

## **BRAIN DRAIN FOR QUALITY CONTROL ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPRAISAL**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examined the concepts of brain drain and its implications for quality control in higher education. The purpose of this paper was to ascertain the implications of brain drain as well as emphasize the need for human capital development which is necessary for economic growth and development. The paper acknowledged that brain drain has its implications on the quality of education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria which include poor quality education, low quality graduates, poor research development, poor programme development amongst others. These implications are the resultant effects of certain factors such as inadequate funding of the education sector, unconducive working environment, poor staff development, poor remuneration and inadequate infrastructural facilities. The paper therefore concluded that manpower in the right number and quality is crucial to a nation's development and as such, in view of the implications of brain drain, it is imperative for efforts to be geared towards curtailing it. Also, recommendations were proffered that strategies should be put in place for curbing this menace in tertiary institutions, such as adequate funding of tertiary education, motivation of staff of tertiary institutions, need for conducive learning environment and so on. It is hopeful that if these strategies are adopted and implemented by Government and institutions' administrators, the menace will be reduced to the barest minimum while the status quo of higher education will improve in Nigeria.

**Keywords: Brain Drain, higher education, quality control**

### **Introduction**

No nation can achieve meaningful development without the availability of manpower in the right number and quality. In 1959, the Ashby Commission was inaugurated in Nigeria, to pave way for high-level manpower training, after the attainment of the country's independence and for the development of its economy. The role of universities in the provision and development of manpower required for the socio-economic and technological advancement of any nation cannot be over-emphasized, as universities aid in increasing the productive capacity of the labour force.

Up till the early 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Nigerian universities were repositories of everything that could be considered excellent in academia as they had good and qualified academic staff. The working conditions were good and motivating enough (Yaqub,2007). During this period, the academic community in Nigeria lived to its billings: researches were conducted and results were achieved. The totality of the Nigerian university system was recognized and well respected. Nigerian university system has witnessed tremendous expansion since independence. Unfortunately, the history of the university system in the country, particularly in recent decades,

indicates that there have been hindrances to the realization of the lofty expectations from the system. A number of multi-faceted problems seem to have inhibited goal attainment and are raising questions, doubts and fears, all of which combine to suggest that the system is at a cross road . A major problem bedeviling the university education system in the recent past is the issue of brain-drain among academics. This stress put on the universities has taken a great toll on the quality of graduates produced in these institutions. Employers of labour and the general public have expressed concern on the quality of graduates of Nigerian universities (Okebukola, 2005).

The working conditions in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria appear to have resulted in many academic and non-academic staff leaving the institutions. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has warned the Federal Government against encouraging brain drain with a nonchalant attitude towards the cravings of ASUU for better working conditions. Ehichoya and Ogunode (2020) noted that many experienced academic staff, professors especially, have been moving out of Nigeria's higher institutions of learning, to developed countries like the United States of America, Germany, the United Kingdom and many other countries for better offers. This is affecting the quality of teaching in higher institutions in the country. For effective teaching to take place, there is need for adequate professional and experienced lecturers in every higher institution.

This scenario seems not to align well for a developing country like Nigeria that believes in human capital development for promoting economic growth and development, hence an appraisal of the sociological dimensions of brain-drain and its implications for quality control in higher education in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Brain Drain**

Brain Drain is closely associated with developing countries. According to UNESCO, "brain drain could be defined as an abnormal form of scientific exchange between countries, characterized by a one-way flow in favor of the most highly developed countries". Brain drain can occur in two ways, first is the outright and direct outmigration and second is that graduates trained abroad refuse to come back (Kaempf & Singh, 1987). Brain drain can also be described as the international transfer of knowledge and resources in the form of human capital and applies to the migration of academics, skilled professionals, technical manpower and experts from developing to developed countries. Young (2023), also opined that brain drain is a slang term that indicates a substantial emigration or migration of individuals which can result from turmoil within a nation, the existence of unfavourable conditions within the migrant abode but favourable professional opportunities in other countries, or a desire to seek tertiary standard of living. Young (2023) maintained that in addition to brain drain occurring geographically, it may also occur at the organizational or industrial levels when workers perceive better pay, benefits or upward mobility within another company.

It is also any process that leads to educational institutions losing some or a significant number of its academic staff to other sectors of the economy or to other countries. Brain drain in whatever perspective, as it is being described, is the widespread migration of academic staff from

universities in the country to overseas universities or equivalent institutions where their services are better rewarded.

### **Factors Responsible for Brain Drain in Nigerian Higher Institutions**

The following are causes of brain drain in higher institutions in Nigeria.

