



Global Advanced Research Journal of Arts and Humanities (GARJAH) Vol. 2(5) pp. 096-102, October 2013  
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*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Governance and human capacity development: harnessing the capacity of Nigerians in the diaspora**

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Accepted 21 October, 2013

**International migration of talented persons from one country to another in search of a better living condition is as old as the early history of mankind. Yet the situation still remains unchanged today. The emigration of Nigerians to Europe and North America especially had continued to deplete its human capacity. This paper therefore reviewed the influence of these migrations on its human capacity development and its consequences. There exists a global competition for the best hands and minds, the most talented and best trained persons. It is a situation where what the third world loses, the developed world gains in terms of human capacity. There had been no concrete policy or practical steps taken by Nigeria to reverse this position. Good governance; provision of adequate employment with good remuneration, good infrastructures and welfare services, and an end to the menace of insecurity and violence attacks against the state were some of the recommendations to redress mass exodus of Nigerians and encourage those at home to stay back to contribute to the development of the country.**

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Infrastructure, Development, Brain-Drain, Human Capacity

## **INTRODUCTION**

International migration of talented persons from one country to another in search of a better living condition is as old as the early history of mankind (Wikipedia: [Africa Diaspora](#)). Such movements had always been justified by economic, social and political exigencies in the countries of the migrants. The situation still remains unchanged today (Odunsi, 1996). Such movements did not elicit much concern in the past. However, from the 1960s, the trend became prominent and lopsided, with Western Europe and North America being besieged by talented people from the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) (Odunsi, 1996). According to Todaro (1985:353) the

international 'brain drain', as the movement later became known, attracted mention because of its effects on the rate and structure of LDC economic growth as well as its impact on the style and approach of third world human capacity development.

The notable emigration of Nigerians to Europe and North America started in the 70s but reached its peak in the late 1980s and the 1990s (Odunsi, 1996). These were the Babangida and Abacha years marked by high rate of unemployment, persistent social unrest, political persecution and intimidation. Consequently, Nigerians decided to migrate to seek refuge, better lives, safety and better opportunities in other countries particularly in Europe and America. Those that were not well educated enough to get desired job overseas relocated to some

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African countries for a new way of life. Between 11 and 17 million Nigerians now live in the 'diaspora' Nigeria (Onuoha, 2007: 220). Most of them have remained in the diaspora for between two to three decades now. According to World Bank report, an estimated 2 million Nigerians live in the United States alone (World Bank, 2005). Between ten and twenty thousand of these Nigerian-Americans are said to be medical doctors, along with other professionals. The report added that, an estimated 1.5 million Nigerians live in the United Kingdom.

Nyang'oro (1989) reported that, the UN in 1986 devoted the entire thirteenth special session to the strategy to safeguard Africa's economic survival (United Nations, 1986). The rationale for this action stemmed from the realization that Africa's economic underdevelopment had its roots in the continent's colonial history and that, unless solutions were proffered, the negative effects could be of global proportions, including the migration of Africans from their ancestral homes (Udogu, 1997:190). Regrettably, nothing important was achieved.

### **Africa and brain drain phenomenon**

It has been argued that, if the Africans in Diaspora had remained in Africa, they could have assisted other Africans in engendering economic development in the continent. It was posited that the contributions of Africa's immigrant intellectuals to the development in the region would probably have been so phenomenal to the extent that, the level of Africa's underdevelopment would have been lower than it is now. Ndegwa (1993) had described the consequences of African's migration in clear terms when he cautioned that:

*This process of marginalization must not be seen in academic terms — as a kind of natural and harmless gradual reduction of contacts between African economies and the rest of the world. What the process actually involves is deepening poverty of already very poor people, widespread unemployment, political instability and other economic and social hardships in [African] countries. In addition to this situation, there is now a crisis of confidence in the continent in closely related areas of economic and political management...(Ndegwa, 1993:13).*

