Transnational migration and educational change:
examples of Afropolitan schooling from Senegal and Ghana

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Abstract: Studies on migration and education have examined homeland returns as part of family strategies around acquiring desired cultural capital. However, the impact of return migration and transnational mobility on homeland educational landscapes remains under-researched. Using ethnographic data from Ghana, Senegal, the UK and the US, this paper shows how 'international' schools on the African continent have emerged as places where young transnational Africans can acquire cosmopolitan and Afropolitan competencies and outlooks.

Introduction

In a discussion with Abdoul (14 years)[1], during her fieldwork in Dakar, Senegal, Hoechner asked him where he envisaged educating his children in the future. 'Here [in Senegal],' Abdoul, who was born and raised in Harlem, New York, replied. When Hoechner inquired about his reasons for this, he said '[b]ecause the education in the US is not very good. The English [...], it's gonna teach, it's gonna make the English wrong [...] Because, it's gonna be slang, they gonna be talking slang …' (Interview, November 2016).

Abdoul, a child of Senegalese parents living in the US, was sent to their homeland for education when he was thirteen. Hoechner met him, a year after his move, in an international 'bilingual' school in Dakar, which is accredited in the US. While French is Senegal's official language and Wolof dominates informal conversations, most classes in Abdoul's school were taught in English. This makes it easy to follow for 'sent back' youths who do not speak French

well. A growing number of so-called international and 'bilingual' schools have sprung up in Dakar in recent years, paralleling a trend observed in Ghana by Abotsi, where internationally oriented schools have equally been on the rise. Such schools, flaunting a cosmopolitan, and – as we argue in this paper – Afropolitan (Mbembe 2018) flair, cater to returnee families and 'sent back' children and youth. But they also appeal to middle- and upper-class families in both the Senegalese and Ghanaian contexts hoping for a transnationally mobile future for their children, with 'good' English and a worldly outlook being key ingredients for success.

Abdoul's rejection of American 'slang' English, tainted by strong class and racial connotations, speaks to larger issues of racial and class disadvantage faced by many West African families in Western countries. Confronted with the impacts of structural racism, such families often find themselves confined to economically-deprived inner-city neighborhoods which are perceived to pose challenges for raising children and facilitating their social mobility. In this context, many parents turn to their homeland for their children's education, building on and furthering change in the educational landscape of the latter.

This paper explores the educational institutions catering to the children of the transnationally mobile in Senegal and Ghana. We shed light on the setups and practices of these institutions, as well as the profiles and perspectives of their founders and directors. These provide an important backdrop to the experiences of youth such as Abdoul while also revealing wider processes of change within homeland educational landscapes in the context of return migration and transnational mobility. The paper draws on data from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Ghana and among Ghanaian communities in the UK by Abotsi, and in Senegal and among Senegalese communities in the US by Hoechner, highlighting continuity across these two different national, religious and linguistic contexts (Senegal is predominantly Muslim with

French as the administrative language; Ghana has a Christian majority and the administrative language is English). While differences between the Senegalese and the Ghanaian context will be acknowledged, this paper seeks to illustrate the cross-case salience of connections between transnational migration and processes of educational change in people's homelands. We show how 'international' schools on the African continent have emerged as places where children from the diaspora can acquire cosmopolitan and Afropolitan (Mbembe 2018) competencies and outlooks, which they believed were largely inaccessible to them in the West. At the same time, we found that access to cosmopolitan spaces was stratified, highlighting the continued salience of class inequalities in a transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). In what follows, we review the histories of transnational mobility, migration and education in Senegal and Ghana, before moving on to our cases.

Cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism

Recent decades have seen a surge of interest in 'cosmopolitanism', a term that has variously been understood as a philosophy/world view, an attitude/disposition, a practice/competency, and a socio-cultural condition (see e.g. Vertovec and Cohen 2002). In a philosophical sense, cosmopolitanism has been associated with universalism from Enlightenment philosophers like Kant and is seen as rooted in ideas of being a 'citizen of the world' which dates back to Ancient Greece (Turner 2002). Cosmopolitan attitudes/dispositions have been defined as 'an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences' (Hannerz 1990, 239), while cosmopolitan competence has been said to indicate 'a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures' (ibid). The rise of such dispositions/competencies has been attributed to the global flows of people and ideas, resulting in forms of social imagination that transcend primordialist identities (Appadurai 1996).

Beyond these positive connotations, however, it has been queried to what extent cosmopolitanism is an elitist practice and new means for the privileged who can travel and 'consume' foreign places, to distinguish themselves and to consolidate their class status (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, 4–6). Questions have also been raised about the ethnocentric bias of common framings of 'cosmopolitanism' which privilege the West as its presumed foremost birthplace (e.g. Appadurai 1996, 49ff.) and tend to ignore forms of cosmopolitanism that involve neither Westerners nor exposure to Western culture (see e.g. Cheng 2018; Kothari 2008).

Studies of cosmopolitanism in Africa have made important contributions to overcoming such shortcomings. Indeed, the notion of Afropolitanism, often credited to theorist and philosopher Achille Mbembe, is concerned with Africa's historical and ongoing interconnectedness with the world (Mbembe and Balakrishnan 2016). Mbembe argues that Afropolitanism is an idea of Africanness not tied to traditions, race nor the Afrocentrism of Pan-Africanism or *négritude*. Instead, he stresses the fluid flows of cultural exchanges and hybridity stemming from centuries of migrations from, to and within Africa (Mbembe and Balakrishnan 2016). As he puts it, Africans' 'way of belonging to the world, of being in the world, and of inhabiting the world, has always been marked … by the interweaving of worlds' (Mbembe 2018, 105). Afropolitanism, then, refers to an awareness of and sensitivity to 'the interweaving of the here and there, the presence of the elsewhere in the here and vice versa […]' (Mbembe 2018, 105).

