

## **MIGRATION AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF BRAIN DRAIN IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Migration is the movement from ones home to other intended or unintended vicinities for want of safety and survival. It has rendered communities, towns, villages and cities devastated and their inhabitants dispersed and made homeless, abject and their lives threatened. Migration is essentially motivated by the quest for security, greener pasture, new land for peaceful settlement and fertile for farming. It is a human tendency that is provoked by hostile circumstances beyond the control of the human person and this movement has been very rampant in the world today. It also involves movement of highly skilled manpower from our country Nigeria to developed cities, developed societies which implies brain drain. Brain drain as one of the major effects of migration has become an embarrassment to the nation and the bitter truth about the brain drain syndrome is that most of the engineers, academics, scientists, physicians and others that were trained in developing countries institutions of higher learning with substantial amount of money turn out to better the socio economic fortune of those already industrialized countries. The Nigerian Government should address and review all the various policies that have triggered the migration stream of intellectuals from universities and other professionals like Doctors ,Pharmacists, Nurses, Engineers etc from the country. Secondly, the Nigerian Government should provide a conflict- free political environment for the immigrants to return in order to contribute to the economic development of the country. Critical analysis and expository methods will be adopted as research methodology in the work.*

**Keywords:** Migration, Brain Drain, Development, Poverty

### **Introduction**

Migration as a scheme ensued essentially in quest for security, new land that is safe for settlement and fertile for farming. It is a natural human instinct to move from a place of discomfort to a place of comfort. As the world grapples with the problem of terrorism, insurgencies economic melt – down and recession, so the

challenges of migration press hard. It is evident that in the period spanning the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries there were lots of moving and settling by the peoples of the world more than in any similar period in human history. Many countries intensify their efforts to attract and retain foreign students educated and skilled individuals which increases the risk of brain drain in the sending countries like Nigeria. This is really problematic because the future of any nation depends largely on the educated and skilled individuals. They are responsible for the development of the nation and are the greatest resources the nation can ever boast about, not oil, agriculture, gross, domestic profit etc. Then the big question is, why are people voluntarily or forcefully living their home lands to settle in other places other than their birth places?

However, migration is an inescapable fact of life and part of human existence such that the proportion of foreign born people in rich countries has tripled since 1960 and the emigration of high skilled people from poor countries has accelerated. Since Nigeria's civil war in late 60's, the country has bounced between military government and dictatorships pushing out between eleven and seventeen million people. Today over two million Nigerians leave in the US alone and of these about 20,000 are doctors and over 10,000 are academics. This is a great loss for a nation that need professionals to rebuild and improve its own resources. Hence, the first and second world wars, genocide and crises sparked by them, had an enormous impact on migration. Brain drain also known as human capital flight is a serious issue in many parts of the world as skilled professionals seek out work abroad rather than returning to work in their home country.

### **Meaning of Migration**

According to shaw (1975) conventional definition, migration is "the relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance". Migration is all about seeking alternative residence as a result of devastation caused by natural and manmade disasters, change in climatic conditions, need for employment, boundary disputes, demographic issues, search for religious or political freedom etc. It is the movement of people from one place, region or country to another particularly with the intention of making permanent settlement in a new location. Migration is not a single act of crossing a border, it is rather a lifelong process that affects all aspect of the lives of those involved (migrants).Amnesty international defines a migrant as "one who :who moves from one country to another often to find work. There may also be other reasons such as wanting to

join relatives or to escape natural disasters. Some move because they want to, while others feel forced to leave because of poverty or other serious problems. People can migrate regularly which means they have official permission to stay in a country or irregularly, meaning they are yet to obtain permission to stay in a country. Whatever their status, all migrants are entitled to have their human rights protected”.

