

Diaspora and Migration Dynamics: Implications for the Nigerian Teaching Profession

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Abstract

The Nigerian teaching profession faces numerous challenges, notably influenced by the dynamics of globalization which has given rise to the emergence of migrant labor, particularly of professionals such as teachers, doctors, nurses, and other professionals seeking better quality of life. This situation led to the mass exodus of Nigerian teaching professional at all levels to developed nations such as the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and various enclaves with Europe. The repercussions of this cerebral drain upon the educational system of Nigeria are nothing short of calamitous, instigating a dearth of adept and capable hands essential for the sustenance of the educational infrastructure. The purpose of this study is to investigate the motivations behind the diaspora and migratory movement of teachers, with a focus on the Nigerian setting, and to consider the implications for the teaching profession in the nation and to examine how these affect the availability and quality of teachers in Nigeria. This research aims to shed light on how diaspora and migration dynamics impact the Nigerian teaching profession and give insights for policymakers and stakeholders to prevent potential negative effects and exploit advantages by throwing light on this problem.

Keywords: Brain Drain, Diaspora, Migration, Nigerian Teaching Profession.

Introduction

Education is critical to the development of any country and it is therefore described as the mirror of a nation as it determines to a great extent the progress of that nation. It shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plan because it is the most important instrument of change. The teacher plays a significant role as they determine the success of any educational programme as no nation can rise above the quality of its teaching force. In the Nigerian context, the teaching profession assumes a special significance, as teachers mold the minds and futures of the nation's young generation. Nevertheless, the Nigerian teaching profession faces numerous challenges, notably influenced by the dynamics of globalization which has given rise to the emergence of migrant labor, particularly of professionals such as teachers, doctors, nurses, and other professionals seeking new knowledge or seeking refuge in 'greener pastures' away from their home environment (The Economist, 2005). The World Development Report on migration recognized the complexity and the increasing necessity of cross-border movements. According to the report, about 2.3 percent of the world's population—184

million people, including 37 million refugees—live outside their country of nationality and some 43 percent live in low- and middle-income countries (World Bank, 2023). Many countries, at all income levels, are both the origin and destination of migrants at the same time and because of demographic divergences and climate change, migration will become increasingly necessary over the next decades for countries at all income levels (World Bank, 2023). Many African nations continue to host migrant teachers, while African migrant teachers leave their home countries for other African countries as well as overseas (Brown, 2008). The phenomenon of skilled teachers leaving the country, commonly known as the brain drain or the "JAPA" syndrome, exacerbates the challenges in the educational system in Nigeria.

Diaspora and migration dynamics is becoming increasingly common in today's world and there is an underlying recognition, particularly in the last decade, that teacher migration within and out of Africa is on the rise (Adepoju, 2006; IOL, 2006). According to the International Organization of Migration, some 20,000 trained professionals - physicians, nurses, engineers, accountants, managers, and teachers - leave Africa each year (IOL, 2006), this number has since quadrupled over the last decade. Teachers relocate for a variety of reasons, including economic possibilities, political instability, and the pursuit of professional development. According to Brown, 2004, many of the migrants may have fled for economic, educational, or sociopolitical reasons. The number of Nigerians residing abroad, often known as the Nigerian diaspora, has increased dramatically over time as a result of people searching for better living conditions, educational opportunities, and job prospects outside of their home country. Migration trends affect a number of things, including education. Several Nigerian-trained teachers have chosen to migrate internationally in search of higher pay, better working conditions, and prospects for professional advancement. The migration of teachers has had a significant negative influence on the teaching profession in Nigeria, resulting in a scarcity of qualified teachers and a loss of intellectual capital otherwise known as brain-drain. The implication of brain-drain to Nigerian academic education systems is the shortage of skilled and competent hands that will sustain Nigeria's educational systems leading to reduced quality of education. Therefore, this brain-drain phenomenon explains the mass movement of experts and professionals from emerging nations to developed nations for better employment engagement (Akinwale and George, 2022).

