

Human Capital Flight: A Woe to Nigeria's Economic Development

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Abstract

Globally, it remains an indisputable fact that, country's future is mostly dependent on its human resources both educated and talented citizens; they are the country's greatest asset and should be cherished above all other endowed resources, including oil, agriculture and all other natural resources. Nigeria is a good example, blessed with both human and material resources. It is indisputable that, development of a country hinges largely on the quality of human resources and not just presence of natural resources. The plague of Nigerian migration to industrialized countries, which has resulted in brain drain in many facets of our national life, makes this issue even more difficult to handle the extent of the specialists' migration. The magnitude of skilled and knowledgeable people leaving Nigeria poses a threat to the country's overall progress and development. This study therefore demonstrates that when there is a significant degree of expert migration from Nigeria, national progress and development cannot be realized. The causes of this widespread Nigerian migration based on corruption, has resulted in a rise in unemployment and a harsh economic situation which result in difficult livelihood situation. The study also shows how migration affects all facets of the political system. The study concludes that if the increasing tendency of competent Nigerians migrating abroad is not addressed, Nigeria's progress and development will not be attainable.

Keywords: Human Capital flight, Migration, Nigeria, Development, Skilled labour

Introduction

During the early days, Africans especially were taken away to foreign lands, they were forced out of their homes especially able bodied men were the concern, remaining a few males, women and children, Africa was almost empty of such categories, development was stagnated, the dastardly incidence was called the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The slave trade is viewed by many African scholars as that which arrested the development of the rich endowed continent, from human to natural resources in the view of Walter Rodney in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972). For more than two centuries today, this migration has resurfaced in another form, as against the former in which people were carted away unwillingly, the new trend appeared in a way that people are deliberately exiting the continent to other lands in search for a favourable alternatives. This happens in two ways, on the one hand, those who are moving with their skills and expertise known as human capital flight and those who are moving in search for greener pasture even when they have nothing to offer to the country of their destination known as migration.

The ever-growing needs of many Nigerians and the dearth of opportunities to explore such needs made Nigeria have a huge number of its citizen across Asia, Europe and the United states. The unfortunate trend of these movements is that the country has failed to provide the

enabling environment for the citizenry to manifest their abilities and thus Human Capital flight and migration have compounded to the development challenges faced by Nigeria.

While, our tertiary education, health and other institutions have become empty due to poor government policies, travel abroad has become a thing of pride, even in neighboring countries like Sudan, South Africa, Ghana and Benin Republic among others to pursue education. In the area of Medical practice it has been observed that a good number of Nigerian Doctors and Nurses practice their profession in the UK, while government officials who are unable to revamp the Medical sector at home travel abroad for medical concerns.

Therefore, Nigerian migration has a dual impact on the country: first, individuals who receive training in Nigeria and acquire the necessary skills depart and contribute to the host countries' economies, and second, Nigerians have been forced to endure cruel treatment in their pursuit of a more environmentally friendly lifestyle, such as the indiscriminate xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa and the cruel treatment of Nigerians who have entered Europe illegally through Libya. Due to migration, a large number of young females are prostitution dealers in Europe, some guys are into illicit drug dealings. Corruption has been blamed extensively for the magnitude of migration, but Nigerians who migrate are struggling to eke out a living for "better life".

Research Methods

This study dwelt basically on qualitative approach to eliciting data. Materials from the internet, journals, books and other secondary sources were accessed.

The phenomenon of Human capital flight could be traced back to the period of slavery in Africa (Obiora, 2008). He opined that the ruthless migration of the able bodied persons from the continent of Africa and most developing states is the genesis of human capital flight which has been greatly intensified by the forces of economic globalization. Africa's capital-scarce resources are widely considered to be detrimental to the prospects of sustained growth and development. Low levels of human capita and particularly skill deficiency is a drawback on investment and development in Africa.

Causes of Brain Drain and Migration

Human capital flight and migration from one's home country to another have a number of causes. In his 1885 book *The Law of Migration*, Ernst Georg Ravenstein outlined the two laws that govern migration concepts, namely the pull factor and push factor principles. Push factors are characteristics of the countries that cause migration, as well as factors that encourage migrants to leave their home countries. The push factors are the unfavorable aspects of the native country that motivate bright individuals to migrate from emerging countries. The lack of research facilities, job discrimination, economic underdevelopment, lack of freedom, and unfavorable working circumstances are some other push factors in addition to unemployment and political unrest.

