that the peoples of the African continent do not have a rich and diverse cultural heritage. However, as Beoku-Betts (2006) points out, people from the various African countries do themselves use the term *African* to refer to themselves when abroad. In addition, the "postcolonial legacies of economic and political marginality that African countries continue to experience" provide an argument for exploring the commonalities between the experiences of people from that continent (Beoku-Betts, 2006, p. 150). Following Boafo-Arthur (2014), in this article we have chosen to make one further distinction and use the term *Black-African* to describe our sample because some of the issues faced by Black-African students are different to those experienced by White-Africans (Adelegan & Parks, 1985; Lee & Opio, 2011). These issues will be explored in more detail in the following section.

Literature Review

Students' Reasons for Studying Abroad

The decision to embark on studies in a foreign country is an enormous step, especially for students from less privileged countries. Studying abroad can be one of the most exciting and rewarding times of one's life (Khapoya, 1998), in terms of learning new ideas, meeting new people, and exploring new cultures and landscapes, and can lead to lifelong relationships (Hyland, Trahar, Anderson, & Dickens, 2008). Pimpa (2003) points out that

> [O]f the many factors influencing student's desire to study abroad the most commonly cited are the ability of international education to raise economic and social status of graduates, limited access to education in home countries, and the perception of quality of education in home or host countries. (p. 179)

A recent study by Brooks and Waters (2011) argues that "international education is often seen by students as a ticket to future international mobility enabled by their inherent 'cosmopolitanism'—they have the ability and drive to take their credentials 'anywhere'" (p. 59). In line with the current emphasis on globalization, Andrade (2006) points out that international education encourages intercultural understanding and/or the study of different languages in the quest for enhanced future career prospects.

According to Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2006), international students' choices of where to study are based on historical connections to particular countries, as well as language, education system, and the perceived quality and reputation of the country's education provision. Maringe and Carter (2007) found that African students tend to follow the roots of their colonizers because of their derived cultural capital, including a shared language. For Francophone Africans, France is the most popular destination for international education, and South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States are the most popular locations for English-speaking African students (ICEF Monitor, 2013). Boafo-Arthur (2014) lists, in order of importance, the reasons for Black-African students' decisions to study in the United States, namely "a wide range of schools and programs; the higher quality of education; a welcoming stance to international students; scholarship opportunities; and good student support services" (pp. 115-116).

Irungu (2013) argues that African students, in general, perceive study in countries such as the United States to be a guarantee of a job when they return home and that students think employers care less about what university the student attended, than the fact that they have an education from a developed country. Maringe and Carter (2007) also found that for many African students, choice of institution is less important than the decision to come to the United Kingdom. In fact, they found that for some students choosing courses, "prestige . . . images of grandeur . . . and relevance of course for local labour markets seemed to come before interest in the subject" (p. 468).

Livingstone (1960) and Barker (1997) claim that in some African countries, the goal of attaining an overseas degree is something in the nature of an obsession. According to Irungu (2013), "Education from an American institution is viewed with pride, not only by immediate and extended families, but also by entire villages, communities and governments" (p. 166). Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) point out that a similar

situation exists for U.K. qualifications: "British Education has for a long time been considered to be the best in the world enjoying the branding of 'made' in the United Kingdom" (p. 320). McNamara and Harris (1997) list the driving factors to pursue courses at U.K. universities rather than anywhere else, as the English language, recognition of U.K. qualification by governments and companies, the standard and quality of education, and the international reputation of a U.K. education. Maringe and Carter (2007) mention that U.K. higher education also has a positive brand perception through association with Oxbridge and describe an African student who gained the reputation among relatives of having been to Oxford, even though he had actually graduated from the University of Derby.

Another common theme that emerges in considering Black-African students' motivations for studying abroad is the notion of wanting to return to their home countries to put their newfound skills and knowledge into practice. In Fischer's (2011) study of Ghanaian students, the participants were reported to have a strong desire to return home after their studies and impart their knowledge to others. In addition, Maringe and Carter's (2007) study of African students studying in the United Kingdom found that they regard higher education in the United Kingdom as preparing them for leadership positions when they get back home. In a report by ICEF Monitor (2012), it was claimed that 98% of Nigerian students in the United Kingdom return to their country after graduation.

Challenges Faced by Black-African International Students

According to Borrett and Zysk (2007), "International students encounter a range of challenges in their first study period in a new country; they are expected to make transitions to new educational, cultural and social environments" (p. 45). Van Gennep (1960) identified three phases involved in the adjustment to a new culture, namely, *separation, transition*, and *incorporation* and declared that these three phases constituted a universal pattern. The *separation* phase involves moving from their home communities (the family, the village, colleagues, and jobs) to become a part of the new university community. Tinto (1987) argues this phase can be difficult, although it is more likely to be a combination of elation of the unknown and pain at leaving the known. *Transition*, the second phase, is described as a process of letting go of the ways and behavior of the past to learn new ways which are appropriate to the new environment (Tinto, 1987; Van Gennep, 1960). The *transition* phase is central to making new friends, understanding the new education system, and accommodating the new culture. The final *incorporation* phase is fundamental to the international student's adjustment process and involves the students finally integrating into the host culture (Van Gennep, 1960). Mushibwe (2009) argues that by the time the individual arrives at this stage, he/she would be stable and accepted in the new social community, but would also be expected to behave according to local norms and ethical standards. According to Lee and Opio (2011), Black-African students have greater problems incorporating into their new environment than separating from their home.

Researchers have noted a catalog of adjustment problems facing international students as a whole, including educational challenges, communication problems, financial difficulties, accommodation, social isolation, serious nostalgia problems, worries about immediate and extended family, discrimination, and the adjustment to social customs and cultural differences (Church, 1982; Crano & Crano, 1993; Furnham, 1997; Persaud, 1993). Boafo-Arthur (2014) states that the most common issues with adjusting to their new environment faced by Black-African students are prejudice and discrimination, social isolation, separation from family and friends, and financial concerns. While some of these problems are common to other groups of international students, there are a number of areas which are particularly acute for many Black-African students.

