
THE IMPACT OF BAD GOVERNANCE ON BRAIN DRAIN: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS' PURSUIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION ABROAD

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the impact of bad governance on brain drain, with a particular focus on Nigerian students' pursuit of higher education abroad. The consistent loss of its best brains through either choice or forceful move to other countries better equipped to house professionals and scholars has become a worrisome trend undermining Nigeria's development. Some of the reasons for Nigerians seeking education in other countries include; deteriorating quality of education; inadequate and unsuitable funding; lack of political and economic stability; perceived poor job prospects; and perceived better opportunities elsewhere. These problems persist mainly because of ineffective governance in states that do not provide the much-needed funding to the education sector; the reason gifted students have to look for scholarships abroad. Moreover, as the study has shown, brain drain aggravates governance problems by demobilizing institutions and undermining the state's capacity to solve its challenges. This paper aims to identify the factors that influence Nigerian students to emigrate and offers an analysis of how poor governance contributes to the migrant's decision. It equally looks at the difficulties and narratives of Nigerian students in foreign schools, as well as the opportunities embraced by these students. To mitigate brain, drain, the article provides the following strategies and policy prescriptions: investing in education, encouraging the development of research and innovation activity, cooperating with foreign universities and corrupt/governance challenges. Therefore, this article draws necessary attention to the critical fashion under which bad governance contributes to the rate at which Nigerian students travel overseas for their higher education endeavors and the need to enhance the existing education system and the governance structures in Nigeria. The proposed measures if effected are useful in managing and retaining human capital, a move that is recurrent in the countries embracing sustainable development and overall effecting the structural adjustments in Nigeria on the ladder towards embracing a knowledge-

based economy. Finally, this article underscores the relevance of governance in contextualizing the issues of brain drain and underlines the imperative to advance efforts toward the achievement and sustainability of educational equity and human capital within Nigeria.

KEYWORDS

Brain Drain, Bad Governance, Nigerian Students, Higher Education Abroad, Innovation and Research

INTRODUCTION

The departure of top talent from Nigeria, commonly referred to as brain drain, has escalated into a critical issue for the country. People are seen as dynamic agents who significantly contribute to harnessing and managing environmental assets, creating community, economic, and governance systems, and driving overall progress. Often referred to interchangeably as manpower, human resources are considered the most vital and precious assets of a nation. Kinard (1988) emphasizes that human resources surpass the significance of physical and financial resources.

Over the years, many Nigerian students have chosen to pursue their higher education abroad, seeking better opportunities and prospects. This issue is frequently linked to poor governance, which has stifled the advancement of the educational system and the broader economic and social progress of the nation. This article delves into the relationship between bad governance and brain drain, specifically focusing on Nigerian students' migration for educational pursuits abroad.

The State of Brain Drain in Relation to Nigerian Students Pursuing Higher Education Abroad

Brain drain occurs when talented professionals, such as students and experts, leave their native country to explore greater opportunities and prospects in other nations. This is equally a reality in Nigeria where the education system and workforce have been affected by this phenomenon because most students now seek foreign education. This reduction of qualified students to other universities in other countries hurts the Nigerian education sector since it denies the country the development of brains that could be used in enhancing its intellectual, economic and social facilities.

Some factors push and pull the students out of school and most of the students drop out. Students run away from the schools in Nigeria because of some pull factors which include the following; there is also a shortage of infrastructure, inadequate research grants, the schools do not have the requisite facilities, absence of adequate academic support among others. On the other hand, the push factors include a lack of better

learning facilities, and lack of better resources, and limited Careers in the host countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada among others make studying abroad very appealing. In the long run, this causes a poor quality of Nigerian education since universities cannot renew and nurture talent, and invest in quality and research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Olugbenga Ogunbode's opinion on a recent review of an international report (Ogunbode, 6 Jan 2022), the United Kingdom witnessed a substantial influx of international students in January 2022, with India, China, and Nigeria being the leading source countries. Despite Nigeria ranking third in terms of the number of students heading to the UK, the situation becomes more revealing when considering the percentage of Indian and Chinese students leaving their home countries in comparison to their massive populations, each exceeding one billion people.

Johnson Nadja (2009) suggests that skilled individuals will continue migrating from developing to developed countries as long as there is a gap in living standards between them. The author suggests shifting the focus from the movement of goods to the movement of humans across nations.

Docquier & Rapoport (2006) examined Brain Drain, which refers to the migration of skilled and educated individuals internationally. They pointed out that Brain Drain weakens emerging nations by limiting their economic progress. The researchers emphasized that the retention of skilled individuals within the country is crucial for its development, rather than focusing solely on the number of people engaging in higher education.

In her study, Srivastava (n.d.) identified various factors that contribute to the loss of capable and skillful individuals to other nations. These factors include career prospects, social injustice, compensation, safety and security, political environment, and access to quality education and medical technology. The fear of inadequate access to medical treatment can also drive immigration.