These aspects are echoed in the Afropolitan figure as 'Africans of the world' from Taiye Selasi's (2005) often cited article 'Bye-Bye Barbar'. Selasi's 'Afropolitans' are a generation of Africans, who like her, were born and/or raised all over the globe, to parents who left the continent in the 1960s–70s. This group is described as 'cultural mutts' with 'American accent, European affect, African ethos' (Selasi 2005). Some of them were, similarly to Abdoul in the

opening vignette, sent home for what Selasi light-heartedly calls 'cultural re-indoctrination' during their youth. The Afropolitans, as a class of highly mobile Africans moving between major global cities and Afropolitanism itself as a worldly form of Africanness, have been explored widely in contemporary African popular culture, the arts and literature since the mid-2000s (e.g. Adichie 2013; Gyasi 2016). However, increasingly, it has been queried where this leaves the experiences of less privileged Africans – on the continent and beyond, and whether 'Afropolitanism' risks celebrating the 'rapacious consumerism' of the African elite and a few Africans who profit from the marketization of Afropolitanism (Dabiri 2016). Several scholars have demonstrated that open- and worldliness are also part of the repertoires of non-elite people (Diouf 2000; Kothari 2008).

Finally, it has been argued that cosmopolitanism does not preclude more locally grounded identities, captured by terms such as 'rooted' (Appiah 1997) or 'vernacular' cosmopolitanism (Diouf 2000; Werbner 2006). Indeed, the question has been raised 'whether there can be an enlightened normative cosmopolitanism which is not ultimately rooted, [...] in patriotic and culturally committed loyalties and understandings' (Werbner 2006, 496).

Global citizenship education and international and transnational education
'Cosmopolitanism' has captured the imagination of education scholars in several fields. The literature on global citizenship education explores the different ways in which educational institutions seek to prepare students for the realities and challenges of a globally connected world (Goren and Yemini 2017; Oxley and Morris 2013; Aboagye and Dlamini 2021). While global citizenship education has been celebrated as a potential means for fostering cosmopolitan attitudes and a critical global consciousness, scholars have also acknowledged that such education often perpetuates Western-centric epistemologies (De Oliveira Andreotti 2014), and

that, by prioritizing competencies needed to compete globally, it implicitly endorses 'the present [neoliberal] configuration of the global market' (Schattle 2008, 83). As it is often accessible only to the privileged few, it risks reinforcing existing hierarchies (Goren and Yemini 2017, 178), a point echoed by our findings.

Studies of global citizenship education and cosmopolitanism in African schools are few and far between, and focus almost exclusively on South Africa (Waghid 2010; Staeheli and Hammett 2013; Howard et al. 2018). These existing studies explore how values such as equality, tolerance, and respect for others can be embedded in national education systems. Yet, they have not paid attention to cosmopolitanism in the context of an education market centered around the needs and desires of the transnationally mobile, which is the focus of this paper.

The connection between mobility and cosmopolitanism has received some attention in the literature on 'international education'. A growing body of work, especially on East Asia, explores families' investments in an 'international education' abroad for their children as part of wider family strategies to reproduce their class status at home.[2] Cosmopolitanism here is scrutinized critically as a form of cultural capital to which access is highly uneven (Huang and Yeoh 2005; Matthews and Sidhu 2005; Waters 2012). The movements explored within this literature are mostly from Global South to Global North, the latter 'usually being framed as the pole of reference in the global knowledge economy' (Newman, Hoechner, and Sancho 2019, 4).

The student movements we explore in this paper are of the opposite direction – from North to South – and have been discussed in markedly different terms in the literature. Such return mobilities have often been associated with exposure to 'local' cultures, religions and traditions rather than exposure to 'cosmopolitan' experiences. Arguably, this is because decisions to educate children partly or entirely in the homeland are often informed by a desire to foster in

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children an attachment to the cultural and religious norms of this homeland (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011; Coe, 2014; Coe & Shani, 2015; Kea & Maier, 2017; on returns for religious education, see Erdal et al. 2016; Hoechner 2018; Qureshi 2014). By demonstrating the continued value people place in the culture and religion of their homeland, existing studies help 'provincialise' Western locations (Kea and Maier 2017, 821).

However, as the example at the beginning of this paper suggests, an exclusive focus on the 'local' experiences offered by homeland returns nonetheless misses an important part of the picture. For Abdoul, the benefits of getting educated in Senegal rather than the US lay not in the local cultural/religious immersion this offered. On the contrary, for him, Senegal promised opportunities to learn a 'global English' untainted by the class and racial connotations of Harlem 'slang'. For youths like Abdoul, schooling in Senegal opened up opportunities to acquire 'cosmopolitan' competencies perceived as out of reach for him in Harlem/the US.

Our studies do not negate that exposure to 'local' experiences and values forms an important part of homeland returns. As we will explore in this paper, a commitment to certain 'Ghanaian' and 'Senegalese' sensibilities shapes the market for international education in our research sites. However, we argue that a range of 'cosmopolitan' – or 'Afropolitan' – experiences are often also central to such returns. Return migration and transnational mobility more broadly have triggered important changes in the educational landscapes of Senegal and Ghana, including the opening of a range of 'international' and 'bilingual' schools that seek to produce worldly Africans.

Return migration and homeland educational landscapes

Little has been said about the effects of return migration and transnational modes of living on educational landscapes and practices in the homeland (but see Lindley 2008, 405 on a school founded by and for returnees in Somaliland). Existing studies on the nexus of migration and

education have mostly focused on the role of remittances in supporting the education of children 'back home', for instance by paying school fees, or by financing school infrastructures and other education-focused philanthropic projects (Mercer, Page, and Evans 2008; Lindley 2008). A small number of authors have sought to understand how transnational migration influences young people's educational aspirations in Global South contexts, highlighting how the prospect of transnational migration influences what (and how much) education is perceived to be valuable (Newman 2018; Valentine et al. 2017). This insight is highly relevant to our own studies where vibrant 'cultures of migration' (Kandel and Massey 2002) have contributed to the rise of bustling markets in 'international' and, in the case of Senegal, 'bilingual' education. However, the studies cited here do not dwell much on the ways in which education markets have responded to such altered aspirations.

