

The *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD) as an Education Migration Programme for the “Gen-Z” Nigerian Student Migrant

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD) programme (i.e German Academic Exchange Service) as one of the popular means through which Nigerian students migrate to Germany. The study x-rays the DAAD programme while also scoping the historical origin of DAAD. Broadly focused on the perceived benefits to Nigerian scholars and other professionals. Using shared experiences, we ascertain its effectiveness in developing cross-cultural understanding, career advancement, German language skills acquisition and its contemporary impact on brain drain. As part of its data collection method and analysis, the study employs a qualitative and descriptive approach focusing on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include oral interviews with German lecturers (DAAD) and Nigerian DAAD scholarship awardees. This study concludes that Nigerian student migrants, through the DAAD programme, are equipped with the basics of German language, relevant soft skills needed in the local and international labour market, and means of livelihood which somewhat strengthens Nigeria’s human capital development. However, while the DAAD approach does enhance seamless integration of Nigerian migrant students into German lifestyles and practices it also fits into imperialist and “push and pull” theoretical frameworks for explaining globalization trends.

Keywords: DAAD, Education, Germany, Gen-Z, Migration

JEL Codes: F22, F66, I25, N37

INTRODUCTION

The world system has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of people leaving their countries in search of a better life and opportunities. For instance, Between 1990 and 2013, the number of Nigerians living outside Nigeria more than doubled from 465,932 to 1,030,322, in other words, in 1990, only 33.8 per cent of Nigerian migrants lived in more developed regions and by 2000, this had increased to 52 percent and further 56.7 percent in 2010 (Isiugo-Abanihe & IOM, 2016). Compared with 2023, migration trends show that this number has risen drastically with a growth rate of over 2,500% even though it recorded a 2.5% decline from 2022 (See NBS, 2023; Ikwuyatum, 2016). Consequently, migration processes and data in Nigeria becomes much more complex and cumbersome than it used to be in the past. It is for this reason that policy makers and analysts in origin and destination countries, as well as donors and the international community are no longer satisfied with knowing only the absolute numbers of international migrants but also requiring more multifactorial insights into migrant characteristics, such as why people move, how long they remain abroad, their socio-demographic and economic background as well as the need to know how well migrants integrate within the host society. These focus from policy makers also tend to consider the effects of migration on the socio-economic situation in origin and destination countries (See Flahaux and Haas, 2016) an aspect which this study overarches.

Migration is influenced by both endogenous and exogenous factors. These factors according to Ikwuyatum (2016) ranges from improved education facilities and higher degree pursuit among others. However, the purpose of migration also depends on individuals’ aspirations often induced by how an ambition can be achieved in a certain place other than one state of residence (Bellamy and Weinberg, 2008). It is for such aspirations and ambitions that people are exploring different migration routes including those within developed economies in Europe like the

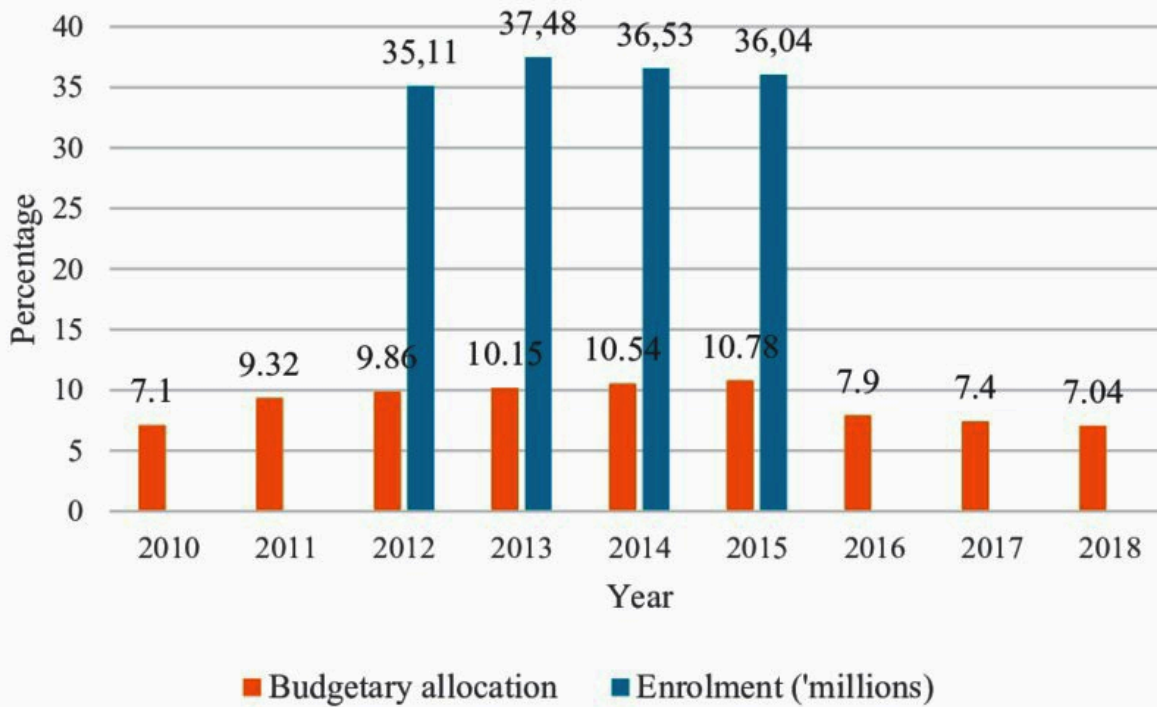
German programme called *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD). Germany alongside the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Australia, represents leading migrant destination for Africans especially for education concerns (Kell, and Vogl, (2012). Migration from Nigeria to Germany is induced by opportunities like fee remission, access to modern training and research equipment, funding, research grants, and scholarship. These attraction has continuously made Germany ranked sixth globally in terms of the best educational systems. Hence, a growing interest from Nigerian migrants to Germany (including the Gen-Z).

