

## University Administration and the Challenges of Brain Drain in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses university administration and the challenge of brain drain in Nigeria. The paper argues that military invasion of the country's policy-making institutions, lack of adequate facilities/poor salary, lack of academic freedom, poor leadership, discrimination in appointment, promotion and insecurity are the some of the causes of brain drain in Nigeria. The paper further argues that the personality traits of the individual determine the extent to which the push or pull factors will influence his or her decision to migrate to better climate. The paper identifies inability to produce ground breaking research that will raise the profile of the university, loss of skilled workers, falling standard of education, loss of confidence in the quality of academic program, loss of innovative ideas and inability to produce employable graduates are the challenges of brain drain in university administration. The paper among others, recommends the creation of an enabling environment, infusion of huge capital to internationalize the Nigerian tertiary institutions at home in order to stem brain drain.

**Key Words:** University Administration, Brain Drain, Challenges

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### I. Conceptualising Brain Drain

Universities, according to Balderston (1995), are remarkable and resilient organisations with unlimited capacity to positively impact the developmental process in any nation. He further submits that financial stringency and conflicting demands on their resources have produced serious stressors within modern universities, necessitating their self-justification in a largely utilitarian age when knowledge is summarily capitalized for profit to researchers and society. With growing advocacy for Entrepreneurial Universities, it would be safe to assume that the era of generating and disseminating knowledge for the sake of knowledge appears to have ended abruptly. In Nigeria, there is serious concern about the direction of the country's higher educational system, largely on account of dysfunctional scenarios that have catalysed a phenomenon known as brain drain.

There is a chorus of agreement among stakeholders that the golden era of Nigeria's educational system is now in the past and they have very unimpeachable reasons to justify their pessimistic assessment of such a critical sector to the country's national development and preservation of institutional memory. The stakeholders nostalgically recall the late 1950s and early 1960s when the University of Ibadan, for instance majestically sat in 4<sup>th</sup> position on the league ranking of universities in Commonwealth countries!

Then, students who obtained the First-Class Honours degree from Nigerian universities travelled to England and other metropolitan European cities to enrol into terminal degree programmes without any form of scepticism or academic discrimination. These home-bred super-brains beat their European counterparts right in front of their parents and bemused teachers. They walked gallantly to the rostrum, carted away available prizes and were garlanded in a blaze of academic glory for their exploits. Very few Nigerian students agreed to travel to North America or Canada, which they erroneously believed to offer less academic completion than was available in Europe—especially the United Kingdom.

Those who were not privileged to travel abroad to further their education, simply internationalized their degrees right here at home and creditably stood the competition anywhere in the world. Then, the Nigerian tertiary educational system suffered no inferiority complex on the highly competitive global stage. Articles and books by Nigerian university students and their teachers matched the best global benchmarks without let or hindrance. That was the golden era of Nigeria's educational system—especially as it applied to university education. At that time, "the system prepared you very well and also prepared a place for you in the workplace and a status for you in society" (Anusiem, 2017). Today, 'increasing bureaucratisation' of tertiary education and

poor funding have conspired with other factors, (top of which is brain drain), to deal a near mortal blow to Nigeria's university educational sector to the shame of a nation. This is pathetic, because those who are currently presiding over the Nigerian educational system were beneficiaries of the "good old days," as we like to say these days.

We shall attempt to discuss this paper under the following subheadings: concept of brain drain in the Nigerian context, causes of brain drain in Nigeria's education sector: historical perspectives, challenges of brain drain in university administration and recommendations.

### **BRAIN DRAIN IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT**

In his seminal paper entitled, *Brain Drain: The Nigerian Situation*, Adelugba quotes the *Standard Dictionary* as defining the phenomenon "as the loss of skilled intellectual and technical labour through the movement of such labour to more favourable geographic, economic, or professional environs; the depletion or loss of intellectual and technical personnel, a gradual depletion of energy or resources; a drain of young talent by emigration." The scenario presented above is self-explanatory as it paints a grim picture of a country in serious academic decline because of several decades of policy summersaults and poorly thought-through implementation processes that have serially undermined the country's once thriving educational system.

