

MIGRATION, BRAIN DRAIN AND ATTRITION: BANE OF NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENTAL STRIDES

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ABSTRACT

In developing countries of Africa, unfavourable conditions have threatened citizens' well-being. These conditions include wars, political instability, unemployment, poor pay system, hostile school climate, hunger and disease, and religious upheaval, arising mainly from religious and political bigotry. These conditions have forced the productive segment of the population to migrate to other professions, countries and regions of the world, where their knowledge and skills can be utilized and their worth appreciated. This migration has resulted in high teacher attrition and brain drain. The effect of all this is grave for a developing country like Nigeria. The paper identifies that brain drain increases the technological gap between developed and developing nations. It leads to the reduction in quality of skilled manpower, a retardation in socio-economic and technological growth and development. Again, the exodus of academics from universities makes the process of teaching, research, publication and knowledge development irrelevant to the challenges of the global market. Teacher attrition leads to weakening of morale and a decline in pupils' achievement, as well as a drop in educational standards. Attrition is costly for government as it forces government to spend huge sums of money to conduct interviews and employ new teachers to fill vacant positions. To deal with brain drain and teacher attrition, the paper recommends, among others, an upward review of the pay package for academics and professionals, provision of conducive working environment, and an intensification, with vigour, commitment and sincerity, of the fight against corruption in the public sector.

Key words: Attrition Brain drain Migration Pull factors Push factors

INTRODUCTION

It is often said that the world is moving and people with it. The world, as we knew it 20, 30, 50 years ago has changed considerably. With the advances in science and technology, it has become difficult to keep people in one place for years on end. Aside from this, with worsening global economic conditions, it has become obvious that people must move to places where succour can be found.

Education has increased peoples' skill and knowledge. In other words, in the time in which we live, people, through quality education, have acquired functional technical know-how and skill by which they expect to earn a living. Unfortunately however, due to factors like corruption and inept political leaders who lack the political will to offer purposeful, functional and enduring political leadership, there has been breakdown in vital institutions which decades ago offered befitting services to citizens, and enhanced their lives. With the restoration of political governance in many African nations, including Nigeria, after years of military adventure in governance, the dividends of democracy have been eroded by the lurid activities of the political class in which corruption, and religious and ethnic intolerance have been on the increase. In sub-Sahara Africa, peace has been threatened for decades by the incessant activities of bandits, Boko Haram and other terrorist groups. Governments' kit glove handling of these fugitive groups, and the incendiary utterances of government officials and religious bigots, have only worsened the already fluid situation. The youth population is disillusioned with the government that promised them much but delivered so little. The labour unions of educational institutions, particularly tertiary institutions, after years of painful negotiation with government on increased funding and improved conditions of work, have

seen hopes dashed as no concrete and tangible steps have been taken by government to honour the agreements. More so, because of poor reward system, and unsavoury school climates, teachers have been forced to explore other options.

With these growing concerns, the productive segment of the Nigerian population, possessing vital skills and the technical know-how needed for national development, have found it necessary to migrate to other professions, regions, or countries where relative peace is found, and gainful employment is available for the utilization of their skills and knowledge. It is against this background that the paper examines the concepts of migration, brain drain and teacher attrition. It examines the factors of migration, brain drain and attrition. The paper discusses the effects of brain drain and attrition and recommends ways for dealing with the trends.

MIGRATION

By 2019, according to Ogbu (2019), over two million Nigerians live in the US. Out of this number, 20,000 are doctors and over 10,000 are academics. This is a clear case of brain drain and is a fundamental problem for Nigeria's development. Now at the core of brain drain is migration. Ogbu held that migration deals with search for an alternative place of residence, occasioned by devastation caused by natural and manmade disasters, climate change, religious intolerance and political marginalization. Migration has become necessary for people who seek better conditions of living and freedom from political persecution and insecurity.