Rizvi and Fazal explored the impact of higher education on immigration. The most skilled people from developing nations attend prestigious universities in the developed countries in the hope that on their return they will help their nations to develop. Thus, the large majority of these individuals are supposedly to come back, although most benchmarks indicate they do not.

Following their findings, Deshmukh and Sankpal (2022) developed the idea that

competence and stability by providing safe, financial, economic and political environments are important factors to attract intelligent people to stay in the country.

Altogether, the work enlightens the variables influencing attrition and the ramifications of Brain Drain for developing nations. Since the Absorption of human capital is important for the growth and development of a country, there (sic) needs to be initiatives that can help solve the Brain Drain and enhance talent holding.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. The study aims to determine the most important factors that they consider in seeking foreign education as opposed to carrying out their education within the Nigerian borders.
2. The research aims to look at different methods through which bad governance in Nigeria has contributed to the phenomenon of brain drain among students, specifically about education and the students' migration experiences.
3. To analyze the socio-economic consequences of skilled professionals leaving Nigeria, focusing on the depletion of talent and its impact on the nation's progress.
4. To evaluate experiences along with perspectives of Nigerian students studying abroad, including their motivations, challenges, and intentions regarding returning to or settling in Nigeria after completing their studies.
5. To propose effective strategies and policy recommendations that can mitigate the impact of bad governance on brain drain, with a focus on talent retention and enhancing the domestic education system.
6. To add to the current understanding of brain drain and its link to poor governance, particularly in the context of Nigerian students pursuing higher education abroad.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data collection for this research paper is conducted through Desk research, which involves gathering information from diverse online sources such as websites, articles, research papers, government and institutional reports and other digital content.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Factors that lead to Brain Drain among Nigerian Students

- i. **Decline in Quality Education:** The lack of quality education is one of the key motivating factors that make Nigerian students to get admission elsewhere other than Nigeria. Yesufu (1996) is correct in his assertion that the quality of graduates is wanting and hence low productivity. Further, there are no composite modern infrastructures, the existing curricula and research oars are dated, which hamper the

academic development of the students forcing them to search other avenues for their better future.

- ii. **Poor Funding and Infrastructure:** There are also some problems which are common Nigerian universities and their lack of the necessary funds to finance their problems and the lack of state of the art facilities required in today's college institutions. This has a limitation on the learning-craving students and research outcomes in a given course. According to Odekunle (2001) the general picture that emerges is a chronic underfunding of Nigerian universities over the years hence the loss of many of our human assets to foreign countries. Additionally, according to Olukoya (2005) paints a very bleak picture for the Nigerian university system, remarking on overcrowded classrooms, students, crowded into classes and even found sitting on the floor, poor, inadequate library facilities, laboratories that lack basic equipment to even conduct experiments let alone do most of those high technology experiments required in producing high-quality research, and on the unending brain drain in Nigeria.
- iii. **Corruption:** Corruption has demystified the Nigerian education sector and cause loss of public confidence. This leads to the loss of quality and motivated students who do not want to invest in future that promises them an opportunity of not practicing what they have learnt due to political instabilities.
- iv. **Unemployment:** High youth unemployment rate in this nation has also caused a concern as it has boost the trend of brain drain in Nigeria. Health care graduates are forced to seek for appropriate job vacancies which are scarce, and out of this they feel they can study in foreign countries and get better job opportunity.

Experiences and Perspectives of Nigerian Students Studying Abroad

The realities and perceptions that Nigerian students undergo while studying in other countries are diverse based on several factors: the country and university that they are pursuing their studies in, their course of study, and other reasons why they are studying outside Nigeria. Here are some common experiences and perspectives shared by Nigerian students studying abroad:

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- i. Cultural Adaptation: Living in a new country with unique culture and language could be stressful at some point. Period of culture shock is common with Nigerian students as they try to acquaint themselves with new ways of comporting themselves within the community.
 - ii. Educational Pathways: A larger percentage of Nigerian students prefer to pursue their studies abroad to enable them have access to quality education and research that is not easily found in Nigeria. Others prioritize the experiences such as exposure to distinctive learning models, studying and innovations, and exceptional premises.
 - iii. International Outlook: The exposure that the students get to gain when they go to other countries to study widen their horn of knowledge on cultures and societies of their host country and other parts of the world. They gain or enhance an international dimension, and they become more tolerant.
 - iv. Global Ties and Associations: Studying in an international university setting exposes the Nigerian students to different people, many of whom are friends and colleagues from other parts of the world. Such contacts are useful to build future partnerships or future jobs.
 - v. Self-Enhancement: Staying on one's own in a new environment helps one to discover who he/she is and develop ways of dealing with different situations. When they are studying abroad students gain some confidence, flexibility and tolerance.
 - vi. Career Advancement Potential: Most Nigerian students who go to other countries to study have the notion that their job prospects will be enhanced on completion of their studies. They have reasons to assume that the degree obtained at an international university and the experience gained under a different educational system will serve them well in the world of work.
 - vii. Decision on Returning Home: Many students who study abroad are willing to return to Nigeria once they are done with their education with an aim of contributing to the social transformation of the nation.
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Some will prefer to remain in other countries because of job opportunity, employment policies, and preferences.