There is no doubt that education remains the tool for upward stratification, and social and economic development of any nation. However, arguments can be made that the Nigerian government has not shown enough commitment towards the educational sector. To buttress this point, data shows that in 2013, over 1.7 million candidates registered for Nigeria's centralized tertiary admission examinations (i.e. the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board -JAMB examination) all competing for limited slots of less than 400,000 which by implication entails that only less than half a million students will be able to gain admission into the university. Now this leaves us with the question of 'what will be the fate of more than a million qualified university-age young Nigerians who were not able to gain access into the university the same year?' It only makes it logical to think that majority of these students will be put under pressure to jump at any readily alternative means provided such as the scholarship opportunities or any other to acquire a formal education which they have been deprived of. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) identifies this as a major driver for migration among Nigerian population (Isiugo-Abanihe & IOM, 2016).

Additionally, while the government expects to commit significant part of its annual budget to improving education outcomes, it has failed to improve its less than 15% annual fiscal allocation to the education sector. The allocated amount for education shows that government investment in the sector and is yet to meet the prescribed 4-6 % of GDP (i.e. >20% of public expenditure) as prescribed by UNESCO for developing countries (UNESCO, 2021). According to budget analysis data, the expenditure on education in Nigeria from the year 2010 - 2015 amounted from between 6.17 percent to 9.26 percent progressively (see figure 1). However, from 2016 to 2021, it witnessed a major decline from 6.65 percent to 5.14 percent of the total federal budget. This explains that overall, the highest figure was reached in 2015, when over ten percent of the national budget was allocated to the education sector. See Figure 1.

Another major consequence of the decline in government funding for education is the frustration experienced by postgraduate students with incessant strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). With successive strike actions, students have to spend longer period than expected duration hence leading to huge accumulation of overstayed school fees by the end of the study. ASUU key demands often centered on financing for public universities' revitalization. This is in accordance with agreements made between the Nigerian government and the union in 2009 and 2013, where the federal government accepted to fund public universities with a total of N1.3 trillion (8.6 billion USD) over the course of six installments, beginning in 2013. Other lingering issues which have contributed to persistent strike action by ASUU include, earned academic allowances for teaching staff, payroll systems, and the remittance of union dues from the federal government to ASUU. All these have culminated towards students frustration often leading to stunted career progression as well as re-enforces decisions to migrate in search of better funded education opportunities across Europe, America and Asia. All of these and many more are reasons the Nigerian Gen-Z population are exploring different migration routes including those within developed economies in Europe such as the German programme called *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD).

Most recently, the number of Nigerian students migrating for studies to German universities in search of modern facilities for training and ensuring completion of programmes in record time has increased. Understanding the motivations of the Gen-Z Nigerian migrants, taking into consideration the push and pull factors that influence migration decisions such as; economic, political, educational, healthcare and security challenges of their home country as well as factors that attract them to Germany like; strong economy, employment prospects, educational opportunities, research and innovations, cultural exchange, social services among others where their needs and aspirations are being met is considered very crucial in this study.