Globally, migration has been on the increase in the last decade. There are many factors responsible for the trend. Literature on the subject indicates that political instability, civil wars, economic problems, globalization and unemployment are some of the factors that have forced the exodus of people across the globe. Another contributory factor is the social media and the computer which brought people together and closer with understanding of favourable existing conditions of living in certain regions or countries. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp, and even the Internet have social boundaries among people in the global arena.

Living in one country or region of the world, human beings, according to Emeghara (2013), are active agents in the factors of production who accumulate, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward societal development. However, poor living conditions, despotic rule, civil unrests, human rights violations, religious intolerance, yearning for freedom and equity have forced people to leave their countries of origin for foreign countries where freedom, equity, human rights, rule of law and opportunities for advancement abound.

Chigozie (2014) has broadly divided migration factors into four. These are economic, social, political and cultural. On economic factors, the author explained that poor salaries, unemployment and inflation have forced skilled workers to move from their countries of origin to other countries in search of better economic conditions such as job satisfaction, higher living standard, better salary and prospects for educational advancement. Oppression, marginalization, religious suppression and intolerance, and human rights violations are some of the social factors responsible for skilled professionals to move to countries or regions where their social rights and benefits are guaranteed. Political upheaval results in wars, riots, and civil strife which increases hunger and disease. In Nigeria, in the last two decades, the Boko Haram sect has given rise to other brands of social misfits like bandits, cattle rustlers, and abductors, who attack citizens on their farms, homes and work places, and maim, kill or abduct them. Bandits who, the federal government of Nigeria branded as terrorists, after years of agitation from a sane segment of the population to do so, have increased their nefarious activities. The attack in schools by this group of social malaise saw the abduction of hundreds of pupils and the murder of scores of others.

Certain countries of the world attach religious and cultural considerations to civic life. Consequently, on the basis of culture and religion, some productive segment of the population are discriminated against. For instance, in a male dominated country, women are held in low esteem.

Some are even denied roles in governance. Consequently, workers with feminist ideology gave migrated to gender friendly countries (Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2012).

BRAIN DRAIN AND TEACHER ATTRITION

Brain drain, also referred to as brain waste or human capital flight, is “the mass exodus of highly trained and well-experienced academics from countries with poor conditions of service to those with better work conditions in search of greener pastures” (Utile, 2008). Adeyemi and others (2018) saw brain drain as the exodus of skilled and competent manpower from less developed countries to developed countries where they believe their skill and expertise will not only be appreciated but will be rewarded as well. Brain drain, in view of Eise and Foster (2018), also refers to the movement of highly skilled individuals or most educated people to nations where their services are appreciated. The concept entails the transfer of knowledge, skill and expertise from one region, country or geographic location to another (Emeghara, 2013). The author cited that there are many Nigerian doctors working as taxi drivers in some large US cities such as New York, Chicago, Texas, Michigan, and Washington.

Actually brain drain as a concept was created by the British Royal Society to refer to the movement of professionals, engineers, scientists, and physicians via emigration from the United Kingdom to the United States of America (Alem, 2016). Today however, the concept has assumed a global dimension. It deals broadly with the migration of educated and professional people from one country, economic sector or field to another country, usually for better living conditions or for better remuneration (Ogbu, 2019). In Africa, the trend became popular in 1960 and 1965 when over 27,000 African professionals left the African continent for Western countries in search of better living conditions (Adeyemi et al., 2013).

Teacher attrition, also referred to as teacher turnover, means teachers leaving their classroom work and taking up other employments outside the educational system (Miller & Chait, 2018). It is a phenomenon described by Okeke and others (2019) as educational capital wastage, where well-trained teachers leave their classroom employment to pursue greener pasture employment outside the educational set-up. When this happens, the school is bereft of essential manpower. Again, human capital acquired over time through training and experience in the job is lost when teachers seek and gain employment outside the classroom (Egu & Chinonye, 2011).