Both Lee and Opio (2011) and Boafo-Arthur (2014) found that experiencing prejudice and discrimination during their time in the United States was a significant issue for Black-African students. A number of authors have found that difficulties with discrimination were not anticipated by students before their arrival, largely because students were members of the majority race in their home countries and many had not experienced racial prejudice before (Lee & Opio, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007). However, in a study of Ghanaian students, Fischer (2011) reports that before departure to the United States, the students did anticipate the emotional impact of discrimination and racism. Boafo-Arthur (2014, p. 118) claims that racial discrimination is the area that causes the most concern for Black-African students studying in America as they found themselves being connected with often unfamiliar negative stereotypes associated with African Americans (Lee & Opio, 2011). Manyika (2001) argues that, in the United States, the issue of race generally dominates the Black international student's experience, whereas in the United Kingdom issues of social class are more evident. Interestingly, problems with discrimination were not specifically reported in Maringe and Carter's (2007) study of African students' experiences in the United Kingdom, although the lack of research on Black-African students in the United Kingdom means that this issue cannot be ruled out as a potential problem. In fact, Beoku-Betts (2006) found a number of examples of "a chilly laboratory or classroom climate" (p. 154) due to racial discrimination reported by African female postgraduate students studying in the United Kingdom.

Black-African students also encounter problems with negative perceptions of African cultures, often seen as "backward" due to "the colonial experience and the marginal position of their societies in the global economic system"

(Beoku-Betts, 2006, p. 157). Beoku-Betts (2006) and Lee and Opio (2011) report that students experienced their tutors questioning their ability to be able to manage their university work, and suggesting that they should take remedial, or easier, classes. A number of authors have queried whether foreign accents lead to these negative perceptions, although Lee and Opio (2011) and Lee and Rice (2007) point out that White-African and European students with different accents do not report problems with such prejudices. As a White South African in Lee and Opio's (2011) study explains, "People confuse me for an American all the time until they get to talk to me and find out that I have an accent" (p. 640) and in general White-Africans describe their time in the United States as "enjoyable" and report that they easily blend into American culture.

For many international students, coping with studying in a foreign language represents a significant challenge (Abdullah, Ismail, Aziz, Latiff, & Ibrahim, 2014). However, many of the Black-African students studying in the United Kingdom come from former British colonies and have previously studied in English-medium environments (Maringe & Carter, 2007). For many of these students, English may be an additional language, but it is one that is used with near-native proficiency. Some students report difficulties with the host population understanding their accents, but Blake (2006) found that language difficulties did not seem to be the greatest challenge for Black-African students. It is, however, disconcerting for Black-African students who have been taught the "Queen's English" in former British colonies to discover that native speakers find it difficult to understand them (Fischer, 2011; Mwara, 2008). Hyams-Ssekasi (2012) details the experience of a Gambian student in the United Kingdom:

> I find myself saying "I beg your pardon" all the time especially when someone speaks so quickly. The response I get is "what?", " You what?" and one time a male said to me, "Excuse me" and I said "You are excused" and he said that was not the way we speak English here. (p. 113)

Rather than language, both Blake (2006) and Maringe and Carter (2007) found that financial concerns were the biggest source of anxiety for Black-African students. During the colonial period, African students who studied in Europe tended to come from the economic elite or even African nobility (Leney, 1999). The assumptions that today's African international students are also from wealthy upbringings is common one (Fischer, 2011), but in fact nowadays, students who study abroad, including Black-Africans, come from a wide range of backgrounds (Manyika, 2001). In Hyams-Ssekasi's (2012) study of Black-African students in the United Kingdom, 43 out of 50 participants were from rural backgrounds and grew up in villages, often with poor infrastructure and facilities. The National Union of Students (NUS; 2014) claims that African students often have more "informal" (p. 26) sponsorship arrangements and that such

arrangements are more common in countries where state support is limited. However, the assumption that students who are sponsored by governments or organizations are less likely to experience financial difficulties than self-funded students is also unfounded, as certain schemes may have unreliable payment schedules for students, causing them financial hardship (NUS, 2014).

There is no doubt that for many self-funded Black-African students, paying for their studies is a major challenge (Blake, 2006; Maringe & Carter, 2007). In fact Maringe and Carter (2007) found that all the students in their study reported facing anxieties about finances and 91% worried about how they were going to pay their fees. Maringe and Carter (2007) also point out that the financial commitment of studying aboard not only places a strain on the individual but also on their parents and families. In addition, as Boafo-Arthur (2014) points out, financial issues are a particular issue for African students as many of them are expected to send money back to their families and communities while studying abroad.

> It is a common belief that once a student is in America, money will no longer be an issue. According to most African cultures, the relative who has more is expected to share with others in the family—an expectation that can create incredible pressures. (Irungu, 2013, p. 174)

This collectivism is often stated to be a common feature of many African societies (Hofstede, 2001; Hyams-Ssekasi, 2012; Irungu, 2013; Wallace & Constantine, 2005) and not only implies an obligation to share finances but also provides a key support mechanism for individuals. A number of studies have found that African students struggle with the differences in cultures between the individualism found in the United Kingdom and the United States, and their own more communal cultures (Boafo-Arthur, 2014; Fischer, 2011; Irungu, 2013; Mwara, 2008). In addition, a number of authors have highlighted that finding support from other students from similar countries and cultures is often valued more highly by Black-African students than seeking support through official channels, such as university counseling services (Blake, 2006; Fischer, 2011; Lee and Opio, 2011; Mwara, 2008). In fact, one study found that Africentric cultural values (communalism, collectivism, co-operation, spirituality) were associated with greater perceived stigma about counseling and greater self-concealment of personal problems (Wallace & Constantine, 2005). In their study of homesickness, Constantine, Okazaki, and Utsey (2004) found that African students concealed adverse information about themselves and were more prone to depression than other international students.