Concretely, the paper asks how educational landscapes in Senegal and Ghana have changed in response to the specific education demands of the transnationally mobile and examines the types of cosmopolitan and Afropolitan environments that 'international' schools provide. 'Cosmopolitanism' or 'Afropolitanism' were not concepts used to frame our studies, thus, we did not explicitly elicit our respondents' understandings of these concepts during data collection. Our respondents did not mobilize these – analytical – concepts themselves to frame their experiences. Rather, during our joint analysis, we found these concepts useful to highlight specific features of the school settings we studied. We argue that some of these features can be understood as reproducing 'normative' forms of cosmopolitanism (Cheng 2018) as concerned with cultivating resemblances to Western educational practices and fostering global competitiveness. For example, the schools we studied provided somewhat similar material environments, featuring modern technologies and an internationalist aesthetic, offered comparable curricula focused on

fostering globally recognized competencies, notably English language skills, and shared a concern with maintaining links and similarity with specific educational institutions in the West, not least to facilitate their students' smooth transition back into and success within higher education institutions there (cf. Kea and Maier 2017 on schools in Nigeria).

Additionally, we found the notion of 'Afropolitanism' helpful to draw attention to cosmopolitan expressions/practices in the schools we studied that do not privilege the West / Global North as a point of reference but instead promote distinctly non-Western values and understandings of cosmopolitanism. Echoing the notions of 'vernacular' or 'rooted' cosmopolitanism discussed earlier, the schools in our studies remained firmly committed to instilling a range of 'Ghanaian' and 'Senegalese' sensibilities in their students. This included a focus on religious practice as well as on values such as discipline, respect, and hard work. The notion of 'Afropolitanism' can also shed light on the ways in which Africa's past and present connections to other parts of the world suffuse the school settings we studied, not least through student and teaching bodies composed of Africans from across the continent as well as the diaspora.

Finally, we explore how transnational class dynamics intersect with 'Afropolitanism', building on critiques of the Afropolitan figure as privileging the experiences of a narrow elite. We found that youths sent to Ghana and Senegal for their education did not immediately fit the image of the worldly Afropolitan. Faced with class and racial disadvantage, the worlds of these young people in the UK and US were rarely exposed to possibilities beyond their immediate horizons. In comparison, Ghana and Senegal offered greater opportunities for developing cosmopolitan 'cultural capital' and competencies, such as aspirations for global mobility or speaking 'good' English, as explored in the opening vignette. Abotsi also found that certain elite

cosmopolitan spaces were off-limits for those suspected of having sought to overcome low-class status in the homeland through migration.

Data, field sites, and research methods

Both our studies draw mostly on ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews conducted in two sites, a Western and an African one. We both were particularly interested in young people's own perspectives and experiences and spent a significant amount of time participating in school activities and family life.

The Ghana study, which sought to examine the transnational parenting and educational strategies of British-Ghanaians, is based on 23 months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (November 2013–September 2015), which included eleven months of fieldwork with Ghanaian families in the UK (London and Southeast England), and twelve months of fieldwork in Ghana, where schools were the key field-sites. Abotsi, who is herself British-Ghanaian, collected data from parents, pupils and school personnel and information from promotion material and websites of ten private schools. These schools were selected through purposive sampling techniques from the networks of the British-Ghanaian families she had befriended in the UK as well as recommendations of Ghanaian educators and academic colleagues.

In this paper, Abotsi draws mostly on the experiences of 25 school staff, 29 pupils aged 8—19 years, and eight parents from six schools. These include three international boarding schools – Kings International, Guiding Light International, and Collins International–; two international day schools – Oasis International and Mount Grace International –; and a Ghanaian boarding school (Christ is Lord School/CLS). Except for Collins, which is located in the Ashanti region, all other schools are located in the Greater Accra Region. Abotsi conducted participant observation at Oasis, Collins, and CLS, and gathered data in the form of semi-structured

interviews and informal conversations at Kings, Guiding Light, and Mount Grace. The participant observation involved taking part in school life, e.g. observing classes, setting up a photography club, mentoring, hanging out in the staffroom during weekly/biweekly visits to the schools located in the Greater Accra Region, and spending a total of one month at Collins in the Ashanti Region.

The five international schools listed here were among the high-end private schools in Ghana catering to predominantly elite and upper middle-class, transnationally mobile Ghanaians and had a few children of expats from other African countries, the Middle-East, China and South Asia. CLS was a mid-range Ghanaian private school with a student body of mostly Ghanaians from lower middle-class/middle-class backgrounds with little to no experience of international travel and a few children from other West African countries. The school also had limited resources (e.g. irregular water and electricity supply, few computers, no internet etc.) compared to the international schools mentioned here.

The Senegal study, the starting point for which was an interest in Islamic education in a transnational context, is based on seven months of fieldwork conducted in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, between 2014 and 2016, and seven months of fieldwork conducted in New York and adjacent New Jersey in the United States in 2017 and 2018. Hoechner, who is a white German woman, conducted participant observation at three Islamic schools in Dakar as a participant-observer and interviewed school staff and some students at a further 20 schools, including both Islamic and secular schools popular with transnationally mobile families. Data was also collected more widely through semi-structured interviews, group conversations, and informal interactions in non-school settings in both Senegal and the US with young people as well as parents who had migrated.

Most of the data presented in this paper is from participant observation and interview data collected at IQRA Bilingual Academy, a comparatively upmarket Islamic bilingual international school in Mermoz, Dakar. This included 25 interviews with students aged 9–18 years and 6 interviews with teachers and the headmaster. Hoechner also sat in on classes and staff meetings, 'hung out' during break time, offered yoga lessons as part of the school's 'extracurricular activities' programme, and accompanied students on a field trip. She gained insights into the workings of other private schools in Dakar attended by Senegalese children from the diaspora from visits to and in-depth interviews with headmasters/representatives of 13 other schools, five of which described themselves as 'international'/ 'bilingual' (Senegalese American Bilingual School/SABS, Dakar Success Academy, West African College of the Atlantic, Noor International Academy/NIA, and International Bilingual School/IBS). These schools were sampled based on their popularity with Senegalese living abroad. She also collected information from the websites of these 'international' / 'bilingual' schools and through interviews with youths/young adults in both Senegal and the US who had been enrolled in these schools before, which allowed for triangulation.