#### **1. Inadequate Funding of the Education Sector**

It needs not to be overemphasized that funding is paramount in educational institutions. No educational system can develop beyond its level of funding. In an educational institution, fund is needed to pay the salaries and allowances of staff, purchase the needed facilities, construct and repair buildings and administer the institution on a daily basis. UNESCO declared that for effective funding of education, 26% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of each country in the world must be allocated to education. The case of Nigeria over the years however portends a non-compliance with this standard. Allocation to the education sector has been very low when compared to the annual budget. Ogunode and Abubakar (2020), observed that the budgetary allocation for the administration of public universities in Nigeria is not adequate to implement the programme of universities in Nigeria. At present, due to inadequate fund, educational institutions in Nigeria are crying for attention. Most educational institutions now parade dilapidated structures while infrastructures are inadequate for the increasing population of pupils/students. Due to low allocation and expenditure on education, educational institutions have not been getting substantial fund to put in place the needed infrastructural facilities and for effective management of the institutions. Consequently, what can be observed in many institutions of learning these days are array of dilapidated buildings, inadequate classrooms, and inadequate facilities, among others. Lecturers have even been at the receiving end of the poor funding. On many occasions, the issue of fund has been one of the root causes of several labour crises in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Many staff of some tertiary institutions have had cause to leave for foreign countries to seek greener pasture due to frustration.

#### **2. Poor Remuneration**

Poor remuneration is one of the key causes of brain drain problem in the Nigerian higher institutions. The monthly salaries that academic staff receive is far less compared to what academic staff are being paid in other countries across the world. The inability of the government to adequately fund the various higher institutions in the country is responsible for the poor salaries and other financial benefits given to academic staff in the Nigerian higher institutions. Other factors responsible for the poor remuneration include corruption, fall in oil revenue and other sectors in the economy like security, health and infrastructural facilities. Ehichoya and Ogunode (2020) observed that there are many factors responsible for brain drain in Nigeria and they include: poor motivation, unconducive working environment, poor working conditions and unattractive salaries.

### **3. Unconducive Working Environment**

This is another major factor responsible for the massive movement of academic staff from the higher institutions in the country to other parts of the world. The working environment in majority of higher institutions in Nigeria is not conducive for effective service delivery. The working policies, administrative bottlenecks, leaderships, quality of supportive services like internet facilities, light and academic freedom is not encouraging in motivating professionals to stay and develop their career. Ogunode (2020), noted that factors responsible for brain drain in the Nigerian public universities include: unconducive working environment, poor motivation, insecurity, underfunding and political interferences.

### **4. Poor Staff Development**

Ogunode, Jegede and Musa (2021) observed that poor capacity development is another problem facing majority of the academic staff of Nigerian universities. Many lecturers are not given the opportunity to access funds to develop themselves. One of the key factors responsible for attracting professionals to stay and develop their career in an institution is the level of the quality opportunities available for career development in the institutions. In Nigeria's higher institutions, the staff development policies are not well developed, the coverage of the policies for all academic staff is poor. Many academic staff in the system spend their personal money to go for training. Basil, Felix and Eno (2013) did a study that examined university lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in South-South Nigeria and its implication for sustainable development. It focuses on the extent of lecturers' participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring aspects of capacity building programmes. Findings revealed that university lecturers participate mostly in conferences than any other capacity building programmes. Lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes is significantly low with respect to workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring.

### **5. Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities**

According to Ogunode and Agwor (2021), school infrastructural facilities refer to social capital within the school environment. They include school buildings/complexes such as classrooms, tables, exam halls, chairs, auditoria, staff offices, seminar/conference/board rooms, laboratories, workshops, studios, farms, gymnasias, central libraries, specialized/professional libraries, faculty libraries, departmental libraries and so on. It is however unfortunate that as important as the infrastructural facilities to support effective service delivery are, many public higher institutions in the country do not have these facilities for usage. Abdul (2013) observed that, in many higher institutions in the country, academic and non-academic staff do not have offices. Four to five academic staff share offices meant for only two lecturers to occupy. Ogunode, Jegede and Musa(2021) observed that many academic staff share offices and some do not have while many non-academic staff roam about from one office to the other due to lack of available space. Many academic staff do not have access to constant light and internet services to support their online teaching programme. Ishere and Ogunode (2021) identified inadequate funding, corruption, increase in population, poor infrastructural planning, poor maintenance culture and uncompleted

projects as the causes of shortage of inadequate infrastructural facilities in Nigerian public universities.