Figure 1: Nigeria's Public Expenditure in the Education Sector, 2010-201

Source: World Bank (2018), Government Expenditure on Education

DAAD's focus on education, research, cultural exchange, skill circulation, sustainable development and global collaboration corresponds with factors that attract not only Nigerians, but nationals of other developing countries to Germany. This synergy showcases how the program contributes to the achievement of its core goals such as fostering academic and research funding, promoting the internationalization of German higher education and research organisations, strengthening German cultural and language studies abroad, assisting developing countries establish productive higher education institutions and advise decision makers on matters of cultural, education and development policy while simultaneously addressing the aspirations and needs of Nigerian Gen-Z migrants population bearing in mind their experiences, and outcomes of the DAAD program as such deserving research attention. Furthermore, Nigeria and Germany's connections is a noteworthy case study in the field of international relations and even though the histories of both countries are rich, there is little or less to know about how much educational exchanges has helped to strengthen and advance their cultural ties. The effectiveness of current educational exchange programs, the degree of understanding they promote and their impact on forming cultural attitudes between Germany and Nigerian populations overall are concerns that needs to be addressed (an indirect focus of this study).

To cover how this trend has been documented is important. Boardly speaking this research intends to scope the shared experience and specific motivations of Nigerian Gen-Z migrants who opt for the DAAD program as a means of educational migration and skill improvement. This becomes necessary as this study examines both historical, contemporary and theoretical perspective for this trend of migration. The research should be able to cover the effectiveness of the DAAD pathway for migration while enhancing policy and contextual understanding of education pathways to promote human capital and national growth while advancing globalization.

Research Methodology

This research involves a combination of qualitative (key informant interviews -KII) and quantitative (survey) methods. KII with 25 Gen-Z (i.e. Nigerians born within years of 1997 to 2001) migrants who have or are currently benefiting from the DAAD programme. These KII also involved faculty and administrators at some German selected universities partnering with the DAAD organization and also some of the country university partners in Nigeria like; University of Ibadan and Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The selection of these institutions was because

of increased German-Nigerian collaborative activities in these schools. Some of which includes, educational fair and conferences, DAAD Lecturers, Alumni network activities, Guest lecturers and Professorial appointment. It is more important to state that the DAAD cooperates with the University of Ibadan by offering up to 5 in-country and 10 in-Region scholarships for master's programme. The study also conducted surveys administered to a cross section of previous participants (200) who have gone through the DAAD scholarship to triangulate and compare contemporary data. Sample size (>200) for this study was determined using non-probability techniques because the population size (i.e. the total number of Gen-Z migrants benefiting from the DAAD programme) was unknown.¹ The survey covered questions on skill development (e.g. language proficiency, cultural appreciation, technical skills specific to career of respondents); future plans and expectations (e.g. perceptions of job prospects, on-the-job experience, networking, if expectations were met). Data collection tool for survey was Google forms, while qualitative data was collected through audio recording equipment adhering to ethical standards for research (i.e. informed consent forms, etc.). The data collected from the surveys was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics; while interviews were qualitatively coded using descriptive and interpretive focused coding techniques to generate themes for discussions and insights.

The DAAD Program and Neo-Colonialism: An Imperialist Perspective

The DAAD program, which facilitates academic exchanges and scholarships for students from developing countries, including Nigeria, can be critically examined through the lens of imperialist and power-relation theories. These theories argue that such educational pathways may not be as neutral or benevolent as they appear but could instead function as mechanisms for maintaining global inequalities and perpetuating neo-colonial dynamics (Mamdani, 2012; Nkrumah, 1965).

From an imperialist perspective, educational programs like DAAD can be seen as tools for reinforcing the global hierarchy of knowledge production, where Western institutions retain hegemonic control over intellectual capital. While the program ostensibly provides opportunities for academic advancement, critics argue that it operates within a broader context of unequal power relations. These power dynamics are not limited to the economic or political domains but extend to the intellectual and cultural realms as well (Said, 1993). The provision of scholarships and the promotion of educational exchange often require the acceptance of certain values and norms dictated by the sponsor country—in this case, Germany—which may subtly or overtly reinforce Western ideals and ideologies. As such, these programs could be interpreted as an extension of neo-colonial control, where former colonial powers continue to shape the educational and professional futures of postcolonial nations (Andreassen & Langer, 2013).

Moreover, some scholars contend that the structure of the DAAD program is inherently paternalistic, as it often focuses on sending students from the Global South to the Global North, while leaving the structural inequalities that cause educational disparities unaddressed. These programs may inadvertently contribute to the "brain drain," where educated individuals from countries like Nigeria are siphoned off to more developed nations, thus depriving their home countries of the human capital needed for local development (Nyamnjoh, 2017). This dynamic mirrors the colonial extraction of resources, where the talents and expertise of individuals are drawn away from the Global South, leaving them underdeveloped and dependent on external powers (Bhabha, 1994).

