

EMIGRATION AND THE PROBLEM OF BRAIN DRAIN IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL EVALUATION

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Abstract:

This Study examines Emigration and the problem of brain drain in Nigeria. The question of emigration implies the indicting problem of brain drain in Nigeria. Every year, Nigeria witnesses the fact of her citizens leaving the country for more developed countries in the world. The rate at which people leave Nigeria for more developed countries is quite alarming. Some of the most celebrated Nigerian intellectuals and other innovative geniuses today are outside the shores of Nigeria. The study argues that this peculiar problem has to do with leadership problem and poor economy as well as environmental structure which inhibit personal growth and development in Nigeria. People who would have greatly contributed to the rapid development of Nigeria have left in large numbers, and this has adverse effects on the economy of the country . Employing the philosophical method of analysis, the study seeks to appraise this issue with the hope of adding voice to the growing list of available literature on the subject in combating the cankerworm that is affecting and killing Nigeria's progress. The study concludes that for Nigeria to retain her best brains, there has to be good structures in place, quality education delivery, career opportunities and job prospects as well as an enabling and conducive environment that allows intellectualism and innovativeness to thrive. Most importantly, the problem of leadership in Nigeria must be properly addressed so as to enable the citizens actualize their potentials.

Keywords: Emigration, Brain drain, Nigeria

Introduction:

The issue of brain drain is one of the serious problems bedeviling Nigeria as a country. It is certainly a baffling problem that every year, Nigeria continues to

witness the mass exodus of her citizens to the more developed countries of the world. The desire to travel to the more developed countries seems to be increasing on daily basis, and the rate of such is quite alarming. Obviously, some people who leave Nigeria are those in search of a befitting job through which they could earn a good living. Some others who leave Nigeria are those in search of a favourable and conducive environment to develop themselves, and thus actualize their potentials. Through such, they hope to attain a better standard of life. The desire to leave Nigeria for more developed and organized countries is increasing tremendously, and many citizens of Nigeria seem to be fed up with the situation of things in the country.

The issue of joblessness in Nigeria is a very disturbing issue among the youths, and this explains why a good number of them want to leave Nigeria to secure a befitting employment. It ought to be noted also that there are a lot of Nigerians in the United States of America and other developed countries of the world who left Nigeria to acquire quality education. Such people end up working in those developed countries after their education. The exodus of the good brains from Nigeria has a devastating effect on the economy of Nigeria. This is as result of the fact that those who would have worked efficiently to improve the economic standard of Nigeria are now working seriously to improve the economy and the standard of life of their host countries. It is not an exaggeration to assert that some of the best practicing doctors and nurses in America and other developed countries of the world have Nigerian origin, and some of the experts in science and technology in such developed countries are also from Nigeria. All these became possible through emigration.

Nigeria is endowed with rich human and natural resources. When one looks at Nigeria as a country, one keeps wondering what stops it from becoming one of the best countries in the world. Despite the rich human and natural resources in Nigeria, it must be noted that bad governance, corruption, ethnicism, favouritism, religious bigotry are some of the factors that combine to make the country somewhat difficult and unattractive. It is a common practice in Nigeria that the best brains may not be able to secure good jobs while the mediocres are occupying very good positions in the country. What matters is not basically one's qualifications or what one can offer but what connection one has. Obviously, Nigeria does not properly utilize the natural and human resources at her disposal. This has forced people to migrate to other countries where they can make meaningful impact and serve in a society that appreciates their services and contributions.

Nigeria has many institutions of learning, but most products of such institutions are half-backed graduates. Corruption has crept into our educational sector such that some people who pushed themselves as teachers and lecturers into such institutions of learning are in no way the best. Our educational system has become a caricature of what was obtainable in the past. There is need to revolutionize our educational sector so as to produce graduate that can make meaningful impact towards developing Nigeria as a country. Today, opportunities that made people of older generation to actualize their God-given potentials are either not available or reserved for the privileged few who can afford it. Only recently in 2018, five female students of *Regina Pacis College* in Onitsha, Anambra State, won the World Technovation Challenge at the Silicon Valley in San-Francisco, U.S.A. It was a rare feat for Nigeria as the girls produced an App called the FD Detector in discovering fake pharmaceutical products in Nigeria with the end point of saving lives. If Nigeria as a country can harness things like this to build World-class technology villa across states in the country, things may take better shape in the promotion of home grown technology and motivate people to stay at home without thinking of emigration.