For instance, in its NEEDS Assessment portfolio a couple of years back, the National Universities Commission (NUC), submitted that the existing 161 universities (private, state and federal), will require a minimum of 32,000 doctoral degree holders to adequately staff their faculties (Source: NUC NEEDS Assessment, 2014). This submission by the NUC was in 2014. Today, with 170 universities, the existing manpower at the present level is nowhere near the NUC's projection and is not likely to be met in the next 20 years or more; not with the hasty licensing of more sub-standard 'universities' aimed at creating 'more access' to tertiary education and scoring cheap political points on the campaign circuit by desperate politicians; as at today there are 170 universities in Nigeria. Quite unfortunately, privately-owned universities do not seem to have well-articulated staff development plans and are currently contented to harvest retiring academics from public universities. Question: how can a country that urgently requires more than 32 thousand PhD holders in its university system survive the raging brain drain?

The mass exodus of highly skilled manpower from Nigeria to other enabling environments of the world is a classic definition of brain drain at its most scandalous manifestation. The bad news is that while the benefitting countries of brain drain continue to improve their skilled manpower base, the victim countries, such as Nigeria, continue to suffer from specialized manpower deficit on all fronts. Recent figures show that twelve percent of medical doctors in the United States of America are Nigerians, while the citizen-doctor ratio in this country is about one to one thousand five hundred! America currently has one doctor to three hundred patients; yet, some of our best brains are in America and Europe.

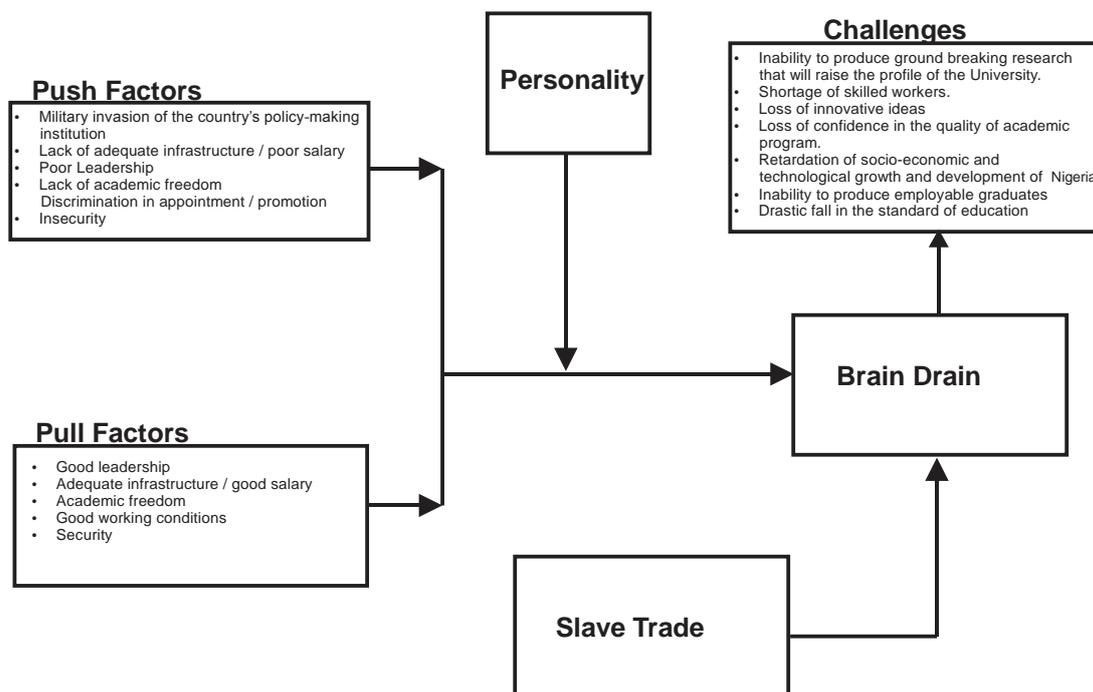
The statistics are not better in other European countries where Nigerian experts professionally ply their trade to general applause and regrettably to the detriment of their own country. Make no mistake about it, there are Nigerians who have a pathological hatred for their own country and would prefer to 'check out' like the fictional 'Andrew' who frowns at just about everything Nigeria. Such citizens will leave, irrespective of what is on ground here in the form of an enabling environment. They will blindly and selfishly argue that 'free movement of labour' across national borders is the true meaning of globalization of knowledge and skills. Nobody can beat that argument from a narrow perspective.