The proportion of international migrants residing in high income countries relative to the total in all possible destination increased from 43% to 60% between 1960 and 2010. As measured by the proportion of the foreign born in the total population of high income countries, the average immigration rates to these countries has tripled since 1960 and doubled since 1985 such that the emigration rate of high skilled workers exceed those of low skilled workers in virtually all countries. Furthermore, migration involves transfer of know-how and skills, financial assets and transfer of people from one location to another. In other words there is a consensus that it involves the movement of people across a recognized political boundary to establish permanent or semi-permanent residence.

### **Types of Migration**

Two types of migration are (a) Internal migration (b) international migration. The two types of migration began almost simultaneously after Europeans arrived American in the late 1400s and they have continued in one form or another up to the present day and in several other countries across the globe. Internal migration refers to a change of residence within national boundaries, such as between states, cities or municipalities example from Enugu to Cross River while International migration refers to change of residence over national boundaries example Nigeria to United States of America. However, it is worthy of note that migration may be temporary, with the intention of returning to the country of origin in the future or permanent or migrants may not have decided between these alternatives at the time of migration.

### **Causes of Migration in Nigeria**

**Poverty:** In Nigeria, the electricity supply is epileptic, there is no pipe borne water, the condition of roads is deplorable and hospitals are mere consulting clinics etc. Poor condition of home countries sometimes can be a trigger for people to emigrate. Hence, poverty and migration are bedmates given the fact that most migrations are poverty orchestrated. Portex and Borocz (1989) argued

that the logic behind the movement of competent individuals from developing countries to the developed countries is due to endemic poverty and underdevelopment. Adepoju(2009) posits that labour driver and component of migration includes the migration of highly skilled professionals, brain gain and brain drain, student migrations and female migration, among others". Other major drivers or causes of these movements include the plethora of civil wars, socio-political, ethnic and religious conflicts as well as terrorist activities in the nation.

**Technology:** Core regions (developed countries) have better technology, salaries and conditions of service which attracts people. The lure of well-maintained high technical facilities in rich countries in particular is seductive for manpower assets in under developed societies.

**Mismanagement:** Nigeria is still a crawling giant in several respects, especially in her inability to create jobs to cater for the employment needs of a large number of citizens that desperately yearn for such opportunity. This is because its abundant human and material resources have been grossly mismanaged over the years.

**Unemployment:** Many are driven away by high unemployment rate, political oppression, lack of religious freedom etc.

**Economy:** The worsening economic plight in Nigeria has necessitated the burning desire for Nigerians to leave their country for greener pastures and survival. In line with the above, Igwe (2011) argued that the blow of economic downturn has badly affected young graduates and female gender in Nigeria. It could force young manpower assets, male and female to migrate to developed nations. In a nutshell, stressful economic conditions, especially the absence of sustainable livelihood opportunities, endemic conflicts, the perception of a bleak future, coupled with widening disparities in income and living standards, are compounded by political factors , especially good governance and human rights abuses to fuel the migration of young people in a desperate venture to get better opportunities elsewhere.

**Globalization:** It is another major cause of migration in the society. Today, there is no restriction on the movement of capital goods, technology and information and every country is trying to make to make a distinguished position in the

world market. This is possible with only the use of the best and the brightest minds.

**Industrialization:** The level of industrialization which can provide job opportunities for the populace is very low and the salaries and condition of service of workers are poor.

### **Effects of Migration**

Migration has become a serious political issue which has attracted and engulfed the attention of national governments and international organizations as well migration can have a range of social, political, cultural and economic effect. Even those who do not migrate are affected by movements of people in and out of their communities and by the resulting challenges. Migration also has consequences for the individual the area of origin and the area of destination, on the family, house hold, society, the economy and development as a whole.

When people leave their country they bring down their country's consumer spending as well as labour force. The migration of skilled workers depletes the stock of professionals in the source nation. Migration results in talent shortage in the home country in the sense that the educated crowd instead of serving their own country prefer to work for the developed nations for the sake of better pay and standard of living or any other reason. It also leads to brain drain which refers to the emigration of intelligent, well-educated individuals to somewhere for better pay or conditions, causing the place they came from to lose skilled people or brains.