While the DAAD program may be seen by some scholars as perpetuating neo-colonial relations, it is important to note that numerous "push" factors continue to motivate Nigerian students to pursue academic opportunities abroad, particularly through programs like DAAD. High levels of unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and the waning belief in the "Nigerian Dream" (if such ever existed) has continuously compel many to seek better educational and professional prospects overseas (Adekoya, 2018). Additionally, the desire for international exposure, access to advanced research facilities, and the hope of gaining employment opportunities in the global labor market all act as driving forces for Nigerian students to leave their home country (Adepoju, 2010). Thus, while some may view the DAAD program critically, from the perspective of Nigerian students, it represents a viable pathway to better career prospects and personal development.

¹ Official publications from DAAD puts this figure over 3000, however, it is difficult to ascertain the age categorizations of this group. See. https://static.daad.de/media/daad_de/pdfs_nicht_barrierefrei/der-daad/zahlen-fakten/daad-laenderstatistik_731.pdf

Finally, some scholars view the DAAD program not as a form of neo-colonial exploitation but as part of a larger process of globalization and cross-country collaboration. This view sees educational exchanges as facilitating knowledge transfer, skills development, and the creation of networks that can contribute to the global labor market (Castells, 2010). Moreover, in an era of globalization, such collaborations can provide avenues for improving job prospects, generating remittances, and contributing to economic growth in home countries like Nigeria (Ratha et al., 2011). The experience gained abroad can also contribute to the development of local industries upon the student's return, fostering the potential for sustainable development (Sachs, 2005). In this light, the DAAD program can be seen not only as an extension of Germany's soft power but also as a potential source of global integration, fostering international cooperation for decent work opportunities and remittances generation for Nigeria.

Historical Foundation of the DAAD Programme

Alongside Fulbright, Mastercard and Rhodes, Schwartzman, Chevening and Commonwealth scholarships, the DAAD is considered one of the world's most prestigious scholarships and grant-awarding organizations/bodies. The historical origin of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) could be traced back to 1922 when Carl Joachim Friedrich, a Social and Political Studies student at Heidelberg University visited the United States and organized scholarships for fellow students in New York (See DAAD Official Website, 2023). Friedrich, in collaboration with the Institute of International Education (IIE) in New York, made available a total of 13 scholarships to German students studying Social and Political Studies. During the period, the scholarship program was exclusively for students within the fields of social and political sciences. In October of 1925, the headquarters of the DAAD programme was transferred to Berlin in Germany with its first managing director as Dr. Werner Pitch. The scope of the scholarship was also expanded to include all disciplines. Between 1926 and 1935, DAAD scholarship programme spread to various countries, mainly in Europe. In the summer of 1926, DAAD had a partnership with the United Kingdom and subsequently the Anglo-German Academic Board was birthed. Five students, as a result of the new partnership, travelled from the UK to Germany for their studies.

In 1928, and through the director of the *Office National des Universit  t et Ecoles Francaise* (ONUEF) and DAAD agreed with France to fund the bilateral exchange of six students. It was not until 1930 that DAAD inaugurated its first branch office in Paris and that was headed by Dr. Hans Gottling. By 1935, DAAD had already signed exchange agreements with fellow Schengen countries such as Finland, Hungary and Poland and then Yugoslavia. Daad has continued to be in existence despite the challenges they have faced amidst the global economic crisis of the 1930s (the Great Depression) and Second World War which almost impaired the success of DAAD activities and more recently withstood the challenges of the Covid-19 crises. Since its establishment, the organisation has initiated a series of policies aimed at contributing to the development of science and society. Contained in her *Strategy 2025* are principal goals which aim:

- To promote excellence and broaden perspectives of education and science through international exchange;
- To enhance international collaboration for the benefit of science, industry and society; and
- To assume global responsibility and contribute to development and peace¹⁴.
- More generally, DAAD programme policies are aimed at overcoming the critical (education policy) challenges in Germany. The policies encapsulate the need:
 - To facilitate access to higher education in German and make Germany a more attractive place to study for prospective international students;
 - To decrease the educational heterogeneity and close curricular gaps of prospective students;
 - To ensure equal opportunities as well as economical and flexible access to the German higher education landscape;
 - To significantly reduce the drop-out rates of first-year students (these are currently at around 45% in bachelor's programme);
 - To prepare prospective generations for future challenges by using standardized and personalized processes;
 - To promote technical and ecological innovation by supporting prospective STEM students in order to implement the sustainability goal of the Agenda 2030; and
 - To meet the growing demand for highly qualified and skilled workers within STEM fields in Germany.