According to Irungu (2013), Black-African students arrive with "great expectations and untested dreams" (p. 166), as obtaining an education from a British or American university is viewed with pride by their families

and communities. However, for many, there are unforeseen challenges to their expectations of the host country (Hyams-Ssekasi, 2012). Having been taught to view England as "the mother country" and America as one of the richest and most developed nations, many African students have expressed surprise and disappointment with the old, dirty buildings, and at the cool reception that they receive from locals (Beoku-Betts, 2006; Carey, 1956). In addition, students must take on a new identity, of being a foreigner and a member of a minority for the first time, as well as adjusting to the culture of their new university and the demands of academic life. Fischer's (2011) study found that students did anticipate the likelihood of an initial adjustment period, although a number of authors have found that the scale of the adjustment that they had to make was greater than expected (Irungu, 2013; Lee & Opio, 2011; Mwara, 2008). As we have seen, the majority of recent literature of the experience of Black-African international students comes from the United States. Maringe and Carter (2007) study is a notable exception, although this study is primarily concerned with the factors behind African students' decisions to study in the United Kingdom. The aim of our study, therefore, is to explore the challenges of adjustment and incorporation that contemporary Black-African students experience once they arrive in the United Kingdom, and the impact this has on their education and well-being.

Methodology

Data Collection

The data in this study were collected from students at three universities located in northern England, which were chosen because of their active involvement in international recruitment. Two of the universities were former polytechnics, given university status in 1992, and one university was previously a college of advanced technology, which became a university in the 1960s (see Bolsmann & Miller, 2008). The universities were not specifically targeting Black-African students in their international recruitment programs, which reflects the anecdotal experience of the researchers, who made contact with isolated students from a variety of different African countries. While the motivational factors for recruiting Black-African students is an interesting topic for future research, it was outside the scope of this study.

An inductive study was selected to provide rich, holistic, and real data from the participants (Sikes, 2004). First, observation was used as a tool for collecting data in the setting, in order for us to understand the social reality of the group under study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). The observation procedure was carried out in university foyers. The purpose was to appreciate the rules that build the students' relationships, which enable them to understand the behaviors, gesticulations, and verbal expressions of others. This was in turn related to perceptions of race-awareness. The observed were not aware they were being observed. This was done to minimize actors constructing artificial actions. We followed the observation process with focus group interviews which Kitzinger (2004) defines as "group discussions organised to explore a specific set of issues such as people's views and experiences of contraception" (p. 269). Two initial focus group interviews, with four participants in each, were conducted at each university and then follow-up focus groups were undertaken with the same participants to ensure credibility of the earlier responses (Kitzinger, 2004; Lofland et al., 2006).

One-to-one interviews, lasting an hour, were also carried out with each of the postgraduate students. The one-to-one interviews helped to confirm what had been observed and to clarify certain aspects of the information collected. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed on the same day to prevent loss of some uncaptured data. We then went through the transcribed interviews with the participants to verify and assess their validity (Kitzinger, 2004; Lofland et al., 2006). Furthermore, an in-depth case study of a Black-African postgraduate student was conducted to give additional insight into the adjustment challenges affecting the international students in the face of an emerging, competitive, and volatile education market. A thematic analysis was employed to assess the challenges of incorporation faced by the Black-African postgraduate students. Through this process, emerging themes were identified, coded, and translated into findings. The codes used include words and phrases which were later related to the aim of the study.

Participants

Initial participants were recruited, or volunteered themselves, during the observation process. Further participants for the focus groups were recruited using snowballing, following suggestions from the initial respondents. In total, 21 Black-African postgraduate students were recruited for this study. The students were studying, or had recently finished, postgraduate taught master's programs in a variety of disciplines (see Table 1). Master's students were chosen for their short stay in the United Kingdom which gives us information on the impact and challenges faced by relatively new arrivals to the country. Those who have been in the country longer tend to have worked out how to survive and overlook some of the prevailing challenges encountered in the first year. The students were from nine different Sub-Saharan African countries, and had all previously studied in English-medium environments. As such, they were all extremely proficient in the English language and can be considered to be near-native speakers.

The participants are all mature students; many are married but all have some family ties "back home." The focus group participants were not specifically asked about their social class background, and it is important to point out that

Table 1. Study Participants.

University	Pseudonym	Discipline	Country of origin
1	Khamfansianji	Business	Zambia
	Jane	Accounting	Uganda
	June	Accounting	Zimbabwe
	Jayness	Health	Zimbabwe
	Jessie	Business	Kenya
	Nana	Engineering	Malawi
	Naila	Economics	Nigeria
2	Lundiwe	Accounting	Zimbabwe
	Nsigini	Engineering	Kenya
	Diba	Computer Science	Gambia
	Bestman	Accounting	Ghana
	Ade	Economics	Nigeria
	Daka	Health	Zambia
	Undi	Education	Malawi
	Sikelo	Management	South Africa
3	Obi	Business	Nigeria
	Tobi	Accounting	Ghana
	Twatasha	Engineering	Zambia
	Angelo	Accounting	Zimbabwe
	Ben	Management	Zambia
	Tinka (case study)	Health	Zambia

definitions of social class vary in different countries (Unterhalter, Epstein, Morrell, & Moletsane, 2004). However, during the interviews, students provided a range of indications of their backgrounds, including their previous careers and parents' occupations (see Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). For example, a number of students indicated that they came from backgrounds such as farming, business, mining, and government establishments, including education. Interestingly, a significant number mentioned being brought up in rural areas, with little access to up-to-date computing resources.

For the majority of participants, their motivation for coming to study in the United Kingdom was to gain a prestigious and globally recognized qualification to enable them to gain promotion. Students from Zimbabwe also mentioned that political unrest in their country was a factor in their decision making, and 1 student from Malawi mentioned that the course they wanted to study was not available in their country. Many of the students were reluctant to discuss their sources of funding and so it was difficult for the researchers to pursue this issue further. However, we were able to ascertain that 15 of the students were self-sponsored and family members had contributed toward their travel, living expenses, and tuition fees. Over half of the students intended to return to their country after graduating, but 3 of the students were not sure whether they would return immediately after their studies or look for work in the United Kingdom, under the current visa arrangements. Four of the students have

completed their master's course and are now looking for work in the United Kingdom. To maintain confidentiality, all the names used in this study are pseudonyms and the three universities are identified by numbers: Uni. 1, Uni. 2, and Uni. 3.