We must recognize that in a globalized knowledge economy, it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep skilled people in one geographical location, especially when their expertise is needed and better appreciated in other climes with better enabling environments that unleash their talent. Those with globally needed expertise claim that they are 'citizens of the world' and should not be confined to one geographical location on account of patriotic zeal that is not shared by the nation's leaders who fend for themselves all the time. Consequently, their countries of origin suffer the dire consequences of brain drain on a massive scale with no remedial measures in sight. Worst still, expertise takes quite a long time to develop and deploy to critical areas of need to achieve accelerated national development. The shame is that most Nigerian professionals excelling abroad and making solid contributions to the economies and scientific accomplishments of these other nations were trained at the Nigerian taxpayers' expense right here at home before they migrated abroad. The marked difference between 'home' and 'abroad' in this context is the existence of an enabling operational environment that allows Nigerians to excel in foreign lands.

Adelugba appears to be equating brain drain to other heinous trans-border crimes that should be tabled before the United Nations Security Council. But there are grey areas in his argument, because the hostile environment in which local scholars are subjected in their practice was wilfully created by our own leaders, some of who benefitted from the gold standard of Nigerian educational system highlighted at the beginning of this paper. How would other African countries that still parade ISO standards in their educational systems make valid contributions to such an UN-sponsored debate? Or would they be recruited to speak on behalf of Nigeria—

a country that is so endowed, yet wilfully beheaded its universities? Is it not a crying shame that Nigerian scholars are migrating to such other African countries that afford them an enabling environment to ply their trade? It is in us, and not in our stars that we have gradually descended into academic underline status (excuse me Mr. Shakespeare).

**Figure1: BRAIN DRAIN MODEL / CHALLENGES IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SECTOR**



The causes of brain drain can be grouped under two headings: push and pull factors. **Push factors** are the negative characteristics of the home country that is the reason for the migration of qualified persons from less developed to developed countries. These factors include poor leadership, military invasion of the country's policy-making institutions, lack of adequate facilities/poor salary, lack of academic freedom, discrimination in appointment, promotion and insecurity. **The pull factors** are the positive characteristics of the developed countries that propel individuals to migrate to such countries to enjoy available opportunities. These are the opposite of the characteristics that pushed people to migrate to the developed countries.

The extent to which an individual reacts to both push and pull factors is a function of his/her **personality traits**. This is because, according to Holland's theory of personality and career choice, people seek environment that are aligned with their personality types and engage in activities that utilize their abilities.

People are different in the way they think and react to situations. Circumstances play an important part in the behaviour of individuals. Some people, therefore, can continue to stay with an organization that has not fulfilled its psychological contract, while others cannot. This difference in individual behaviour is explained by differences in personality traits. Each personality trait is beneficial in certain circumstances and costly in others.

Personality traits are the thermostat in the brain, each regulating a range of behaviour and attitude (Lawton Graham and Webb, Jeremy 2017).

The Big Five most fundamental human traits are extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and personable personality traits.

**Extraversion** include characteristics such as sociability, engagement with the world, and need for external stimulation. Extroverts tend to be warm, gregarious, assertive, and might have ambition to seek excitement.

**Neuroticism:** People with this trait tend to be prone to psychological stress. They tend to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety and depression. They often blame themselves for problems, are sensitive to criticism and also, cope poorly with stress. They have negative view of the world and see problems others do not see. These kinds of people will always find fault with the system and are very likely to voluntarily leave the system the moment their expectations are not met.

**Agreeableness:** People with this trait get along well with people. They have more empathy for others, have fewer prejudices, and are accommodating. They are more likely to show allegiance to the system even when their expectations are not fully met.

**Conscientiousness** describes how well organized, hardworking and responsible an individual as well as how goal directed one is. The four facets that are included in this trait are responsibility (e.g. Punctuality, meeting responsibility, keeping promises); self-control (ignoring distractions, overcoming temptations); industriousness (e.g. Pursuing goals, working hard); and orderliness (keeping the surrounding well organized). It is reasonable to assume that people with this trait will not like to work in an environment that limits their potentials.