The DAAD Programme and Education Support in Africa since 1960s

Germany maintained relations with Africa across political, economic and educational levels long before 1960. The politico-economic relations of Germany and Africa can be traced back to the period of colonialism. Germany played a critical role in the colonial history of Africa for which alongside France, it initiated the Berlin Conference of 1884/85. It directly colonized Togo, Cameroon, German Southwest Africa (Namibia) and German East Africa (Tanzania) before they were taken away from her in the wake of the First World War (Conrad, 2014). Within those colonial territories, Germany promoted education. With regards to education development of her “colonies,” the German colonial authority was particularly interested in what it termed as “education to work” – i.e. agricultural education hinged on the transfer of “modern” agrarian knowledge to Africa (See Zollmann, 2020; VanderPloeg, 1977) -and continued up till the end of the 20th century. German education aid in Africa in the early and mid-20th century started with the idea of *Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe* (i.e. “helping people to help themselves”). This programme sought to build training centers in various African villages and communities where people could be trained in different fields. The aim of the program was primarily to “draw target communities in Africa into defining their own local needs.” It discouraged the act of the locals receiving expensive gifts from ‘powerful outsiders’; rather “villages were urged to take a hand in constructing their own training facilities and modern housing complexes.” Unfortunately, the programme did not achieve its goals as the villagers (or ‘peasants’ as Germans constantly referred to them) only showed little interest in learning different new techniques. They viewed the self-help aid programme as an unreasonable demand for unpaid labour, a variant on colonial forms of compulsory service (See Gray, 2015).

With the wave of African countries independence in the 1960s, DAAD for the first time considered funding African students. The proposal to offer African students scholarships was approved by the Board of Trustees in 1963 (See DAAD official Website, 2023). The form of scholarship made available was *Sur-Place* (i.e. immobility scholarships) which means that the scholarship candidates were funded to study or carry out research in their home universities. Ten years after, DAAD established a coordination office in Nairobi Kenya. The office, financed by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), was responsible for managing the DAAD Sur-Place scholarship programme in the region.

In 1985, DAAD showed support to the marginalized black population in South Africa under the apartheid regime. The Board of Directors discussed funding programmes for South Africa and supported the efforts of the German federal government in concluding a new cultural agreement which aimed to promote stronger participation by South Africa’s black population. On 21 October 2001, and with the aid of DAAD, the cornerstone of the German University Cairo (G.U.C.) was laid. The university which started full operations in 2003 has today more than 70 study programmes leading to the degrees of bachelor, masters and PhD. GUC is often regarded as the largest transnational education institute. Though English is the language of instruction at GUC, its programmes are designed basically according to German standards and accredited in Egypt and Germany. DAAD also launched series of scholarship programmes exclusively for Africans since 2020s in order to promote learning across the continent. The ‘Leadership for Africa’² programme launched in 2021 is an example. It targets candidates from sub-Saharan Africa who wish to pursue master’s degrees at German universities. The target countries are in East Africa and West and Central Africa. Also, with the outbreak of Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, DAAD equally launched a scholarship programme to assist master’s degree students from sub-Saharan Africa fleeing the war.

Unpacking the Contemporary DAAD Program

Nigeria has had an enduring relationship with Germany and that spans over six decades. In the sphere of academics or education (which is the focal point of this research), the two nations maintain good partnership. DAAD is one of the avenues through which Germany maintains strong education ties with Nigeria. As at 2015, a total of about four hundred and fifty (450) Nigerians benefit every year from the scholarships made available by the German Academic Exchanged Service (DAAD). Statistics provided by the *DAAD BintHo* –Benchmark In-ternational University- study has it that a total of 440,564 international students enrolled in the German higher education sector in 2021/2022 session (DAAD, 2023). The data shows that Germany has experienced a steady increase in the influx of international students, with over 60% of international students surveyed indicating their interest to remain in Germany after studies. To put this migration data to perspective, there is a need to understand its driven benefits (i.e.

² See DAAD, “Leadership for Africa,” accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/what-we-do/sustainable-development/funding-programmes/funding-programmes-for-students-a-z/leadership-for-africa/>

pull factors) motivating international students (including Nigeria) for study in Germany under the DAAD program is essential.