Findings and Discussion

The findings from the research will be examined in the following section and are discussed in relation to the initial research questions:

> **Research Question 1:** What are the challenges that Black-African postgraduate students have?
> **Research Question 2:** What strategies do students use to cope with the challenges they encounter?

What Are the Challenges That Black-African Postgraduate Students Have?

The students mentioned a range of issues that challenged them. Three main themes emerged from their narratives: financial pressures, difficulty integrating into the host culture, and differences in the education system.

Financial pressures. Almost all the respondents mentioned the challenge of funding their tuition fees. This echoes the findings of Blake (2006) and also those of Maringe and Carter (2007), who found that all the African students in their study had financial worries and 91% were concerned about how they would meet the costs of their study. Interestingly, according to a report by the NUS (2014), between 2005 and 2007, more than half of applications to the Churches International Hardship Fund for students from developing countries were awarded to students from Africa. The following comment is typical of the difficulties that the students in our study faced:

> It is all about money. If you don't pay them, you are done . . . you don't access the library facilities, you cannot use your student card, and you cannot send your assignment to your tutor. (Tobi, Uni. 3)

A number of students reflected on the assumptions that they often encountered about their finances. Fundamental to the attitudes that they experienced was the belief that international students are relatively wealthy:

> For them, an international student is a rich person from a poor developing country because he/she is in the UK. (Tobi, Uni. 3)

This assumption of affluence was behind another commonly encountered viewpoint, that they should have had enough money for their studies before coming to the United Kingdom:

I went to explain my circumstances to the finance office and guess what I was told. "You are an international student love. You should have had enough money before leaving your country and you signed to this effect." International student my foot! Did I sell my life away? And what did I sign? (Nsigini, Uni. 2)

In fact, it was apparent that the students felt that given their modest backgrounds, raising such sums before leaving their countries was not a particularly realistic prospect. The African students in Blake's (2006) study also reported that it was difficult for their relatives to pay their tuition fees from the income they got in their countries. Our students commented:

I mean, it is difficult to get all the tuition money. £8,000 per year is a lot of money. £1 is equivalent to K8,000, so I had to look for K56,818,929.61 and that is a lot of money and I have never earned that amount of money nor my relatives. Have you seen the figure? That is scary! (Twatasha, Uni. 3)

Yes they write to say you need to have all the money but whom here in England as developed as they are, has all this money, £24,000? Now they expect me a poor Malawian from a developing country to have it all. (Undi, Uni. 2)

A student in Maringe and Carter's (2007) study also echoes this:

Many of us come here with enough money for the first year, perhaps second year of study. The final year is usually a struggle which is why some students do not do as well as they combine lots of part time hours and study. (p. 468)

Many of our students also planned to supplement their funds by working in the United Kingdom. While international students in the United Kingdom have fewer restrictions on working than they do in the United States, for many it transpired that the only work available was unskilled, low paid work, due to their qualifications or experience not being recognized by employers in the United Kingdom:

I am an accountant with 10 years' experience, but I can't even work in any company or organization. I work as a carer and even then, I can't be classified as a senior carer or in management as an administrator because they don't accept my qualification. (Jane, Uni. 1)

I have to work as a carer with my master's alongside "their" own people with poor GCSEs. They can't, and I mean it, they can't even appoint me as a senior carer because I don't have an NVQ. (Jayness, Uni. 1)

For many students the lack of adequate funds and suitable part-time work led to them defaulting on their fee payments, to which the universities respond with letters demanding payment. Despite the letters being standardized and meant for all defaulters, they are internalized and the effect on the student, and their ability to study, is clear:

I don't like the letters they send. They make me sick, unstable, stressed, homesick, I fail to concentrate on my work or anything else and that's when I'm most vulnerable. (Daka, Uni. 2)

The letters I get about non-payment of tuition fees are frustrating, scary and each time I get my letter, it puts a stop to my concentration in class. I know what follows. My tutor knows right away because I am absent-minded in class. Even if they say they are standard letters, I am the addressee and psychologically, am affected. (Lundiwe, Uni. 3)

As Boafo-Arthur (2014) points out, financial problems are often interrelated with other issues to do with adjusting to living abroad, such as social isolation and separation from friends and family. For example, a lack of funds can prevent students from participating in social activities with other students and may mean that students are unable to return home for holidays or telephone their family. In our study, Jessie's story demonstrates in detail the strain that financial concerns had on her:

One day I broke down "big time" in my room. A neighbor heard me scream and called the university saying, "one of the international students has lost her mind." You, know, I had set a direct debit allowing the university to withdraw the money. This time I did not have enough money but the university withdrew everything in my account. I did not have money for food or to pay rent. What was I supposed to do? Am in a foreign land, I have no friends or relatives, what was I going to eat? Where was I going to live if the landlord asked me to leave? I cried my eyes out and I did not want to go to class for days. (Jessie, Uni. 1)

Having no money highlighted to Jessie the absence of any support network in the United Kingdom, and the perilous position that she was in as a result of having no friends and family around to assist her. This is particularly disorientating for students from collectivist cultures, such as many African countries, where difficulties are often tackled by seeking advice from close friends and members of their extended family (Fischer, 2011).