## **6. Strike Actions**

Ogunode (2020) posited that strike action in Nigerian public universities is another problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. The Nigerian public universities are known for continuous strike actions by different union groups. The continuous strike actions by these different unions are frustrating the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Ogunode, Jegede and Musa (2021) observed that many academic staff cannot function or discharge their responsibilities whenever there is a strike action either by the NASU, NAAT or ASUU. Strike actions affect the teaching and research programme of academic staff. It causes an unstable academic calendar as well. Ogunode (2020) outlined the reasons for the strike action by different unions to include; underfunding of then public universities, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor implementation of agreement reached between the Federal government and unions and poor working conditions. The implications of the continuous strike actions on the public universities include; disruption in the academic programme, poor quality of education, bad image for the universities, poor ranking internationally, poor patronage of public universities and above all, brain-drain. This was evident during the last and long-lasting strike action that occurred in 2022, which brought to a halt, all academic activities, transfer of students to private universities and even universities abroad, and the migration of lecturers outside of the country for greener pastures.

### **Implications of Brain Drain for Quality Control in Higher Education**

The issue of brain drain has its implications on the quality of education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and they are:

#### **1. Poor Quality of Education**

Poor quality of higher education in Nigeria is also linked to the problem of mass exodus of professors out of the higher education system to other part of the world due to poor motivation. Academic staff are the main determinant of quality education in higher institutions of learning. The quality of academic staff trained, posted and retained in the higher institutions determines the quality of manpower for the future. Yohanna and Simon (2013) observed that the place of academic staff in any academic institution cannot be overemphasized. The academic staff of any university are equally the intellectual resource pool of the university. The poor quality of education in majority of higher institutions is due to inadequate academic staff and shortage of other resources. One of the factors reducing the number of academic staff in Nigerian higher institutions is the problem of brain-drain.

#### **2. Inadequacy of high-level Manpower in Tertiary Institutions**

One of the resources needed for effective school administration is human resources especially the academic staff. School administrators cannot do anything without the availability of right qualities

of academic staff. Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory and Abubakar (2020), also observed that teachers are fundamental to effective delivery of teaching programmes in the educational institutions. The teachers' place in the educational institutions cannot be replaced. The reduction in the number of academic staff due to brain-drain problem is frustrating the administration of many higher institutions in the country. Ahaotu and Ogunode (2021) noted that administrators of higher institutions in Nigeria are also struggling with the issue of brain-drain in their respective institutions. Ogunode (2020) also submitted that the mass movement of academicians from the Nigerian public universities is affecting the administration of the universities because academic staff are very important for the implementation of universities' programme.

### **3. Low Quality Graduates**

Ordinarily, the worth of an educational system can be measured by the quality of its outputs. It is thus expected, that the graduates of educational institutions would be able to display quality skills and knowledge at their respective places of work. While it cannot be contested that educational institutions in Nigeria had produced graduates in different fields of science and technology, many among these graduates in various sectors of the economy, are of poor quality. Scholars like Obadan (2010), have criticized the quality of education at the three levels of the educational system in Nigeria, where all point to the fact that there is a declining quality in such education to the extent that the employers of labour are complaining over the inability of those employed to perform. Many public and private establishments are thus spending huge money to train and retrain their employees in order to meet standard. Presently, graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria must pass aptitude tests before they can be employed. Those seeking admission into tertiary institutions for further studies at national and international levels, are either denied admission or subjected to tests due to loss of confidence on their quality. Also, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in the National Policy on Education noted that one of the goals of education is that through it, a child would be able to acquire appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental and physical as instrument to live and contribute to the development of the society.

### **4. Poor Research Development**

Poor research development in many higher institutions in Nigeria is as a result of limited academic staff with experiences in carrying out research. Research is one of the key programme of higher institutions. It is a major indicator used for ranking higher institutions' performance. Conducting quality research demands experienced researchers and academics. It is unfortunate that many higher institutions in the country do not have these qualified researchers and professors due to brain-drain problems. Okoli, Ogbondah and Ewor (2016), observed that there is a diminishing scope of mentoring junior researchers by seasoned and senior researchers due to brain drain.

### **5. Poor Programme Development**

According to Ogunode and Ishaya (2021), many higher institutions of learning in the country are losing their academic programmes due to shortage of academic staff which is caused by brain drain. In Nigerian higher institutions of learning, commissions are saddled with the responsibilities of accrediting programmes. Programmes accredited by these commissions implies that the

departments met the standard set, and other listed resources. Accreditation programme are done every five years depending on the institutions. Research has it that departments are losing their accreditation due to shortage of academic staff.