Attrition is perceived to consist of two types, namely, attrition due to transfer which leads to teachers relocating to another school, and attrition which deals with a teacher leaving the teaching job completely (Bromley et al., 2012). Where a teacher leaves the teaching profession completely, he takes on a different job outside of teaching. Where a teacher decides to change job location still within the teaching profession may be occasioned by several factors, such as accommodation, availability of social amenities, school climate, including staff relationship among and with the school head, and the general security of the school.

It may suffice to pause at this point and ask which category of teachers attrition mostly affects. Attrition mostly affects new teachers posted to areas where social amenities and other educational facilities are absent or in short supply, and this development occurs within the first five years of employment (Egu & Chinonye, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). And because of poor working conditions and poor pay package and reward system, the teaching profession records the highest attrition rate of all professions (Heller, 2004). Although often referred to as a noble profession (by way of simply placating members and nothing more), the teaching profession is the most ignored and scorned by the society. This is so because their monetary contribution to the society, compared to members of other professions, is obviously insignificant.

In 2010, Adebayo asserted that brain drain is one of the principal factors hampering Nigeria’s development, especially in the education system, teaching hospitals and research centres. A key factor responsible for the migration of the intellectually viable segment of the Nigerian population is, in the view of Emeghara (2013), the harsh economic condition under which most

Nigerian intellectuals operate. In order to effectively use their skills and better their lot, these intellectuals and professionals prefer to take up employment outside Nigeria.

Nigerian tertiary institutions present a gloomy and worrisome picture. Having suffered from long years of underfunding and neglect, the Nigerian ivory tower, for instance, is now termed a glorified secondary school with overcrowded classrooms with students either sitting on the floor or leaning on door frames and windows to receive lectures. With growing discontent, many Nigerian experts and professionals (technologists, scientists, engineers, business managers, university lecturers, and computer specialists) have migrated to North America and Europe in search of better work life and better conditions of living (Odekunle, 2001; Saint et al., 2003; Olukoya, 2005). In Nigeria, successive governments for over two decades have given less attention to developmental issues, to education and to manpower development. The political climate in Nigeria is skewed towards political the class's gimmicks and lip service. Many youths in Nigeria have remained unemployed even after their university education. A productive segment of the youth population now roam the streets while the political class continues with its clandestine plots and maneuverings in governance. A good number of these youths, along with experienced academics, professionals and businessmen now live and work in foreign countries, contributing to the GDP of those countries.

It must be stressed that the productive segment of Nigeria's ivory tower has every reason to seek for employment elsewhere, preferable outside Nigeria. This is because of government's lackadaisical attitude towards university education. Ever since government signed agreement with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in 2009, little has been achieved. Government has always shied away from practically showing commitment to agreements. Even of late, that is in 2020, when ASUU renegotiated the agreement with government and timelines were outlined, government did nothing tangibly to indicate commitment. The withheld salaries were paid but with names of many academic staff excluded. The earned academic allowances were also paid but only paltry sums were received which could not match reasonably with the academic workload already executed by academic staff. Practically, government reneged on key agreements as contained in the memorandum of understanding and memorandum of action, one way or another. After a series of follow-ups right from when the prolonged strike was suspended in 2020, ASUU was forced to embark on a warning strike from February 2022. Today, the warning strike has run into months. As was expected, government withheld the salaries of the academic staff.

It does appear that the sitting government in Nigeria has not fully understood the necessity and the implication of funding university education. Or it can be assumed that the government has fully understood the necessity and the implication but is only shying away from its statutory responsibility. For instance, before the All Progressives Congress (APC) came to power, in 2013, the Interim National Publicity Secretary of this party, advocated for adequate funding of university education and research. However, when the government came to power in 2015, in an interview with Punch newspaper, the Minister of State for Education insinuated that Nigeria's heavy financial burden was wasted on paying 10,500 professors and that strikes by public universities were the main driving force for Nigerian students seeking alternative university education abroad and in private universities. Up this time in June 2022, the sitting APC government in Nigeria has not been able to improve the lot of lecturers in public universities in Nigeria (Tade, 2020).