Thus, this study examines the concept of Emigration, the link it has with brain drain, the reasons why people emigrate in Nigeria as well as its implications for integrative development in Nigeria.

The Concept of Emigration

According to Kenton, (2018) "Emigration is the relocation of people from one country to reside in another. People emigrate for many reasons, which include increasing one's chance of employment or improving quality of life. Emigration affects the economies of the countries involved in both positive and negative ways..." (para.1). Kenton examines the concept of Emigration from economic perspective. This stems from the fact that it involves the improvement of life and opportunities for people. When one looks at this definition, one can agree with him to a reasonable extent. In a country like Nigeria, the reason why many people emigrate has mostly to do with economy. People want access to a better standard of life and opportunities.

Merriam Webster Dictionary saw it as: "an act or instance of emigrating : departure from a place of abode, natural home, or country for life or residence elsewhere." From this perspective, Emigration is the act of leaving a resident country or place of residence with the intent to settle elsewhere. Emigration is

related to Immigration, but the two concepts are not synonymous. Immigration describes the movement of persons *into* one country from another. Both are acts of migration across national or other geographical boundaries. There are what can be described as the push and pull factors with regard to emigration. Certain factors can make one to leave a particular place while certain factors can make one to be attracted to another place. The desire to escape unemployment, oppressive conditions, unfair treatment etc. can push one to leave a particular place, while better job opportunities and fair treatment can pull one to another place. (Wikipedia 2019, paras.1-2).

From the foregoing, it is explicitly clear that emigration involves leaving a country of one's origin in order to settle elsewhere. Most times the reasons are economic. Other times, it is more about actualization of potentials or generally about total wellbeing. Emigration and Brain Drain are twin concepts that hinge on matters of national development especially for a country like Nigeria. Let us at this juncture examine the concept of brain drain.

Understanding the Concept of Brain Drain

According to Dodani and LaPorte (2005), "Brain drain is defined as the migration of health personnel in search of the better standard of living and quality of life, higher salaries, access to advanced technology and more stable political conditions in different places worldwide " (p.487). Dodani and La Porte defined Brain drain from medical perspective. They were actually referring to health personalities migrating. For them, health personnels are among the important persons in the society and the role they play are quite indispensable. This stems from the fact that a healthy nation is a wealthy nation. But when such emigrate, it grossly spells doom for such a nation. They noted further that:

This migration of health professionals for better opportunities, both within countries and across international borders, is of growing concern worldwide because of its impact on health systems in developing countries. Why do talented people leave their countries and go abroad? What are the consequences of such migrations especially on the educational sector? What policies can be adopted to stem such movements from developing countries to developed countries?" (Dodani and LaPorte 2005, p.487).

The movement of such talented and talented people to other countries adversely affects the country of origin, but enriches the host country. When someone has something to offer, the natural corollary is that the person will be utilized. It is glaringly worrisome that developing countries do not know how to engage and utilize their skilled human resources and hence, they migrate to other places to find succour and proper utilization.

Tefera (2019) offers a similar definition of Brain drain. However, he approached it from the perspectives of remuneration and gain. In his word: "Brain drain is defined as migration of educated laborers from low-income countries to high-income countries where as brain gain is when the reverse happens" (para.1). The striking feature of this definition is that it highlights the difference between developed and underdeveloped countries. It is not out of place to know that in developing countries, the income is not as high as that of developed countries. Thus, people leave their home countries in order to get better pay and better life elsewhere. Be that as it may, in the course of brain drain, some of the talented citizens of a particular country are lost, and such people become very useful in their host countries.