### **Meaning of brain drain**

In ordinary usage the term brain drain refers specifically to the migration of Engineers, Physicians, scientists and other very high skilled professionals with university training, often between developed countries. The term brain drain originally referred to technological workers leaving a nation. But nowadays its application or meaning has widened to include the migration of educated and professional people from one country, economic sector or field for another usually for better remuneration and or living conditions. Cambridge dictionary (2016) defined the terms "as the situation in which large numbers of educated and very skilled people leave their own country to live and work in another country where their conditions are better". According to Chimankire (2005) brain drain is the movement of a specialized set of people such as medical

doctors, engineers, scientists, academics and among others from one nation to another, commonly for higher wages or for the quality standard of living .According to David(2005) brain drain is an emigration of trained and talented individuals to other nations of the world. The menace is traceable to conflicts, lack of opportunity, health hazards and political imbroglio arising from bad leadership prevalent in countries of origin of these manpower assets.

Stenman (2006) describes brain drain as a large emigration of individuals with technical skills or knowledge from one country to another usually for better conditions of service and good living environment .According to Herbert and Scott(1977) brain drain involves the problem of the outflow of trained or skilled personnel from developing to developed countries. According to Shin(2002)the British Royal society views brain drain as the out flow of scientists to North America. Walter Adams cited in Alem (2016) described the term brain drain as “the flight of technical, scientific, managerial and administrative personnel from less developed countries to North America and Europe or from the semi advanced nations to the advanced countries”. According to Eise and Foster (2018) highly skilled individuals or most educated people move to advanced nations where their services are appreciated. Such movement is always promoted by regulations and institutional influences as most nations look more comfortable on immigration by those highly skilled and educated individuals than those without. Brain drain is a problem described as the process in which a country losses its most educated and talented workers to other countries through migration. For instance Clement and Petterson (2007) affirmed that in the medical line that 14% of medical doctors working outside the country had their education in Nigeria and out of this percentage 90% are in United Kingdom and United states. It is worthy of note that brain drain can be classified into three forms: the first form is “primary external brain drain” it happens when high level educated workers leave their countries to go and work in the developed countries. The second form is called “secondary external brain drain”- it occurs when high level educated workers leave their countries to go and work in other parts of developing region. The last form is “internal brain drain” -it is a condition when high level educated workers are not employed in the correct field in their own country or when they move from one sector to another sector in the country.

## **Migration and Brain Drain as global issues**

Migration is a global issue, it is not peculiar to Nigeria only. Kenya is also feeling the hurt of losing so many skilled professionals because fewer than 30% of Kenyans who study overseas return to work in Kenya. In South Africa, the high crime rate, aids and lack of jobs have combined to make South Africa's brain drain a serious problem. The country has lost over hundred thousand (100, 000) workers with an additional 70% of skilled South African's who are planning to leave the nation. Over the past few years, England has seen a large number of its skilled professionals leaving for work abroad with over 1.1million university graduates leaving and working outside of the country. Two out of every ten Malaysians with higher education seek employment elsewhere, accounting for about 305,000 immigrants in 2009. Mexico is seeing a huge brain drain as more middle and upper class citizens move abroad, many who hold higher degrees and work in professional fields like medicine and law. Since 1978 over one million Chinese students left for Universities located abroad to get their degrees yet fewer than 275,000 have returned. In 2006 the IMF ranked Iran the highest in brain drain among 90 countries with over 180,000 people leaving each year due to a poor job market and oppressive social conditions. Even, a number of Latin American countries had over the years suffered a considerable loss of professional to western nations.