From the students in our study, it appears that although they knew before coming to the United Kingdom that finances would pose a challenge to them, they claimed not to know that they would be effectively excluded from the university if they were not able to pay their fees on time:

But, you know you guys, in all the documentation I received back at home, none of them say that when you default, X, Y, and Z services will be terminated. (Undi, Uni. 2)

Why the university does not explain this in advance will never be known. All they talked about was the advantages of studying in this university, the good facilities, resources, excellent library and computing suites, and the nice surroundings and so on and so forth. (Daka, Uni. 2)

Maringe and Carter (2007) also found that African students were dissatisfied with the information that they

received from the university about financial matters, including the likelihood of being able to earn enough money once in the United Kingdom. One student hardship fund manager in a report by the NUS (2014) commented:

> I battled with my marketing team as I wanted to put that any part time work they found would probably be minimum wage and low grade and marketing said it was "too negative." However, this is because this is a reality and we were seeing teachers and engineers etc coming to the UK and thinking they would find jobs in those areas to support their studies and of course this is rare to find that level of part time work whilst studying. Some students borrow money to fulfil visa purposes and then have to give it back . . . .(p. 24)

Maringe and Carter (2007) also point out that recruiters to U.K. universities find it difficult to reliably determine whether a student has the means to pay their fees. It seems that for many Black-African students, the lack of understanding about the job prospects in the United Kingdom and the penalties for defaulting on fee payments, means that they arrived less financially prepared than they need to be. The inevitable result is financial hardship and considerable distress about how they will survive in this unforgiving environment.

Integrating with the host culture. According to Van Gennep (1960), during the transition to a new culture, the previous ways and behavior must be abandoned so that an individual can learn the appropriate way to behave in the new environment. Tinto (1987) states:

> Individuals who come from families, communities, and schools whose norms and behaviours are very different from those of the communities of the college (university) into which entry is made, face particularly difficult obstacles in seeking to achieve competent membership in the new communities. (p. 97)

Irungu (2013) points out that African students can find the cultural gap between their own country and the host overwhelming. It appears that the students in this study found it difficult to change their deeply embedded cultural beliefs within the short period of time that they are studying in the United Kingdom:

> I still appreciate who I am and one year here can't change me. I don't see myself fitting into this culture. I don't appreciate it. Like, let me give you an example, going to the toilet. How can someone, old enough to be my father announce to me that they are going to the toilet for a poo? How? Where I come from, that is an insult! Or a 3 year old small boy calling me by my first name! I don't appreciate that! (Angelo, Uni. 3)

> This is a difficult place. But culture-wise, one year is not enough, even the weather. It is too short to adapt easily especially because I am 40 years old. I am who I am and cannot be changed easily. I guess that makes things even worse. You know, everyone expects you to change right away but it is difficult. (Nana, Uni. 1)

Maringe and Carter (2007) found that the mature students they studied were concerned about the erosion of their cultural heritage while in the United Kingdom, and according to Mwara (2008), older international students have more adjustment problems than younger, "traditional" age, students. In our study, Angelo echoes this:

> But the young ones adapt easily and even want to be like the British. They may even be doing it to be accepted. You know? But on the other hand it's because they are too young to appreciate who they are and where they come from. (Angelo, Uni. 3)

Recent studies of Black-African students abroad also show a reluctance to relinquish the former identity, in favor of embracing the host country's culture. Lee and Opio (2011) report that the African student athletes in their study felt that attempts to try and "fit in" and be accepted would require them to lose their culture, and Beoku-Betts (2006) also noted that studying abroad as a Black-African entails a loss of identity. The concept of relinquishing an identity to integrate into a new culture is especially challenging for many African students due the legacy of cultural marginalization and destruction left by the colonial period (Beoku-Betts, 2006). Our students also reported experiencing negative stereotypes about their African culture and traditions, similar to those reported by Beoku-Betts (2006) and Lee and Opio (2011):

> If you are not careful you can lose your confidence and self-esteem in this country. The values we have in Africa are looked down on. Talk about our traditions, they are still considered backwards only good enough for research. [She laughs loudly] I don't want to say so much about this because it makes me angry. (Ade, Uni. 2)

Unlike in Lee and Opio's (2011) study of African athletes in the United States, none of the students in our study reported incidents of overt racial harassment. As mentioned earlier, this was also not something reported in Maringe and Carter's (2007) study of African students in the United Kingdom. However, as Beoku-Betts (2006) found, we did have reports of a distinctly "cool climate," and difficulty making friends with local students. Tobi recounts his experience:

> I never knew we are so different until I came here. What I dislike the most is people looking down on me and making me feel inferior. I mean, I try to socialize and have tried to befriend a number of White people but there is a limit. I know it and I feel it. I have been left alone in a pub by my so-called friends. (Tobi, Uni. 3)

This lack of engagement of the British with international students is something that was noted by Nigerian students in London in 1956 as "the refusal of the English people to be friendly" (Carey, 1956, p. 207), and postgraduate students in the United Kingdom in Beoku-Betts' (2006) study reported

that "social life was almost zero" (p. 154). It seems that even for those students who want to integrate, make friends, and form social bonds with local people, there was little reciprocal enthusiasm from the host population. This leads to loneliness, feelings of isolation, exclusion, and being left out as well as feeling unwanted and not having group membership (Boafo-Arthur, 2014; Irungu, 2013; Lee & Opio, 2011; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Mwara, 2008).

Academic issues. The lack of engagement with Black-Africans from British students is not only relevant to the social realm as, increasingly, university education in the United Kingdom involves collaborative learning. Not only is this an unfamiliar way of studying for many Black-African students (Irungu, 2013), it was also made distinctly more difficult due to the "chilly laboratory or classroom climate" (Beoku-Betts, 2006, p. 154), where students felt unwelcomed and looked down upon.

> The problem comes when it means working with "people" who, you can tell instinctively, don't want to be with you! (Ade, Uni. 2)

> They are still racist whether they say it or not. In class for example, most of the White students would not want to pair up with me. I end up relating well with the Asians. In some modules, if there is a Black student, we right away end up together. If there is no Asian or Black person, I end up alone. (Naila, Uni. 1)

Naila's concerns reflect Freeman's (2006) conclusions that "immigrants can only blend totally into their host environment if they are the same color as the host or dominant population" (p. 52). As mentioned earlier, a number of authors have questioned whether these issues are a result of foreign accents, although notably White international students do not report problems with fitting in (Lee & Opio, 2011). All the students in this study were near-native speakers of English and so had very few linguistic issues to contend with. Interestingly, Andrade (2006) reports that lecturers perceive the international student's lack of involvement in class not to be a linguistic issue but instead a cultural one.

