

Education Migration among Africans: A Case Study Of Nigerian Postgraduate Students In International Islamic University Malaysia

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Abstract: *The research paper attempts stress the importance of education and also clarify the factors influencing African postgraduate students to undertake higher education studies abroad. In the recent times, Asia pacific is one of the attracting region for the African students particularly, Malaysia. A sample of 90 international postgraduate students from Nigeria studying at International Islamic University Malaysia (Gombak main campus) were selected as informants and their experiences and views was used in the analysis of data collected.*

The results show that conditions in both the students' countries of origin and that of the hosting countries contributed to the decision to study abroad. Of prime importance among the factors attracting students abroad is the poor condition of learning, political instability in the continent and lack of basic infrastructure like lecture rooms, student accommodation, power supply, portable water, inadequate manpower, laboratories, equipments and other learning facilities in the higher education sector were identified as push factors. On the other hand, migration to Malaysia was influenced by the availability of infrastructure, learning facilities, manpower, moderate tuition fees, affordable cost of living and above all being Muslim country further serves as motivator for the international student migration.

I. Introduction

This study tries to enumerate the importance of education and the growing trend in education migration among African students with specific reference to Nigerian students. Though the phenomenon of education migration is not a new thing, is something that is being practice many years back. But in the recent times there is rapid increase in the trend, many governments and well-to-do individuals in Africa had to award sponsorships and scholarships to several students to study abroad. Maringe and Carter (2007: 17) stated that there is no comprehensive statistical data on the exact number of African education migrants to other parts of the world. However, there is substantial increase in the number of African students in many European higher education Institutions. Educational migration and international studentship in recent times have been attracting phenomena to many people across the world. Though is difficult to have a comprehensive figure but it is belief that African continent has experienced a steady increase in the last four decades, the number of students migrating for the sake of seeking post-graduate education abroad, predominantly in the OECD countries Spring (2009: 32). Also it has been reported that, the number of African students studying abroad has increased from 2,580 in 1970 to over 1.8 million in 2002 (Africa Statistical Year Book, 2002: 45). In the UK alone in 2002, the number of African students studying in various higher education institutions was estimated at 66,000 students. The figure suggests that one in every 15 international students comes from Africa (Africa Statistical Year Book, 2002: 45). The UK is the most favoured destination for the African students particularly those from the West African states. Other destinations sought were Australia, the US, Canada, France, Germany and New Zealand (Dzvimbo, 2003: 18-19). Scholars have attributed a range of reasons that could have contributed to this phenomena among Africans as far as education migration is concerned. For this, it is important to examine briefly some vital issues surrounding education and migration in the context of Africa.

Also according to the Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Nigerians have spent over USD1 billion annually in foreign education (CBN Report February, 2012). It has been reported in several literature that migration among Africans is related to lack of basic infrastructures in the educational systems of many African countries (Adepoju, 2008: 42; Augusta & Augusta, 2008: 32 and Rodney, 1972: 115). Adepoju (2008: 43) states that international students' migration in most parts of Africa is due to the deteriorating state of internal conditions, for instance, lack of basic infrastructure and modern facilities to meet the demands of their education systems. Augusta and Augusta (2008: 24) also attributed education migration among Africans to political instability in the region and lack of development in education and other sectors that can allow them to face the challenges posed by globalization and the globalizing world. On the other hand,

Rodney (1972) argues that education is deliberately underdeveloped in all colonized regions of Africa so that the colonial legacy of exploitation will continue indefinitely. Rodney further argues that the education provided was only to train few individuals in administrative education in order to serve the colonial power during and after the colonial era.

In 2000 a survey conducted by Task Force on Higher Education and Society, indicated that Africa has no more than 300 institutions that fit the definition of a university. By international standards, Africa is the least developed region in terms of higher education institutions and enrollments. While a few countries on the continent can claim comprehensive academic systems, most have just a few academic institutions and have not yet established the differentiated postsecondary systems required for the information age (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000:23). Thus, African students migrate abroad in search of education a tradition which existed since colonial period to present day.