Recognizing the underlying dynamics of diaspora and migrant movements, as well as its ramifications for the Nigerian teaching profession, is crucial for a variety of reasons. To begin, it gives perspectives about the underlying reasons that motivate teachers to leave their native country, allowing policymakers to develop targeted remedies to these constraints. Second, by assessing the consequences of brain drain on teacher availability and quality, it assists stakeholders in developing feasible mitigation solutions. The study of the diaspora's influence on education also provides the path for the diaspora community, international organizations, and local educational institutions to deepen partnerships while maximizing the benefits of knowledge and skill transfer. By exploring these issues, this paper seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide

insights for policymakers, stakeholders, and educational practitioners to navigate the complexities associated with diaspora and migration dynamics in the Nigerian teaching profession.

Factors Promoting Migration of Teachers in Nigeria

Economic Factors: Social scientists' analyses of teacher mobility have stressed economic factors as a primary driver of teacher movement (Adepoju 2006; IOL 2006; Mafukidze 2006). High-skilled workers often generate economic benefits that exceed their own remuneration (Beine, Docquier and Rapoport 2007), referred to as external benefits. The migration of Nigerian teachers has become a prominent phenomenon influenced by various economic factors and this often stems from financial considerations. Yearly, the various teacher training institutions churn out teachers who are unable to secure meaningful employment years after graduation and other are so poorly paid especially those employed in private schools. Low salaries for teachers make it difficult for them to keep up with the escalating cost of living. This leads to questions about how and where the teaching profession stands in comparison to other professions (UNESCO-IIBC, 2011). Nigerian teachers, like many professionals, seek better salaries and enhanced earning potential. Within the Nigerian education sector, low remuneration remains a persistent challenge, leading to dissatisfaction among teachers. Insufficient financial incentives can significantly impact the quality of life for teachers and their ability to meet their basic needs.

Teachers who choose to migrate are motivated by the desire to get higher-paying employment that will assure financial stability and improve their economic well-being. Economic factors attract people to nations or locations where the education industry offers more competitive pay, perks, and opportunities for advancement. This pursuit of better financial prospects is frequently motivated by a desire to support themselves and their family (both nuclear and extended), achieve an improved quality of life, and assure a brighter future.

Beyond monetary concerns, the desire for a better quality of life is a major motivator for Nigerian teachers to migrate. Teachers are motivated by economic prospects to seek places that provide improved living circumstances, including access to top-tier healthcare, housing, infrastructure, and social facilities. These variables work together to promote the overall well-being of teachers and their families. Migration to nations with higher living standards is generally viewed as a chance to secure a more comfortable and better life for oneself and one's loved ones (Akinwale & George, 2020). Teachers are drawn to the idea of better healthcare systems, reliable public services, and a more hospitable social environment. The search of a higher quality of life, along with economic imperatives, is a powerful motivator for teacher migration.

Political Considerations: Political causes of migration can include conflict, war, oppression, lack of liberty, and loss of human rights. According to the UNESCO-IIBC report (2011), a teacher may decide to relocate as a result of years of political repression.

Political instability and insecurity play a big role in teachers' decision to leave Nigeria, and these chronic challenges pervade other parts of society. Lack of trust in the democratic process, political turmoil, and governance issues all contribute to an unpredictable climate that affects the lives of everyone, including teachers. Unfortunately, recent developments in Nigeria's political landscape have left many disillusioned with the country's current state of affairs. It is important to note that the absence of political stability damages the social fabric and impedes the nation's overall growth.

Teachers face the weight of political insecurity, which can appear as disruptions in the education system, such as salary delays, insufficient school financing, and uneven policy execution. This insecurity undermines teachers' morale, jeopardizes their job security, and impairs their capacity to provide effective instruction. Consequently, many teachers feel compelled to explore opportunities abroad, where they perceive a more stable political climate and other political desires such as guaranteed human rights, social services provided by the government, a desire for liberty and equality, and the presence of strong institutions that protect rights and do not tolerate corruption.

Conflict and insecurity imperatives: The UNESCO-IICB report (2011) identified insecurity and conflict as some of the reasons why qualified and professional teachers will choose to live their countries for foreign lands to teach and according to the report, this loss of qualified and newly educated instructors in emergency and conflict-affected nations is considerable and challenging.. Nigeria, with its diverse ethnic groups, experiences occasional tensions and conflicts. These tensions may stem from power struggles, disparities in resource allocation, or historical grievances. Ethnic conflicts not only undermine social cohesion but also create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity for individuals and communities.