## **Conclusion**

Manpower in the right number and quality is crucial to a nation's development. In view of the implications of brain drain, it is imperative for effort to be geared towards curtailing it. Government has however over the years been committing resources on manpower production with the hope that the manpower will serve the country in one way or another. The mass exodus of lecturers from tertiary institutions in Nigeria constitutes loss of resources invested on their training. The cost of replacing the academic staff is so heavy and serves as a burden to government as well as a threat to the limited finance flow to the education sector. At present, it is disturbing that Nigeria's universities are rated low in world ranking.

One of the conditions for ranking universities is the number and quality of academic staff in stock. Due to its consequences, strategies for curbing this menace in tertiary institutions, such as adequate funding of tertiary education, motivation of staff of tertiary institutions, need for conducive learning environment and so on. It is hopeful that if these strategies are adopted and implemented by Government and institutions' administrators, the menace will become a thing of the past while the status quo of higher education will improve in Nigeria.

## **Suggestions**

In view of the adverse effects of brain drain on higher institutions in Nigeria, the following recommendations are suggested to reduce the fast rising occurrence of this issue. They are as follows but not limited to;

### **1. Proper Funding of Tertiary Education**

Funds are very critical to tertiary education in Nigeria. Ogunbenle and Edogiawerie (2019) viewed funding as an important tool of any organization. They also stated that sufficient funding is a foundation for effective running of every aspect of education, including university education. University education has over the years witnessed inadequate funding. Ogbondah (2010) penned that insufficient financing of universities has been one of the main challenges confronting university education. According to Saint, Hartnet and Strassner (2013), the university system in the country has not had the financial wherewithal necessary to maintain educational quality even in the midst of the significant population explosion. To develop and sustain the universities require enormous amounts of financial resources. Government should therefore provide more funds to the Universities. This will provide adequate resources for the maintenance of decaying infrastructures, procurement of new equipment, books, journals, chemicals and other learning inputs (Oni, 2008).

### **2. Need for Conducive Teaching/ Learning Environment**

According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2006), dilapidated structures, obsolete laboratory and workshop equipment and low usage of ICT have converged to make teaching of

poor quality. A massive overhaul of the infrastructures in the university system is therefore imperative. Apart from the physical teaching/learning environment, there is also the need to make psycho-social environment conducive.

3. **Upward Review of the Pay Package for Academics:** Based on the premise that the decline in the purchasing power of lecturers' salaries was responsible for brain drain, it is hereby suggested that the personal emoluments of the lecturers need to be reviewed upwards. The wage differential between the university and other sectors of the economy is a major cause of frustration and disillusion among present and future generation of academic staff (Oni, 2008). The author reported that the pay package for a professor in Nigeria is about 1% of that of his contemporary in South Africa, 7.32% (Ethiopia) and 9.15% (Ghana). This case needs to be readdressed.
4. **Staff Retention Programmes:** Staff retention programmes can be put in place in the country. This may take the form of putting in place, measures that would dissuade those still in the system from contemplating travelling out of the country. To do this, the struggle must encompass convincing government to allocate more funds to the system to adequately cater for the needs of the University (Yaqub, 2007). Secondly, by providing individuals who have expertise with career opportunities and giving them the opportunity to prove their capabilities. Another staff retention programme is the promotion of existing staff who have demonstrated sufficient academic excellence to senior lecturers, readers and professors (Mgbekem, 2004). With all the staff retention programmes, staff morale would be rejuvenated and staff retention guaranteed and sustained.
5. **Nigerian Experts and Academics in the Diaspora Scheme (NEADS):** NEADS was launched November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004 with the aim of attracting experts and academics of Nigerian origin in the diaspora to contribute their quota to the development of the Nigerian university system and hence to the development of the nation through short-term academic appointments. This programme is designed to encourage the return of academics of Nigerian origin in the diaspora to come and contribute to National development through engagement in teaching, research and community services (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2002). If the scheme put up by the National Universities Commission can be sustained, those who fled the country at the height of the economic trough and military dictatorship may eventually be lured back on a voluntary basis, just as they voluntarily went away in the first instance (Yaqub, 2007).

**Other measures could be:** The international organizations including UNESCO, Commonwealth, Ford, Rockefeller foundations and others could consider making their facilities and resources available to Nigerian universities (Odekunle, 2001). They should make available research grants, academic exchange, scholarships and donations of books and journals to Nigerian university libraries.



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