**Openness to experience.** People high on this trait are inquisitive, creative, imaginative. They have broad range of interests, are curious about the world and other people and are eager to learn new things. People with this trait tend to be adventurous.

Perhaps, we should add that personality traits evolve with age. As one advances in age, some of the dominant personality traits may be suppressed and these will likely influence the individual subsequent decision.

However, it is reasonable to say that there are people who do not exhibit a clear predisposition to a single factor in each of the above dimensions. Such people are considered moderate, reasonable and adaptable; they can be perceived as unprincipled, inscrutable and calculating (Toegel and Barsoux, 2012).

#### **CAUSES OF BRAIN DRAIN IN NIGERIA'S UNIVERSITY SECTOR: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Slave Trade.** Some timescale would be a useful compass to guide us at this point: Historians are quick to posit that the earliest form of brain drain from the African continent was the Slave Trade in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries during which hundreds of millions of helpless citizens were forcefully branded and sold off as merchandise to wealthy European slave dealers through greedy African middlemen. The most conservative estimates put the figure of Africans who made it through the notorious "Middle Passage" to the New World at about 300 million victims. Who knows; some of those sold as human commodities would probably have become celebrated intellectuals, inventors, traders, farmers, business moguls and allied professionals if they were not uprooted from their homes and set adrift on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans on their way to enrich other economies in Europe, America and the Caribbean Islands.

**Military Invasion of the Country's Policy-Making Institution.** Noticeable cracks began to appear on the solid walls of the country's tertiary educational system when the federal and state governments started paying very little attention to the educational sector in their policy thrust. According to Ibe (2018),

*...the economic squeeze of the of the early 1980s  
In Nigeria, consequent upon a global slump in oil prices,  
Put national loyalties to the test. People often talk of  
"going for greener pastures." In reality, it was more a  
Case of "stomach infrastructure" By some coincidence  
the countries in which they had trained were waiting  
with open arms to receive them. And so, they left, first  
in trickles, then in droves. For the receiving countries,  
it was like, "Did we not tell you to stay back here?"*

It began with the unexpected military invasion of the country's policy-making institutions with all the attendant rot that followed such ill-timed intervention in public life. The men and women in khaki arrived the political stage with their suffocating regimented way of doing things. Among the first to suffer from such command structure was the country's robust educational system which required flexibility, autonomy and academic freedom to thrive as it did in the pre-military era. The system was no longer able to design "degree programmes which would produce persons who are well-grounded in contemporary culture, and who have sound knowledge of one or more branches of learning and are intellectually well-equipped to make their own contributions to national development." (Nimi Briggs, 2006).

The military just lumped all the universities together and sequestered them under the suffocating grip of the Federal Ministry of Education. What is known today as 'brain drain' started when a few concerned scholars, who were previously used to unfettered academic freedom started checking out of the Nigerian university system to better climes that still allowed them to adhere to the cultural conventions of a true university. That was the origin of the phrase— 'brain drain' in Nigeria's post-Independence era with disastrous consequences for all stakeholders.

**Absence of research facilities/ Poor Salary.** The second wave of 'brain drain' commenced when critically needed funding dwindled to an intolerable point and university authorities could no longer stock their libraries and laboratories with current books and journals, including re-agents and cutting-edge technology to run laboratories along global best practices. To worsen a bad situation, salaries were made stagnant and further

eroded by galloping inflation that turned into economic recession and then the current compression! In time, the lecturers' pay could no longer take them to the next bus stop, let alone their homes.

**Lack of Academic Freedom.** The third wave of Brain drain came in the late 1980s and early 1990s—better known as 'the Babangida years' when a dehydrating World Bank-dictated Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and officially sanctioned corruption systematically and progressively obliterated the modest gains made by previous administrations on the educational front. Those were the years when self-styled Military 'President', General Ibrahim Babangida threatened to sack lecturers who were accused of 'teaching what they were not paid to teach.' Lecturers who operated under the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), were picked up in the middle of the night for 'endangering state security'. It was the direct equivalent of the maximum ruler, General Augusto Pinochet of Chile or Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines resurrecting in Nigeria! The academia became an endangered species to the detriment of quality research and teaching.

