

# Educational Migration as A Bridge for Achieving the SDG4

**Uchenna Sydney A. Osuji**

Faculty Of Education  
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja  
[osujiojiugwo2006@yahoo.com](mailto:osujiojiugwo2006@yahoo.com)  
[uosuji@noun.edu.ng](mailto:uosuji@noun.edu.ng)

## **Abstract**

*Education of migrant children and youths is a very important aspect for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal number four (SDG4). It can also be used for the attainment of the economic and social benefits of improved livelihood, better health management, enhanced political participation, reduction of gender inequalities and promotion of life-long learning. A major purpose of conceiving the SDG4 is to have equitable and inclusive education as a necessary tool for developing inclusive and equitable societies. This correlates with the international human right's position to guarantee the right to quality education for all. It means that when migrants have a guaranteed quality education, the SDG4 target is partly achieved. This is a gateway to having inclusive and sustainable development and peace. The vision of the SDG4 is life transformation through education, which is a key driver to development in all aspects of life and in the achievement of other SDGs. The rest of this paper discusses education as a driver to migration, the SDG4, some statistics, why educational migration outside Nigeria and educational migration as a bridge towards achieving the SDG4.*

**Keywords:** Education, Migration, Bridge, SDG4, Achievement.

## Introduction

People's movement, both intra and inter country related have come to be a key element of the contemporary socio- economic reality of our time. There are different reasons why people migrate. These may include but not limited to such forms of mobility as migration for economic reasons, employment, higher earnings, better opportunities, improved services and standard of living. According to Devictor, the major reason for people's migration is to have improvement of their circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this, people also move as a result of displacement, which can arise from political, social and economic unrest, conflict or war, and disasters which can be natural or man-made. There is also the educational migration, which is the concern in this discourse. Educational migration can be described as people moving to study outside their countries of birth for a duration not less than one year. This includes the quest for higher education which has greatly increased as a result of globalization. Educational institutions in different countries now compete to attract students of international status. This has become market driven exercise for such institutions. This is why Scladhter and Knopp opined that educational services and the provisions have become an important export, cost effective industries for countries that have leading positions in the international market.<sup>2</sup> It implies that educational migration has generated much consequences which exert significant or considerable influence on the shape, development and the functioning of the outflow and influx areas. It has also impacted on the demographic spheres of the academics, cultural life, socio- economical life and the labour market. We are all aware of the fourth United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG4) of the 2030 agenda which is hinged on "Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life- long learning opportunities

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<sup>1</sup> Devictor, X. (2016), How does education affect migration? In Browne, E. (2016) How does education affect migration from fragile and conflict-affected areas? HEART Helpdesk report. [http://www.heart-resources.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/HEARTHelpdesk\\_Education-Migration.pdf?x30250](http://www.heart-resources.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/HEARTHelpdesk_Education-Migration.pdf?x30250)

<sup>2</sup> Scladhter, J, & Knopp, S, B. (2017), The Impact of Educational Related Migration on International Statistics in the U.S.; Cited in Alaluusua, S. (2017). Rural to urban migration and young female domestic workers in the 21st century Lima, Peru. Conference paper for Migrating out of Poverty: From Evidence to Policy, London, March 28–29

for all”.<sup>3</sup> This goal simply implies that we leave no one behind in education. If this is the case, we need to provide answers to such questions as:

- To what extent does education drive migration?
- What does SDG4 mean as regards to migration?
- What does statistics say about educational migration?
- Why educational migration outside Nigeria?
- How is educational migration bridging the achievement of SDG4?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This discourse is hinged on the causal model by De Jong and Fawcett.<sup>4</sup> This model which is broad and encompasses many components of other theoretical views of migration is called ‘Value- Expectancy’ model. This model can be summarized by saying that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the expectancy that the act will be followed by a given consequence or goal and the value of that consequence or goal to the individual.<sup>5</sup> We note two elements in this model. These two elements are goals and expectancies. It implies that the goal for migration in this discourse is education. The decision by people to migrate for educational purposes is hinged on the probability that they will achieve their goal. It also means that the desire for further education falls within the expectancy component. Therefore, the value derivable from the goal motivates individuals to decide to migrate and to realize the expected goal which is education. This model can be said to be relevant to this work for the fact that it explains the value placed on further education and the expectancy of the goal to be realized.

### **Method**

This work is based on documentary review. It means that information for the work was collected by interrogating existing documentary evidence. It is not an empirical study. Therefore, only existing documents were consulted as secondary sources of information.