In spite of huge volumes of work on their hands, Nigerian academics and professionals are one of the least paid category of workers in Nigeria and on the global scene. Since 2021, a professor in a Nigerian university with 12 or more years of experience on the job receives between #332, 833 – #350, 169. A professor at the bar collects a consolidated salary of #416, 743, down from #555, 351 before deductions occasioned by the forceful inclusion of academic staff into the integrated personnel and payment system (IPPIS). Since 2021, an Assistant Lecturer collects between #118, 127 – #137,334. An Associate Professor collects #277,179 – #350,169 per month. In other African countries, a full professor in Uganda collects \$4.054 per month. An Associate Professor collects \$3,891, and an Assistant Lecturer collects &1,631. In South Africa, a full

professor earns an equivalent pay which is between #22,325,844 – #37,209,741 per annum. An Associate Professor earns between #20,224,232 – #32,564,902 per annum. A junior lecturer in South Africa earns between #10,453,326 – #17,427,663 per annum (Tade, 2020).

Deji-Folutile (2022), lamenting the kind of salaries being paid university lecturers in Nigeria, said:

A senior lecturer must have a PhD, at least with 8 years' teaching experience, as well as publications in both local and international journals and the salary is #231,393 per month (US\$557)...A reader or Associate Professor, a rank below a professor, must have at least 12 years teaching and research experience and earns #281, 867 per month (US\$678). A professor earns #342,442 (US\$824) monthly and it takes an average of 15 years.

In Western countries, first out of ten countries with highest paid university professors is Switzerland. In this country, a professor collects between 150,000 – 172,000 CHF. The tenth country is France. In France, a professor collects between €37,000 – €74,000 per annum. An Associate Professor collects between €25,000 – €54,000 per annum (Nailbuzz, 2021).

It need be added here that while the ASUU warning strike which began on 14th February 2022 lasted, the nation woke up to the news of the arrest of the Accountant-General of the Federation by the financial crimes watchdog, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), on 16th May 2022, over allegations of money laundering and diversion of public funds to the tune of #80 billion, which the AGF laundered through real estate investments in Kano and Abuja, using bogus contracts with companies involving family members, close associates and proxies (The Guardian, 2022; Premium Times, 2022). Meantime, ASUU had complained of non-payment of salaries to its members for several months and of undue salary deductions since the inclusion of its members in the Integrated Personnel and Payment System (IPPIS) (Daily Trust, May 18th, 2022).

CAUSES OF BRAIN DRAIN AND TEACHER ATTRITION

A number of factors have been identified as causes of brain drain and teacher attrition. These include conflicts and political instability, better living standards and favourable environments (Adeyemi et al., 2013). The authors held that generally causes of brain are divided into push and pull factors. Push factors are the negative factors that contribute to the outflow of skilled manpower from developing to developed countries. They include political turmoil, unemployment, economic uncertainty underdevelopment, job discrimination, poor working conditions and lack of freedom. The pull factors refer to the positive impact of the migration of the skilled manpower from developing to developed countries, resulting in better opportunities such as huge economic outlooks, higher paying jobs, better quality living, intellectual freedom, conducive political atmosphere, and modernized education system. Buttressing these points, Stanojoska and Petrevski (2012) also saw push factors as characteristic of high crime, drought, dearth of essential services, crop failure, insecurity, flooding, poverty and war. Pull factors are the positive factors. They are characteristic of better services, more wealth, good climate, higher employment, security, less crime, political and social stability, more fertile land, lower risks from natural hazards, religious freedom and promotion of democratic norms.