Bossuyt, (1995) posited that the rapid economic development of the countries of Southeast Asia in the latter part of the 20th century was due largely to their deliberate policy on capacity building through investment in human capital and institutional building. That, development in the Asian continent, especially in China has been promoted through systematic and deliberate policies, which were directed at capacity building of both human and institution. Most African countries have displayed lack of attention to the relevance and development of institutional capacity building. Capacity

under-utilisation and low retention due to brain drain constitute very important problem area in capacity building in Africa (Adubifa, 1990). Bad governance and instability are other factors that can de-capacitate potentially efficient administrative machinery. Hence, Bossuyt (1995) observed that, capacity building issues particularly brain drain touched on much sensitivity, which includes governance, quality of leadership, management philosophy, workers' remuneration, resource allocation strategies etc. Capacity building policies and programmes therefore should be grounded in an appraisal of the environment.

### **OBJECTIVE**

This paper therefore sought to review the influence of these Nigerians on human capacity development in their country of residence, the effect on the Nigerian nation, and examine the possibility of synergy of relationships between their country of residence and their home country.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Secondary data were collected from past reports on the subject matter. To obtain current information, Google alert was generated from which new information was obtained real time. Questionnaires were administered to Nigerians in the Diaspora through social networking media.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

The responses from the questionnaire and interview were classified according to the factors, presented and discussed below.

#### **Causes of migration**

Nigerians left for varied reasons. While those who left because of unemployment, poor remuneration and poor conditions of services may be attracted home by better pay and better conditions of service, others may only be attracted by better infrastructures both at home and at the work environment, efficient transportation system, reliable health facilities, good retirement package, safety and security of their lives, the lives of family members, investments and property. With the present security challenges, infrastructural failures and absence of welfare programmes, government should not be under the illusion that good employment package would attract Nigerians home.

### **Corruption and general lack of respect for the rule of law**

In the fourteen years of democratic government, Nigeria still lacked accountability and delivery of democratic dividends to its nationals. Corruption and lawlessness pervaded the system, thus, giving citizens in the Diaspora the impression of a system of a government in disarray, tilting towards anarchy and backwardness.

### **Absence of free access to information about job and investment opportunities**

Many in the Diasporas who may want to return do not have free access and knowledge of the various vacant job opportunities as most vacancy advertisements are restricted to the local communities. They expressed fear that except one has a God father in government, responding to vacancy adverts was a waste of time and resources. They held the view that, if information is publicised, the government functionaries would not have the opportunities to slot in their family members or receive gratifications.

### **Reasons for emigration**

Previous studies have discovered myriads of justifications for emigration from the African region for solace in the developed world by African intellectuals and capable individuals (Uduku, 2002). Some of the reasons adduced for this phenomenon had included extremely high levels of dissatisfaction with the cost of living, high incidence of taxation, poor remuneration to workers. Those functionaries have made the number of poor Africans living below poverty line to increase progressively in the last few years as a result of the political and economic crises accompanied by spiralling inflation (Uduku, 2002).

### **Lack of opportunity at home**

Aligning with the view of Oyowe (1996:59-60) which stated that, "It might be foolhardy to suggest that Africa's manpower shortage could be resolved if African professionals in the diaspora are repatriated in one fell swoop to Africa to replace the over 100,000 or so foreign technicians working for numerous international organizations in the continent". President Obasanjo while appealing to Nigerians in diaspora to return home, at the conference of the Nigerian professionals, resident in the United States of America which was held in Atlanta, Georgia in the early 2000s cautioned Nigerian professionals not to return home in droves because the system could not absorb them (NIDOA, 2000). President Obasanjo observed that it was lack of opportunity and

challenge at home that drove them out. He promised to provide conducive environment to attract them home. In his words, he said:

*Many of our best men and women, for lack of opportunity and challenge at home, have had to work outside our shores. We should challenge them to return by putting in place the conducive atmosphere and the tools, with which they will be able to give this country the full benefit of their education, training and experience. I recognize that just as there are good and bright Nigerians abroad, there have remained many at home who have persevered. I salute them and assure them that their sacrifice, perseverance and tenacity will be recognized and rewarded by a grateful nation. (Onuoha, 2007:220)*

### **Lack of employment**

Many skilled, educated and professionally qualified Nigerians have remained unemployed several years after graduation. Many that are in employment were under employed and consequently grossly inadequately remunerated. This had caused them to migrate to other countries of the world in their quest for greener pastures.