The brain drain is worst in the sciences where 79% of students who come to study in America never returned home. To support the facts above, McLaughlin and Smith (2005) noted that the less developed countries of central and Eastern Europe are not exonerated from the problem of brain drain. Then according to Viveros and Jackson(2006) in the underdeveloped nations of Caribbean islands, the menace of brain drain has promoted 80% of college graduates from Suriname, Guyana, Haiti, Grenada to migrate to the United states. According to WHO World Health Organisation report (2006) up to 20,000 highly trained medical doctors and nurses are leaving Africa every year. In line with this Barka (2000) observed that in 25 years time virtually all the best brains in African continent must have moved or migrated to the developed world. According to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)(2000) the African continent is losing the most important people it needs for social, economic, technological and scientific development. IDRC also noted that the continent has lost more than one -third of its human capital especially the skilled labour and the trend is moving at a geometrical rate. Then Chimanikire (2005), was of the view that the perspective of Africans brain drain can be traced from the integration of developing countries economies into the global market. For him

sub-sahara Africans just like other developing countries have been incorporated into the world economy essentially due to the availability of cheap labour and primary goods in the continent. He noted that, before African labour was subjugated and exploited through colonialism but after the Second World War African labour was engaged by ex-colonial masters as an alternative to exorbitant European labour. He opined further that countries like France gave its ex-African colonies favourable status and entered treaties with such African countries like Mauritania, Senegal and Mali to encourage labour migration.

### **Causes of brain drain**

Naturally, there is the desire to go to countries that could pay for and utilize the competitive skills of the intellectuals and professionals. A brain drain can result from turmoil within a nation, the existence of favourable professional opportunities in other countries or from a desire to seek a higher standard of living .According to Birks and Sinclair (1980) contemporary researchers of International Migration have blamed the phenomenon of brain drain on economic forces and the insatiable demand for labour in the oil exporting capital rich states.

In the views of Lee (1966)there are also the push and pull factors . The push factors are the depressing characteristics in the countries of origin which produces emigration. They include lack of employment opportunities, political instability, lack of research facilities, underemployment etc. The pull factors are the attracting features in the countries of destination and they include higher standard of living, better opportunity for higher education, proper value for intellectual and professional worth, easy access to inputs for satisfying job opportunities.

### **Brain drain and development in Nigeria**

The menace of human capital flight seems to be an issue of concern to scholars across the globe, because its occurrence defiles ideological affiliation of countries worldwide as well as their level of development. According to Anekwe (2009) brain drain is considered a world problem, its degree of occurrence varies from one country to another while its occurrence is very minimal in developed world, it is endemic in under developed nations. Brain drain is largely seen as a problem for the reason that these competent persons leave their country and exercise their expertise to the economy of other nations. For instance , Nigeria

lags behind in development while her citizens in many parts of the world are doing wonderfully well in different fields of endeavor.

### **Effects of Brian Drain in Nigeria**

Brain drain induces shortages of manpower in key activities, as when Engineers or health professionals emigrate in disproportionately large numbers, undermining a country's ability to adopt new technologies or deal with health crises. Brain drain increases the technological gap between leading and developing nations because the concentration of human capital in the most advanced economies contributes to their technological progress.(brain-drain-from-developing-countries.pdf). It produces many more losers than winners in developing countries. In line with this Barka(2005) argues that the share of the African continent in the globe's scientific output has drastically dropped from 0.5% to 0.3%, the continent is losing, day in day out its Engineers and scientists as a result of brain drain. While Chimanikire (2005) argues that France and United Kingdom are the most beneficiaries countries of the phenomenon as they are the European nations that have the highest number of skilled labour and students from developing nations, especially from Africa. It often puts the health and safety of the nations citizens at risk, creating long term and potentially disastrous results for countries with high brain drain rates spanning several decades. Example, Ethiopia produces a large number of qualified professionals in the medical field but is experiencing one of the worst brain drains of any country in the world. Brain drain is a threat to developing countries and a negative externality on the people left in the source country. Among the effect of brain drain includes dropping in the quality of service due to absence of skilled personnel in the home countries to the economic benefit made from remittances.