Our respective positionalities determined the terms on which we could access our field sites and relate to our research participants. While race was a crucial marker of identity in all our field sites, positioning us differently, for Abotsi, her nationality as a British-Ghanaian was also central to her research relationships and informed both assumptions about and expectations towards her. In Hoechner's study, her religious identity as a non-Muslim, in conjunction with her being white, was particularly important, leading to some suspicions about her intentions notably in the US context. Despite these important differences, we also observed similar dynamics. For example, we faced similar challenges trying to mitigate the inevitable power imbalances inherent in

research conducted by adults on young people's experiences, which we sought to overcome by spending extended periods of time with the children and youth whose experiences we were interested in, and by eschewing positions of authority (such as formal teaching roles) in the schools we studied. Also, our (perceived) class/socio-economic and educational statuses helped both of us connect with school directors and teachers and negotiate access to their schools and classes as sites for our respective studies.

We both used an anthropological approach to ethnographic analysis, which involved close reading of interview transcripts and fieldnotes to identify major themes (Mills and Morton 2013). Similar to Coe and Shani (2015), we decided to write this paper together as we discovered strong similarities in our findings after reading and discussing each other's work, despite our different fieldwork settings and the religious and linguistic differences between them. We then developed a list of topics to compare findings across our two studies more systematically. These included parenting projects of Africans in the diaspora, transformations in homeland educational landscapes related to transnational migration, and practices within the 'international' schools we both studied. This comparison confirmed our initial impression that there was continuity in the phenomena we were interested in across the two country contexts, strengthening the validity of our respective findings (cf. Bryman 2012, 72ff.). At the same time, the comparison allowed us to synergize insights from our two respective cases, notably into class and religious dynamics.

Education, status and transnational migration in Senegal and Ghana

Migration, both internal and international, has long presented a means through which to pursue educational opportunities and social status in both Ghana and Senegal. Historically, formal education first imparted in schools set up by missionaries and colonial administrations was one of the means of achieving social mobility, and remained an important marker of middle/upper

class status in both countries upon independence (Lentz and Noll 2021; Kane 2011). Acquiring such an education, along with the associated dispositions of the middle/upper classes e.g., being literate, disciplined, respectful, punctual, etc., often required people to move to the urban centers of the region (e.g. Coe 2014) as well as further afield. Both Senegalese and Ghanaian elites have pursued education abroad since colonial and even pre-colonial times (Akyeampong 2000). For example, both countries' first presidents studied overseas (Léopold Senghor in France, Kwame Nkrumah in the US and UK).[3] Commerce, religious travel (e.g. hajj), and intercontinental marriages have also long contributed to Africans' transnational mobilities and connectedness (ibid).

In the face of growing graduate unemployment, worsened by state recruitment freezes in the context of structural adjustment and general economic crisis, migration, both for education and for work, gained further importance as a way forward from the 1970s and 1980s onwards. Ghana also experienced political instability in this period which further contributed to large scale emigration to neighboring West African countries but also countries in Europe, notably the UK, and North America (Van Hear 1998). Senegalese who until the mid-1970s had primarily migrated to other African countries and to France, sought out new destinations in the wake of tighter immigration controls in the latter and political instability and economic crisis in the former. These more recent destinations include southern Europe, notably Italy and Spain, as well as the United States (Tall 2008).

In both Ghana and Senegal, transnational migration is an important social fact today which leaves its mark on many people's imaginaries and material environments, for example in the form of family remittances or the presence of real estate developments financed by migrant money. Migration is an important part of how young people imagine the future (Coe 2012;

Riccio 2005). Large-scale migration has shifted the nexus between mobility and elite status. Ghanaians and Senegalese abroad include students, university graduates, and middle-class professionals (see Henry and Mohan 2003 on Ghana). They also include people working in low-qualified and low-paid jobs at the bottom of the societal ladder in their countries of immigration (Nieswand 2014; Riccio 2005), where they have to contend with exploitative working conditions as well as everyday racism (Herbert et al. 2008). Among the Senegalese abroad are people of mostly rural origins with little to no 'Western' education (Kane 2011; Diouf 2000). The wealth that many Senegalese have accumulated abroad has helped alter their low class and caste status at home. However, a sense of ambivalence surrounds the sources of this wealth, given the low-status work through which it has mostly been earned (Nieswand 2014; Riccio 2005). In the capitals of both countries, Accra and Dakar, 'newly rich' transnationals are juxtaposed with an older transnationally mobile national elite, as well as other West Africans and people from further afield working in business or staffing the offices of the various embassies, regional headquarters of international organizations and international NGOs located there.

Transnational education projects

While numerous young Ghanaians and Senegalese aspire to study overseas today, notably for their higher education, many Ghanaian and Senegalese families overseas have been looking to their African homelands for the education of their children. Difficult conditions in the diaspora often provide the backdrop for decisions to educate children partly or entirely 'back home'. These include entrenched class and race inequalities curbing Black children's prospects of academic success, as well as the criminalization and securitization of Black inner-city youths (Tomlinson 2008; Alexander 2010). In both our studies, these structural conditions influenced the negative perceptions parents had of their low-income, inner-city neighborhoods, where they

feared their sons may drift off into gang violence, drugs, and illegal activities, and had major concerns over their daughters' sexuality.[4] We also found that, in some cases, having to work long hours limited the time parents could spend with their children. This heightened their anxieties and left them dissatisfied with the care and instruction they are able to provide.

At the same time, parents in both our studies felt that Senegal and Ghana had much to offer to their children. They wanted their children to receive a solid grounding in the culture and religion of the 'homeland'. This included learning cherished values such as respect for elders, a sense of responsibility for others and the ability to withstand hardship, as well as a commitment to religious norms (cf. Coe and Shani 2015). Parents considered cultural and religious training important in its own right, but they also valued it as a means of protecting children against the perceived social, moral and spiritual dangers of life in the West, and in inner-city neighborhoods more specifically. Homeland stays were believed to both help build young people's resilience against these perceived threats, and to be a measure that could help bring young people back to the 'straight and narrow' when other disciplining projects had failed (Kea and Maier 2017).