Pull factors, on the other hand, are favorable aspects of the developed nation that draw and encourage foreigners to the receiving nation; these are the advantages that the migrant would experience there. These are the incentives in the recipient nations that motivate people to leave their homes in search of work opportunities. Higher pay and a better standard of life, a more favorable economic outlook, and the prestige of receiving training abroad, a comparatively stable political climate, a modernized educational system that permits

improved training, intellectual freedom, and diverse cultures are some of these characteristics.

The Causes of Human Capital flight and Migration of Nigerians

The number of highly skilled and educated Nigerians migrating to Europe, the Americas, and Asia has significantly increased since the turn of the millennium. It is important and harmful because, although Nigeria Developmental lags, a developed country, which is the recipient, benefits more from our labors. Nigeria's populations are spread out around the globe and are achieving incredible feats in a wide range of human pursuits. Human capital flight is a result of migration, whereby those with the academic aptitude and talent use to leave the country. Migration has hampered Nigeria's progress, as many of its youth are thriving in variety areas.

The problem of human capital flight has gotten worse over the past two decades due to the percentage of Nigerian professionals who leave their home country to exercise their skills elsewhere. The departure of experts in Nigeria's development is hampered by its exports to other nations where economic stability and a high standard of living are assured, while host countries profit from the labor of those countries without having to pay for their education, while Nigeria lags behind. "This development is being seen as a problem, due to the fact that the most competent and highly skilled labor travelled out of their countries to contribute their quota (Adeyemi et al., 2018). In Nigeria, hiring decisions are often primarily on a candidate's connections to high-ranking officials rather than their qualifications. Regardless of their level of education and grades, those without any connections find it difficult to acquire employment because one needs to know someone who knows someone in order to get a job.

Additionally, the majority of employers think that Nigerian graduates are unemployed due to the condition of educational institutions, especially public ones. Despite the continuous encouragement and promotion of education, there are few job opportunities. Furthermore, it is evident that "many Nigerian graduates are unemployable due to the deplorable state of Nigeria universities (Akusoba, 2014). Because they believe Nigerian education is of low quality, most firms prefer to hire graduates with international credentials over those with local ones.

A large number of our ignorant graduates show off qualifications they are unable to defend. Another issue contributing to Nigeria's joblessness is the country's fast population increase and insufficient job supply; there are extremely few job openings, and money intended for the construction industry is diverted into private pockets, which further contributes to unemployment. The introduction of oil has also been detrimental, resulting in a lack of economic diversification, white-collar jobs, and innovation; many Nigerians are solely interested in completing their education and landing a white-collar job.

As a result, many recent college graduates are unemployed; others have been looking for work for months or even years, and when they are unable to find one, they are forced to Poor Educational Sector: Many of our public educational institutions lack the essential facilities and infrastructure, which has caused some of our undergraduates to migrate to other countries for their studies. These students do not return to aid in the reconstruction of the country; instead, they become accustomed to their new society, which portends disaster for Nigeria. Additionally, the length of time students are expected to attend tertiary institutions has been impacted by the frequent strikes called by the Academic Staff Union of Universities; it is typical to find undergraduates enrolled in courses that should last four years taking up to six

or more years. These strikes are not advantageous for the students or the institution's infrastructure development in any manner.

Economic Reason: Due to Nigeria's economy's volatility, many people are leaving the country in quest of better opportunities abroad. Undoubtedly, poverty is on the rise in Nigeria, where a large number of people live on less than \$1 per day. The average Nigerian finds it difficult to make ends meet, which drives many young people to migrate across the Mediterranean borders in search of better opportunities, some of whom pass away too soon. Human capital flight is another effect of Nigeria's dire economic situation, whereby a qualified worker migrates to another nation in quest of better economic conditions in order to obtain a better job, raise their standard of living, receive a better compensation package, etc.

Corruption: "Nigerians are corrupt because the system they live under today makes corruption easy and profitable," according to Chinua Achebe (2012). The former British prime minister's claim that Nigerians are incredibly corrupt is understandable. Nigeria's pervasive corruption has consistently demanded grave concern and attention. "A corrupt-free environment encourages growth by providing space for investment and initiatives to expand the pie rather than just squabbling over its allocation. Therefore, the development process is accelerated by excellent governance and minimal levels of corruption (Adeyemi, 2018).