- viii. Adversities faced Abroad: Some Nigerian students might suffer from racism or discrimination in the community, or, generally, feel a lack of fit in the community or experience some other hardships.

The Effects of Poor Governance to Nigerian Students Struggling to Get Education Abroad:

- i. **Loss of Qualified Professionals:** This put the Nigerian country at a disadvantageous position since these are skilled personnel who are seeking education in other countries. These students are overwhelmingly endowed with special knowledge and skills that, when harnessed in Nigeria, could produce a magic for this nation.
 - ii. **Impaired Educational Landscape:** This paper further notes that brain drain compounds the problems affecting education in Nigeria. As students with potential move to other countries in search for better opportunities, the already stressed system loses key and motivated human resources which makes the qualitative delivery of education in such country affected.
 - iii. **Overreliance on Foreign Skills:** A good percentage of the skilled students who proceed to the universities end up working in other countries upon the completion of their studies and this makes Nigeria rely on the importation of skilled personnel in every facet of the economy.
 - iv. **Impaired Research and Innovation Capacity:** The loss of good students means that growth of research and discovery within Nigeria is also likely to be reduced. Human capital flight hinders technological advancement and deployment which constitute critical factors for endogenous growth and competitiveness in a country.
 - v. **Economic Repercussions:** Thus, brain drain is negative for Nigeria.” When highly educated people emigrate, the skills, ideas, capital, and potential for producing new jobs and fostering business leave with
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them. This loss leads to the decrease of generated taxes and the increase of financial load on the rest part of the population.

- vi. **Social Influences:** Young, ambitious students leaving their home country are likely to have social effects on Nigeria. It may have a positive result of “brain gain” on the societies of the ‘receiving countries’ while the ‘sending country’ Nigeria is on the other hand suffering a nearly paradoxical result “brain drain” were the country loses its best of brains.

Complications in Healthcare Delivery: It is also not unique to the education sector; other important sectors like the healthcare sector also face it. Nigeria the loss of qualified medical students and professionals’ affects the country’s healthcare service provision since the available facilities are not capable of sufficiently meet the healthcare needs of the country due to the loss of such medical brains.

The effects of poor governance on brain drain particularly on Nigerian students in foreign universities is one problem that needs urgent and appropriate solution. If not tackled, the country stands to lose more talented students and qualified workforce due to the attraction of better conditions in other nations that make up the developed world’s pool of highly skilled human resources for their own development and progress. By acting upon the suggestions derived from this study, Nigeria will be in a better position to turn around the ugly trend of brain drain by putting in place good policies that supports the growth of the education sector, provide better facilities and foster the right environment for the recruitment of competent local Nigerian brains.

Thus, approaching education with an emphasis on the preservation of students and skilled personnel implies changes in governance activities aimed at the elimination of the causes of ‘brain drain’. Forces like low funding, fewer research openings, fewer amenities, and the country’s failure to support leads to the students seeking opportunities in other countries. These underlying problems explain the need for policies that encourage long-term investment in the education sector with special emphasis on competitive salaries for teachers, modern infrastructure and facilities and improved research and development funding. With reference to these areas, Nigeria can make its local tertiary education system an option for students who intend to study in foreign countries thus keeping the student within the nation’s education system.

More so, for Nigeria to retain its health professional workforce, there is the need for the country to create an environment that nurtures capacity building, provides incentives for Health professional workers to work within the country and economic stability with job opportunities for graduates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has underscored the effects of brain drain and called on the Nigerian authority to enhance the learning environment, as well as tackle governance issues that hinder the learning process. Key strategies include:

Amplify Resources for Education

For the enhancement of public education, there is a need to scale up funding within the sector. This means the government has to come in to provide the extra funds required for the construction of such infrastructure, improvement of research grants and faculty development all of which are crucial in ensuring the increase in educational productivity. The development of infrastructure creates a good environment in that students can make use of proper facilities, libraries and laboratories.

Boosting Research and Innovation Capacity

Promoting research and innovations in Nigerian universities will also deter students and researchers from moving to other countries without contributing their quota for the overall development of Nigeria.

Deepening Collaborative Efforts

Nigerian and foreign institutions can enter into exchange partnerships that can assist in improving the caliber of education at Nigerian universities.

Bolstering Governance Practices and Eliminating Corruption

Improvement of governance and combating corruption will increase confidence among learners and promote an environment conducive to learning and development.

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