

Globalization and National Development: An Analysis of Brain Drain and Brain Circulation in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

The brain drain phenomenon remains an increasingly devastating impact on the economic wellbeing of countries in the sub-Saharan Africa. For decades now, the rate of national development has stagnated because of the impact of brain drain, which is the unintended consequence and outgrowth of globalization. Brain drain/brain circulation, the mobility or departure of highly skilled and educated workforce out of sub-Saharan Africa to Western industrial countries, has been a concern to past and present governments as well to African citizens. This paper examines past and current trends associated with globalization, brain drain, brain circulation, and their impact on national/economic developments. This research determines and emphasizes a consistent long-term impact of the exodus or mass departure of skilled citizens on the rate of progress, quality of life, and global competitiveness. Based on reviews and findings, this study raises awareness on the challenge of both globalization and brain drain, and makes recommendations for balancing global developments in the interest of mankind.

Keywords: Globalization, brain drain, economic development, brain circulation, sub-Saharan Africa, national development, workforce and competitive disadvantage.

Introduction

As the world faces the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century in the wake globalization, countries in sub-Saharan Africa are grappling with the epidemic of brain drain and brain circulation, which has been impoverishing their economies and demoralizing the workforce. The brain drain phenomenon has not only placed developing countries in a competitive disadvantage, but has also endangered their economic development. Consequently, national and economic developments in sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Nigeria, have lagged behind for a number of years in terms of human and intellectual capital and have failed to measure up to the expectations of their citizens as well as the evaluation of international communities. Over the past three decades, some economists and strategic analysts (Edwards, 1998; Nnadozie, 2001; Olusegun, 2009) have evaluated internal and external factors impacting national, economic, and political developments in Africa, and they consistently determine that brain drain and brain circulation have had the most negative effect on the economies and citizenries of the countries. According to Kana (2009), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) recognized that the emigration or flight of African professionals and skilled workers to the West and Europe is one of the obstacles to Africa's development efforts and initiatives. A brain drain or human capital flight is described as an emigration of trained and talented individuals (human capital, human resources, or intellectual capital) to foreign countries as a result of national conflicts, unavailability of employment opportunities, domestic or local health hazards, and a host of other reasons associated with economic development. Studies operationalized brain drain in a variety of ways.

Research assessments (Rogers, 2001; Sako, 2002; Raufu, 2002) explained that brain drain or brain circulation could be attributed to when citizens of a country trained abroad refuse to return home, or when individuals who studied abroad and after completing their education do not return to their home country to contribute their knowledge and training to economic and national development. Furthermore, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa emphasized that the brain drain phenomenon is most problematic for citizens of developing nations of the sub-Saharan Africa where economic development indicators are exceedingly low or in a deplorable state. Kana (2009) characterized the migration of skilled health professionals from poorer to richer countries in the past as essentially a passive process which was driven primarily by political, economic, social, and professional circumstances of individual immigrants. Researcher Kana pointed out that past trends demonstrated that the demand for health workers in many countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development dramatically increased by changes as a result of population dynamics. This development caused some of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa to rely increasingly on imported or foreign labor, which contributed significantly to the failure of healthcare systems in a number of developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, Muula (2005) suggested the need for international trade which would lead to specialization, increase resource productivity, creation of employment and wealth, and generation of income. Edwards (1998) noted the role of global trade on economic growth applying a reasonable degree of trade openness, terms of trade, tariff and exchange rates. Wolf (2004) pointed out that the practice of trade protectionism is a better means for domestic economic growth, because it would encourage comparative advantage in international economies.

Globalization and Brain Drain

Independent researchers and academics (Thomson, 2005; Akunyili, 2006; Surdakasa, 2007) across social science disciplines consistently maintained that brain drain phenomenon has been the single most negative factor created by globalization, which has continued to impact economic development in Nigeria and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The Military Review (2012) noted that the continent of Africa is “bleeding” as a result of the fact that most well-educated citizens, skilled labor, and practitioners (engineers, doctors, pharmacists, educators, healthcare practitioners, nurses, scientists, etc.) have been departing from countries in the continent primarily because of poor quality of life, unemployment, and other environmental factors. The widespread impact of brain drain on African militaries, individuals trained to protect the citizens and national borders, has caused deplorable and agonizing situations in the countries of Africa. Military Review (2012) stressed that essential personnel of the armed forces are equally affected by brain drain as they have been moving in large numbers in search of better employment opportunities and livelihood overseas