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<sup>3</sup> OECD and GEMR.( 2018). Learning from Data. Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/ Global Education Monitoring Report

<sup>4</sup> De Jong, G. F., & Fawcett, J. T. (1981). Motivations for migration: An assessment and a value-expectancy research model. In G. F. De Jong & R. W. Gardner (Eds.), *Migration decision-making* (pp. 13–58). Pergamon

<sup>5</sup> Crawford, T. J. (1973). Beliefs about birth control: A consistency theory analysis. *Representative Research in Social Psychology*, 4(1), 53–65

### **Education as a Driver to Migration**

Educational access is very fundamental in the society. This is because people's life, opportunities, people's economic and civic involvement, the integration of migrants and the extent to which they overcome various forms of discrimination can be influenced by education. Education can be regarded as a fundamental human right. It can also be described as a transformational force for poverty eradication, sustainability and peace. It means that when people move, whether voluntarily or otherwise, they are advised not to leave their right to education behind. Most of the times, education provides the essential component which assists the government to develop the necessary capacities used for the support of migrants in their process of integration and /or reintegration. It also provides different societies the understanding of migration, why it occurs, how it occurs and its influence.

Younger people migrate for better quality education. Likewise, most countries have education as the main reason for migration.<sup>6</sup> It should be acknowledged that the more educated people are, the more they are likely to migrate for further education. Internal migration for the pursuit of higher education can be linked to differences in quality and affordability of the education. Graduates of post primary schools and high schools are more likely to go to universities, polytechnics and other higher institutions. These higher educational institutions are mostly located in the urban areas and cities. The people's aspirations and preferences for higher education cause them to move or migrate. A report across 53 countries shows that the probability of migration doubled among those that have primary education in comparison with those with no education.<sup>7</sup> From the same report, the probability tripled when compared with those that have secondary education, and quadrupled among people that have tertiary education. In most countries especially in Africa, the people who migrate from rural to urban areas are the more educated. Although these days, both educated and the non- educated migrate. This migration has neither pattern nor is it

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<sup>6</sup> Gavonell, M. F. (2017). Patterns and Drivers of Internal Migration among Youth in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. Oxford, UK, Young Lives, Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford. (Working Paper 169.)

<sup>7</sup> Bernard, A., Bell, M. and Cooper, J. (2018). Internal Migration and Education: A Cross-National Comparison. (Background paper for Global Education Monitoring Report 2019.)

normal. It is caused by insecurity in the Nigerian situation. It therefore means that education is the major prompter of variations in migration.

It has also been reported that when children migrate from rural to urban areas for the purpose of getting education, their educational attainment is higher than those in the rural areas where access to quality education is very low.<sup>8</sup> Of course there are exceptions. For instance, children who are subjected to child labour by their guardians in the cities are not likely to meet these expectations. Studies have revealed that many of the children from the rural areas who are taken to the cities are made to work as domestic helps for their urban households. This category of children belongs to the most vulnerable to non- attendant to school. According to International Labour Organization (ILO), about 17.2 million children aged from 5 to 17 years were engaged in paid or unpaid domestic works in 2012 in their employer's home. Two thirds of this number were girls.<sup>9</sup>

One can see that education has multiple influences on migration. The youths aged between 15 to 25 years form a group which most strongly use migration for education.<sup>10</sup> This is because they consider education as a route out of poverty and it also gives them the opportunity to improve their lives and that of their families' economic conditions. It has become clearer that education drives migration. Both of them can combine to have a multifaceted process which involves educational institutions, individuals' communities, regions and countries. This process leads people to develop knowledge, skills and competences in order to contribute to the social and economic development for themselves and their societies. Since education is perceived as an investment in the human agent, it means that every decision taken about education and migration may be intertwined in

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<sup>8</sup> Tamanja, E. M. J. (2016), Child Migration and Academic Performance: The Case of Basic Education in Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 7, 15, p 109—120

<sup>9</sup>International Labour Organization (ILO) (2018). ILO, UNHCR Strengthen Partnership to Promote Employment for Refugees and Jordanian Host Communities in Jordan. Geneva, Switzerland, International Labour Organization. [www.ilo.org/pardev/news/WCMS\\_634696/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/pardev/news/WCMS_634696/lang--en/index.htm). (Accessed 16 August 2022.)

<sup>10</sup> Browne, E. (2017). Evidence on Education as a Driver for Migration. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies P 1—23.

different dimensions. This shows that education plays a very important role at many stages of the individuals' migration.