This is a study conducted in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Gombak main campus, focusing on Nigerian postgraduate students; on push and pull factors and challenges of education migration.

II. Contemporary Education and Migration

Merriam Webster Dictionary (2009) defines education as a action or process of educating or of being educated; *also* a) the stage of such a process, b) the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process c) the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning. The concept of migration, on the other hand, refers to cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of personal convenience, without intervention of an external compelling factor (International Organization for Migration, 2010: 4). In addition, the United Nations Report (2006: 12) defines a migrant as an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, either voluntary or involuntary and regular or irregular. Under such a definition, those travelling for shorter periods as tourists and business-persons would not be considered as migrants.

According to Jackson (1969: 34) migration refers to a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence by an individual or group. The migration could be for a specific material reason or other purposes. Jackson further explains that permanent migration implies permanent change of residence while semi-permanent migration implies temporary change with a view of returning to one's native settlement or homeland. Tadaro (1976: 34) on the other hand, classifies migration into two broad forms, namely, "internal" and "external migration". Internal migration deals with migration within the borders of a particular country. External migration refers to cross-border or international migration that involves moving out of one's country with a view of settling in another country for a long period of time. In this case, the huge population of white settlers in South and East African regions and the presence of Arab merchants and traders in some West African countries during the Era of Trans-Sahara trade which has now accorded them the status of full citizenship are clear examples of external and permanent migration.

2.1 Education Migration

Scholars have been using different concepts and terms in referring to the migration phenomenon particularly of education migration. A time is referred to as international student migration or internationalization. There are also other concepts often used in relation to education migration, concepts like transnational education, cross-border education, international education, international student mobility, international mobile student, student migrant, foreign student education or foreign student mobility are being used interchangeably. All these concepts highlighted above are fundamentally the same and virtually all of them are addressing the same subject matter (Knight, 2003: 2). For the purpose of this study, the two concepts, education migration and international student migration will be used side by side.

For UNESCO, international students refer to students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are currently enrolled outside their country of origin (UNESCO, 2006: 178). In addition, international students are also referred to as the ones who undertake all or part of their higher education experience in a country other than the home country (Project Atlas, 2004). At this juncture, it is imperative to distinguish between ISM and other similar phenomena such as migrant education, emigrant education or professional migration, which may likely be confusing to people who are not familiar to migration studies. It should be understood that migrant education and emigrant education are centrally concerned with providing educational opportunities for the families and dependents of those who migrate from their country of origin either for economic, social or political reasons to settle in another country. Their migration however, is not in any way related to education or educational pursuits as the main motivator for their migration. Professional migration, the concept refers to migration of people who possess professional skills or training such as medical doctors, nurses, mid-wives, engineers, lawyers or teachers who decide to migrate permanently to a second country. The motivational factors for their migration are very much affected by better income and welfare issues. At times is also referred to as 'brain-drain' (Abdullahi, 1998: 31). The concept of brain-drain

was originally coined by the British to express loss through emigration of large numbers of skilled professionals (Altbach, 2003: 21).

It is a well known fact that education migration is a global trend and not limited to students from Africa only. It is reported that over the past 10-15 years, education migration has become an increasingly important aspect for the international higher education landscape particularly for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. It is estimated that in 2005 more than 2.7 million people (about 61% increase since 1992) have migrated to other countries for education. In this case more than 90% of international students have enrolled in institutions belonging to OECD countries with main destinations such as the US, the UK, Germany, France and Australia (Verbik&Lasanowski, 2007).

2.2 Globalization and Education Migration

Castles and Miller (2003: 23) in their study on globalization and migration found that the connection between immigration and globalization is so powerful and has been present for the last 50 years. Scholars had defined globalization from different perspectives. A famous sociologist Anthony Giddens(1997: 19) for instance, defined globalization as an intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa. Waters (2001: 5) sees globalization as a social process that creates geographical constraints on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and for which people act accordingly. For Robinson (1991: 1) globalization is a dynamic process of growing interdependence among nation states, with the implication that issues are becoming global rather than national. In addition, Ajayi (2002: 20) notes that the globalization process is facilitated by new knowledge and information flow. Knowledge has become the most valuable commodity in the present global economy, which is entirely different from previous international economies.

