

An Appraisal of Skilled Labour Migration in Nigerian Construction Industry

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Abstract

The inability of employers to get employable professionals to fill vacancies may have taken its toll on the Nigerian Construction Industry. This scenario may not be unconnected with the global demand for skilled workers and the search for greener pasture. This research identified why professionals leave the Nigerian Construction Industry in droves and explored the effect of these on project delivery in the Nigerian Construction Industry. A survey research design was employed for the research and the research objectives were achieved through the use of percentile and relative importance index method of data analysis. It was gathered that there was an external economic pull on the Nigerian Construction Industry as a result of better wages, political stability, social stability, health insurance etc. To arrest and reverse this development it was recommended that economic, political and social climate be made conducive so that qualified hands can be retained and those in diasporas can be encouraged to return home.

Keywords: Skilled labour, Construction, Migration, Nigeria

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

There are many Nigerian talents in the developed countries, which could play a vital role in Nigeria's development. This movement of trained personnel (skilled labour migration) from Nigeria to other countries (because of better opportunities, etc) is known as Brain-Drain (Anekwe, 2003). Brain-Drain is known as "The human capital flight". It can simply be defined as the mass emigration of technically skilled people from one country to another country. The online free dictionary (2011) and answers.com (2011) defined brain drain or skilled labour migration as the loss of skilled intellectual and technical labour when they move to a geographic, economic or professional environment which is more favourable to them. Barker (2003) opined that brain drain occurs when scientific; technical and leadership talent is lost through emigration.

Anekwe (2003) asserts that Africa as a continent has suffered maximally because of brain-drain. According to a survey, Ethiopia lost 75% of her skilled workers in the years 1980 - 2001. This mass migration of skilled workers is

showing extremely detrimental effect on the development of a nation. In the similar manner Kenya and Nigeria are also great sufferers of brain-drain. Experience shows that the problem of brain-drain is not novel in academic literatures, since very often references is made to this phenomena in discussing man power problems facing developing countries (Anekwe, 2003). Also recently the Nigerian Ambassador to Togo had stated that Nigerians constitute a third of the total population of Togo. Out of Togo's 4.5 million population Nigerian resident in the country are about 1.5 million (Anekwe, 2003) Gedamu (2002) notes that about 20,000 Nigerian academic are now employed in the USA alone.

Global demand of professionals may have reduced the roll of engineers and professionals in Nigerian construction Industry causing its shortage and as such it would be worth while exploring this area. Since it has been agreed that brain-drain in one country is brain-gain to another country.

Again the provision of infrastructure which is the primary pre-occupation of the construction industry is Human Capital Intensive.

Therefore, skilled labour migration may have had effect on project delivery.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research aimed at appraising skilled labour migration in the Nigerian Construction Industry

1.2.1 Objectives

- ❖ To identify the reasons for or causes of the skilled labour migration.
- ❖ To evaluate the effect of skilled labour migration on project delivery in Nigerian Construction Industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 What Is Brain-Drain?

From WIKIPEDIA, (2011) Skilled Labour Migration more commonly referred to as "Human Capital Flight" is the large-scale emigration of individuals with technical skills or knowledge; it is normally due to conflict, lack of opportunity, political instability, or health risks. Skilled labour migration is usually regarded as an economic cost, since emigrants usually take away with them the fraction of value of their training sponsored by the government. It is parallel of capital flight, which refers to same movement of financial capital.

According to Aremu (2008) skilled labour migration is not a recent phenomenon, but over the last few years it has cost much concern. According to the United Nation's definition skilled labour migration is defined as one way movement of highly skilled people from developing countries to the developed countries that only benefits the industrialized countries. Encyclopedia (2011) agrees with Answers.com (2011) in defining skilled labour migration as the emigration of highly trained or intelligent people from a particular country. When a highly qualified professional chooses to leave his own country for another, also for one or several legitimate political or economic reasons; peace and security for himself and his family, job satisfaction, education, better pay conditions, a higher standard of living e.t.c. throughout countries and centre of academic excellence which offer these attractions have received the largest numbers of professional migrants and these have, in turn, made substantial contributions, not only to the economic growth of their host countries but also to the scientific and technological advancement of humanity.