When the dust kicked up by General Babangida's misrule died down with his 'voluntary stepping aside' in 1993, the university system had been dealt a final *coup de grace*—a form of intellectual *hara-kiri*—as experienced academics trooped out of the country in search of greener pastures. Some academics were so impatient and thoroughly disenchanted with the system that they started offering their services to other African countries where the pasture was not that green—but just about anything that would enable them to get out of the rapidly crumbling system back home. No Nigerian scholar wanted the system to crumble upon him or her. Then, the exodus turned into a deluge!

Today, third rate foreign 'universities', especially those in neighbouring West African countries daily assault us with cheap advertisements about lucrative educational opportunities 'abroad.' In time, the phrase: 'Study Abroad', adorned billboards in every corner of our country. The preferred destinations range from Malaysia, Singapore, Hungary, Ukraine, Mauritius, Ghana, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Egypt, Malta, Gibraltar, Madagascar, Cyprus, Botswana, to Kenya and Uganda, etc. The hawkers of these 'quality' foreign universities promise much more than they can ever deliver compared to Nigeria's prostrate tertiary educational system. Recruitment of 'suitably qualified candidates' is usually done in low-rate hotels and brothels that offer high discounts as venues. The Internet is awash with foreign recruiting agencies which see Nigeria as the preferred happy hunting ground for the now popular 'Study Abroad' programme. The brain drain problem is worsened at the primary level because most students who travel 'abroad' do not return to Nigeria at the end of their studies, thus, compounding a bad case.

**Poor Leadership.** Leadership as discussed in this paper is seen from two perspectives, the external and internal perspectives.

i) **External Perspective.** Africa is blessed with abundant resources. Despite its large size and population, Africa is still one of the richest continents in the world. However, since the political elites took overpower from the colonial masters, they have not applied themselves to understanding what leadership all is about; hence the level of development in the continent is unfortunately at its lowest level.

The leaders have milked their respective countries dry and in an unbridled manner for personal gain. They have failed in government to the detriment of the interest of the people; thus, resources meant for development are now diverted for personal use. Omonijo et al (2011) observed that the activities of these leaders leave their countries improvised, culminating in economic collapse, low level of industrialization, mass unemployment and general discontent among the masses. These are resources that should have been used to create an environment that is conducive for teaching and research.

When leaders of a country are not development oriented, and are self-focused, the social, economic, political ills that precipitate brain drain will be a common place with implications of inability to build human capacity that can galvanized economic prosperity and development (Segun, et al. 2014).

ii). **Internal Perspectives.** The success of university administration is dependent upon many factors, but none is more important than the impact of its leaders. They make the decisions which determine both organizational purpose and the means by which that purpose is fulfilled. Their actions determine whether the potentials of the organizational members will be actualized or lie dormant or whether the emotional tone of the organization will be characterized by warmth and enthusiasm, or coldness and apathy.

One of the causes of brain drain in universities is poor leadership. Not all Chief executives of universities are good leaders. Some are bad leaders. They have the 'know -all-attitude,' abundance of ego, and pride. They are critical about others who do not share the same view with them. They surround themselves with people who tell them what they love to hear and thus, create in-group and out-group within the system. The in-group, unlike the out-group enjoy appointment and promotion, irrespective of performance. This type of leadership style only helps to promote brain drain.

Beyond managing human resources, university administration also requires prudent management of financial resources. Unfortunately, some of the University Administrators are bad financial managers. Sound financial management requires financial accountability; that is, the ability to account for the way the money is

spent to donors, Board and Committees, members and the people whom the money is meant to benefit. It also requires financial responsibility, not taking on obligations the University cannot meet; paying staff and accounts on time; keeping proper records of the money that comes into the university and money that goes out of the system.

Failure to adhere to strict financial guidelines often lead to the collapse of the system and hence brain drain.

