

Brain drain: The bane of human capital development and utilization in West Africa

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Abstract

West Africa, which comprises sixteen countries, appears to be the least developed in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Facts on indicators of development and human capital place the sub-region among the lowest, even globally. For instance, fourteen of its countries are currently ranked among the low human development category while human capital development activities in the areas of education and health are at their lowest ebb. Literacy rate in the sub-region remains low while health outcomes such as infant mortality, maternal mortality, and under-five mortality are still high amidst low average life expectancy. The Unemployment rate has been high, an indication of low utilization of human capital. Besides, greater percentage of the few human capital developed in the sub-region have migrated to advanced countries in search of greener pastures. This however, is not unconnected with several factors, such as poor infrastructure, high rate of insecurity, which is further aggravated by terrorism, high rate of poverty, inadequate industries, hunger, high unemployment rate, bad governance, low pay to workers in the home countries, low living standard, uncertainty about the future, economic instability, in addition to economic and political environments that are not conducive among other pull factors in the destination countries, which encourage highly developed skill manpower and professionals to migrate to such economies. It is on this note that this chapter attempts to examine how brain drain affects human capital development and utilization with its consequences on the development of West Africa, using descriptive information together with the review of relevant literatures. The findings suggest that brain drain, although beneficial in some instances, has had a negative influence on human capital and level of development in West Africa. It is therefore necessary to address the factors pushing these skilled professionals and personnel out of the sub-region and provide those that encourage them to seek better anchorage in countries of destination.