One of the palpable consequences of brain drain is the shortage of qualified manpower in the critical sectors like education, health, science, technology and business. In the views of Adepoju (2008) the absence of competent individuals has a direct and a negative effect on the quality of service delivery to the public in the home countries. In the education sector the out flow of intellectual and teachers has resulted in the fall in the quality of education thereby discouraging the process of knowledge creation. In the health care, the scourge of brain drain has led to inadequate health care delivery services especially in the late 70's and early 80's when medical doctors migrated to the middle East especially Saudi Arabia for green pastures. This created a gap in the ratio of medical doctors

(health professionals) to patients and the proportion of health care workers to patients can be as high as 1 to 41,000.

It also exacerbates brain waste which according to Emeghara (2013) is a situation whereby foreign nationals or workers are often hired to do jobs for which they are over qualified. For instance, there are many Nigerian Doctors and European scientists working as taxi drivers in New York, Washington, Texas, Chicago etc. However, the major effects of brain drain in Nigeria are backwardness of the nation, shortage of manpower, to mount various institutions in the country, loss of tax of migrants to developed countries etc. It reduces the stock of human capital and induces occupational distortions.

### **Migration and Brain Drain in Nigerian Universities.**

Brain drain is occurring in the universities because views and observations of national concern from the academic are neglected and discarded and sometimes even branded as radicalism and also because Nigerian leadership tend to rely on foreign expert advises at the expenses of the local academics. Brain drain threatens university educational system with total collapse because there is a growing difficulty in inducing brilliant and able students to come back to the system. Migration is also prompted by neglect of the academia on the part of the Government. For instance in 1973, the federal Government set up a committee headed by Chief Jerome Udoji to review the salaries conditions of service in the public sector including the university and the harmonization of salaries into grades levels ranging from 1-15 and this removed the differential between the salary of lecturers and civil servants. This made the lecturers of the six existing Nigerian universities to go on strike. Then the Government retaliated by asking all lecturers to go back to work or quit their official quarters within 48 hours. According to Oni (2008) 'the mass movement of academics from the nations universities to other countries has invariably taken its toll on the quality of outputs produced from the system'. He equally argued that "in this very depressing situation 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". In another instance, Mbanefo (1992) noted that the Nigerian University system continues to suffer from intellectual haemorrhage created by the problem of brain drain". This according

to him is more critical in the fields of human medicine, pharmacy, computer science and engineering.

The estimate of the presidential committee on Brain Drain set up in 1988 by the Babangida Administration and headed by Professor Oye Ibidapo-Obe reported that Nigeria between 1986 and 1990 lost 10,694 professionals from tertiary institutions alone. Banjura (1994) noted that between 1988 and 1990 over one thousand lecturers left federal universities in Nigeria. For Odekunle (2001) Nigerian universities have been grossly underfunded which resulted in the loss of great deal of valuable manpower to overseas countries.

Nigerian universities have become "glorified secondary schools" due to lack of books in the libraries, overcrowded classrooms, ill-equipped laboratories that cannot conduct experiments etc. Mahadi (1988) said that lack of books, journals and other teaching and research materials have reduced some of the professors to mere graduate assistants. This is a sorry case because they cannot afford to buy research materials because of their meagre salaries. Even, lecturers cannot attend international conferences which, helps them to update their knowledge. Also there has been a general lack of motivation amongst university lecturers and professionals like medical Doctors, Pharmacists, Nurses, Lawyers, Medical laboratory scientists etc due chiefly to poor wages.

An evidence from the Asuu secretariat Abuja indicates that Nigerian lecturers constituted one of the least paid workers in the country. For instance in 1997, the annual salaries of some public sector workers (oil and iron and steel) were #600,000 and #400,000 respectively while that of university academic staff was #54,000. It is obvious that Nigerian university lecturers are not well remunerated, this was obvious when compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world. Timilehin et al (2010) supported this when he noted that salaries of Nigerian university lecturers are poor when compared to the salaries of their counterparts in South Africa. He equally noted that young graduates who is fortunate enough to secure employment outside the unified public service immediately after schooling earned salary twice the annual salary of their professors per annum. The truth remains that lecturers are underpaid and overworked. The lecturers have unpaid gratuities and pensions running into billions of Nigeria naira. Hence, the misappropriation of little funds meant for educational development in Nigerian universities by university leaders contributed in declining of academic standards. The most basic needs of human