First, like many education support programs, the DAAD alleviates the financial burden of living expenses for international students migrating to Germany for studies. Though tuition fees are generally not charged in Germany, international students (as at January 1, 2023) are expected to present the sum of €11,208 as proof of fund before they are granted a study visa. The Gen-Z Nigerian student is expected to demonstrate their financial strength by showing a proof of scholarship or parent's sufficient income and financial assets, by having sufficient funds in a blocked account.³ However, a student who is awarded a DAAD program scholarship is not required to provide such proof of funds (in a blocked account). The DAAD program covers the cost of tuition and pays its awardees a monthly stipend of €934 euros (for master's program), €1300 euros (for doctoral candidates and postdocs) €2000 euros (for assistant teachers, assistant professors and lecturers), and €2150 euros (for professors). Additionally, travel cost for studies are also covered.

By operating an socially inclusive and family centric system, DAAD allows its awardees to move to their study destination with their spouses and children. For the accompanying spouse and children, DAAD offers "wife-and-children allowance" and equally makes health insurance available for them. In 2023 the DAAD scholarship awardee receive "marital allowance" of €276 euros per month and €250 euros per month per child as "child allowance." Again, DAAD has an inclusive policy that caters for people with disabilities and chronic illness. Award provides additional benefits supplement challenges associate with navigating disabilities and illness.

Secondly, DAAD students are given the opportunity to learn a new language. Particularly, the DAAD *Helmut-Schmidt* Scholarship provides tuition coverage for a 6-months mandatory German language course from April to August for its awardees before the start of their studies in September. This provides an avenue to DAAD awardees to immerse themselves in the German culture by possessing relevant tools to understand its rich history and cultural influences across Europe. Germany is the second largest country in Europe after Russia in terms of population size. It has the largest economy in the continent and the fifth largest in the world. It shares border with Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and Poland which shares in some cultural similarities. It has a long and rich history and culture which combines predominantly Christian values with literature, art, philosophy, logic, reason and a love for beer and sausages. By providing opportunities to understand the language, some international students immerse themselves in the rich culture of the German people and shape their lives according to these values.

The DAAD program also makes it possible for international students to improve their soft skills and be confident to compete in the job market. Studying abroad generally helps students to improve their communication, problem-solving and team working skills.³³ These skills are vital towards access job markets and remaining competitive (Hossain, et al. 2022). Sisavath (2021) argued on the merits of studying abroad as a means to both develop these soft skills and how international curriculum and interaction often exposes the contemporary student to life skills beyond academic diplomas and degrees. Gen-Z Students who consider Germany as their study destination do so to acquire such relevant skills so as to increase their competitiveness in the local and international labour market. German universities provide networks alongside relevant employers and industry stakeholders which stands as an alluring option for international student migrants. Employers provide internship opportunities for the international students to help them develop hands-on experience needed in their field. Beyond that, all graduate schools in Germany engage with stakeholders from public and private sectors and civil society and invite them during summer schools to train and educate their students on different subjects (DAAD, 2019).

The opportunity to work while studying is also a factor that stimulates the Gen-Z students' interest in Germany. There are many ways for international students in Germany to earn money while they study. Among such options include working as wait staff, academic assistants, or private tutors. Students from the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland have unrestricted access to the German labour market and they have the same rights as German students but for other international students from different parts of the world, they are allowed to work for 120 full days or 240 half days per year. The opportunity exists for the Gen-Z Nigerian student to

³ A blocked account is a special type of bank account that an intended/prospective student opens and deposits the amount needed for visa application and approval. The amount deposited into the account must be enough to fund the student's one academic year in Germany. From the account, the student is given a certain sum on monthly basis for his/her bills.

be self-employed or work as freelancers provided permission is obtained from *the Agentur für Arbeit* (i.e. Federal Employment Agency) and the *Ausländerbehörde* (Foreigners' office).

Despite this, some Gen-Z students have reflected how work opportunities impact their lives thus:

“A student job... does not only boost your finances. The job requires many facets of you as a colleague, employee, supervisor, newcomer, or expert. You get to know yourself in different roles and perhaps in difficult situations. You also meet people outside your university circle of friends. Of course, a job will also enhance your CV: Working while studying in Germany proves that you can manage your time well, and work hard. It doesn't really matter what industry you're in – it's important to recruiters that you have practical experience.”

The DAAD program appreciates this need for work placement to future opportunities as the program embeds work placements to gain/improve professional experiences while the Gen-Z student is studying. This is essential in choosing areas of specialization and career pathways.