Millions of Nigerian youth back home are confronted with unemployment and poverty. It is unfortunate that for the greater part of the democratic Nigeria, poverty had become endemic. It has been exemplified by the fact that Nigeria still hosted the third largest population of the world's poor, growing from 54.4% in 2004 to 69.0% in 2010. In 2007, the United Nation ranked Nigeria on Human Development Index as 157<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries, down from 148<sup>th</sup> out of 173 in 2003 (Azeez, 2011). The index of 0.453 was lower than the average index for sub-Saharan Africa of 0.515, making the country the 13<sup>th</sup> least viable countries of the world. The declining fortune was largely due to corruption as the TI's Corruption Perception Index ranked Nigeria between 1999 and 2007 as either the most or second most corrupt nation. Nigeria also scored an average of 43%, ranked 37 of 53 countries in Africa on the Mo Ibrahim Index for African Governance (MIIAG) between 2001 and 2008 (Ibrahim, 2010). The implication was bad governance, limiting the prospects of delivery of dividends of democracy. Hence, the call for the people from diaspora would have compounded the economic problems of the home nation.

In the absence of gainful employment, they have become ready tools for politician for use as political foot soldiers. Many of them had taken to kidnapping which had proved to be an easy source of becoming rich quickly. Some have even gone into robbery and assassination business. This finding confirmed that of Lawal (2013).

### **Absence of Human Capacity Building**

In the past, the governments of Nigeria had operated both local and overseas scholarship programmes which

provided financial opportunities for the brilliant students to study and acquire knowledge. Since they were usually bonded to return to serve their sponsor, they were compelled to return. That had since been abandoned. Individuals now have to fend for self and such students do not find any obligation to return home for any development to the Nation. Worse still, is the poor conditions of the tertiary institutions which had forced many Nigerian youth to the neighbouring African countries with better educational facilities and stable academic calendar.

### **Insecurity**

While the issues reported above by Uduku (2002) have not changed, this work found that the high level of insecurity which had been mitigated by kidnapping has become predominant in the southern part of Nigeria. In the Northern part of Nigeria, insecurity had been created by the frequent unprovoked coordinated bomb attacks. All these have been causing many Nigerian business men and academics to migrate to other countries that they perceived to be reasonably safe. Another source of insecurity was the increased level of political violence and assassinations.

In relating their experiences, all the kidnapped victims had deposed that the kidnapers, many of them, university graduates took to kidnapping because of unemployment. The arrested kidnapers had made confessional statements that they were forced to kidnapping having been unemployed several years after graduation. Though the bomb attacks were often credited to the activities of Boko Haram sect, we found this not be absolutely true. Some politicians hid under the cover of Boko Haram insurgence to detonate bombs at public places so as to create the impression of general insecurity in the country.

### **Poor Infrastructure**

Absence of good and sustainable roads, electricity power supply and portable water supply facilities are some other push factors for many intellectuals and professionals. Many Nigerian professionals turned entrepreneurs had to generate their individual electricity power supply, produce their water and secure personal security service thus increasing their cost of production to the extent that, the prices of their goods could not make them compete favourably with other similar imported products in the market. Consequently, such entrepreneurs including large firms had moved out of Nigeria to some neighbouring countries where there exists adequate, reliable and sustained infrastructure.

