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INFLUENCE OF MIGRATION ON NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS AND POLICIES: A SYSTEMIC REVIEW

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Abstract

Migration has become a challenging issue in the field of education and an ongoing crisis for many countries. The migration crisis and education have a reciprocal relationship in that the influx of migrants puts a strain on educational systems, particularly regarding resources, funding, and linguistic and cultural differences. However, education can play a crucial role in addressing some of the challenges associated with migration, such as the need to integrate, skill acquisition and cultural awareness in host countries, as well as brain drain in the countries of origin. It is crucial to investigate how education can both address the problems caused by migration and maximize its potential for sustainable development. This chapter targets analyzing relevant scholarship and aims to illustrate the broad patterns of relevant scholarly sources on migration in the field of education indexed in the Web of Science between 2015 and 2022, explore their collaboration trends, and reveal the conceptual structure of these studies in the context of international sustainable development. A bibliometric methodology is employed for the exploration and analysis of the publications; 991 studies on migration in the field of education are descriptively analyzed in terms of distribution of publications with their citations, topics at the micro level, journals, and the number of authors contributing to these papers. The results contribute to picturing the characteristics and collaboration trend of the scholarly sources on migration in the area of education as a challenging disabler or a driving force that contributes to societal development within the scope of international sustainable development.

Keywords: Migration, Education, Educational system, Nigeria, Educational policies, Influence, Globalization, Teaching.



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Introduction

Migration, in its diverse forms and complexities, has emerged as a prominent and intricate global phenomenon that transcends geographical, social, and cultural boundaries. Its multifaceted impact spans across various sectors including education, which is a significant arena that is profoundly affected by the waves of human movement. Migration has recently taken a central stage on the international agenda, presenting opportunities and challenges for societies all over the world (Mosler Vidal & Laczko, 2022). Sjaastad (1962) viewed migration in the same way as education: as an investment in the human agent. Migration and education are decisions that are indeed intertwined in many dimensions. Education and skill acquisition play an important role at many stages of an individual's migration. Differential returns to skills in origin and destination country are a main driver of migration. The economic success of the immigrant in the destination country is to a large extent determined by his or her educational background, how transferable these skills are to the host country labor market and how much he or she invests in further skills after arrival. The desire to acquire skills in the host country that have a high return in the country of origin may be another important reason for a migration. From an intertemporal point of view, the possibility of a later migration may affect educational decisions in the home country long before a migration is realized. In addition, the decisions of migrants regarding their own educational investment and their expectations about future migration plans may affect the educational attainment of their children. But migration and education are not only related for those who migrate or their descendants. Migrations of some individuals may have consequences for educational decisions of those who do not migrate, both in the home and in the host country. By easing credit constraints through remittances, migration of some may help others to go to school. By changing the skill base of the receiving country, migration may change incentives to invest in certain types of human capital. In addition, migrants and their children may create externalities that influence educational outcomes of nonmigrants in the destination country. This chapter will discuss some of the key areas that connect migration and education.

Nigerian youth constitute one of the largest populations among migrants travelling from countries of the Global South to Europe. Why are these young people deciding to leave their country? Are they aware of the dangers they may encounter en route? These questions formed the basis of this study, *Influence of Global Migration on Nigerian Educational and Economic Policies*. The young people who fell into one or more of these categories expressed fear of the future, and viewed migration as a survival strategy to escape an existence of poverty and powerlessness. The study also included youth who had left the country and then returned – either voluntarily, or because they had been deported.