Brain drain can be described as the process in which a country loses its most educated and talented workers to other countries through migration. This trend is considered a problem, because the most highly skilled and competent individuals leave the country, and contribute their expertise to the economy of other countries. The country they leave can suffer economic hardships because those who remain don't have the 'know-how' to make a difference. (Study. Com 2019:para. 1).

Obviously, the movement of the most educated and talented people from a developing country to developed countries weakens the country of origin in different sectors of life. Brain drain also entails the loss of the academic and technological labor force through the movement of human capital to more favorable countries. Mainly, the movement occurs from developing countries to developed countries of the world. (Study. Com 2019,para.2).

As was earlier demonstrated in this study, bad governance, poor economy and other unfavourable circumstances can necessitate emigration and subsequent

brain drain. The country of origin suffers as she loses her most educated and talented citizens to more developed countries.

Brain Drain and the Nigerian Experience

The fact of some citizens of Nigeria emigrating to more developed and organized countries is very obvious as was already established in this study. The fundamental question now becomes why do many Nigerians emigrate? What is it about Nigeria that has made many of her citizens to continue leaving on daily basis? There are many reasons why Nigerians leave home. These reasons include bad leadership, insecurity, unemployment, bad economy as well as the search for a better opportunity outside among others. Nigeria's economic situation has dwindled in the last five years. The problem of economic recession in Nigeria quickly comes to mind. Nigeria's economy is quite bad, and many people are not comfortable with such poor economic situation. Talking about Nigeria's economy is important because it gives us a background understanding to the problems of brain drain and emigration.

On paper, Nigeria's economy is said to be thriving but it does not reflect the reality on ground. The present administration in Nigeria seems not to be doing enough in combating the problem of poor economy. Corroborating this, Kazeem (2019) notes that:

Under Buhari's watch, Nigeria's economy, once one of the world's most promising, has struggled with tepid growth, including a 15-month long recession. The effects on the lives of everyday Nigerians have been significant: the unemployment rate has more than doubled and more people now live in extreme poverty in Nigeria than anywhere else in the world. The president's ambitious plans to diversify Nigeria's economy away from its dependence on oil have not yet borne fruit. Indeed, hopes of an agric-driven economy have been hurt by increased insecurity in key parts of the country (paras. 2-3).

The poor economic situation in Nigeria has kept the citizens of Nigeria very sad, and some people find it very difficult to have both ends meet. In its economic outlook following Buhari's victory, analysts at credit ratings agency Fitch predict

Buhari is “likely to maintain his previous policy stances, suggesting only slow progress on key oil sector legislation and broader reforms” (Kazeem 2019,para.6). It could be argued that the poor economic situation in Nigeria is closely associated with bad governance.

The Economist also made alarming report on Nigeria’s economic condition. *The Punch*(2019) notes that:

The Economist in its report said based on the thinking of the International Monetary Fund, the average income of Nigerians “will not rise for at least another six (years).The report partly read, “The Nigerian economy is stuck like a stranded truck. Average incomes have been falling for four years; the IMF thinks they will not rise for at least another six (years).The latest figures put unemployment at 23 per cent, after growing for 15 consecutive quarters(paras. 4-6).

The increasing unemployment in Nigeria also brings about increment in crime rate. This is as a result of the fact that such jobless people may involve themselves in one crime or the other just to put food on their tables. Increment in crime rate brings about increased insecurity in the country.

When President Muhammadu Buhari took over the mantle of leadership on May 29, 2015, there were high expectations from Nigerians that the long-awaited ‘messiah’ had come. Many Nigerians were optimistic that there would be a positive change. The word “change”, which was the campaign slogan of the All Progressives Congress during the build-up to the 2015 general elections, became almost as popular as the National Anthem (Punch 2019, paras. 1-2). The expected positive change was not forthcoming. The country also experienced inflation largely due to incessant herdsmen and farmers’ crisis in some key food-producing states. An analysis of other major economic indicators such as the unemployment rate, and capital importation, which measures investment inflows, also revealed the various form of volatility (Punch 2019, paras. 5-8). Furthermore, the number unemployed Nigerians continues to increase every year.