DAAD from Nigerian Shared Perspectives

Language Opportunity

It is safe to say that the German government is not oblivious of the need to arm international students with the knowledge of German language which they have consistently demonstrated through various schemes such as the DAAD pathway. Historically, the teaching and learning of German language among Nigerian students can be traced back to 1859 when the first secondary school, the CMS Grammar School was established in the Bariga district of Lagos State by the Church Missionary Society.⁴ However, with the arrival of DAAD in Nigeria, German language and culture became intensified. It is, therefore, important to note that the first effort of DAAD in facilitating the teaching and learning of German language skills among Nigerian students is through the establishment of a language course in Nigerian higher institution of learning (i.e. universities). Perspectives of experts subsisting on geopolitical and international studies stance might opine that these efforts were done to further harnessing potentials of diplomacy.

However, to assist the development of language skills, DAAD provides instructional materials such as DVDs/CDs, books, pictures microforms, slides, projected opaque materials, flashcards, and PowerPoint. These materials are used in Grammar-Translation Method, audio-lingual method and audio-visual method for language trainees and by the trainers. All these methods help in equipping language learners (including the Gen-Z Nigerian student) with the four language skills of speaking, writing, understanding (listening) and reading.

Another clear achievement of DAAD in attempting to build German language skills of Nigerian Gen-Z students is the setting up of *Goethe Institute Lagos*. Although German is not among the dominant foreign languages studied in Nigerian schools, but the development of language centers help prepare the Gen-Z student for life in Germany. Regardless, the German government continues to seek to strengthen existing language linkages with countries like Nigeria to compete favorably with other foreign languages anywhere in the world. Charlotte Meyn believes that the goal is to internationalizing its language and culture. It is, therefore, convenient to claim that the internationalization goal and the need to build multilingual Gen-Z Nigerian students are the motives behind the setting up of *Goethe Institute* as Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide. It promotes the study of German abroad and encourages international cultural exchange. Since its establishment, the *Goethe Institute Lagos* has been very helpful in developing German language skills of Nigerian Gen-Z youth (and student), which has invariably opened opportunities for its participants and DAAD applicants.

DAAD adds to this by enhancing the Nigerian Gen-z students' German language skills through the *Language Immersion Program*. The program is designed to allow DAAD awardees to relocate to Germany some months before the actual start date of their undergraduate/graduate programme for the acquisition of German language skills that will enable them to cope with everyday life in their new cities in Germany. The Language Immersion Programme which lasts for a maximum of 6 months is designed to help DAAD awardees navigate adaption and easy

⁴ Interview with Charlotte Meyn- German Language Trainer and DAAD Lecturer – University of Ibadan, interviewed on May 4, 2024.

“culture shocks” during their new academic environment due to language barrier. It is important to note that all expense arising from this six-month training is covered by DAAD. This strategy has been helpful in developing German language skill and preparedness for studies immediately after the six-month training, for which many Gen-Z students often apply for more funding to continue the training.⁵

Job Prospect

Gen-Z Nigerian students who choose to remain in Germany after completing their studies benefit from a favorable labor market characterized by high demand for skilled workers, particularly in STEM fields. According to a report by the German Federal Employment Agency (2023), Germany faces a significant shortage of skilled professionals, especially in engineering, IT, healthcare, and the natural sciences, with projections indicating a need for over 1.2 million skilled workers by 2030. This gap is expected to widen as the country faces demographic challenges such as an aging population and declining birth rates (Genz et al., 2022). For Nigerian graduates, this presents a promising opportunity, as international talent, particularly those with German language skills and technical qualifications, are increasingly sought after to fill these gaps. Moreover, the demand for foreign graduates is particularly high in sectors like information technology and engineering, where the growth in digital transformation and green energy initiatives is accelerating. A study by the German Industry Association (BDI, 2023) estimates that Germany will need to fill over 100,000 jobs in the IT sector alone by 2028, driven by the expansion of digital infrastructure and innovation. Similarly, in healthcare, the need for qualified medical professionals and engineers in biotechnology and renewable energy is expected to rise significantly in the coming years (Hess & Beutler, 2021). Given these trends, Nigerian graduates who take advantage of DAAD-sponsored internships, academic training, and language acquisition are well-positioned to secure long-term employment in these rapidly growing sectors, with pathways to permanent residency and potential career advancement.

In addition to the strong demand for professionals in STEM fields, there are also growing opportunities for Nigerian graduates in non-STEM sectors in Germany. The services sector, particularly in areas such as finance, marketing, and management, is experiencing steady growth, driven by Germany's status as Europe's largest economy and its global trade connections. According to a 2023 report by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), the demand for qualified professionals in business administration, digital marketing, and international trade is expected to increase over the next decade, with a shortage of over 200,000 workers in these fields by 2030. Furthermore, Germany's increasing focus on sustainability and corporate social responsibility is creating opportunities for graduates with expertise in environmental management, social sciences, and public policy (Genz et al., 2022).