### **Sustainable Development Goal4(SDG4)**

The United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development include 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The concern of this paper is the Sustainable Development Goal number 4, otherwise called SDG4. This seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable, quality education and the promotion of life- long learning opportunities for all. The question asked in relation to this is –what is the role of education and training to ensure humane and orderly migration geared towards promotion of international cooperation on migration and arising issues, in order to promote the achievement of the SDG4. To provide probable answer to this question, we need to understand very well the range of the educational engagements to the scope of SDG4. The overall purpose, targets and means for such implementation will be considered before linking them together.

SDG4 can be described as an offshoot of the Millennium Development Goals'(MDG) uncompleted education agenda. They were proposed during the United Nations' summit on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The 17 SDGs are interconnected goals conceived in such a way that success in one lead to achieving the others that are closely related. These are made possible by providing some clear guidelines, including targets which countries are required to adopt based on their own challenges and priorities. According to UNESCO, SDG4 is focusing on three underlying principles which include:<sup>11</sup>

- looking at education as fundamental human and an enabling right,
- taking education as a public good,
- focusing on gender equality as linked to a right in education for all.

The SDG4 is an advocacy for the commitment of all countries of the World, irrespective of income level or developmental status to ensure equal opportunities for the accessibility of quality education at all levels, including the life- long learning propositions. In this context, education can

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<sup>11</sup> UNESCO (2017). Practical Application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Preliminary Progress Update. A report presented by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva, Switzerland

be provided through both formal and informal(training) perspectives. In whatever environment education is provided, the key element is the quality. This is to ensure equal opportunities for both youths and adults to have access to quality learning throughout their lives. It goes to show that SDG4 is not only about formal education as a means of acquiring knowledge, skills and competences, training is also included for skills acquisition. The implication is that education is viewed as a holistic and comprehensive approach for quality, access, rights, inclusiveness and life- long learning. Whereas training is concerned with the activities which mostly involve transfer of skills. SDG4 has seven outcome targets and three means of implementation. To this effect, the key parameters of focus are access, inclusion and equity, gender equality, quality and life- long learning.

From the fore going, the link between education and migration is seen. How education drives and remains the key for the management of migration is also shown. We therefore have the responsibility to solicit for measures that tend to develop inclusiveness, responsiveness and resilience in the education systems geared towards meeting the needs of all migrants, especially those within the crises contexts which include Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees. There is the need to equip them for sustainable development future so as to prevent potential forced migration. It is hoped that this will help to bridge the gap for the achievement of the SDG4.

### **What Do Statistics Say?**

The number of people moving from one country to another is staggering. In the year 2000, 173 million people were reportedly living outside their countries of origin. This figure does not include migration within the same country. The figure increased to 250 million in the year 2015 and also increased to 258 million in the year 2017. In relation to educational migration, the United States of America has the highest number of international students in their tertiary education system. For instance, in the 2015 to 2016 academic year, the number was one million. The number was 740,000 in the year 2006. It increased to 1.6 million in 2010 and to two million in 2015. The focus of this discourse is the educational migration from Nigeria. Nigeria can be regarded as the number one country in Africa in terms of sending people out for the pursuit of education. More than

84,735 Nigerian students were studying in different countries overseas in the year 2017. This number dropped to 76,338 in 2018.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Year Net Migration Rate Growth Rate**

2022	-0.280	-2.780%
2021	-0.288	-2.370%
2020	-0.295	-2.640%
2019	-0.303	-2.260%
2018	-0.310	-2.820%
2017	-0.319	-2.450%
2016	-0.327	-2.680%
2015	-0.336	-2.330%
2014	-0.344	-2.550%
2013	-0.353	-2.750%
2012	-0.363	-2.680%
2011	-0.373	-2.860%
2010	-0.384	-2.540%
2009	-0.394	-2.480%
2008	-0.404	7.730%
2007	-0.375	8.380%
2006	-0.346	8.810%
2005	-0.318	10.030%
2004	-0.289	11.150%
2003	-0.260	7.880%
2002	-0.241	8.560%
2001	-0.222	9.360%
2000	-0.203	10.330%

Table 1; statistics showing growth rate of Nigerian student migration from year 2000 to 2022.

**Source:** [file:///C:/Users/User/Desktop/MIGRATION/Nigeria%20Net%20Migration%20Rate%201950-2022%20\\_%20MacroTrends.html](file:///C:/Users/User/Desktop/MIGRATION/Nigeria%20Net%20Migration%20Rate%201950-2022%20_%20MacroTrends.html)

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations (2013), Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision



- The current net migration rate for Nigeria in 2022 is **-0.280** per 1000 population, a **2.78% decline** from 2021.
- The net migration rate for Nigeria in 2021 was **-0.288** per 1000 population, a **2.37% decline** from 2020.
- The net migration rate for Nigeria in 2020 was **-0.295** per 1000 population, a **2.64% decline** from 2019.
- The net migration rate for Nigeria in 2019 was **-0.303** per 1000 population, a **2.26% decline** from 2018.