Skilled labour migration is common amongst developing nations such as the former colonies of Africa, the Island nations of the Caribbean, and particularly in centralized economies such as former East Germany, Soviet Union and Latin America where marketable skills were not financially rewarded.

A year 2000 study revealed that a number of Latin American countries had, over the years, suffered a considerable loss of professionals. As a percentage of each country's corps of university graduates, the following percentages lived overseas: Argentina, 2.9%; Brazil, 3.3%; Chile, 5.3%; Colombia, 11.0%; Ecuador, 10.9% and Mexico, 14.3% (www.bbc.co.uk/caribbean/news.com)

The same study revealed that during the 1990s, a significant number of those who emigrated from Latin America were specialized professionals, constituting the following proportions as a percent of each country's volume of emigrants: Argentina, 19.1%; Chile, 15.6%; Mexico, 2.6% and Peru, 10.0% (www.bbc.co.uk/caribbean/news.com).

2.1.1 Causes of Skilled Labour Migration

According to Rodney (1980), the radical Guyanese revolutionary, scholar and prophet of self emancipation, the entire African continent (including Nigeria) are underdeveloped because the west (Europe and America) are

developed. The reason he adduced for this is that the west plundered the economy of the African nations during the colonial era, which was to Africa's detriment. The colonialist invaded Africa using deception, betrayal, warfare and wanton violence. Europe (and America) also carted away the manpower resources of African nations, which constituted the working and active population, through the process of slave trade which was highly repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience.

The situation of things in the country compelled many Nigerians talents to flee to more conducive climes in their effort to eke out a living (Anekwe, 2003). Aremu (2008) asserts that migrants are tempted by significantly higher wages and brighter prospects. In his article "Causes and Consequences of Brain-drain" (Gedamu, 2002) divides the causes into three, namely: lack of employment and low salaries; political instability in home countries, thus they lose confidence in their government and future prospects for a better life while Chimanikire D. P in an article titled Brain Drain: Causes and Economic Consequences for Africa listed globalization and integration of the world economy; economic and political development failures; immigration and refugee policies in Europe and USA; and colonial background as causes of skilled labour migration.

Many scholars who have been sent abroad for further studies or who are once out in one way or another remain abroad leaving their family and work place behind with the hope that a better life can be achieved elsewhere, despite their well being at home. Expectations are usually not met as hoped; thus, obliged to seek assignment which derogate their lives and becomes ashamed of themselves to return home empty handed. Therefore, immigration flow due to lack of information and misguidance.

2.1.2 Effect of Skilled Labour Migration

According to (Suleyman, 2008), Africa, which has serious shortages of manpower, has been worst hit. It is said to have lost more than 50,000 professionals (doctors, university lecturers, engineer, surveyors e.t.c.) between 1985 and 1990 and to have been losing an average of 20,000 annually ever since. Wikipedia (2011) says Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia are the most affected by emigration in Africa while Anekwe (2003) noted that between 1986 and 1990 Nigeria lost 10,694 professionals from tertiary institutions alone; total estimates, including those who left public, industrial and private organisations is over 30,000.

Elsewhere outside Africa, 80% of Jamaicans with high school certificate live abroad, 30% of the workforces have left the island and as much as 18% of the gross national product (GNP) is remitted back home by this group of sojourners. It is clear developing countries are losing colossal amount of investment annually to the developed countries. Based on United Nation Integrated Regional Information Networks, Africa is losing as much as US \$ 4 billion a year through top professional seeking better job abroad, according to research by a senior economist at Addis Ababa University. Suleyman (2008), states the mostly affected countries by the skilled labour migration that the receiving countries are the winners while the sending countries are the losers. The receiving countries include the United States, Australia, UK and West Germany. The sending countries include Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ghana.