2.3 Impact of globalization on Education Migration

Globalization has brought a new vision of seeing students as human capital (Apple, 2000: 60). The vision and theory of human capital stimulated international student migration from developing countries to developed countries for a better education in order to strengthen themselves in the competitive labour market (Marginson, 1997:43). Habu (2000: 23) states that there are four particular factors that motivated this growth. Firstly, the globalization of economies and many businesses has created the need for those businesses to link with international education experiences via an international network. Secondly, the demands for broader cultural experience and language training have been increasing. Thirdly, the growth of expert knowledge has created an opportunity for international higher education institutions. Finally, an increase of income levels in some developing countries has stimulated the demands for international higher education service. Barrow, et al (2003) stated that the influence of globalization and knowledge economy has significantly promoted the trend in international higher education. Adewusi (1997: 43) in his book entitled "Impact of Globalization on Education", points out that globalization has affected education in two broad dimensions; commercialization of education and productive education. Commercialization of education refers to turning schools as avenue for income generation and modern form of investment where huge amounts of money are invested to procure modern gadgets and facilities with the sole objective of realizing a huge turn over. On the other hand, productive education represents market-force as the sole driver for education. People are trained professionally for specific productive activities in order to meet market demands, especially in present era of advanced technology of production and communication.

III. Push and Pull factors for African Education Migration

Adewusi (1997) argues that is difficult to most governments in Africa to provide all their population's with the modern high educational needs, it must look outward to meet the contemporary challenges. In most African countries, university education are becoming highly expensive and beyond affordable for the majority of the citizens. Teferra and Abatch (2003) posit that the inadequacy in Africa's higher education originated from the period of colonialism. Various colonial authorities in Africa deliberately embarked upon a policy of not encouraging higher education in the region. The colonial government adopted a policy of sending few individuals to their respective metropolis, notably, Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, German, Italy and Spain in order to acquire higher education. They were interested in training limited numbers of African nationals to assist in administering the colonies. Some colonial powers, notably the Belgians, forbade higher education in their colonies. Others, such as the Spanish, French and the Portuguese, kept enrollments low (Teferra and Altbach,2003: 23). Slaughter & Rhoades, (2004: 21) state that some view international students as revenue sources and cheap skilled labour particularly in the sciences and engineering. Meanwhile Maringe and Carter (2006) developed a model for African students studying in England, in their study they found that decision by Africans to study abroad was very much influenced by the push and pull factors. The push factors concentrated

on three important factors namely, politics, economy and home country capacity. The pull factors include international recognition of a UK degree, high quality education, safe environment, easy application process, marketability of courses applied and labour market viability.

3.1 Educational Dependency and Structural Constraints in Africa

One aspect that contributes to the inadequate, access and poor state of higher education in Africa is educational dependency. This involves sponsoring student from developing countries to obtain higher degrees abroad after the Second World War by OECD countries (Offiong, 1980: 83). Many Western governments, particularly from developed countries have been sponsoring students from developing countries in order to study abroad in various professional fields. The Australian government, for instance, introduced the Colombo Plan since 1950, the plan was supporting and sponsoring students to study in Australia until 1980's. The main objective of the plan was to promote interest and support for the economic and social development in developing countries, through educational training, trade, technical support and manpower development (NAFSA, 2001: 12). Rodney (1972), previous policies of colonial administrations in the African region such as the deliberate refusal to develop higher education, lack of access to higher education, inadequate funding, mismanagement and poor governance remain as inherited legacies in the region. Most African governments adopted and continue with the previous patterns of funding higher education in Africa. Others like Barrow, Didou Aupetit & Mallea (2003) attribute the inadequacy of higher education in Africa to structural policies of international economic regulatory organizations. Thus, includes the role of IMF and the World Bank, UNESCO and OECD countries in influencing, interfering and shaping most of Africa's internal policies including educational policies. In many instances, they encourage promoting only basic literacy education such as primary and post-primary education as the major focus in order to achieve only basic mass literacy. Another important factor that has recently been discovered to contribute to the deplorable condition in many Africa's higher institutions is professional migration or brain-drain it is reported that since 1990, Africa has been losing approximately 20,000 professionals in different fields of specialization annually (IOM: 2004: 46).