**Insecurity.** Before we turn attention to the challenges of brain drain, it would be important to address one of the often-neglected causes of brain drain—security, or the lack thereof. It started with militancy attacks on the expatriate personnel of multinational oil companies for ransom. While they were here, the foreign experts closely collaborated with scholars in their areas of operation, which in turn enriched the academic curriculum and benefitted the IOCs. As insecurity heightened in the region, some first-rate scholars who feared for their lives joined the expatriate brain drain, thus, further impoverishing universities in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, the fleeing expatriates spread the story of insecurity in Nigeria back home—especially the Niger Delta region. Thus, further worsening the situation. The burning of poisonous hydrocarbon substances also raised health alarms that compounded the brain drain from Nigeria, especially with no end in sight to the heightened agitations. Correspondingly, the *Boko Haram* fundamentalists in the North East, scared away foreign experts that enriched the university faculties in the Northern parts of the country. Consequently, foreign scholars and students could no longer come on exchange programmes in Nigeria with devastating impact on the country's tertiary educational system.

## **II. Challenges Of Brain Drain**

The goal of the university dictates the tone for its administration. It determines the responsibilities of the central administration and the faculties. According to Babatunji Adedeji, the aim of: University administration is to ensure collaboration between the central administration and the faculty for the betterment of the whole institution and their immediate and distant environments. Furthermore, university administration is about ensuring a sincere and committed management of relationships that exist amongst the central administration, faculty, students and all other externalities (government agencies, suppliers, professional of all kinds, members of the public, employers of labour, various other institutions (for collaboration), etc., for the goal of producing employable and responsible graduates for the immediate economy and the global community (<https://www.researchgate.net>).

These relationships are difficult to maintain in an environment of shortage of skilled and professional employees.

Brain drain hinders the supply of the very best people who could have helped to build up a critical mass in any area in which the university intends to have comparative advantage. The vision of every university is to be ranked the best amongst the universities in the world in terms of teaching, research, innovation and knowledge transfer. This laudable vision can be fulfilled when the university has the very best of staff who can transform the vision into reality. This is a major challenge!

For instance, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings has the following as its performance indicators:

- i. Teaching (the learning environment)
- ii. Research (volume, income and reputation)
- iii. Citations (research influence)
- iv. International outlook (staff, students and research)
- v. Industry income (knowledge transfer)

How can a university meet the required staff-student ratio, doctorate awarded to academic staff ratio, in the absence of qualified personnel? How can the university's reputation for research excellence among its peers be high when such university does not have competent faculty to carry out their assignments? How can the Chief executive exhibit excellent performance in the absence of qualified administrators who can interpret the law and help in the day to day administration of the university? How can the Chief Executive perform well when those who are supposed to inform him of the financial situation and help to ensure that all expenditures are in accordance with the operative budget and in conformity with the financial regulation of the university lack the necessary skills and knowledge? How can the university be rated high when there is no competent staff in the Academic Planning Unit who can provide a range of management information and planning support to facilitate informed decision making, planning and policy formulation and the strategic development of the university?

The core mission of the contemporary global academy is the ability of universities to help industry with innovations, inventions and consultancy. In this time of dwindling resources, a university must have the ability to help industry with innovations and inventions in order to raise funds to assist the institution.

Meeting the above performance indicators in the environment of brain drain is a major challenge for the university administrator. There is no gaining saying the fact that brain drain has placed the academic

departments and other units of Nigerian universities in a state of helplessness and lack of direction. According to Adebayo (2010:2-4), “Many departments of Nigerian universities have lost the middle cadre of their lecturers to brain drain, while most of the senior and junior lecturers were left behind. The senior lecturers will soon retire and the junior lecturers who received little training are saddled with a lot of departmental responsibility ranging from heavy teaching to department administration and university administration.”

Beyond these, the absence of professionals who can develop and nurture the skills set and personalities required for modern work environment is a challenge. Curriculum development, for example, can only be developed by those who are abreast with the new trend in their respective disciplines. Unfortunately, in an environment of brain drain, the young faculty used obsolete curricula that are out of tune with developments in the work environment. The consequence of this is that they produce graduates that are unemployable. Also, these young faculty are unable to develop research proposals that can be funded by donor agencies in order to produce grand breaking research that can enhance economic and technological development of the country.