Nigeria has lost more than 1,000,000 immigrants to the United States alone. In the United States 64% of foreign-born Nigerians aged 25 and older have at least a bachelor degree. Forty-three (43) percent of foreign-born African living in the United States has at least a bachelor degree. Nigerian and Africans are the most educated ethnic group in the group in the United States. The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) notes that in Africa, the loss of medical doctors has been the most striking. At least 60 percent of doctors trained in Ghana during the 1980s have left the country. The phenomenon "is putting a huge strain on the continent", notes IOM Deputy Director-General Ndioro Ndiaye. To fill the gap created by the skills shortage, Africa countries spend as estimated \$4 billion annually to employ about 100,000 non-Africa expatriates.

The views aired by proponents of the Divergent School of Thought are that, the country of origin suffers a net loss because it funds the education and training of professionals who, precisely at the moment they start producing, decide to emigrate. Avveduto & Brandi 2007 in defining Brain-Drain: The Evolution of Theories of Brain-Drain and Migration of Skilled Personnel corroborate with the above sentiments by echoing that "the country that invests in human resources is not the one that enjoys the return of his investment". Conversely, the receiving country obtains qualified workers without having to bear the costs of training them, and therefore budgets for the West hence giving developmental assistance the wealthier western nations, which makes the rich nations richer and the poor nations poorer.

There is a general belief that drain tends to pull the 'best and the brightest from their home countries, the very people most equipped to help improved living conditions at home. This means a slow death for Africa. Devesh and Mac

Hale (2005) argued in their article “Give Us Your Best and Brightest” published by the Centre for Global Development, that the loss of institution builders-hospital managers, university department heads and political reformers among others had trapped countries in poverty.

2.1.3 Impact of Skilled Labour Migration on Nigerian Construction Industry

One central question that has caused a lot of controversy is whether skilled labour migration has positive or negative impact on construction industry. One divergence school of thought examines skilled labour migration from the perspective of highly detrimental effect arising from the loss of brightest minds from developing countries thus, weakening capacity for development. This has affected construction industry because a large proportion of construction firms in Nigeria are subsidiaries / affiliates of European, North American and Asian construction firms. Also the outflow of young school leavers such as fresh graduates from universities and other tertiary institutions that finished with construction related courses has distorted Nigerian economy and in turn its development, and also affecting construction industry. According to Gedamu (2002) the emigration of skilled workforce from Africa amounts to the depletion of the natural supply of intellectual talent and replacing this skilled workforce has cost her as much as \$4billion per annum. This is a staggering amount that could have been deployed to other useful endeavour to move the continent forward.

Ellwood (2001) asserts that the challenges facing construction stem in part from demographic trends occurring in Nigeria’s work force. It is useful to understand these national work-force shifts, as they provide context for construction’s specific work-force challenges. For nearly two decades, Nigerian state has seen a marked increase in both the size and educational level of the labour force as a result; the country has experienced strong economic growth. The depth and breadth of the labor pool has been driven by the large numbers of baby boomer women and immigrants entering the work force as well as a substantial increase in the number of college-educated workers.

Further, the percentage of industry like others will be searching for skilled individuals or individuals with strong learning skilled who can be effectively and efficiently trained.

In addition to these demographic trends, it is important to note that many industries also face a host of other pressing, work force challenges.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

According to Adaranijo (2001) research design can be described as a blue print, outline or scheme that allows a researcher to provide solution to the problem of how to generate data for his study, who to study and what to study.

Research design is also defined by Donald (1997) as a specification of procedure for collecting and analyzing data necessary to help solving the problems.

There are three main categories of research design they are:

- (a) Survey Research Design
- (b) Experiment Design
- (c) Expost-facto Design

For the purpose of this research work, primary data was generated by survey research design. This is because it took its roots from history of data and it also entails studying a group of people or item known as “sample” to collect and analyse data that are considered representation of bigger population units from them in order to discover some fact about them, their opinion, attitude and behaviour.

3.2 Sampling Size

This contains and denotes the element in the samples, which is a replica of the population. For the purpose of this research work 60 questionnaires was administered to professionals that consist of 20 Quantity Surveyors, 10 Architects, 10 Builders and 10 Engineers this is to investigate sampling and to get the percentage of respondents who agree or disagree on a particular question of the study.