For Nigerian graduates with a background in the humanities or social sciences, Germany's expanding cultural and creative industries also present promising career prospects. The growing importance of multiculturalism, coupled with the digitalization of media and entertainment, opens doors for graduates in fields like communications, journalism, and arts management. The German creative economy is expected to grow by 3.5% annually over the next five years, creating significant demand for talent in these areas (Hess & Beutler, 2021). Thus, Nigerian graduates in both STEM and non-STEM disciplines are well-positioned to capitalize on Germany's diverse and expanding labor market, with access to long-term employment prospects across a range of industries.

Career Prospect

The DAAD has consistently through various schemes provided better career opportunities for their members. The recent launching of the initiative supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBWF) with a total of almost €120million until 2028, is a clear example of the DAAD's commitment towards the advancement and expansion of career opportunities for its participants. This initiative comprises of two programmes which includes the “Fit-promotion of international talent” for integration into studies and the labour market programme and also the “Profi plus-Academic Adaptation” qualification for the German labour Market and are geared towards assisting international students both during their academic journey and career prospect. These initiatives provide customized tailor support to international students both during their studies and in their transition to the German labour market.

⁵ Interview with Chijoke Ekwe (psuedo name), benefiting student from the language program. Interviewed on July, 28 2024

Due to this, the favorable chances of remaining in Germany later in life have remained a major consideration for many international students particularly Nigerian Gen-Z students who have gained valuable insights on specialised trainings such as job application coaching, job related language and communication training and in addition, acquired practical experience in companies thereby boosting their career by virtue of having career entry or promotion opportunities. In confirmation to this statement, one of the respondents indicates how life was transformed via the DAAD programme and now is more confident to embark on career pathways via desired job in Germany without thinking of returning home where he is been faced with fewer or no opportunities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The DAAD program has played a pivotal role in shaping the educational and migration trajectories of many Nigerian Gen-Z students, providing them with opportunities to pursue higher education in Germany. Established in 1925, the DAAD program has since facilitated international academic exchange and fostered the development of skilled professionals across a wide range of disciplines. For African students, particularly those from Nigeria, the DAAD program offers a unique opportunity to benefit from Germany's world-class education system, gain professional experience through internships, and acquire proficiency in the German language. This academic migration is increasingly motivated by both "push" and "pull" factors.

On the "pull" side, Germany's strong economy, robust labor market, and the strategic partnerships between German universities and the Nigerian government have made it an attractive destination for Nigerian students seeking quality education and employment prospects. The DAAD's tailored support, including funding, language training, and placement opportunities, helps African students navigate the challenges of studying abroad. On the "push" side, systemic issues such as the prolonged strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), inadequate government investment in higher education, and economic instability in Nigeria have driven many students to seek educational opportunities abroad. As a result, Germany's well-established academic infrastructure and promising job market continue to draw Nigerian students, who see it as a viable path to both academic and professional success.

- **Further Research on the Impact of DAAD on Nigerian Career Development:** Future studies should focus on tracking the long-term career outcomes of Nigerian graduates who have participated in DAAD programs, particularly those who have stayed in Germany after graduation. Understanding the impact of DAAD's language training, internships, and academic support on their career trajectories can provide valuable insights for refining the program and enhancing its effectiveness in meeting the needs of Nigerian students in Germany.
- **Enhanced Collaboration between Nigerian and German Institutions:** Given the growing number of Nigerian students in Germany, it is recommended that DAAD officials strengthen collaborations with Nigerian universities and government agencies to create more structured pathways for Nigerian students. This could involve establishing dual-degree programs, expanding scholarship offerings, and facilitating more exchange programs between German and Nigerian academic institutions to further cement Germany's role as a destination for high-quality education.
- **Policy Advocacy to Address "Push" Factors:** DAAD officials, in collaboration with Nigerian student migrant communities, should advocate for policies that address the underlying "push" factors driving Nigerian students abroad, such as the inadequate funding of higher education and the frequent ASUU strikes. Engaging with Nigerian policymakers to increase investment in education and address systemic issues in the academic sector could reduce the brain drain and create opportunities for Nigerian students to thrive domestically. This can also persuade critics of international education migration programs to see it beyond the neo-imperialist lens. Additionally, fostering a better understanding of the DAAD program within Nigerian communities could ensure that more students are aware of these alternatives, allowing them to make informed decisions about their educational and career paths.

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