Teachers, as members of various ethnic groups, are not immune to the repercussions of ethnic tensions. They may encounter discrimination, threats, or violence based on their ethnic background, particularly in areas of heightened tension. This situation then reinforces their decision to relocate, as teachers seek a more secure setting free of the dangers associated with ethnic conflicts for themselves and their families.

Nigeria has faced several security issues, such as terrorism, insurgencies, and inter-communal violence in various parts of the country. Teachers' and their families' lives are directly impacted by these security risks. There is a significant danger to one's own safety and well-being when one fears assault, kidnapping, or other harm. Teachers make their safety and that of their loved ones a priority just like everyone else. The desire for a safer environment frequently drives people to relocate from areas impacted by security concerns. In order to focus on their work without continual worry or interruptions, teachers seek safety in nations or areas with improved security measures and lower rates of violence.

Quest for Professional Advancement: International migration gives teachers the opportunity to expand their professional perspectives beyond the confines of their own

country. Teachers who relocate to nations with developed educational systems have access to a multitude of resources, including pedagogical innovations, technological integration, and state-of-the-art research that they might not otherwise have in their home countries and guarantees them quality of work-life. Many teachers want to become more proficient on their jobs, be exposed to cutting edge approaches, and obtain knowledge from prestigious colleges and universities. The availability of advanced training programs and exposure to best practices can significantly contribute to professional growth and enable teachers to provide high-quality education upon their return to Nigeria if they choose to return. Globally, quality of work life is important to employees everywhere, it exhibits an appealing work environment and centres on improving personnel's ability, knowledge and skills (Akinwale & George, 2020).

Impact of Nigerian Teacher Migration on the Teaching Profession in Nigeria

The mass exodus of human capital has provoked serious concerns regarding the attendant paucity of professionals in many of Nigeria's dwindling industries, especially the educational industry which has witnessed the exit of its best hands in multitudes in recent times (Consterdine, 2019). Evidence suggests that teacher migration has varying effects on educational quality (UNICEF, 2000) and that teacher migration from developing countries has had double-edged consequences for both the migrants and their home countries (Crossley, Hancock & Sprague, 2015). In Nigeria, the migration of teachers has significant implications for the Nigerian teaching profession in the following ways:

Teacher Shortage: One of the primary negative impacts of teacher migration is the severe shortage of qualified teachers and this lack of sufficient, qualified teachers threatens students' ability to learn (Darling-Hammond 1999; Ladd and Sorensen 2016). Also, instability in schools' teaching workforce (high turnover and/or attrition) has a detrimental impact on students' learning outcomes as well as teacher effectiveness and quality (Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff 2013; Jackson and Bruegmann 2009; Kraft and Papay 2014; Sorensen and Ladd 2018). Skilled teachers, enticed by better opportunities abroad, leave the country, resulting in a significant deficit in the number of competent teachers available to meet the educational needs of Nigerian students. This shortage leads to overcrowded classrooms, increased teacher-student ratios, and compromised individual attention for students.

The teacher shortage hampers the delivery of quality education and undermines the overall effectiveness of the teaching profession. It places a burden on the remaining teachers, who are forced to handle larger workloads and may experience burnout due to the increased demands. The poor teacher-student ratio and inadequate resources make it difficult to establish an effective learning environment for learners.

Loss of Intellectual Capital: The loss of intellectual capital in the local education system arises from the exodus of highly qualified teachers from Nigeria. Teachers that choose to migrate usually have considerable expertise, experience, and innovative teaching methods. The departure of these seasoned teachers deprives the Nigerian teaching

profession of contributions that may have enhanced teaching techniques and boosted educational standards. This high loss of Nigeria's intellectuals to highly developed nations has not only caused harm to Nigeria's educational institutions but also other fabric of Nigeria as a whole (Akinwale and George, 2022).