However, parents from our research were also aware – either from direct experience or through observations of others – that most academic credentials from their homelands were not valued in their countries of immigration. Status loss and limited opportunities for social mobility are common among people migrating from the Global South (Nieswand 2014). With this in mind, many parents sought to maintain some degree of continuity with their children's schooling in the West to allow for a smooth transition back into Western or other globally recognized higher education systems. Such aspirations were related not only to opportunities this could entail in the UK or US, but also to the value college degrees from abroad have in Ghana and Senegal, where they promise access to a professional job.

Structural transformations in homeland education markets

A growing number of educational entrepreneurs in Senegal and Ghana have responded to demand for schooling that is locally grounded yet promises easy transitions (back) into Western (higher) education systems, by offering a particular curriculum or language of instruction. Education sectors in both countries have undergone massive privatization over the last three-four decades, related to the retreat of the state from public services provision since Structural Adjustment (Grysole 2018). This parallels developments observed across the continent, with stratified private education sectors catering to various segments of society, including the poor through low-cost private provision (Härmä 2013), and the religiously minded through private Christian and Islamic schooling (Dilger and Schulz 2013).

In recent decades, both Senegal and Ghana have seen a boom in mid-/upmarket private schools fashioning themselves as offering an 'international' education, which appeals particularly to the transnationally minded. In Ghana, international schools have been catering to expatriates and the transnational Ghanaian elite since the 1950s/1960s, but their numbers have rapidly increased in recent decades. This boom coincides with the steady growth of Ghana's economy in the last two decades which in turn has led to a growing middle-class population as well as to increased opportunities for transnational mobility. In 2015, the British Council in Accra reported that there were 33 international schools authorized by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) to deliver the British IGCSE and IA Level curriculum.[5] However, they estimated that the actual number of schools offering this curriculum is even higher as this list consists of only the schools that have CIE authorization. While exact numbers cannot be confirmed, these international schools are highly visible on the Ghanaian educational landscape and usually charge higher fees than schools offering the Ghanaian curriculum.

In Senegal, the centers of Islamic learning of the Sufi orders, notably the *Tijaniyya*, have long attracted a diverse crowd of followers from West Africa and beyond (Kane 2016), making them early hubs of cosmopolitanism. Private French-medium Catholic schools have been popular among the elites since colonial times (Grysole 2018). Since the 90s and 2000s, new so-called 'bilingual' schools, promising education in both English and French, have started to sprout up in Senegal's capital Dakar. This reflects the fact that English language competency took on a greater significance with North America emerging as a prime migratory destination. The most recent innovation on the education market is English-French 'bilingual' Islamic schools, which offer both religious instruction and an English-French bilingual curriculum.[6] These schools tap a market of parents desirous of religious education for their children yet dissatisfied with the education offered by Qur'anic schools, or French-Arabic schools, where English is merely a subject among many (see Hoechner 2017).

'International' schools in both our studies consciously tap the income opportunities promised by 'diaspora children'. Collins International School in Ghana for example charges up to 50% higher fees for 'non-Ghanaian' or 'non-Ghanaian resident' pupils. Christ is Lord, another private Ghanaian school from Abotsi's sample, recruited an educational consultant, who was a former administrator at an international school in Accra, to help them expand their enrolment of pupils from the diaspora. Similarly, several headmasters of bilingual schools Hoechner visited in Dakar said that they advertise their schools via personal contacts and Senegalese 'community radios' in the US. Over half of the students enrolled at Dakar Success Academy in 2015/16 were children of Senegalese living in the US. At the Senegalese American Bilingual School (SABS) and IQRA Bilingual Academy, children from transnationally mobile Senegalese families made up some 30 percent.

'Cosmopolitan' and 'Afropolitan' school environments

We have discussed 'Afropolitanism' as being concerned with Africa's past and present connections to other parts of the world earlier in this paper. Such connections were manifest in the teaching bodies of the schools we studied as well as in the approaches they advocated. We both found that returnees, but also other internationally mobile people were very active in the education sectors in our cases, setting up and working as teachers in 'international' and 'bilingual' schools. They often had similar experiences of frustration vis-à-vis the Senegalese and Ghanaian education on offer which led them to open their own schools. The founders of Collins International School, Michael and Anna Akoto, for example, who returned to Ghana in the early 2000s after living in the US, were motivated by what they felt was a lack of schools that would prepare their children for the global futures which they envisage for them. Madame Sarr, a Black American Muslim woman from Brooklyn married to a Senegalese man and the founder of IQRA Bilingual Academy in Dakar, described a similar dilemma. As a mother with cosmopolitan aspirations for her own children whom she was trying to raise in Senegal, she wanted to send her children to a school grounded in the Islamic faith but also able to 'propel them towards their collegiate and professional aspirations on an international scale' (interview, August 2016). Dissatisfied with the low academic profile of most classical Qur'anic/Islamic schools, and the secular outlook of the international schools available in Dakar, she decided to set up her own school.

The ambition of the schools in our studies to offer a 'cosmopolitan' experience to their students in the sense of exposure to diversity was most readily visible in their aesthetic choices: international flags decorated many schools' gates. A sense of 'cosmopolitanism' was further nurtured by the internationality and racial diversity of both teaching and student bodies in the

schools we studied. At IQRA Bilingual Academy, teachers were from the US and Canada, as well as the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and the Bahamas. Abotsi also met teachers/school personnel at international schools like Oasis and Collins from the UK, US and Canada. In both the Ghanaian and Senegalese cases, the students included not only young people from various parts of West Africa, but also young 'returnees' from North America and Europe, and children of embassy workers and professionals working for multinational companies from a range of national and religious contexts, including Egypt, Sudan, Dubai, China, and India. In both cases international schools also had a number of mixed-race children from the US, Europe and Asia, again echoing notions of 'Afropolitanism' as concerned with Africa's historical and ongoing interconnectedness with the world. The Black American founder of IQRA Bilingual Academy referred explicitly to this entangled history when explaining that she wanted her children to study in Senegal 'because it took me so long to get out of the diaspora, it took me so many generations to have come back that I don't want that same [...] feeling for my children' (interview, August 2016).

Similarly, the Senegalese American Bilingual School/SABS displays a 2016 video on the landing page of its website from the school's 'Big Gorée Project', which includes a trip to Île de Gorée – a historical slave trading point – and student dance/theatre performance memorializing slavery in front of the former dungeons. The video is overlaid by the following text, highlighting SABS' self-concept as serving Africans on the continent and beyond: 'Senegalese American Bilingual School. Values Service. Shapes Leaders. For Africa, Diaspora & Beyond.'