However, Altbach (2004:26) concludes that there are some political motives behind higher education beside economy interests of the developed worlds. Altbach, believes that political and ideological factors have been playing a crucial role in sending students from developing countries abroad for high education. He further claims that industrialized nations view higher education as another battleground for the "hearts and minds" in the world particularly, in Third World countries. Assistance programmes, scholarships, book aid, provision of foreign aid, and other initiatives were all seen as part of the Cold War political strategies. One cannot forget that national interests and agendas, on all sides, are involved in academic cooperation (Altbach, 2004: 32).

IV. The Duo Benefits of Education Migration

It is evident that education migration has great benefits to both the sending and the receiving countries. According to Kemp (2007: 23) the market for international students is one of the most dynamic of all world markets. The last ten years has seen such an unprecedented growth that governments from a range of countries now prioritize involvement in this market through their own ministries of education or dedicated international education promotional agencies. The potential benefits of having international students are linked to skill migration, economic growth, public diplomacy and more importantly to research and innovation for a knowledge society Kemp (2007:23). Drucker (1994) posits the concept of knowledge society is widely used by development scholars to describe the replacement or shift in traditional labour and capital as main factors to the production of knowledge as the most important and fundamental factor in contemporary globalized world. Ismail and Ismail (2003:34) stated that the transformation in modern society has made the role of knowledge greater and more crucial than ever before.

Robertson and Keeling (2008: 221) also observe that in many parts of the world higher education is viewed as a prime 'motor' for the development of a knowledge-based economy. Under the banner of this 'new economy', higher education policies, programmes and practices have been increasingly co-opted and shaped by wider geostrategic political and economic interests. In other words, higher education in modern times has not only become an important tool, but is a necessary requirement to obtain the desired skills needed in order to be able to compete in the globalizing world (Robertson & Keeling, 2008: 221).

The Australian government for example, has identified the international higher education service as the most profitable and rapidly growing export industry. It contributed AUD5 billion in 2003, and at the same time, created over 42,000 jobs for the Australian economy (NAFSA, 2003). In the US the international students have provided significant revenue not just to the host campuses but also to local economies of the host state from living expenses, including room and board, books and supplies, transportation, health insurance, support for accompanying family members, and other miscellaneous expenses (Open Doors, Report, 2010).

Gribble (2008: 25) emphasizes that the contributions that foreign students make to host nation economies, both culturally and financially, have encouraged major players to implement further initiatives to

facilitate the arrival and integration of overseas students, including substantial amendments to immigration, visa policies and procedures.

V. Malaysian Influence in the Trend

It is interesting to report that Malaysian higher education institutions are able to secure international students from many developing countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. As a result, the number International students coming to Malaysia has been increasing steadily since 2001 especially after the famous September 11, 2001 (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007: 28). The September, 11 or 9/11 event that took place in the US in 2001 has gave Malaysia a comparative advantage by getting more number of international students patronizing its education (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007: 28). After the 9/11 the US government has intensified its immigration policies, process and procedures for migrants including international students as a result that the student intake dropped with approximately 4-6% (NAFSA 2004).