### **Poor education facilities**

The squalid condition of service in the Nigerian universities, coupled with the staff and students strikes and lockouts which were frequent and usually prolonged caused incessant school closures resulting in an unstable academic calendar. Another problem was the dearth of functional library, poor state of learning infrastructure, lack or limited access to recent advances in various spheres of knowledge, length of time required to complete a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), are some of the factors which have compelled most lecturers to enrol for doctorate degree abroad. When such students complete their programme, faced with the reality of the myriads of problems back home decided to remain in their country of study where opportunities for gainful employment abound.

This is one of the factors that could cause low level of human capacity building in the last decade as reported by the World Bank (1998). The Bank reported that this was a major cause of Africa's underdevelopment.

### **Underutilization of existing capacity**

The underutilization of existing capacity and the loss of same through brain drain have made Africa to remain underdeveloped (Odunsi, 1996). According to Motsi (2003), brain drain in Zimbabwe had exacerbated the development problem. The outflow of professionals had stalled the country's development especially the health sector which bore the brunt of the exodus. To this argument, the inability of a country to absorb all of them would have been an advantage to other African countries that can share from their experience and help to revamp their ailing development.

### **Absence of data of Nigerians in the Diaspora**

Nigeria lacked data of its academics and professionally skilled citizens in the Diaspora. Too much emphasis had been placed on impressionistic and anecdotal information, rather than on a clear methodology for collecting and processing data and information that would allow for an objective analysis and assessment of the extent of brain drain. To some countries, the movement of brains could be negative or positive or even become a zero-sum game in which losses and gains add up to zero. Nigeria lacked the empirical data to determine her position in the game.

### **Absence of economic Integration by African countries**

There was a time when within the Pan Africanise credo, it was suggested that, Africans should be urged to return to

Africa where they could contribute to the development of some other African countries. Many Nigerians responded positively to this call. Nigerians migrated in droves to countries within the Africa continent.

African countries have not evolved an established document to ease the intra migration of member countries within Africa. African countries have frequently shown very serious hostilities to themselves through illegal deportation of Nationals of other fellow African countries. Nigerians have variously been deported from Europe, United States, Asia and even African countries for "immigration irregularities" and some unsubstantiated negative vices. (Anon, 2012; Adegoke, 2013; Lekan, 2013 and Anon, 2013). Nigerians had also deported citizens of some other Africa countries for various flimsy reasons, probably in retaliation (Akinkuotu, 2013; Abioye et.al.2012).

## Recommendations

For Nigeria to be attractive to her citizens in the Diaspora and lead to a steady reversal of the brain drain that has stifled investment and general development, government must evolve sustainable economic, social and security policies that would improve the image of the country by action and not by mere slogans in the media. The following actions are recommended:

- Government should establish sustainable economic and social integration document
- African leaders, through the Committee of the Heads of States of members of the African Union must make conscious efforts to integrate the continent socially and economically through well structured and well crafted Memorandum of Understanding that will spell out in clear terms condition for integration, business transactions, immigration and residency to avoid arbitrary deportation of member citizens. Every thing should be done by the Committee to encourage African professionals to remain in the region to develop their primordial homes instead of the search for greener pastures in other world regions.
- Leaders of the Nigerian Diasporas from Europe and the Americas launched the formal Global Data of Nigerians in the Diaspora in year 2009. Four years after, no significant progress had been recorded. Government should provide funds to establish a data bank for Nigerian experts in the Diaspora which must include the detailed information such as gender, academic and professional qualifications, type and level of skill, area of research or business competence, period of absence from home among others.
- Government should establish formal network and procedure to obtain input from Nigerians in the Diaspora when initiating educational and industrial projects in Nigeria rather than relying only on foreign experts, in order to ensure sustainability of those projects.