Mbembe (2018, 106) describes Afropolitanism as a way of being in the world that 'reject[s] on principle any identity based on victimhood – which does not mean that it is blind to the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people...'. The commemoration of slavery

through artistic expression and a forward-looking emphasis on 'shaping leaders' on the SABS website arguably resonates with this stance.

Beyond these commitments to African heritage and connectedness, cosmopolitanism was also practiced in its more 'normative form' (Cheng 2018), acclaiming Western educational credentials and practices as a presumably superior form of cultural capital. Several schools in our studies cultivated links with educational institutions in the West. Oasis, an elite international day school in Accra, for example, modeled on the British preparatory and public (i.e. private) school system, sent its Ghanaian teachers on a 'working holiday' to visit private schools in England. The young British-Ghanaians at the school found many overlaps between the CIE curriculum (the international version of the British GCSE and A Level qualifications) and the British curriculum, with some even commenting that it was the same. Similarly, IQRA Bilingual Academy in Dakar has achieved accreditation by the 'Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools' (MSA), which means it conforms to United States Department of Education standards.

Interactive teaching pedagogies were a routine part of how schools sought to represent themselves (though the reality in the classroom sometimes diverged from such ideals). Pictures of fieldtrips and 'hands-on' learning activities including arts and crafts and applied science workshops frequently appeared on the promotional materials of the schools we studied, notably their internet presences. Using modern technology, including computers and projectors as well as in some cases more expensive technology, was also part of the schools' 'cosmopolitan' agendas. Sarah (11 years) told Abotsi that her school in Ghana also had 'the interactive whiteboards, they also have screens, [...] ACs [air conditioner], ... a proper science lab and it's equipped with stuff, libraries and we have school plays like we used to in England' (interview, November 2014).

Sarah's mention of school plays echoes observations we made in other schools. IQRA Bilingual School organized 'spelling bees' and a time slot was reserved for 'extra-curricular activities'. Besides the yoga classes Hoechner offered, students could sign up for basketball, cooking lessons, and art classes. Similarly, Oasis in Accra offered extracurricular activities like Chinese (Mandarin) lessons, ballet, photography (facilitated by Abotsi), and African dance. The food served in the schools we studied was a mix of local dishes and international cuisines, such as pasta, pizza, and hotdogs, reflecting a certain 'Westernization' of local middle/upper class eating habits as well as attempts to please the palates of 'recent arrivals' (complaints were frequent nonetheless).

Grounding cosmopolitanism in non-Western cultural and religious values

While in many ways the practices described here reproduced a normative form of 'cosmopolitanism' celebrating Western educational practices, the schools in our studies also sought to ground their students' worldliness in explicitly non-Western cultural and religious values and imaginaries, echoing notions of 'rooted' or 'vernacular' cosmopolitanism discussed earlier, and resonating with Selasi's (2005) emphasis on Afropolitans cultivating an 'African ethos' alongside their 'American accent' and 'European affect'. Schools in our studies marketed themselves as promoting not only academic excellence but also a particular type of upbringing, in some cases explicitly setting themselves apart from international schools perceived to lack this and represent 'an island in the African continent' (interview with the founder of IQRA Bilingual Academy, August 2016).

The Facebook promotional material for Noor International School in Dakar, Senegal, described the school as offering 'African-centred learning' in an 'Islamic environment'. Similarly, promotion materials for Oasis in Ghana lauded the school as providing British-style

Preparatory and Public [private] School education with 'solid Ghanaian cultural base' and 'sound Christian framework' among its core values (fieldnotes, September 2014). The images accompanying the description of the school were of children in *kente* cloth, a colorful woven fabric virtually synonymous with 'Ghanaian/African' tradition. *Kente* cloth forms part of cultural displays on special occasions such as 'Speech and Prize Giving Day' at Oasis and other schools from Abotsi's research.

Some of the key values the schools in our studies sought to instill in their students were studiousness, diligence, and a strong work ethic, which have wide appeal in Senegalese and Ghanaian society. Africans abroad often found these missing in the European or American schools their children attended. Curiously, these same values have also been part of the colonial justification for European-type schooling on the continent, highlighting how values and practices considered 'indigenous' often have complex genealogies (cf. Miescher 2005).

In Abotsi's study, teachers in Ghanaian international schools constantly reminded pupils to focus on their studies and school staff and pupils alike fostered an academically competitive atmosphere (see Abotsi 2020). As Nicolas (17 years) at Kings commented, '[i]t's all academics here [in Ghana]' (interview, October 2014). Students in Hoechner's study reported similar experiences. Abidine (14 years), who had moved to Dakar from Detroit recently, described his new school's ethos as 'here you have to be like, a first and stuff like that. Like, they say you have to be [...] first in the class, and then [...] someone will be second, third. Until last' (Interview, December 2016).

Many of the schools in our studies also encouraged adherence to religious values and practices. Whereas older international schools in Dakar/Senegal are run in the French tradition of *laïcité* or strict secularism, a new generation of Islamic international schools now actively teach

and encourage Islamic values and practices, situating themselves as part of a larger Muslim *ummah*, and thus embracing understandings of cosmopolitanism that do not position the West as its pinnacle. At IQRA Bilingual Academy, students learned to read and recite the Qur'an in dedicated classes ('iqra' means 'recite!' in Arabic and is said to have been the first word revealed to the Prophet Muhammad). Students also studied the basics of Islamic beliefs and worship, Islamic history, and Islamic manners and morals during Islamic Studies classes. Female students and teachers were expected to cover their hair (the school uniform for girls consists of an ankle-length gown and a headscarf), and daily prayers were performed together by staff and students in the school courtyard. The school's walls were decorated with posters with religious messages such as 'Islam says no to bullying'.