The Russia-Ukraine war may have impacted on this figure. The countries of interest are mostly America, United Kingdom, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, Australia, Ireland, Norway, France, Turkey, Poland, Estonia, Greece, and recently Ghana, Benin, China, among others.

**Table 2:** Top 5 countries or areas of destination for Nigerian students in 2013

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland	17452
United states of America	7011
South Africa	2575
Finland	857
Saudi Arabia	701
Total	28596

**Source:** The 2013 Revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2013).

The report of a study carried out by Sussex University earlier in the year 2022, shows that 89.87% of young Nigerians prefer to study overseas. This study used 4000 respondents across Nigeria. This result implies that, if given the opportunity, many more Nigerians will travel outside the country in search of education.

### **Why Educational Migration Outside Nigeria?**

It should be noted that the statistics provided in this discourse are not comprehensive. This is because it reflects only those registered and pursuing their higher education abroad. There are also people who travelled for greener pastures who are now engaged in either part-time or full-time studies. There are many Nigerian students studying in different African countries who are not included in these statistics. Every individual who wants to migrate in pursuance of educational ambitions outside the country must consider these three Cs. They are cost, curriculum and country. The question is why do Nigerians like to pursue their higher education outside Nigeria. The answer is quite simple. The educational system in Nigeria has deteriorated so much.<sup>13</sup> The reasons include but not limited to:

- long running strikes in Nigeria
- graduates from Nigerian higher institutions are largely unemployable
- lack of investment in education
- unqualified people superintending and making policies in education
- outdated curriculum which has no relevance to the realities of the changing society and demands of the current labour market
- general lack of faith in the educational system
- the educational environment is no longer competitive
- large scale corruption in the educational system in particular and the country in general.

### **Educational Migration Bridging the Achievement of SDG4**

It should be noted that educational migration is a global phenomenon which has so much economic, cultural and social implications. It should also be acknowledged that education drives migration flows. These are affected significantly by the people's movement. Education serves as a bridge which improves the educational status of children and youths. Educational migration also serves as a bridge towards achieving the SDG4. This is especially true, when 'No one is left behind' in education. The major role conceived for the SDG4 is to be formative in nature. It is meant to draw all countries' attention to the core issues which had not been available before

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<sup>13</sup> Olawale, S. S. (2022), Statistics of Nigerian Students Studying Abroad. C:\Users\user1\Desktop\MIGRATION AND EDU\Statistics of Nigerians Studying Abroad and Destinations – Information.html//Amason.co.uk.(retrieved 20th August 2022).

the year 2015. This is a clarion call to prompt all countries to have triggered investments in education and to have a robust national monitoring mechanism for education. This includes educational migration, equity, inclusion, quality and life- long learning. To achieve the SDG4 before the year 2030, we need to make sure that everyone including the migrants, the IDPs and the displaced children and youths have quality education. This call is not particularly for any country, but for all the countries of the world.

### **Conclusion**

Access to quality education is a fundamental influence to migration. It has influence on people's opportunities in life, their economic and civic involvement and their degree of integration. Migration is a prominent element that impacts all the SDGs including the SDG4. Educational migration helps people to develop knowledge, skills and competences in order to contribute to social and economic development. Since SDG4 is inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development based on human rights, dignity, social justice, inclusion, protection, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity with a shared responsibility and accountability, there is the need to encourage reasonable educational migration. Government should as a matter of urgency provide adequate competitive educational environment and policies which can induce continuous curricula reforms that change as the society changes. Government should also conduct studies to find out the major reasons why young people prefer to study outside the country, with a view to reducing the rate of educational migration.

### **Recommendations**

The Nigerian government should respond to make the teeming population of youths acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies in order to fit well into the globalized and modernized society, through the provision of access to quality education.

All hands must be on deck in order to improve the quality and visibility of the Nigerian universities so as to improve on their world ranking.

The carrying capacities of the Nigerian universities and other higher institutions should also be improved in order to absorb the majority of Nigerian students seeking admissions to these higher institutions and therefore meet the booming demand for higher education in the country.

The three tiers of government in Nigeria should make adequate strategies to create jobs for the graduates of the higher institutions.

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