Nigerian Budget Office (2012) described globalization as a phenomenal development which has affected sub-Saharan Africa as well as other emerging markets around the world. For example, the current Nigerian economy is seriously on the brink of collapse, especially as the crude oil price is fluctuating constantly and decreasing the petro-collar accounts of participating countries. Babawale (2006) noted that the ongoing trend of globalization appears premeditated on the concepts of neo-liberal capitalist principles resulting in anti-human policies of deregulation, subsidy removal, commercialization of education, and privatization of public organizations intended to ensure that collective patrimonies are sold by the government in the guise of non-involvement in business or commercial truncations. While the concept of globalization has been operationalized by different researchers, its impact and implication have far-reaching consequences. Discussions and analyses of globalization have often taken the form of advantages and disadvantages, and costs-benefits, and recent studies seem to focus on the effects which minimize the benefits. According to Acker (2004), globalization has demonstrated a rapid increase or ease of movement of human capital, products, services, and capital through many international and multinational boundaries to create a sense of interdependence and interrelationships of nations. Derived from the term globe, globalization has gained popularity over the past two decades because of its worldwide interconnectedness with seemingly hidden disadvantages to countries in the developing region of the world. Eboh & Ogbu (2010) traced the origin of globalization as resulting from the attempt to establish international collaboration and partnerships among nations of the world in pursuit of common objectives and interest for the ultimate benefit of establishing global citizenry. Based on Acker (2004) operationalization, globalization was interpreted as multifaceted concepts with a range of categories, which includes political globalization, economic globalization, technological globalization, and socio-cultural globalization designed for inclusiveness, equal participation, and engagement in the international marketplace.

Broadly speaking, researchers agree that globalization was conceived as a concept intended to eradicate marginalization of nations, elimination of racial and ethnic identity, including gender and other forms of discrimination among nations, thereby establishing the notion of global free market in which economic and cultural boundaries are removed or deemphasized.

Operational Definition of National Development

Over many years of qualitative and quantitative studies, the distinguished works of such communication scholars as Lerner (1958), Schramm (1964), Rogers (2003, 1969, 1962), Melkote (1991), among others, were extensively reviewed in the quest for an appropriate conception and operationalization of national development. Some of the early research considered development of African nations only on the basis of Western and European standards, criteria, and definitions. For example, Fejes (1976) pointed out that countries of African origin and other developing nations were considered modern and developed when their development format and structure closely resembled Western and European industrial levels of development in terms of political and economic behavior and institution, as well as attitudes toward technology, innovation, and social mobility and sophistication.

A number of other development scholars and social scientists view national or economic development as country-specific, meaning that development of a nation should be based on the participation of the socio-political and economic subsystems. Oftentimes, political, social, and economic developments are addressed separately in the literature, but it must be stated that these concepts are simply a supporting framework for national development which includes all of them. It was on this based that researchers Awa (1989) Beltram, (1974), Schramm (1964), and Mody (1981) operationalized national development for African context. As Awa (1989) explained, national development is a complex process that involves multidirectionality in its application. Although initial emphasis was placed on economic growth as determining national development, more recent analyses indicate that the concept has been extended to include, economic, political, and agricultural transformation of society.

National Development and the Citizenry

Emphasizing the concept of “a participatory approach” as a required strategy for development in sub-Saharan countries, Mody (1991) stressed that national or economic development must focus on strategy of mobilizing human or intellectual potential through access to material resources like good health, education, housing and food; and the creation of a culture and environment that guarantee freedom, human rights, and personal self-respect. Additionally, other subject matter experts Beltran (1974), Melkote (1991), and Schramm (1964) contend that national development is not achieved via an external mechanism or strategies. It is an internal approach for the improvement of human conditions that utilize domestic services and talents of indigenous people. Additionally, Beltran (1974) explained that the notion of national or political development is a directed and widely participatory process of deep and accelerated socio-political change geared toward producing substantial change in the economy, the technology, and the overall culture of a country in order that the moral and material growth of majority of its population could be achieved and sustained within conditions of generalized human quality, dignity, and liberty.

Globalization and National Development: Brain Drain and Brain Circulation

In their analysis, Marquardt & Sofo (1999) expanded the discussion of globalization by pointing out that global market or business involves the integration of national economic activities through trade, foreign direct investment, joint ventures, capital outflow, resource allocation and international subsidiaries, brain drain, brain circulation, and human migration. Importantly, globalization is a phenomenon that affects developments and interconnectedness between developing and developed nations in the establishment of human capital investment and cross-border productivities. For examples, several multinational organizations (Xerox, Honda, MacDonald, Motorola, IBM, and academic institutions) have established their productions and supply chains primarily outside their countries of origin. Several recent studies (Bello, 2009; Ikpamejo, 2009; Jibo, 2009; More & Lewis, 2010) concluded that globalization has demonstrated different phases in human, economic, and national development, and the current phase of globalization provides costs and benefits to both developed and developing nations in their quest economic and political relationships. To a significant extent, globalization impacts cultural and social developments of nations resulting in cultural and social imperialism.