Other causes of brain drain can be identified as institutional failure, endemic corruption, and poor infrastructural base. Nigeria, over the years has experienced in various ways, failure of leadership, characterized by pervasive corruption, insecurity, inflation, and unemployment. In the last decade Nigeria's inflation has drastically risen. Foreign investments have gone down considerably, occasioned by insecurity and poor political culture. These have projected Nigeria's image abroad in bad light. Today, the country is viewed as the poverty capital of the world (Uzoho, 2021), and the government a surpassing failure (Eluemunor, 2022).

Research studies have laid bare the factors responsible for teacher attrition. For instance, Okeke, Okaforcha and Ekwesianya (2019) undertook a study on attribution and the strategies for retention of teachers in secondary schools in Anambra State. The study found that teacher attrition happens due to reasons such as low social recognition and lack of opportunities for professional development. The work of Okeke et al. (2019) buttressed this when their work revealed low social status of the teaching profession, excessive workload, poor school environment, low salary of teachers, and lack of professional development, as reasons for teacher attrition. Matthew and others (2019), in their study, found that school, government, students and health related factors influenced attrition of teachers. Bennell and Akyeampong (2007), Kasan (2012), and Hassan in Kasan and others (2016), in their separate studies, identified poor working conditions, poor salaries and fringe benefits, and institutional factors such as administrative corruption, heavy workload, ineffective recruitment and deployment process, and lack of professional development, as factors responsible for high teacher attrition among secondary school teachers. On the other hand, Limandi in George (2010), reported that individuals felt motivated to continue to work for their organizations when there was collegiality, administrative support, supportive supervision and encouragement.

EFFECTS OF BRAIN DRAIN AND TEACHER ATTRITION

There are many consequences of brain drain and teacher attrition for a developing country like Nigeria. Brain drain leads to a reduction in the quality of skilled manpower. It also leads a retardation in socio-economic and technological growth and development. Speaking on the fall in the standard of education, Yesufu in Emeghara asserted that "the quality of graduates is so poor that their impact in the national economy in terms of productivity is generally below the required standard for a developing economy". Buttressing this, Oni (2008) held that "the mass movement of academics from the nation's universities to other countries has invariably taken its toll of outputs produced from the system", insisting that "the process of teaching, research, publication and knowledge development has no relevance to the challenges of the next millennium or even the present global market". Regarding the reduction in the number of qualified and skilled manpower, Emeghara (2013) posited that in Nigeria, there is mass exodus of seasoned academics and intellectuals from the nation's ivory tower to other professions in and outside Nigeria. This has the consequence of slowing down the economy.

Lending voice to the discourse on the effect of brain drain, Ogbu (2019) posited that brain drain induces shortages of manpower in key activities such as in the health sector and technological field. The author stressed that brain drain increases the technological gap between leading and developing countries. This development, the author argued, leads to concentration of human capacity in the leading nations, making them to be more technologically developed. Buttressing this point, Adepoju, van Naerssen and Zoomers, 2008, and Boyo (2013) stressed that host countries benefit a lot from the skilled manpower who migrated from developing countries without having to pay for the cost of training. The authors argued that with the growing aging population of countries like the United States and Canada, migrant skill workers from developing countries of Africa will fill up labour shortages in those countries.

Brain drain has its own advantages. One of such advantages is what has come to be known as remittance. Remittances refer to "those monies sent by immigrants to family members in their home country" (Wilkinson in Adeyemi, Ebenezer & Attah, 2013). Such monies are used for the education of their children, for raising their economic status, as well as for improving their standard of living. The author's work found that in selected developing countries of Africa, there existed a negative relationship between brain drain, remittance and economic growth. However, a positive correlation was found between human capital development and economic growth in Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria.

Speaking on the effect of teacher attrition, Sawchuk (2012) opined that "when teachers leave schools, the overall morale appears to suffer enough that pupils' achievement declines, both

for those taught by the departed teachers and by pupils whose teachers stayed put". Again when teachers leave the classroom, there is drop in educational standards; there is also low academic achievement and high failure rates in class and public examinations (Dallington-Hammong et al., 2009). Buttressing this point, attrition, according to Emeghara (2013), leads to drastic fall in the standard of education, as it restricts children to low quality education which results in unequal teacher distribution (Utah Foundation, 2007).