Insecurity: According to Taft and Haken (2015) security issues have plagued Nigeria's Fourth Republic since Olusegun Obasanjo was elected president in 1999. These issues include increases in sectarian and communal violence in the Middle Belt, militancy and criminality in the Niger Delta, and insurgency in the Northeast. The rise in violence and insecurity has also been facilitated by the threats posed by the Herdsmen, who are present throughout the nation, as well as the inadequate performance of our security forces. Most significantly, the government's unwillingness to address the ongoing violence has compelled many Nigerians to leave the country in quest of safety abroad.

Educational System and Human Capital Flight

Scholarly researches have estimated that nearly 150 million people or 4 percent of the total world population is composed of migrants. Out of these, IOM (2000) put an estimates that 50 million or one third of all world migrants appeared to be African. It is noteworthy that significant number of African migration is intercontinental and about half of the African migrants (25 million) are either refugees (5 million) or displaced persons (20 million).

Despite the huge amount of investment that Africa spend annually to educate young people in various fields of human endeavour, for instance-health field, Medical practitioners from both Nigeria and Ghana, for instance, in their thousands, have fled and are working in the United States whereas there is an acute shortage- in the health professions in their home countries. More so, as at 2013, nearly half of the teaching staff of the Medical School, University of Ghana, had left the country, leaving the school without enough academics to train future medical practitioners and therefore depriving people from receiving adequate health care (El-Khawas, 2014).

In the bid to further buttress the point as regards brain drain, Ezech (2008), argues that Nigeria and indeed the whole of Africa expends a whopping sum of USD 4billion annually to employ up to 150,000 expatriate professionals in various fields of endeavour and thus he went on to show that within the sub-Saharan African countries alone, thirty eight (38) out of the forty seven (47) of them fall short of the World Health Organization (WHO) Standard of twenty

(20) physicians to every 100,000 people and most regrettably too, there has been a technological gap between Africa and other continents.

Discussions

Due to gross socio-economic and political mishaps in the polity, many Nigerians today take great pleasure in exiting the country in quest of a better and preferable livelihood elsewhere. "Human capital flight affects development and its effect becomes unambiguously negative. One of the fundamental consequences of human capital flight out of Nigeria is that the potentialities of these individuals is reduced or not felt at all as they flee out; instead, it enriches the host countries socio-economic and political structures.

As a result, Alabi (2015) hinted that Nigeria has lost a significant amount of tax revenue due to the exodus of skilled and educated individuals, while Nigeria is actively seeking for expatriates to advance their nation, regrettably, good brains are perpetually draining into other economies, the majority of whom are workers are contributing to the GDP of developed countries and are primarily from emerging countries, especially Nigeria. Nigerians have achieved success in a number of disciplines in recent years, but the recognition and credence is given to developed entities where these individuals reside. In the realms of engineering, health and science, there are records of countless exceptional Nigerians who are exceedingly valuable to development of the developed nations.

Furthermore, there is a severe lack of critical, skilled people in Nigeria's many industries due to human capital flight and migration. This results to a decrease in service quality as well because of the dearth of qualified staff. Human capital flight and migration can be attributed to problems like bad governance, corruption, inadequate and poor infrastructure, and lack of readiness to transform the dominant culture of impunity. Although migration and human capital flight are related, Emeghara (2013) came up with the idea that, Nigerians abroad are more of brain waste in some instances, he hinted that some exceptional Nigerians in the field of science and technology were reduced to irrelevant employments in the developed worlds, for instance, in many major American cities such as New York, Chicago, Texas, Michigan, Washington, and others, a considerable number of Nigerian physicians and engineers work as cab drivers.

Way forward

Mass human capital flight out of Nigerians remains a perpetual menace that needs to be addressed. As long as poverty and bad governance persists, Nigerians will continue to migrate to developed countries. Government must develop initiatives that help young people reach their full potential, especially in Science, technology and information technology; promote locally produced content; and give the citizens the opportunity to pursue specialized education that will fast-track Nigeria's quest for development. There is also need for a sensible macroeconomic strategy to be implemented so as to boost the economy.

Since there is no place like home, it must be made safe and secured and create an environment that supports their development. If the general state of the economy and the conditions of service are comparatively favourable, such will reduce the rate of flights abroad.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, there is need to understand better that migration and human capital flight are phenomenon that must be addressed in the interest of progress and development. Government should therefore emphasize the ideals of making the polity a better place thrive

and to compete with others in the international system. Such can only be realistic is there is political will on the side of the leaders towards making Nigeria a better place for all.

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