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The first lesson learned was that most of these youth were unfamiliar with formal, legal immigration processes. More than half of them did not own valid passports, a minimum requirement for safe and legal international migration. They knew, however, that it was possible to migrate illegally, or, as they say in Nigeria, “travelling to Europe by road”. Most of them knew someone who had left the country illegally, using forged travel documents, or the services of human traffickers or smugglers. The consensus was that “the end justifies the means”. Most of the youth did not consider irregular migration a crime, but a practical solution that was “diplomatic” or “smart.” Their strong motivation to migrate meant they failed to see the risks of an illegal journey, making them easy prey for human trafficking cartels. Most of the youth did not consider irregular migration a crime, but a practical solution that was ‘smart’

Conceptual Considerations and Literature Review

Migration in Education

Due to its profound implications for individuals, societies, and economies worldwide, the intersection of migration and education has captured significant scholarly attention. Migration can be defined as the movement of people across national or geographical boundaries (Rees, 2009). It encompasses various forms such as ‘the movement of people across national borders’ called international migration, ‘the movement of people within a country’ considered as internal migration, and ‘the movement of people who are compelled to leave their homes due to conflict, persecution, or natural disasters’ termed as forced migration (Skeldon, 2018). According to the IOM (2023), any individual who moves across an international border or within a nation’s borders away from his or her typical place of residence is considered a migrant, regardless of the following factors such as the legal status of the individual, whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary, the reasons for the movement, and the duration individuals spend living or staying in a particular location.

Within the context of education, migration involves the mobility of individuals or families seeking educational opportunities in different regions or countries, leading to a diversity of student populations in educational institutions. Education and migration have a significant relationship because it affects social disadvantage, labour migration, and intergenerational social mobility (Bilecen, 2020). Education systems play a significant role in reproducing social inequality based on social class, gender, and minority ethnicity; in addition, migration and international mobility shape an individual’s possibilities in education (Chamakalayil & Riegel, 2016; Jacobs, 2022; Olowookere et al., 2022).



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Migration is integral to human development and enhances educational outcomes, with internal migration supporting the economy and increasing human capital in certain regions (Bernard & Bell, 2018). Therefore, the field of migration, academic mobility, and education has gained interest in international and comparative education, exploring the educational experiences and challenges different migrant groups have had, which can be used for educational practice and policies (Arnot et al., 2023).

The complex relationship between migration and education has been investigated from multiple perspectives. The influx of migrant students results in demands on educational systems, which necessitates considerations for linguistic and cultural diversity, equitable access to educational resources, and strategies for social integration (Benson, 2019; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2018). On the other hand, education serves as a vehicle for the enhancement of the social and economic integration of migrants into host societies. It also plays a vital role in skills development, cultural adaptation, and intercultural understanding (Martini, 2021; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Furthermore, it is often linked to the notion of 'social capital' because educational attainment can facilitate social mobility and enhance migrants' overall well-being (du Plooy et al., 2020, p. 2).

The impact of migration on education is not limited to host countries, and it also has some implications for countries of origin. The phenomenon of 'brain drain' occurs when highly skilled individuals migrate to pursue educational and career opportunities abroad, which potentially leads to the loss of human capital and expertise in the home country; conversely, 'brain gain' occurs when the return of skilled migrants contributes to knowledge transfer and capacity-building in their home countries (Gomellini & Ó Gráda, 2019, p. 168). The interconnectedness of migration and education underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities presented by these phenomena in order to formulate effective policies and strategies that promote inclusive and equitable education for all (UNESCO, 2020).

When it comes to educational migration or international students, there is a phenomenon when individuals pursue educational opportunities in foreign countries (Sironi et al., 2019). The link between education and economic development and employability (SDG 1, SDG 8, SDG 16), inclusive education and lifelong learning (SDG 4), social inclusion and justice (SDG 16), eliminating discrimination and inequality (SDG 4, SDG 10), and worldwide collaboration (SDG 17) have also been contextualised in the Agenda 2030 (Kushnir & Nunes, 2022; Nicolai et al., 2017) through education primarily explored under SDG 4. This interconnected relationship among education, migration, and related matters concerning sustainable development necessitates governmental and intergovernmental organisations' dealing with the migration and education issue



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with a holistic approach that balances the interests and notices the challenges and opportunities (UNESCO, 2020). By unravelling the conceptual framework underpinning the scholarly sources in the context of global sustainable development and educational migration, this chapter strives to enhance the understanding of the intricate interplay of education, migration, and sustainable development and to provide a basis for informed decision-making and comprehensive strategies at governmental and intergovernmental levels.