As noted by Beoku-Betts (2006), having to learn independently was another issue that was raised by our students:

> The education system is different and strange. Every time its group work, presentations, simulations, and independent work. The lecturers have it easy in this country . . . For the English children, they are more independent than us. That is one part of "their" culture I appreciate . . . Then the computer! There is so much. (Ade, Uni. 2)

Mwara (2008) also found that older African students were uncomfortable with the emphasis on independent learning and the amount that they were expected to use technology in their studies. According to Irungu (2013), African students are often used to education systems that are designed around "a culture of rote memorization and verbatim reproduction of knowledge" (p. 172). As such, they can struggle with the

pedagogical styles in the United Kingdom and the United States that encourage critical thinking and independent learning, and have severe penalties for plagiarism (Irungu, 2013).

What Strategies do Students Use to Cope With the Challenges They Encounter?

The students identified a number of different strategies that they use to mitigate the problems that present themselves during their studies. The emerging themes include the following: isolating themselves from both university and family sources of support and instead seeking out same-culture friendship networks. This process of isolation from official sources of help is illustrated by returning to Jessie's story, the student who "broke down big time" in her room as a result of a financial crisis. The response from the university was to send her to the counseling service but she was reluctant to consider this option.

> The University referred me to the counseling service unit fearing I could commit suicide. What? I never went there; I needed the money. (Jessie, Uni. 1)

According to Irungu (2013), African students have a cultural bias against seeking counseling (see also Wallace & Constantine, 2005). This was echoed by the attitudes of the students in our study:

> If I mention it to someone or a lecturer they want to refer me to a counseling service. Am an African! (Nana, Uni. 1)

This is in part due to a lack of familiarity with mental health professionals and a taboo in some cultures to associate with people with mental health problems (Irungu, 2013). Boafo-Arthur (2014) also reports that international students often do not seek counseling for their problems. This leave Black-African students in a predicament as they do not have the support networks around them that they are used to, but they also do not value the institutional support services that have been put in place by the universities. Consequently, they have to deal with "unpredictable encounters, idiosyncratic communications and problems of racial discrimination, largely on their own" (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008, p. 149). As Naila (Uni. 1) points out, "How can you be alright on your own?"

Irungu (2013) states that some Black-African students often respond to difficulties by isolating themselves and will often "suffer in silence" (p. 173). Our students certainly demonstrated this:

> So I keep to myself and no one knows what I go through. (Lundiwe, Uni. 3)

Lee and Opio (2011) also found that African students did not want to draw attention to their struggles. It seems that not only do students not discuss their problems with the

university, they also appear not to want to share their troubles with their family back home. Despite the fact that collectivist cultures provide a high degree of support from family and friends, there is also a tradition of forbearance and a wish not to burden others with one's own problems (Irungu, 2013). This is claimed to be a result of a need to diminish the importance of individual problems that have the potential to jeopardize the harmony of the group (Constantine et al., 2004; Fischer, 2011). A number of our students expressed this sentiment:

> I hope I will get a good job not the care job that I do now [smiles]. I cannot even tell my relatives the type of job I do. It is so degrading. (Twatasha, Uni. 3)

> Despite the troubles I am going through here, I am a big man, I don't tell them and I will do my best to make them proud . . . It is not right to bring shame to parents. They have brought us up well and deserve to be respected. (Bestman, Uni. 2)

In line with Hofstede's (2001) notion of collective societies, family honor is highly valued by the Black-African postgraduate students. Triandis (1989) has argued that in collectivist societies, the child–parent bond is strongest. Therefore, bringing honor to one's parents is paramount. For many students, their immediate family's expectations motivate them to do well in addition to putting pressure on them to maintain the honor.

> I am doing this for my family and am proud. The members of my family are respected because of my being here. (Tinka Uni. 3)

In their research, Sawir et al. (2008) referred to the concept of "same culture networks" where co-nationals or people with similar backgrounds helping to ease incorporation into a new culture. Interestingly, in the case of Black-African students, these networks can be formed between students from different countries, supporting the idea of at least some experiences being common to Black-Africans as a group.

> You know, it's so funny. I have my own African friends whom I depend upon, not from the same country. I mean we understand each other. (Tobi, Uni. 3)

Irungu (2013) claims that Africans "tend to gravitate toward other Africans" (p. 175) and this was borne out in our study when, while sitting in the university library foyer collecting data for this study, a student approached one of the authors:

> I recognized the accent as I passed by . . . Come on give us a hug! Am so happy! I thought I was alone in this whole university! (Nana, Uni. 1)

Support provided by other Black-African students was also found in studies by Beoku-Betts (2006) and Blake

(2006). The same-culture group, as pointed out by Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2008), seems to offer coping strategies and a sense of belonging that provides motivation to continue despite the problems faced. The importance of same culture social networks is well illustrated in the following narrative from Sikelo:

> My assignments were supposed to be submitted through a system called turnitin but without access to the computers it was a nightmare. Assignment briefs and other information were posted on the blackboard, but how could I get the information? I managed to continue studying through the support from my trusted friends who weren't even on the same course. They understood my circumstances and trusted me. Problems were there but with my friends I finished my course and I'm ready to go back home with a qualification! (Sikelo, Uni. 1)

Conclusion

Despite the relatively small amount of literature on the experiences and needs of Black-African international students, a picture is starting to emerge of the unique challenges that this group of students face. Previous studies of Black-African students, largely from the United States, have highlighted the issues such as prejudice and discrimination, social isolation, and financial concerns (Beoku-Betts, 2006; Blake, 2006; Boafo-Arthur, 2014; Fischer, 2011; Mwara, 2008). This study has provided an in-depth examination of the challenges faced by Black-African postgraduate students in the United Kingdom. The most pressing issue for the students in this study was financial hardship, which caused the students considerable distress and in many cases affected their ability to concentrate on their studies. The students in this study did not report overt racial harassment, but did feel socially excluded and unwanted by the local student population, which had an impact on being able to work collaboratively. The Black-African students also found that studying at a U.K. university requires a greater degree of independent learning and use of technology than they were used to in their own countries. Interestingly, a major issue for many international students from Asia and Europe studying in the United Kingdom is the challenge of studying in English. However, this was not reported as a problem for any of the students in our study as all of them had previously studied in English-medium environments.