Having analyzed the Nigerian economic situation, one is in a better position to identify the causes of brain drain in Nigeria. As a result of poor economic situation and other allied problems in Nigeria, many citizens are seeking for better standard of life elsewhere. According to Umana (2018),

There are several causes of brain drain in Nigeria to the developed world. Most of these factors are economic and political in nature; however, social and psychological factors also contribute to human capital flight (brain drain) in the country. Economy is very essential in any nation, but economy of Nigeria is very poor. Consequently, the level of industrialization, which can provide job opportunities for the populace, is very low. Salaries and condition of service of workers are poor. Household incomes of many workers often drop below an acceptable level. Thus, a large proportion of the population is living below poverty index. Nigeria, which was one of the richest 50 countries in early 1970s, has retrogressed to become one of the 25 poorest countries at the threshold of the 21st century. Furthermore, Nigeria hosts the third largest number of poor people worldwide, after China and India (para. 3).

Furthermore, Umana (2018) identified and listed the causes of brain drain to include the following:

1. Mass unemployment
2. Mass poverty
3. Poor leadership of the country
4. Poor salaries and conditions of service
5. Crises (political, religion, communal)
6. Poor infrastructural facilities
7. Poor recreational facilities

8. Lack of opportunity for advancement
9. Poor education facilities
10. Poor health facilities
11. Lack of good rewarding system for hardworking manpower
12. Untimely death of manpower assets (para. 10).

These factors above are all sources of pain and sorrow for Nigerians. Obviously, the issue of Brain drain may not stop in Nigeria if the above factors are not properly addressed. Nigeria gained independence in 1960, and it is quite unfortunate that 59 years after independence, Nigeria is yet to develop into a world class country, where people can have access to opportunities to become their best. In other countries of the world, it is in their initiative to have human investment and development programs that inform their capacity to be seen as developed. There are provisions for medical facilities, and also there are provisions for those without the means to go to school, to do so. There are good roads, good accommodation, good recreational and tourist centres, good sporting facilities, technology is thriving and new frontiers are opened daily and so on. It is not that Nigeria cannot afford these things but corruption and bad governance continue to be the bane of the country's socio-political development.

Looking at all these, one discovers that it has complications for the country's continuous development. Any time, we turn up the news, we hear a lot of exploits of Nigerians in different parts of the globe and we so wonder if these Nigerians would have done better at home. Of course, they will do better once the environment is conducive and favourable.

The adverse effects of brain drain in Nigeria are unimaginable. They are very devastating. In fact, brain is among the factors that made Nigeria to be underdeveloped. Umana (2018) lamented this trend when he opined that:

The effects of brain drain could be very difficult to measure. However, it serves a devastating blow to the economy of Nigeria in term of physical cash. The United Nations Commission for Trade and Development estimated that each migrating African professional represents a loss of \$184, 000 to Africa. Moreover, brain

drain is a loss in term of money used to employed skilled manpower from developed societies to replaced migrated manpower from underdeveloped countries (para. 11).

Nigerians who are living in the more developed countries contribute their own quota in making their host countries great. Besides, brain drain serves as a loss to the country of origin in term of tax earnings. This is as a result of the fact that such migrated citizens pay tax to their host countries.

In the domain of education, brain drain has also devastating effect in Nigeria. Many Nigerians trained in Nigeria do not contribute their intellectual quota to developing Nigeria as a country. Nigeria invests resources in education to produce skilled manpower needed in various sector of the economy but who instead end up benefiting the development of other more developed countries. (Umana 2018, para. 12). Nigeria continues to lose skilled and efficient experts in different sectors of life as a result of emigration. The implication of this is retrogression in different sectors of life in Nigeria

In the health sector, the devastating effect of Brain drain can never be over emphasized. What is in vogue in Nigeria today is medical tourism to India, United States of America, Germany etc. Brain drain has worsened the already depleted health care resources in Nigeria and thus, widens the gap in health inequalities worldwide. The departure of health professionals from Nigeria has eroded the ability of health workers to deliver the basic health and social needs in Nigeria. Many poor persons who cannot afford overseas treatment for their patients are dying every day through sicknesses and diseases due to insufficient health workers in the country (Umana 2018, para.16).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the devastating effects of brain drain in Nigeria are enormous. Nigeria cannot be where it is now if the services of skilled, efficient and talented Nigerians ere properly harnessed and utilized. Such talented citizens of Nigeria may not even be noticed in Nigeria and may not even be able to gain meaningful employment because some of them could not bribe their way through.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Sincere effort has been made in this study to examine the issues of emigration and brain drain in Nigeria. As it is obvious in this study, the rate of brain drain in