- It should establish formal outlets to give opportunity to Nigerians in the Diaspora to tender for government developmental projects.
- It should establish formal outlets to give opportunity to Nigerians in the Diaspora to apply for employment vacancies in Government establishments, business organizations engaged in national projects and multinational business.
- Government should establish financial support aids and other support services for Nigerians in the Diaspora who are willing to return but are constrained by some financial challenges.
- It should provide budgetary allocation to strengthen the Nigerian House committee for the Diaspora to efficiently and effectively give support services to all Nigerians in the Diaspora.
- Government should improve its social services to a level comparable to what obtains in other developing countries that have taken away these citizens.
- It should improve the general infrastructure to the level that would stimulate investment or attract those investors that had transferred their investment to other neighbouring countries particularly Ghana. These will include; good roads, rail lines, reliable and sustainable electricity and water supply environment that encourages world-class professionals to remain in Nigerian.
- Government should stabilise political and the economic systems by making conscious efforts to run the business of government according to the rule of law.
- Government must improve on the security in the country. The incessant kidnappings and attacks by the various militant groups had driven away many investors to the neighbouring countries that are relatively safe for investment.
- Government must establish anti-graft court and remove all impediments by way of review of the laws that established the anti-graft agencies to actually make them independent and ensure speedy prosecution of corrupt persons. Anti-graft agencies should not be made to take instruction from the Attorney General of the Federation.

## CONCLUSION

Migration may foster human capital formation and economic growth in the sending countries through such factors as: migrant remittances; know-how transfer, knowledge and skills acquisition by returnee migrants and applied after their return to their country of origin and the domestic use of business and trade networks established by migrants abroad.

Within Africa and among authorities in power, the persistent exodus of Africans to foreign countries had often been attributed to deliberate favourable policies of governments in developed countries that lured and kept Third World experts, many of whom had been trained in the developed countries, given challenging employment

in their areas of specialisation and provided good welfare facilities particularly security, good living conditions and out of work welfare facilities.

There is no doubt that there is a global competition for the best hand and minds, the most talented and best trained people. This is shown regularly in sports where the best in the world are highly sought after by foreign nations and rich clubs irrespective of their race, creed or colour. The Nigeria nation currently contributes at least 20 world class soccer players to this elite group of international professionals currently engaged by foreign teams. It is a situation where what the Third World loses the developed world gains in terms of human capacity.

Over the years, the task of reversing the 'brain drain' saga by the Nigerian government like her counterparts from other African countries had been more of talking than action. There had been no concrete policy or practical steps taken to accomplish the objective. Other problems included the inconsistent government policies on all matters of state and lack of confidence of Nigerians in government because of its failure to honour previous promises and signed agreements.

Though, the exit of some of the best brains from Africa had excluded them from contributing to the continent's development, the various leaders of the continent do not feel sincere concern for the losses. Many Nigerians in the Diasporas do not want to return since those factors that forced them out have remained unchanged. This author may appear unpatriotic when recommending that they should not rush to return yet. Why would a medical doctor be prevailed upon to return to the country when on his way from the airport to his home, he could be kidnapped, or when at the Bureau de change, he could be attacked and dispossessed of his life savings and even be killed for trying to plead for mercy. Why a professional would be persuaded to come home, when he could be kidnapped at work site or be an object of bomb attack at a bus terminal. Why would one who had been used to easy access of electricity power and portable water be encouraged to return to a place where he has to be a mini government by himself, generating electricity, producing portable water, providing personal security guards and constructing the road to his residence. The various governments had failed the citizens by their failure to provide these essential services which in other countries are non negotiable. This author agreed with Darko (2003) when he stated that, the negative environmental factors caused by corrupt, inefficient and obscurantist authorities will work against them if they do return.

To convert brain drain saga to brain gain, the governments must develop its human capacity, provide adequate employment with good remuneration, good infrastructures and welfare services, an end to the menace of insecurity and violent attacks against the state. No nation can progress in the absence of electricity power supply, inadequate water supply, insecurity

conditions of kidnapping, armed robbery and unprovoked terrorist attacks.

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