The institutional response to discovering international students in crisis was to refer them to counseling services. However, the Black-African postgraduate students in this study have indicated that they do not find these services a culturally appropriate response to their needs. This is an area which may require further investigation as if counseling services are not understood or valued by students from particular cultures, then universities may need to consider different ways of offering support to them. For the participants in this study, the use of same-culture support networks (Bradley,

2000) was highly recommended and utilized. They were neither bashful nor fearful in praising the benefits of such networks. The same-culture networks theory has demonstrated how supportive they can be in the event that the universities withdraw their resources, for example, for non-payment of fees. Although the students identified same-culture networks to help them fight loneliness, meet their need of belonging, and enable them have meaningful contacts, they may not allow the students to integrate easily into the new culture because they are mainly associating with people with similar cultural backgrounds and mind-sets. Sawir et al. (2008) point out that although same-culture networks are positive, the universities have a crucial role in the integration of international students into mainstream university culture.

Andrade (2006) argues that universities seem to have a piecemeal picture of international students' needs and we would argue that this is particularly apparent for the issues faced by Black-African students. Sawir et al. (2008) and Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2008) point out that although some institutions have a fresher's orientation program at the beginning of the year, most new students are left to fumble and flounder their way through university life. While incorporation into the host country could be viewed as the responsibility of the Black-African postgraduate students, the universities in the business of recruiting international students have a large part to play in easing the process. Western universities should put in place well-designed programs that tarry with the cultures they recruit from: programs that target both African students, the local students, and communities. It is the duty of the universities to help Black-African students belong, help them make a difference, and make them feel they matter (Phillips, 2007). If this is not done, it can result into feelings of regret and disillusionment of ever setting off on this journey to attain a U.K. qualification. Ben (Uni. 3) concludes by saying, "Do I regret coming? Yes I do. So much so! The culture, the university! I have spent so much and been through a lot . . . it is not worth it! No!" This narration indicates that what was initially assumed as a golden opportunity is masked with a number of challenges that threatens the joy of ever embarking on the journey.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

References

Abdullah, D., Ismail, M., Aziz, A., Latiff, A., & Ibrahim, M. (2014). A "research" into international student-related research: (Re)Visualising our stand? *Higher Education*, *67*, 235-253.

Adelegan, F. O., & Parks, D. J. (1985). Problems of transition for African students in an American university. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, *26*, 504-508.

Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, *5*, 131-154.

Barker, J. (1997). The purpose of study, attitudes to study, and staff-student relationships. In D. McNamara & R. Harris (Eds.), *Overseas students in higher education* (pp. 108-123). London, England: Routledge.

Beoku-Betts, J. (2006). African women pursuing graduate studies in the sciences: Racism, gender bias, and third world marginality. In J. M. Bird & S. R. Bystydzienski (Eds.), *Removing barriers: Women in academic science, technology, engineering, and mathematics* (pp. 142-160). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Binsardi, A., & Ekwulugo, F. (2003). International marketing of British education: Research on the students' perception and the UK market penetration. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *21*, 318-327.

Blake, A. C. (2006). The experiences and adjustment problems of Africans at a historically Black institution. *College Student Journal*, *40*, 808-813.

Boafo-Arthur, S. (2014). Acculturative experiences of Black African international students. *International Journal of Advanced Counselling*, *36*, 115-124.

Bolsmann, C., & Miller, H. (2008). International student recruitment to universities in England: Discourse, rationale and globalisation. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *6*, 75-88.

Borrett, K., & Zysk, A. (2007, November 27-30). *Relationships and friendships across cultures: Using "story telling" to engage new international students in conversations about friendships, relationships and sexuality*. ISANA International Conference on Student success in international education, Stamford Grand, Adelaide, Australia.

Bradley, G. (2000). Responding effectively to mental health needs of international students. *Higher Education*, *32*, 417-433.

Brooks, R., & Waters, J. (2011). *Student mobilities, migrations and internationalization of higher education*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Carey, A. T. (1956). *Colonial students: A study of the social adaptation of colonial students in London*. London, England: Secker & Warburg.

Chandler, A. (1989). *Obligation or opportunity: Foreign student policy in six major receiving countries* (IIE Research Report No. 18). Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Publications-and-Reports/IIE-Bookstore/RR18-Obligation-or-Opportunity-Foreign-Student-Policy-in-Six-Major-Receiving-Countries

Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, *91*, 540-572.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (5th ed.). London, England: Routledge Falmer.

Constantine, M. G., Okazaki, S., & Utsey, S. O. (2004). Self-concealment, social self-efficacy, acculturative stress, and depression in African, Asian, and Latin American international college students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *74*, 230-241.

Crano, S. L., & Crano, W. D. (1993). A measure of adjustment strain in international students. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *24*, 267-287.

Fischer, N. (2011). *Pre- and post-migration attitudes among Ghanaian international students living in the United States: A study of acculturation and psychological wellbeing* (Virginia

Commonwealth University Theses and Dissertations, Paper 2551). Retrieved from http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/2551/

Forbes-Mewett, H., & Nyland, C. (2008). Cultural diversity, relocation, and the security of international students at an internationalized university. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *12*, 181-203.

Freeman, K. (2006). "If only my eyes were different": The loss of identity and the under-utilization of Black children's educational potential—Rethinking social justice and assimilation. *International Review of Education*, *52*, 49-65.