Teacher attrition affects students' learning. It hinders the students from achieving their objectives. More so, teacher attrition affects the full coverage of the syllabus which, in the end, contributes to the fall in education standard (Oketunbi & Oshinyadi, n.d.). The authors argued that pupils' performance falls when authorities are unable to find qualified teachers in subject areas. This is brought about by the fact that the school authorities are forced to either hire unqualified teachers, or ask the few qualified teachers, to teach in subject areas where there are shortages, or overload the available teachers. At the end of it, according to Cooper and Alvarado (2006), the pupils are being taught by teachers without the knowledge and skills necessary for producing the desired learning outcomes.

Teacher attrition has far-reaching effect on a school. As Patall and Birkeland (2003) pointed out, "losing a good teacher, whether to another profession or to the school across town means losing that teacher's familiarity with school practices, experience with the school curriculum and involvement with pupils, parents and colleagues". On the part of government, attrition has severe consequences. Attrition is costly on the part of government as it forces government to spend huge sums of money to conduct interviews and employ new teachers to fill vacant positions.

SOLUTIONS TO BRAIN DRAIN AND TEACHER ATTRITION

There is no magic solution to the problem of brain drain and teacher attrition. Concerted effort must be made to secure the productive academic segment of the Nigerian population for constructive nation building. Measures that need to be taken would include providing infrastructure, the enabling environment for business to thrive, increasing budgetary allocation to education, providing an increased and sustainable payment system for academics. These measures are necessary as research finding has indicated (Okeke et al., 2019). The authors' work found that strategies such as improvement in salaries, timely payment of salaries and other fringe benefits, provision of professional development programmes, involvement of teachers in decision making, as well as reduction in workload, would assist greatly in addressing brain drain and attrition in Nigeria's institutions of learning. In fact, it must be added that increase in budgetary allocations to education, especially tertiary education, timely interventions by government and respect for agreements reached between government and teacher unions will assist to a large in averting agitations for strike actions. When government treats the issue of education funding, and lecturers' payment and remuneration system with levity, the consequences are grave, to say the least. For over two decades, because of government's insensitivity to the plight of lecturers in tertiary institutions, especially in universities, the consequence has been incessant strike actions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Migration is a global phenomenon. When individuals feel unsafe in their countries of origin (economically, socially, religiously and politically), they are forced to move to areas, regions or countries where they deem that their well-being can be guaranteed. Citizens with relevant skills and knowledge expect to get employed and contribute their quota to national development. Teachers at various levels of education in Nigeria also have passion to contribute their quota to development, after being gainfully employed. However, attrition and brain drain are eminent when teachers and lecturers in tertiary institutions feel unsafe in their professions, due mainly to poor reward system, poor working environment, and hostile political and religious climate, among others. The paper has discussed these issues and many others and hereby makes the following recommendations:

1. In order for teachers to be employed and retained within the educational system, government needs to make concerted effort to provide accommodation and other social amenities like portable water, electricity and health services
2. Deliberate effort must be made to improve the remuneration system for teachers, especially to be at par with their counterparts in developed countries of the world.
3. Government needs to encourage the retention of teachers by instituting in-service training and study fellowships.
4. Upward review of the pay package for academics and professionals is urgently required. For over a decade, the salaries of Nigerian academics have not been reviewed.
5. Need for proper and adequate funding of tertiary education is required. To achieve this, government needs to declare an emergency in the entire education sector.
6. Need for the provision of conducive working environment, and the equipping of workshops and laboratories with relevant facilities.
7. The fight against corruption in both public and private sectors of the economy must be done not only in a concerted manner, but with vigour, commitment and sincerity of purpose
8. Government needs to offer functional education to citizens so that they can be gainfully employed after leaving school.

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