International Migration and Brain Drain

Emigration of skilled professionals, including educators, continues to affect tertiary and secondary education. Qualified teachers and university lecturers are leaving for better opportunities abroad, leading to shortages in staff and declining education quality (Okafor & Nwankwo, 2020). Internal migration—especially due to conflict and natural disasters—has led to increased pressure on educational infrastructure in urban areas. For instance, displaced populations from Northeast Nigeria due to Boko Haram insurgency have overwhelmed schools in safer zones (Adewale, 2021). An “imagined West” – an idealized view of life in western countries – is often at the heart of the immigration plan. Respondents generally believed that those who had successfully migrated enjoyed a better quality of life. “Those who migrate outside the country often live far better than we do in Nigeria. They have constant power supply, better weather, eat a good diet, and are relatively safe,” said Saturday, a 29-year-old unemployed woman. Their attitudes were also influenced by radio, television, music, and other popular culture and media portrayals of destination countries. “Been to”, the popular term for people who have visited foreign continents, especially Europe and America, conferred a level of social status. A returnee migrant at a social gathering was seen to add glamour and prestige. Information about destination countries – which was often exaggerated or inaccurate – came from informal sources like friends, relatives, and social media.

Methodology

A systematic review method was employed, examining peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, and institutional reports published between 2005 and 2024. Databases searched include JSTOR, Google Scholar, Scopus, and ResearchGate using keywords such as 'migration,' 'education in Nigeria,' 'policy,' 'brain drain,' and 'internal displacement.' The inclusion criteria studies focusing on Nigeria, articles published in English; and studies that evaluate the effect of either internal (e.g., IDPs) or external migration (e.g., brain drain) on education.



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Data Analysis Table

Study	Migration Type	Education Impact	Policy Discussed	Key Findings	Research Method
Adewale (2021)	Internal (IDPs)	Overcrowded schools, inadequate infrastructure	Temporary resettlement programs	IDPs cause strain on public schools, need for mobile education units	Case study (Northeast Nigeria)
Okafor & Nwankwo (2020)	International (Brain drain)	Loss of skilled educators, decreased tertiary education quality	Returnee schemes, diaspora engagement	30% of university faculty lost to migration in a decade	Quantitative analysis
Ibrahim & Adebayo (2022)	Both	Planning challenges, uneven teacher distribution	NYSC deployment, rural teaching incentives	Short-term fixes without long-term success	Policy evaluation
Musa et al. (2018)	Rural-urban migration	School dropout rates, pressure in urban schools	UBE policy	UBE not robust enough to handle migration-related disparities	Mixed-method
Balogun (2015)	International	Student emigration	TETFUND, scholarship programs	Students study abroad but rarely return	Survey-based research
Eze & Onuoha (2019)	Conflict-induced migration	Interrupted education, trauma in children	Safe schools initiative	Conflict exacerbates education inequality	Qualitative interviews

Discussion

The literature reveals that migration, both voluntary and forced have a multidimensional impact on Nigeria's education system including internal migration strains urban schools and reduces



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educational access in rural zones; international migration leads to the brain drain of teachers and students; and educational policy responses often lack sustainability and coordination. Challenges persist in aligning policy planning with real-time data on population movement, necessitating a shift toward more adaptive, evidence-based strategies. Nigeria's economy and high levels of youth unemployment push people to seek better opportunities, jobs and security. These economic realities, coupled with other variables such as political instability, rising waves of conflict – and now, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic – have led to an increasing number of youth in certain categories leaving Nigeria for other countries perceived to hold greater promise. Most respondents who left Nigeria illegally said they were completely unaware of what lay ahead. Many of those who came back recounted horrendous stories of their attempts to reach Europe. Hence, the policy response and education planning of Nigerian government is through temporary policies like deploying NYSC members to underserved areas and introducing incentives for rural teaching. However, these have had limited long-term success due to poor implementation and funding (Ibrahim & Adebayo, 2022).

Conclusion

Migration significantly affects education outcomes and system sustainability in Nigeria. There is an urgent need for integrated policies that balance population movement with educational planning, along with investment in educational infrastructure in both sending and receiving areas.

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