Furnham, A. (1997). The experience of being an overseas student. In D. McNamara & R. Harris (Eds.), *Overseas Students in Higher Education: Issues in Teaching and Learning* (pp. 13-29). London, England: Routledge.

Higher Education Statistics Agency. (2014). *Region of domicile of non-UK domicile students*. Retrieved from https://www.hesa.ac.uk/stats

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Hyams-Ssekasi, D. (2012). *The transition of International Sub-Saharan African students into the UK University system with reference to a University in the North of England* (Doctoral thesis). University of Huddersfield. Retrieved from http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/17493/

Hyland, F., Trahar, S., Anderson, J., & Dickens, A. (2008). A changing world: The internationalization experiences of staff and students (home and international) in UK higher education. *Escalate*. Retrieved from http://escalate.ac.uk/4967

ICEF Monitor. (2012, April 11). *Number of Nigerians studying in UK will nearly double by 2015*. Author. Retrieved from http://monitor.icef.com/2012/04/number-of-nigerians-studying-in-uk-will-nearly-double-by-2015/

ICEF Monitor. (2013, July 19). *A closer look at African student mobility*. Author. Retrieved from http://monitor.icef.com/2013/07/a-closer-look-at-african-student-mobility/

Irungu, J. (2013). African students in the US higher education system: A window of opportunities and challenges. In H. C. Alberts & H. D. Hazen (Eds.), *International students and scholars in the United States: Coming from Abroad* (pp. 163-180). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Keith, J. L. (1946). African students in Great Britain. *African Affairs*, *45*(179), 65-72.

Khapoya, B. V. (1998). *The African experience: An introduction*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kitzinger, J. (2004). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. In C. Seal (Ed.), *Social research methods: A reader* (pp. 269-280). London, England: Routledge.

Lee, J., & Opio, T. (2011). Coming to America: Challenges and difficulties faced by African student athletes. *Sport, Education and Society*, *16*, 629-644.

Lee, J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education*, *53*, 381-409.

Leney, K. (1999). African students in Europe. *Journal of African History*, *40*, 321-322.

Livingstone, A. (1960). *The overseas student in Britain: With special reference to training courses in social welfare*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Lofland, J., Snow, D. A., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Manyika, S. (2001). Negotiating identities: African students in British and American universities. *Dissertation Abstracts International 62*(1-A), 97.

Maringe, F., & Carter, S. (2007). International students' motivations for studying in UK HE: Insights into the choice and decision making of African students. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *21*, 459-475.

McNamara, D., & Harris, R. (1997). *Overseas students in higher education: Issues in teaching and learning*. London, England: Routledge.

Moreau, M.-P., & Leathwood, C. (2006). Balancing paid work and studies: Working (-class) students in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *31*, 23-42.

Mushibwe, C. P. (2009). *What are the effects of cultural traditions on the education of women? The study of the Tumbuka people of Zambia* (Doctoral thesis). University of Huddersfield. Retrieved from http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/9090/

Mwara, J. N. (2008). *Non-traditional age Black African international students' experiences: Phenomenological heuristic inquiry*. Adult Education Research Conference Proceeding. Retrieved from http://www.adulterc.org/Proceedings/2008/Proceedings/Mwaura.pdf

National Union of Students. (2014). *Widening the safety net: International students in unexpected financial hardship and what can be done*. Retrieved from http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/open/international/Widening-the-Safety-Net-Bringing-Financial-Safety-to-International-Students/

Nebedum-Ezeh, G. C. (1997). An examination of the experiences and coping strategies of African Students at predominantly White institutions of higher education in the United States. *Dissertations Abstracts International*, *58*(6A), 2106.

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2006). *Education at a glance*. Paris, France: Author.

Persaud, R. (1993). The loneliness of the long-distance student. *Journal of International Education*, *4*, 45-51.

Phillips, K. D. (2007). Moving out of the margins: Mattering and the international student experience. *The Vermont Connection*, *22*, 1-6.

Pimpa, N. (2003). The influence if peers and student recruitment agencies on Thai student's choice of international education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *7*, 178-192.

Pruitt, F. J. (1978). The adaptation of African students to American society. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *2*, 90-118.

Sawir, E., Marginson, S., Deumert, A., Nyland, C., & Ramia, G. (2008). Loneliness and international students: An Australian study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *12*, 148-180.

Sikes, P. (2004). Methodology procedures and ethical concerns. In C. Opie (Ed.), *Doing educational research: A guide to first time research* (pp. 15-33). London, England: SAGE.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Triandis, H.C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts. *Psychological Review*, *96*(3), 506-520.

Unterhalter, E., Epstein, D., Morrell, R., & Moletsane, R. (2004). Be yourself: Class, race, gender and sexuality in South African

Hyams-Ssekasi et al.

schoolchildren's accounts of social relations. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, *12*, 53-72.

Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage: Anthropology and ethnography*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Wallace, B. C., & Constantine, M. G. (2005). Africentric cultural values, psychological help-seeking attitudes, and self-concealment in African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *31*, 369-385.

Warren, K. A., & Constantine, M. G. (2007). Counseling African international students. In D. H. Singaravelu & M. Pope (Eds.), *A handbook for counseling international students in the United States* (pp. 211-222). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Wedderburn, L. (1979). Overseas students: Fees and funding 1980-1981. *House of Lords Debate*, *403*, 1275-1352. Retrieved from http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1979/dec/12/overseas-students-fees-and-funding-1980

Author Biographies

Denis Hyams-Ssekasi EdD FHEA is a Senior Lecturer at the University Campus Oldham. His research interests include the transitional experiences of international students in Higher Education, intercultural communication and social impacts.

Christine P Mushibwe PhD is currently Dean in the School of Education with University of African in Zambia. Previously she worked as Associate Lecturer at the University of Huddersfield. Her research interests include the effects of cultural traditions on the education of women as well as the international students experiences.

Elizabeth Frances Caldwell PhD FHEA is an Academic Skills Tutor at the University of Huddersfield. Her current research centres around the theory and practice of Higher Education, including the experiences of international students studying in the UK.