Today, a college degree has become a necessity for most careers, and a graduate degree is desirable for an increasing number (Ogu 2008). Parents would do anything to ensure that their wards secure admission into the universities. Between 1948 and 1962, enrolment figures in Nigerian universities rose from about 210 to 3,646. From the modest enrolment of 3,646 students between 1962 and 1963, the system recorded a student enrolment of 20,889 between 1972 and 1973; rising to 104,774 between 1982 and 1983. Five years later, in 1987/88, the total enrolment in all federal and state universities jumped to 160,767 students (Adesola, 1991:1). With the increasing number of universities, enrolment into Nigerians universities has indeed been very phenomenal. Today we have approximately more than 1,900,000 students in the 170 universities, with only 51,000 lecturers (<https://www.vanguardngr.com>, 2017 Universities Statistical Digest).

The implications of this phenomenal increase are that there are congestions in lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, residential halls, *etcetera*. Another implication is that with the large class size, coupled with shortage of academic staff, effective teaching, grading of scripts and research become difficult.

Education generally, and university education in particular, is an expensive venture. Historically, the education sector has always been given top priority in the National Development Plan. In the 1970-74 National Development Plan for example, education was ranked second to transportation. Out of the gross public-sector investment of about 2,000 billion Naira, education took a share of 77.8 million Naira (Oshagbemi, 1988:22). The actual capital expenditure for all the universities in the 1979-1980 session was more than 30 million Naira. This represented about one-third of the total capital expenditure for education that year (Oshagbemi, 1988:22). These were the periods when education was given top priority in the National Development Plan.

Unfortunately, those days are gone. With the downturn in the economy coupled with the increasing growth in students' enrolment and number of universities, the government appears to be overstretched. The implication of this trend is that statutory allocations to universities continue to decline from year to year. For example, in the 2018 budget, President Mahamadu Buhari allocated 7.04 per cent of the 8.6 trillion to education, much lower than the 26 per cent of the national budget recommended by the UNESCO. The challenge of having to maintain high academic standards in the face of declining statutory allocations, infrastructural decay and high cost of maintenance of existing facilities is indeed, one of the major challenges facing Nigerian university administrators today.

How can the university administrator attract and keep highly skilled and competent professionals in an environment of scarcity? How can the scholars produce ground-breaking research that can raise the profile of Nigerian universities and *ipso facto* generate revenue for them when those who are supposed to produce such research have left the system out of frustration and inability to provide the tools, they require to carry out their responsibilities? How can the university produce employable graduates in an environment of brain drain?

### **III. Recommendations**

Having identified the teething problems of brain drain that has badly depleted the Nigerian university system, it is even more compelling to proffer some workable solutions to the brain drain conundrum with the intention of reversing it into a brain gain programme that would mutually benefit those in the Diaspora and their counterparts at home in a mutually beneficial manner. The issue of brain drain could largely be addressed if Nigeria were to truly transit into a knowledge-based economy that would fully equip the workforce to make contributions to all facets of national development. Citing the 1998/1999 World Bank Development Report, Salmi (2008), recommends an “analytical framework emphasizing the contemporary role of four key strategic dimensions to guide countries in their transition to a knowledge-based economy:

*...an appropriate economic and institutional regime,  
a strong human capital base, a dynamic information  
infrastructure, and an efficient national innovation system.*

Salmi adds that tertiary education is central to all four pillars of the framework outlined above, with “a strong human capital base and contributing to an efficient national innovation system,” (p.2). It is only the presence of

an enabling environment that can attract talented faculty and students with global outlook back to the Nigerian university system. University proprietors must make huge capital infusion to internationalize Nigerian tertiary institutions at home and give them the visibility and capability to engage in world class research and teaching that would stem brain drain on the scale we are witnessing now. To achieve these goals, there must be government and private sector support for the universities that would appeal to Diaspora scholars and even attract foreign faculty and students, which form part of the criteria for rating world class universities.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the uncensored patronage of Western intellectuals at the expense of local scholars who are no less talented. When governments, industry and even university authorities fly in experts and shower attention on them, it creates the condition for locally based academics to migrate abroad and come back as “Visiting Scholars” with all the privileges that were denied them while they were here. Next is the perennial conflicts and ethnic cleavages that scare away academics to peaceful and enabling environments.