Nigeria is quite alarming. The fundamental question is this: Can the problem of emigration and brain drain in Nigeria be addressed? It seems to the researchers that such problem can be addressed if the leaders and citizens of Nigeria rise up to their responsibilities. As was already demonstrated in this study, Nigeria is very rich in both human and natural resources, and it has all it takes to be a great country. Our leaders have not done their best to make the country attractive. The truth remains that people will always go to an environment where their best can be accomplished. It is quite unfortunate that Nigeria still remains an underdeveloped country. Despite the programs erected by the government to aid Socio-economic growth and help people find sizeable opportunities, implementations of such programs are usually fraught with corruption and other negative factors.

In order to combat the problem of Brain Drain in Nigeria, the following are recommended:

1. There is need to revolutionize Nigerians' attitude and mentality. It is really quite unfortunate that a country so blessed with rich human and natural resources continues to be on developmental and infrastructural recess every year. This has made citizens with the means and who believe that their talents, skills and professions are not being properly utilized at home to be fed up with the non-growth of Nigeria and seek for a better means outside. This revolution involves the fact that Nigerians can rise up, and speak against the evils in the Nigerian polity in a louder fashion than the sentimental one often employed that reeks of sabotage, tribalism and bias.
2. There is need to emphasize on think-home philosophy. Nigerians should know that the Country Nigeria belongs to all of us. Thus, every Nigerian should make sincere effort to make Nigeria great, and contribute his or her own quota towards the development of the country.
3. There is serious need for the appreciation of competence in Nigeria. People should be given free hand to exercise their competences. Experts, well-talented and best-skilled in different sectors of life should be allowed to be at the helm of affairs in different sectors of life. This gives room and brings about the desired development.
4. Unemployment remains a teething issue in Nigeria and it is not subsiding soon. To salvage Nigeria of this cankerworm that has bred all manner of ill-behaviours in our youths—who have taken to crime, violence, indolence

and other short cuts, just to survive, the onus is on government to make Nigeria an entrepreneurial and technological hub where the youths can be brought up on time and developed for self-reliance in a way that can make the country economically buoyant. When we have a thriving youth workforce, Nigeria will be re-engineered for self-sustaining development. Innovative strategies would thrive, genius would emerge, competition will abound and skills necessary to build a nation would be on display. At the end, Nigeria is the winner, not the loser as with the problem of brain drain.

5. Intellectuals should be given their dues. Most academics are snapped up in some countries where they become much vaunted and highly regarded. In Nigeria, how much does a professor take home? What is the general remuneration of teachers? In some countries like China, for contributing to knowledge through research, one is being paid and the intellectual product is accessible globally; but Nigeria, in most cases, is still local in intellectual production and lacks merit of international recognition, which causes exceptional intellectual to ply their trade in developed countries where they are seen and utilized.
6. Government needs to improve the health sectors too. Most countries of the World take up skilled workers in form of health personnel. This leaves Nigeria with quacks who end up endangering the lives of citizens. The more qualified health personnel in Nigeria, the better the quality of health delivery.
7. Development is what a people do for themselves or it will not happen. It is high time Nigeria as a country corrected her many difficult ills, through purposeful leadership and interrogative followers. In between, there will be governance as well as accountability, and Nigeria would rise again, beyond whatever glory she may have had in the past especially before the civil war.

In conclusion, the problem of Emigration and brain drain in Nigeria can be drastically reduced. This can be made possible by creating an enabling environment, where the best and qualified Nigerians in different areas of specialization can thrive and flourish. All hands should be on deck to make Nigeria great, and minimize the problem of brain drain in Nigeria.

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