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

The nature of the data and the objectives to be met govern the research method and the tools for data analysis. For this, major tools of statistical analysis that was used include percentages, average, e.t.c

Relative Importance Index (RII) also known as Mean Item Score (MIS) shall be used to determine the Relative Importance of the factors to be considered in procurement which may influence project performance.

Relative Importance Index (RII) ($0 \leq \text{Index}, X < 1$).

Where w = weighting giving to each factor by the respondents and ranges from 5 to 1.

3.4 Procedures for Data Collection

Here, questionnaires shall be designed or drafted in such a way that it will be easily comprehended by the respondent in order to get facts from them.

4. Factors That Led to Skilled Labour Migration

The table 1 shows the factors that led to brain-drain. The responses were ranked and it shows Political Instability with Relative Important Index of 0.8538 is ranked 1st there by making Political Instability the major cause of skilled labour migration and Low Salaries as 2nd with Relative Important Index of 0.8460.

Table 2 Indicated that Good salary which has the Highest Relative Important Index of 0.9480 which is ranked 1st as the biggest attraction for migrant workers.

Table 3 shows that poor workmanship with Relative Important Index of 0.8296 which is ranked 1st as a major effect of skilled labour migration on project delivery.

5. Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Findings

Experience has shown that the external economic pull is not only in the Nigerian Construction Industry but also on the country Nigeria as a whole. Political instability is the highest reason for emigration of many highly educated workers and this coupled with low wage and, in the extreme cases, unemployment amongst other reasons. On the other side of the divide, there are attractions which tempt workers to want to emigrate to the receiving countries. Chiefly among these is the pay cheque offered by the employers which are in several multiples of what a local employer can offer. Second to this is the fact employment relatively speaking is easy to come by overseas where as the reverse is the case at home. The effects of these are not farfetched in poor workmanship, abandonment, delay and poor material usage

5.2 Conclusions

It is noteworthy that for the balance of power and for the staggered development of the Nigeria Construction Industry. It is very important to stop the phenomena of skilled labour migration. This will help Nigeria to use all local skilled citizens for development and proliferation, by holding these skilled workers at their native places. It is also important to provide them enough work opportunities and good salaries all based on Good Governance by the Nigerian Leaders. And also Nigeria University Commission and Professionals in Construction Industry in Diaspora within and outside the country should encourage students studying construction related courses by organizing seminars for better orientation in Nigeria Universities.

5.3 Recommendations

- ❖ Good governance at the National and international level, transparency in leadership is essential and should be maintained.
- ❖ Offering higher wages for insiders instead of over estimating and hiring expatriates.
- ❖ Expanding a better educational infrastructure to prevent emigrants who are seeking a higher education abroad.

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Table 1. Factors that led to skilled labour migration

Causes of skilled labour migration	5	4	3	2	1	R11	Ranking
Unemployment	32	12	2	-	-	0.8220	3 rd
Political Instability	22	26	4	-	-	0.8538	1 st
Health Risks	4	20	18	4	6	0.6346	7 th
Personal conflicts	4	26	18	2	4	0.6920	6 th
Low Salaries	24	20	4	4	-	0.8460	2 nd
Lack of Information/ Misguidance	8	30	8	4	2	0.7300	4 th
Low Quality of Education	14	18	4	12	4	0.7100	5 th

Source: Field Survey, August, 2010.

Table 2. The biggest attraction for the migrant workers

Attraction	5	4	3	2	1	R11	Ranking
Creativity	14	18	14	6	2	0.7340	3 rd
Good Salaries	40	14	-	-	-	0.9480	1 st
Inclusive Industry	18	10	16	4	-	0.6888	5 th
Variety of Work	6	32	10	2	4	0.7259	4 th
Employment Availability	30	16	4	4	-	0.8666	2 nd

Source: Field Survey, August, 2010

Table 3. Effect of skilled labour migration on project delivery

Effect	5	4	3	2	1	R11	Ranking
Delay	22	18	6	8	-	0.8000	3 rd
Abandonment	22	22	6	2	2	0.8222	2 nd
Poor Workmanship	26	20	6	-	2	0.8296	1 st
Poor material Usage	10	30	6	6	2	0.7481	4 th

Source: Field Survey, August, 2010