At Collins in Ghana, the Lord's prayer was recited every morning after cleaning; prayers were also recited before and in some cases after meals. In addition, there were student-led Christian worship sessions or, as Neil (16 years), called them, 'school church' (Interview, April 2015) and religious retreats for exam candidates which involved an intensive day of prayer asking for God's support and guidance through the challenging exam period. These sessions involved discussing passages from the Bible, group prayers and singing gospel songs, and tended to follow the Charismatic Christian or Pentecostal worship practices in Ghanaian churches. Daniela (19 years) saw no difference between her Pentecostal churches in London (which had a large Ghanaian/West African congregation) and Accra (where she resided during the school holidays) and the Christian services at her school. To her, all three were 'African' churches (Interview, April 2015). Similarly, Oasis' branding of itself as a school with 'Ghanaian' and Christian values were mentioned by two British-Ghanaian mothers from Abotsi's study among their reasons for choosing the school. They rejected other international schools on the basis that they were secular

and 'too international' (interview, September 2014 and fieldnotes, November 2014). This conflation of Ghanaian/African culture with religion (Christianity) was part of how the schools marketed themselves and how they were read by Abotsi's participants: as spaces offering continuity between their lives in their Ghanaian/African communities in the diaspora and in Ghana, despite European origins of Christianity and formal schooling. This highlights the historical and ongoing global nature of what is perceived/discussed as 'local' and slippages in what is considered 'local' / 'non-Western' values versus Western ones.

Finally, discipline and respect for elders were strong themes in both our studies. The speeches delivered during the weekly all-school assembly at IQRA Bilingual Academy emphasized that Islam wanted children to respect and honor their parents, urging students to study hard to not waste the hard-earned school fees their parents paid (fieldnotes, December 2016). Gladys, the director of Guiding Light in Accra, emphasized to Abotsi her school's ethos of 'treat[ing] a child like a child' and its 'ability to insist that the right thing must be done' (fieldnotes, September 2014), evoking notions of strong adult control over young people. School staff at Guiding Light maintained strict hierarchies between adults and young people.

However, such practices and norms did not always go uncontested. We document elsewhere how 'sent' youths questioned and resisted the behavioral expectations they were confronted with in Ghana and Senegal (Abotsi 2020; Hoechner 2020). Suffice to say here that schools/teachers sometimes struggled to square endeavors to instill discipline and respect for adult authority with ideals promoted by 'international' schooling which emphasized creative thinking and encouraged pupils to be critical and confident. Some teachers in Abotsi's study found that embracing the latter set of ideals under the guise of internationalism was detrimental to upholding respect for elders. Ms. Boah from Collins felt that this contributed to the Ghanaian pupils acting in the rebellious

manner she associated with children from abroad (fieldnotes, May 2015). Similarly, in Hoechner's study, both a teacher and a parent voiced frustration over their school's strict 'no beating' policy (fieldnotes, October 2016 and April 2018). In their view, this was a failed opportunity to inculcate discipline in students (Hoechner 2020). These examples highlight that there is no ultimate consensus on what an international/cosmopolitan education should look like, and that certain expressions of 'cosmopolitanism' may sit uneasily with others.

Cosmopolitan experiences and transnational class dynamics

For some sent back/returnee youths, the educational possibilities promoted by their African schools were markedly more international/cosmopolitan than what they had encountered in the West. Oasis, Collins, and IQRA Bilingual Academy offered opt-in school trips – the costs of which were born by parents – to Western cities (e.g. Paris and New York) as well as to destinations in the Gulf, notably Dubai, highlighting how not merely knowledge of the West was considered relevant for developing a 'cosmopolitan' identity. Similarly, schools in our studies encouraged graduating students to seek higher education opportunities globally. Destinations included North America and Europe, but also China, Russia, Ukraine, and the Middle East.

Students remarked on how their African schools opened up new horizons for them beyond what they had considered before. For example, in a conversation Abotsi had with a group of pupils at Collins, Daniella said:

in London, I never met one friend or family member that said 'I'm going to American universities' [...] But here everyone's like 'I'm going to America,' you know all those places [...] one boy is going to China, two boys are already there [...] I never knew someone would go to university in China [...] Like Russia, [...] Ukraine, I

thought nobody goes there [...] So it's like you get more opportunities (interview, April 2015).

Her friend, a US-Ghanaian from Columbus, Ohio, agreed with her observations. The girls' experience of urban centers in the Global North such as London/Columbus appears parochial compared to that of their international boarding school in a rural area of Ghana, as their school exposed them to educational possibilities they had never considered.

This brings us to the question of how transnational class dynamics made themselves felt in our studies. As we have argued throughout, schooling in the homeland allowed the young transnational Africans to acquire 'cosmopolitan' competencies and outlooks out of their reach in the West where their families often faced racial and class disadvantage. However, we also found that class distinctions continued to matter in the homeland, confirming scholarship that has identified 'cosmopolitan' experiences as a consumer good reserved for the privileged. Some international schools were simply out of the financial reach of most Africans in the diaspora who worked low-qualified jobs and catered to several children while simultaneously supporting large extended families in the homeland. Two of the headmasters Hoechner interviewed emphasized explicitly that they were seeking to offer a cheaper alternative to these upmarket schools (interviews, August and October 2016).

As hinted at in the introduction, Abotsi also observed that especially the more upmarket ones among the (already oversubscribed) international schools became increasingly selective in their admissions process. They reduced their numbers of 'sent' young people who often came from economically-deprived neighborhoods in the US or Europe, which were perceived to be associated with social challenges and recruited instead from among the Ghanaian elite and

returnee families who had achieved middle-class status in the diaspora. Elizabeth, the co-founder of Kings, reported that:

There was a time we had lots of them [British-Ghanaian pupils] coming in … Some of the children we had were involved in gangs in the UK... [She recounts an incident where a boy pulled out a knife at school] I said 'no, it is not a gang, you can't pull a knife here' [...] So in the final analysis, we had to decide that no, enough of this nonsense [...] and [other] parents were actually getting worried, that 'hey, what kind of people are you bringing in here?', yeah so at a point [...] we had to reduce the numbers... (Interview, January 2014).

Guiding Light went through a similar 'learning' process in their first two academic years (2012/2013 and 2013/2014) of dealing with young British-Ghanaians with 'colorful pasts' (fieldnotes, September 2014), as Gladys, the school's director, stated, which led to decisions to streamline admitting young people from the diaspora.