The loss of intellectual capital impedes Nigeria's development of a strong and innovative education system. The lack of qualified educators reduces the availability of mentoring, direction, and leadership within the field. This loss will have long-term consequences for the education industry, which is struggling to stay up with global innovations while still providing excellent education to Nigerian students

Reduced Quality of Education: The migration of teachers contributes to a compromised quality of education within Nigeria. High-skilled emigration can impair public services and reduce productivity in origin countries Brain drain deprives students of exposure to competent and experienced teachers who can effectively impart knowledge and foster critical thinking skills. In support of this notion, Ogunode (2020) decried the effect of brain-drain and declared that several academic professionals and researchers are resigning from their appointments in Nigerian schools to other countries for better job offers and favourable work conditions. The resulting shortage of qualified teachers diminishes the overall educational experience, hindering students' academic progress and limiting their potential for future success.

Moreover, the compromised educational quality further perpetuates educational disparities, as students from disadvantaged backgrounds bear the brunt of the teacher shortage. These students face increased challenges in accessing quality education, widening the existing gaps in educational opportunities and exacerbating social inequalities.

Low Motivation within the Profession: The exodus of highly qualified teachers from Nigeria may demoralize those who choose to stay in the field. Teachers may experience a decline in motivation, a sense of disappointment, and a loss of morale as they watch colleagues depart in quest of better prospects elsewhere. Teachers may become less enthusiastic and have lower job satisfaction if they believe that their opportunities for professional progress and financial compensation are limited in their area of work. Fair compensation is a core aspect of motivational techniques that enable an employee to exhibit efficient performance in the corporate work environment. Marchand and Weber (2019) acknowledged that the management of sufficient and fair wages and salaries is notably essential to employees' satisfaction in their workplace and the situation is no different in the teaching profession. The general quality of education may suffer as a result of the profession's decreased motivation. Teachers who are disengaged may be less inclined to devote their time and energy to professional development, which might lead to teaching methods that become stagnant and incapacity to adjust to changing student requirements.

Conclusion

Migration is as old as man but the rate at which it is spreading these days is out of control and it has become a common decimal among Nigerians of all ages. It is evident in every sector of our national economy, and the explanation is not implausible. Their shared rationale is that they all required and wanted a better living away from challenging environments and a robust, high-quality job life. The increasing mass exodus of employees from low and middle-income nations is a concern for policy-makers and organizational development strategists due to its negative effect on access to essential services in the country of origin. This trend is also very visible in the Nigerian educational system following the mass exodus of Nigerian teachers at all levels to other advanced nations of the world in search of greener pastures and this has wrought detrimental repercussions upon the teaching profession in the country. The severe loss of qualified teachers due to brain drain and its devastating effect such as lowered standard of education, and the lack of motivation among teachers pose serious challenges to Nigeria's educational system. Addressing these negative effects requires policymakers and interested parties to work together to recruit and retain qualified teachers, provide attractive benefits, provide chances for career growth, and foster a supportive work environment that can retain competent teachers. Reducing brain drain and its harmful effects is crucial to building a strong and long-lasting teaching profession that can provide learners excellent education.

Suggestions

Mitigating the negative implications of teacher migration and capitalizing on its advantages will need the combined efforts of policymakers, stakeholders, and the broader educational community. To successfully address this concern, the following suggestions are important:

1. To reduce the negative consequences of teacher migration, concerted efforts should be made to attract and retain highly skilled teachers within Nigerian educational institutions. This includes improving working conditions, elevating the status of the teaching profession, and providing appealing remuneration packages. A sufficient and fair compensation package is considered a major driving force that motivates employees and impacts their productivity in the workplace.
2. The Nigerian government should provide opportunities for continual professional development for teachers and provide access to new teaching approaches to improve teacher retention. This therefore calls for the provision of incentives for professional development and career advancement for teachers in the country.
3. The government should strictly comply with UNESCO's guidelines of allocating 20-25% of her national budget to education in developing nations such as Nigeria. It will enable the government to easily finance and fund Nigerian education.
4. Nigeria needs to do more to benefit from teacher migration by actively enticing diaspora teachers to return to Nigeria. This can be achieved by creating an environment

conducive to their repatriation and requires ensuring the potency of the rule of law to ensure justice and equity, providing adequate security for both lives and properties and offering appealing employment packages that include competitive salaries, attractive benefits, and opportunities for career progression.

5. Policy interventions are critical in minimizing the disadvantages of teacher migration and capitalizing on its benefits. It is critical to ensure that migration concerns are included into national policy. This is because migration is a necessary component of progress, and the scenario is unlikely to change very soon.

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