which are physiological safety needs have not been met by the Nigerian workers, this prompted and energizes them to strive to fulfil them. The end result was their mass migration to developed countries where they believe that their dreams of actualizing their needs will be materialized. Nigerian's universities face the most disturbing effect of the brain drain scourge between 1980 and 1990. It all began in the late 70;s and early 80,'s when medical doctors migrated to the middle east especially Saudi Arabia for greener pastures.

The adoption of the structural Adjustment programme (SAP) by General Babangida regime in the 80;s further worsens the situation, as many academics formed part of the brain drain figures. SAP made it difficult for lecturers to make ends meet. The unbearable bank interest rate made it impossible for them to liquidate mortgage loans and lecturers were forced to seek foreign employment to save their houses from the auctioneer's hammer.

The Obasanjo administration introduced the basic salary scheme which is 50% increase in basic salaries of civil servants but 25% was implemented and this led to instability and inconsistency of academic sessions in the university system in Nigeria. This endangers the university education and also the search for better educational career abroad by students as well as greener pasture by lecturers. Evidence has it that during the Babangida and Abacha's regimes, much Nigerian academic staff left for Europe, North America, Asia, Australia and middle East. In line with this Ucha (2010) noted that widespread poverty is a reality in Nigeria and as such many staff from Nigerian universities migrate overseas to escape from poverty and it is estimated that more than 10,000 Nigerian academics are employed in the USA alone.

Brain drain has placed the academic departments of the Nigerian Universities in a state of chaos and no direction. Many departments of Nigerian universities have lost the middle cadre of their lecturers to brain drain while most of the junior lecturers were left behind. This is clearly seen in the views of Utile (2008) where he defined brain drain as, 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 pasture. However, the universities have been unable to retain sufficient academic staff which constitutes the backbone of development and expansion of any academic institutions and which makes it difficult to attain maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the field of teaching, research and public services. Above a certain level, brain drain

reduces the stock of human capital and induces occupational distortions and Okolo et al (2014) discovered that lack of job opportunities, lack of job satisfaction and fear of professional atrophy are reasons for the brain drain in Nigerian universities.

## **Conclusion**

Brain drain is anti-developmental and has been a great constraint on the development of poor countries. The most competent and highly skilled labour travel out of their countries to contribute their quota to the development of other nations while leaving their countries underdeveloped. This implies that technical and other developmental initiatives are lacking in Nigeria as a result of brain drain. It is detrimental to the growth potential of the home country and the welfare of those left behind. Hence, the ugly story about brain drain in Nigeria is that the custodians of knowledge who could transformed Nigeria are scattered all over the world due to the menace of brain drain. The country is been denied the services and expertise the professionals would have otherwise provided. The African continent is a hot bed of brain drain in the word. For any national development to be achieved this growing trend of migration of competent Nigerians must be curtailed.

## **Recommendations**

- There is need for the government to create programmes that can enable youth to realize their potentials example IT innovation hubs, encourage local contents and also provide opportunities for citizens that have studied specialized programmes.
- For Nigeria to retain her best brains, there has to be structures in place, quality education delivery,career opportunities and job prospects and an enabling environment that allows intellectualism and innovativeness to thrive
- The government in Nigeria, Ethiopia and Kenya should eradicate corruption and nepotism at all levels of government.
- Nigerian government should offer the young ones the necessary education qualifications in their home countries and expand a better educational infrastructure to prevent emigrants who are seeking a higher education abroad.
- The Nigerian government should always consider the general safety of lives and properties of the entire citizens.
- The Nigerian government should attract and partner with developed countries in the developmental venture in Nigeria.

- Unemployment should be reduced by the provision of more job opportunities and the salaries and wages of workers should be increased to motivate and to maintain optimal performance.

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