Globalization and National Development in Nigeria

While several studies (World Bank, 2001; Salvatore, 2003; Babawale, 2006) concluded that the benefits of globalization outweigh the costs, Nigeria as a developing nation faces the following specific challenges – technological imbalance, international capital system, trade imbalance, international financial institutions, political leadership, insecurity, and environmental degradation.

In terms of challenges which Nigeria faces as a result of globalization, trade imbalance which was designed to improve trade relationship between nations of the world, the structure of between Nigeria and its global partners has been exploitative and imperialistic. As Ikpamejo (2010) noted, trading between Great Britain and Nigeria was unsatisfactory as conditions of trade were both condescending and abusive. The study also noted that globalization has impacted technological advancement with the result that a range of innovations were products of developed nations, which are used effectively to exploit and control relationships with West African countries (such as Nigeria and sub-Saharan countries).

A more serious impact of globalization facing West African countries since gaining independence from the colonial masters is brain drain and brain gain phenomenon. The challenge has been unanimously described as mass departure or exodus of educated, talented, and skilled manpower or workforce from one country to another, usually for better living conditions, higher salaries, and improved quality of life (The World Bank, 2006; World Health Organization, 2006; Yan, 2008). Regrettably, globalization has facilitated and encouraged departure of citizens from developing nations to developed world, because of the attraction of better living conditions with negative consequence on national and economic development. For example, it was noted that better skilled and trained Africans/Nigerians departed their countries to reside in developed countries of the United States and European civilizations. Essentially, brain drain has been the single most critical challenge which Nigeria has faced since its independence nearly six decades ago

Scope and Consequence of Brain Drain

According to The World Bank (2016), approximately 30.6 million Africans have departed their respective countries of origin in search of better living conditions and other associated reasons. While some of these African citizens relocated to other African countries, 90 percent of North Africa's emigrants went to developed economies (such as USA, Germany, and United Kingdom) for similar reasons. As noted in the Military Review (2012, November/December, P.50) "In 2004, 7.2 million Africans, 3.8 million from North Africa and 3.4 million from sub-Saharan Africa, were residing in countries who were members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a group of developed nations attempting to improve the economies of less developed countries."

A number of seemingly valid reasons were advanced for the departure of well-educated and trained Nigerians and other African citizens who were leaving their countries. A more compelling reason is the search for much higher income that is commensurate with their training and talents were offered overseas. Indeed, by international standards and income evaluation, salaries in many African countries are much lower, specifically for professions in the health services and related areas (such as physicians, and nurses), including engineering. The constant exodus of African citizens in health-related and associated professions is constantly driven by the realization that their economic and financial worth is much better outside the African continent. These underpaid professionals are also enticed by the security of their jobs as well as the dignity and respect for their professions. In earlier studies, Sukarkasa (1977) noted that for more than three-quarters of a century, intra-national and international migrations have been a prominent feature of socio-cultural challenge in African countries generally and in sub-Saharan African countries in particular. Recent economic analysis indicates that the continent had suffered from a consistent lack of qualified and capable manpower in nearly all professions that would aid national development. Nwaka (2011) acknowledged that the migrations of Igbo women from Southeastern Nigeria in West Africa increased immediately after the unprecedented Nigeria-Biafra civil war in 1970.

Globalization and Gender Migrations

In her doctoral dissertation entitled "International Migration of Igbo Women to the United States, 1995-2012: Brain Drain/Brain Gain or Brain Circulation," written at Howard University, Sussie Okoro (2014) attributed the inequality that exists among nations and the unavailability of opportunities for professional enhancement and personal development as instrumental to the urgent need for workforce migration.

This negative factor, according to the author, has deprived Nigeria and other countries in sub-Saharan region of qualified workforce to support and sustain national development for competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Sako (2002) acknowledged in Okoro (2014) characterized the flight of human capital as a deplorable economic circumstance plaguing West African countries for decades, and it has been a phenomenon that has consistently caused a devastating national concern to citizens as well as various governments since their national independence.