Abotsi's general observation was that schools like Kings and Guiding Light that had established a reputation among the elite and upper middle-class Ghanaians did not want to risk the reputation of their schools by taking in children who were seen not to contribute to the school's image. Though many of the School Heads mentioned behavioral issues, or young people not achieving the required grades during the entrance exams, Abotsi found that perceptions of the low-class status of some families from the diaspora also mattered. Margaret, the Assistant Director of Mount Grace, a prestigious Christian international school, explained to Abotsi that her school had no interest in taking on children whose 'family background isn't good' (fieldnotes, September 2014). She then went on to list characteristics such as parents who are not well-educated, doing low-skilled, low-paying jobs abroad, and coming from families where education was not deemed important. It is noteworthy that these class dimensions are

heavily influenced by historical and ongoing processes of racialization and experiences of race in both the African and diasporic contexts (Pierre 2013). These issues will be explored in future work.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored how 'international' and 'bilingual' schools in Ghana and Senegal have emerged as places where the children of local middle and upper classes desirous of transnational mobility, as well as returnee and 'sent back' children and youths can acquire cosmopolitan and Afropolitan competencies and outlooks. Literature on the nexus between transnational migration and education in migrants' homelands has mostly focused on altered educational aspirations and the role of remittances. We add to this literature by exploring how return migration and transnational modes of living have transformed educational landscapes and practices in the homeland by giving rise to a bustling market in 'international' and 'bilingual' education. We have analyzed these schools through the notions of 'cosmopolitanism' and 'Afropolitanism', shedding light on cosmopolitan expressions/practices that do not posit the West/Global North as their sole reference point, but celebrate African connectedness as well as a range of 'African' sensibilities and Christian and Islamic values.

We have argued that notably for 'sent' young people, cosmopolitan competencies and outlooks are largely inaccessible in the Western countries their parents have migrated to. By highlighting this, our findings add nuance to the figure of the 'Afropolitan' (Selasi 2005), which has emphasized international exposure. Growing up abroad (i.e. in the West) alone did not necessarily result in 'cosmopolitan' competency/capital. For some youths, notably those facing class and racial disadvantage in the West, such competency/capital was more easily acquired in Ghana and Senegal.

By emphasizing how schools on the African continent offer greater opportunities to obtain desirable educational capital, we counter stereotypical representations of homeland returns as reactionary and punitive (e.g. Abotsi 2018). Such representations, unfortunately, continue to define the terms on which many policymakers and education practitioners in the West engage with young Africans' return mobilities. By highlighting the educational opportunities opened up by return mobility, we add to existing critiques of sedentary and racist biases in education policies that frame the mobility of certain groups of students as problematic and detrimental to their learning (e.g. van Geel 2019). Our findings also add to existing studies documenting the challenges posed to 'global geographies of power, rooted in a colony-metropole divide' by educational return mobilities (Kea and Maier 2017). Yet, we move beyond the current focus of this literature on exposure to 'local' cultures and traditions by highlighting how Afropolitan and cosmopolitan experiences are part and parcel of such returns, and notably young people's schooling experiences. By doing so, we add to the fledgling literature on cosmopolitanism in African schools, which so far has not paid much attention to 'international' schools centered around the needs and desires of the transnationally mobile.

Young transnational Africans' access to cosmopolitan schooling in their parents' homeland can be understood in light of the 'status paradox of migration' (Nieswand 2014). This notion draws attention to the status inconsistency that many Africans experience, doing working-class jobs in Western Europe or North America, yet holding middle-class status in their home countries. As Nieswand (2014, 403) puts it, '[t]hey gain status in the sending regions by simultaneously losing it in the receiving regions'. The young returnees and 'sent' children and youths in our studies experienced status differences mostly as a 'win' as their schools in Ghana and Senegal exposed them to educational possibilities they had never considered.

However, there were limits to this. Nieswand (2014, 403) notes about transnational Ghanaians that '[s]ince their relative wealth lacks conventional legitimations, these migrants are a cause of irritation to existing imaginaries of social status in Ghana'. Similarly, Abotsi observed in her study that access to cosmopolitan spaces in Ghana was somewhat stratified. Material wealth and the ability to pay high school fees did not completely obliterate perceptions of low-class status for some Ghanaians abroad among the Ghanaian elites running and frequenting international schools like Kings and Guiding Light. Our findings highlight that certain types of international experience were clearly more valued than others. Future research may be able to illuminate how the processes of stratification we observed affect graduates and their prospects in the longer term.

Finally, our findings complicate common tropes about return migration, which in development discourse and practice has been cast as a convenient source of people with international education, skills, and professional experience for homelands to tap (see e.g., AU Executive Council's Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2006)[7] and Ghana's Diaspora Investment Summit (2021)[8]). Our work adds layers of complexities on these discourses, highlighting how inequalities govern access to valued forms of education and experience in both homelands and the West.

Acknowledgements

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[1] All the respondent and school names in the Ghana study and some of the respondent names in the Senegal study have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

[2] Young people from less privileged backgrounds of course also migrate to access education, as documented by scholarship on independent child migration (Hashim 2005; Porter et al. 2011). Such movements are not usually framed as expressive of 'cosmopolitanism' though.

[3] A fuller historical account detailing the nuances of colonialism, education and status hierarchies is beyond the scope of this article.

[4] Of course, not all West Africans live in dangerous inner-city neighborhoods. The salience of inner-city problems in our studies is at least partly a by-product of our respective foci on London and New York, where high rent prices drastically limit the available housing options.

[5] Seven of the eight international schools in Abotsi's sample were part of the 33 CIE accredited schools, while one delivered the CIE curriculum without being accredited.

[6] In 2015/16, these included IQRA Bilingual Academy at Point E, IBAD – Islamic Bilingual Academy Dakar on the Plateau, and NIA – Noor International Academy in Mermoz.

[7] Available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/32899-file-1._au_migration_policy_framework_for_africa.pdf (last accessed 29/07/2021)

[8] Modern Ghana (2021) 'Come back home and let's build Ghana together — Finance Minister to Ghanaians abroad'. Available at: https://www.modernghana.com/news/1090154/come-back-home-and-lets-build-ghana-together.html (last accessed 29/07/2021).