The steady enrollment rate of the international students has motivated the Malaysian higher education sector in its National Higher Education Action Plan, 2007–2010 to project and target of 100,000 foreign students by 2010. For this, a study on international students was conducted in 2008/09 initiated by the Education Promotion Division, Department of Higher Education. The study indicates that as of 2008, Malaysia had 69,164 foreign students with a steady growth of 16.8% and in 2009, Malaysia had 80,750 foreign students with African students constituting approximately 20% (Perangkaan Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, MOHE, 2009).

The study found that the education migration to Malaysia has connection with economic, social and political factors prevailing in that country as a driving force, influencing education migration. It reveals that certain important factors such as affordable school fees, political stability, proximity or geographical location, relaxed visa policies and average living expenses in Malaysia have continued to attract a wide range of students from Asia, Africa and the Middle East (Perangkaan Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia MOHE, 2009).

However, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) there is a mix view on public perception of migrants as either positive or negative ambassadors depending on individual countries. A survey conducted across some selected Asian countries including, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2010 “On how migrant workers were being perceived by the local population” in those countries. The survey shows that the majority of the respondents believed that migrant workers were needed to fill labour shortages. An average of 80% in the Republic of Korea and Singapore believed that migrant workers made a net contribution to the economy; 40% in Thailand and 38.6% in Malaysia also felt the same way (ILO, 2010:19). However, according to the international Organization for Migration (IOM), there was misconception about these migrants due to distorted information shown by the mass media. As a result, this inadvertently affects government policy in dealing with migrants. One of the biggest challenges in this regard is what and how governments communicate about migrants and migration policy to the wider public and society at large. Informing and educating the public may be the single most important policy tool in all societies grappling with migration, since managing migration also involves managing how migrants are perceived in society (World Migration Report, 2011: 12).

The foregoing literature has addressed several issues surrounding education and migration. There are many factors responsible for international student migration. These factors include the political instability in Africa (Nigeria), economic opportunities in other countries, the impact of globalization on education, the emergence and transformation of economies and societies to knowledge society which compel a new look to educational system. In addition, other factors also examine the persistent inadequacy of higher education in many developing countries had also attracted the trend of education migration.

VI. Conclusion

The summary of the research reveals that the higher education in Nigeria suffers from numerous problems confronting the sector. Those problems were classified into two broad categories. They are basically attributed to political and socio-economic factors. The political factor has to do with the unstable political administration and poor governance in Nigeria, which led to underdevelopment of many institutions particularly, educational institutions in country. It was discovered that from the collapse of first republic between 1960 to 1966 Nigeria has experienced many different military and civilian regimes, all the regimes come to power with different priority. Unfortunately none of those regimes had taken the issue of education so serious like the previous regional governments that was sustained for only six years (1960-1966) that marked the systematic beginning of problems of higher education in Nigeria. Another major problem identified was poor funding, the under- funding of education by successive regimes had adversely affected the sector in all its ramifications. The budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria is not up to fifty percent of the UNESCO’s recommendation of 26 percent of the national budget. What the governments allocate to education in Nigeria was between 11 to 12 percent of the national budget which is far below what is recommended to boast the sector. The long time under-funding of higher education sector especially by military regimes has worsened the

entire higher education system leading to poor quality education with predominantly “half-baked graduates” poor quality graduates.

The research found that one of the fundamental reason that compelling Nigerian students to travel abroad for higher education is due to poor state of higher education in Nigeria. The poor funding issues had affected almost all areas of higher education institutions in Nigeria, making it difficult to produce capable postgraduates. Teaching and learning facilities were grossly inadequate almost in all the universities. Also there is problem of non-commitment to duty by some academic staff, the postgraduate student receive less attention from their respective supervisors. The research revealed that many senior academic staff engaging themselves in multiple part time academic jobs to the detriment of their primary employer.

Malaysia attracted many Nigerians because of affordable school fees, affordable living expenses, quality education, simple visa procedure and most importantly for being Islamic country as motivating factor to Malaysia. The strict visa policies introduced in Europe and America couple with the growing threat of Islamophobia in the West and other non-Muslim countries after the popular September, 11 event had also attracted many Nigerians to Malaysia.

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