Although globalization has contributed enormously to the economic backwardness of developing nations by placing them at a serious competitive disadvantage, the inability to provide a comfortable environment to retain their trained and educated workforce has exceedingly compromised national integrity and sovereignty of countries in the sub-Saharan region.

Evaluating the negative impact of globalization on national development, researchers (Sako, 2002; Surdakasa, 1977; Olufemi, 2010; Okoro, 2014) characterized African citizens' flight (brain drain) as an unfortunate and deplorable factor affecting economic growth, competitiveness, and productivity. According to these researchers, brain drain grossly represents the total loss of highly skilled professionals from source countries to recipient countries (developing to developed economies of the world), which worsens development imbalance around the world. In other words, the tendency of migrants to leave their countries of origin for other countries as a result of the strong attractions associated with differentials in living conditions, opportunities for professional advancement, and the existence of environments that are comparatively conducive for peace, security, and professional/personal growth.

As Okoro, S. (2014) demonstrated qualitatively and quantitative in her doctoral dissertation, a new breed of Africans migrated to the United States in the past decade, expanding the scope of migrants described as the New African Diaspora, which her research identified and characterized as "The New Igbo Women in the Diaspora." This breed of immigrants was well educated, high-income earning professionals, and could be classified as a huge loss to African civilization. Contending that globalization has not been entirely advantages to Africa, Falola and Afolabi (2008) characterized this new category of African immigrants as comprising of the antinomy of those Africans who were forcibly or unwillingly removed from Africa during slavery, a practice that is manifesting or re-emerging as globalization phenomenon. Furthermore, Falola and Heaton (200) substantiated that a number of Nigerians and other Africans and their families have moved to settle permanently overseas, especially in the United States, becoming part of the brain drain, which is the negative outgrowth of globalization. These researchers noted that Nigerian population in the United States as of the year 2000 was 164,000, of which approximately 104,000 were Nigerian born. In addition, Okoro, S. (2014) explained that consistent with the migratory trends were the increases in the number of women who have departed Igboland, Nigeria, since the end of civil war in the country. The World Bank Statistics on Migration Characteristics of Nigerian Ethnic Groups (2010) described the Igbo ethnic group as comprising the highest number of internal and international migrant of the six major ethnic groups in Nigeria. A number of African scholars have recognized that the emigration of educated and professional citizens from sub-Saharan African to the United States and to other developed countries in the wake of globalization is contributing to the slow progress and development in the continent, which has become a matter of deep concern to development strategists and experts.

Concluding Thoughts and Recommendation

Evidently, economic and national development of countries in sub-Saharan African is suffering or lagging behind as a result of globalization with its attendant brain drain. The phenomenon of brain drain has increased considerably and appears out of control since the advent of globalization. While there are benefits of globalization in the form of expanded market-share, global consumers, multinational joint ventures, international subsidiaries, and global collaboration, the brain drain phenomenon remains a devastating challenge to the economic wellbeing of developing nations and seriously impacts national development agenda of countries in the African continent, mainly because of the sophistication and advancement of western industrial systems and technologies. Researchers Ahmad (2005), Surdakasa (2007), and Kana (2009) among others concluded that developed countries were gaining from retaining the best qualified workforce while developing countries were disadvantaged because of their inability to compete and to provide attractive professional environments, salaries, and other benefits to attract and sustain the interests of skilled and talented workers.

Based on the evaluative analysis of this research, it is strongly recommended that the governments of countries of sub-Saharan African should place more emphasis on providing a number of incentives, commensurate salaries, fringe benefits, better pensions, and job security in order to attract and retain their citizens who received advanced western education, training, and skills needed to contribute to their national, economic, social, and political development. Availability of these conditions will certainly reduce the tendency to seek employment overseas regardless of the attraction of globalization.

Table 1
The New Igbo Women in Washington, DC Metropolitan Area by State of Origin:

<u>States</u>	<u>Frequency</u> %	<u>Migration</u> %	<u>Cumulative</u>
Abia	60	24.5	24.5
Anambra	52	21.2	21.2
Enugu	54	22.0	22
Imo	64	26.1	26.1
Other Igbo-Speaking States	15	6.1	6.1
Total	245	100	100

Source: Okoro, S. (2014). Self-generated from survey and computed, using IBM SPSS Statistics Editor

Table 2
Factors Responsible for Decisions to Migrate

Western Education
Job Opportunities
Professional Growth
Visa Program
Joining Spouse
American Lifestyle/Sophistication
Human Security

Source: Okoro, S. (2014): Doctoral dissertation, Howard University Washington, DC

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