The public sector which is currently poorly remunerated should be made more attractive to motivate those who left on account of poor reward system to return to make contributions to nation-building. As Wosyanju, *et. al.* (2012) posit, young graduates must see opportunities and self-actualization in the public sector to be motivated to join. “Many feel stifled by the routine nature of public service, particularly at the lower echelons. Remuneration is also an important factor in retaining people in the face of increasing cost of living and sophisticated wants.”

Next is the need to identify and redress hostile institutional policies enacted by so-called developed countries to attract skilled labour from developing nations that lack capacity to compete for these experts that took so much taxpayers’ money to train.

A study by Chigozie of Lund University recommends the “...provision of appropriate democratic structures that will encourage the emergence of leaders with good managerial skills in the universities. Salaries and wages of workers should be increased to motivate and to maintain optimal performance,” (2014). To put it rather bluntly, brain drain is the third wave of slavery; except that this time, it is the intellectual version that is unfolding in Third World countries. Chigozie also recommends that the Nigerian government should embark upon an aggressive international diplomacy and high-powered lobbying to discourage the powerful and developed countries from implementing policies and programmes that will militate against Nigerian development... This has the potentiality of providing basic infrastructure that will render workers’ migration unattractive.”

All said and done, brain drain was instigated by a combination of short-sighted policies by the Nigerian government and external pressures associated with the marching forces of globalization. There must be the political will to stem and reverse the trend and the onus is on government to create the right environment to stop brain drain and even attract foreign faculty and students. It is time for the Nigerian policy makers to consciously embark upon a brain gain programme to return a vote of confidence on its educational system.

Nigeria has more than enough home and Diaspora-based scholars with capacity to dig her out of the educational morass into which the country is currently stuck. The Federal Ministry of Education, the National Universities Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, should work in concert with universities and inter-university centres to establish a credible data base of Nigerian academics in the Diaspora and classify them according to their specializations. Once that is achieved, the next step should be to identify those of them that may wish to resettle in Nigeria and give them, not just incentive to relocate, but create the same conditions that make foreign lands attractive than their motherland. For instance, the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology and all the near-dormant research institutions and centres should fund modern laboratories with cutting-edge technologies for the returnee scholars under a Diaspora Returnee Programme (DRP).

The Indian example could be replicated here, where mega-specialty hospitals were constructed and equipped to global standards for returning medical doctors and allied professionals with diverse expertise to tackle most of the known and emergent diseases that currently take Nigerians on expensive medical tourism trips abroad.

Specialized libraries could be stocked for their counterparts in the liberal arts, social sciences and education to power their research and publications, including sponsored conferences for a specific period. They must, of course, be fully integrated to work with their counterparts on ground in a truly symbiotic relationship that would enrich the learning and knowledge production processes without creating an ‘alpha academic breed’ that could create, breed disaffection in the proposed system.

The proposed brain gain programme would afford the Diaspora scholars who have no plans to return a veritable platform to be attached to such high-profile centres. Such Visiting Scholars should be placed on approved statutory honoraria to be transparently administered by the relevant government agencies with verifiable quarterly or annual reports and record of milestones to justify their continued sponsorship by government and other stakeholders. We are now at the crucial threshold where government at all levels must

take practical steps to reverse the devastating impact of brain drain and turn it into a brain gain programme for the benefit of all citizens of Nigeria.

Government can no longer watch with shocking indifference as Nigerian citizens continue to die in their thousands in their futile bid to reach *eldorado* through North Africa and other porous borders in search of greener pastures. The recent report of the resurgence of slavery by the Cable News Network (CNN), is another compelling reason to stem the brain drain. As it stands, current government policies create a hostile environment and make citizens to easily lose faith and patriotic fervour in their fatherland. Decisive leadership that is visionary and forward-looking is urgently required to dig Nigeria out of the hole into which it is currently stuck.

As a philosopher once said, it does not make sense to keep digging when you are already in a hole! It is the duty of the leadership class to reassure the ordinary Nigerian citizen that he or she can, once again, have faith in this country and contribute in a selfless manner to its accelerated development. That done, we can reverse the current brain drain into a robust brain gain programme for the benefit of all of us and to the shock of those currently mocking our parlous tertiary educational system. Let us do it; because it can be done, and we have the people and resources to do it!

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