

Relegation of Merit System and Politicization of Appointments: Escalation of Young African Migration to Europe

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Abstract

This article seeks to address the relegation of merit system and the politicization of appointments that propel young and intelligent Africans to migrate to Europe and other developed countries. There is no gainsaying that about 95 percent of young Africans travelling to Europe and other developed countries is for economic prosperity occasioned by job offers base on merit. It is unfortunate that African continent that is rich in both human and natural resources yet most qualified young Africans cannot secure jobs base on merit despite their professional competence and expertise. This is the bane on African development. The article emphasized the negative impact and the pains young luckless Africans travelling to Europe through the Mediterranean sea without proper documents where many have lost their lives. The article proffered solid recommendations to ending this social problem of young Africans migrating out of the continent to include, the enforcement of the African Union Migration Policy Framework (2018-2027), the workability of the justice system to prosecute any person found wonton to have breached the law pertaining to appointments and relegation of merits.

Keywords: Migration, Merit System, Politicization of Appointments and Africa

1.1 Introduction

Africans have the best brains and intelligent people in the world, unfortunately most of these bright minds are in Europe and other continents of the world. There is no gain saying that in sports one can find Africans with traceable African descent representing European countries rather than their countries of origin. This is mostly done when the managers of talents cannot manage talents and select talents based on merits, but allow politics to hold sway on representation. This is the greatest bane to the deficit of manpower in Africa. According to Emmanuel and Inmpey (2019) posit that, one of the persistent claims made against civil service in Nigeria over the past several decades has been that the civil service has been politicized. The exact meaning of the term is often not specified, but the general sense is that members of the civil service now pay greater attention to politicians than they did in the past. To add to this malady, it appears that politicians in elective offices are investing greater time and energy in ensuring that the members of the public service are compatible with their own partisan policy preference (Onwe, Abah and Nwoku, 2015). At the most basic level by politicization of the public sector, it means and relate the substitution of political criteria over the merit adherence criteria in recruitment selection, retention, promotion, reward and discipline of members of the public service to read the individualism nature of human being with political undertone (Oyedeyi, 2016).

Political control is supposed to bring development in the entire Africa having moved from military regimes to civilian administration. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case because politicization of job placements and relegation of merit system are responsible for injustice and

the escalation of young Africans migrating to Europe and other continents where merit system is enhanced with all resentful alacrity. If a person with the requisite skills and qualifications cannot secure jobs in his home country due to the fact that he knows nobody in the helm of affair of government that can influence his job placement. This act is tantamount to injustice, discrimination and stigmatization. Political injustice and relegation of merit is responsible for most of the political crises in Africa, military coups which is an aberration and the current massive migration of African descent. Using the Nigerian scenario as a point of departure, Emmanuel and Inmpey (2019) stated that, the Nigerian civil service has been highly politicized due to numerous factors, ranging from the form of government in practice (Presidential system) whereby appointments are done by elected office holders, that is the president, governors, local government chairmen and or authorities authorized by them. They further stated laws such as chapter 11 section 14, subsection 3 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 which lay emphasis on the federal character principle have consequently made appointments and recruitments into the federal, state and local government in Nigeria to be purely based on political patronage rather than merit. Associated with such cankerworm of the relegation of merit and politicization of appointment, the syndrome is the appointment of wrong persons that are without the requisite and desired skills, which is using square pegs in a round hole in the name of party affiliation, tribalism, nepotism, God-fathers among others. This is making the economy to be in a state of regret (Nnamani, 2009). A continent that relegates merits system and idolized political patronage would have a catastrophic economy and visibly low productivity in all ramifications. The resultant impact is the scourge of poverty glaring in the faces of Africans, poverty of infrastructure, energy poverty and the seemingly massive migration of young Africans with competent skills to other continents ready to accept them strictly on merit.

Most times, the young Africans migrating to Europe and other continents may not have the financial resources or required documents to travel. They resort to using illegal routes that can cost their lives. Television footages have shown young African migrants traveling to Europe through the Sahara Desert and Atlantic Ocean. These routes have cost lives of young Africans and brought pains and regret to families back home in Africa. The Arab spring of 2011 in Africa started when a young man who could not secure job in Tunisia after many years of graduation resorted to setting himself ablaze when he was harassed by security agents. Political patronage and relegation of merit in appointments have triggered the migration of young Africans with skills out of the continents. For Nwatu (2012) the politicization of appointments has resulted in “cake sharing psychosis and ascription”. Essentially, the politicization centered more on benefits and reward than in contribution towards high productivity and economic development. In Nigeria, the politics of appointments and the relegation of merits allows a law graduate to be appointed as the minister of power and housing because of prebendalism, political patronage and federal character. The aftermath of all these political issues that surround recruitments and appointments is low productivity and value basterism. Emphasizing on value and enthronement of merit in appointments, Nnamani (2009) maintained that, the strength and durability of the development or civilization build depend on the kind and quality of the value they exhibit or extol. This is the reasons why the political leadership of Africa must rise up to task of enthroning merit in appointments in order to give young Africans with skills, commitments and talents to have a sense of belonging and imbibing the spirit of pan-Africanism in them.

What then is politicization of appointment?

This is when people with requisite skills and qualifications are denied appointments into an advertised position due to them not having connection or influence from influential people in power or government. While relegation of merit system is when merit as it relates to set standards or rules is breached in order to favour the unqualified into appointments. This is what is obtainable in Africa and has escalated young Africans to find their way through legitimate and illegal means of venturing abroad where their skills are commended and utilized. The quest for African youth and those capable and ready to work has given developed countries with deficits

in skills to throw their dragnets under the guise of free visa lottery and unfounded scholarship to attracts the talents of young Africans to these countries. Not securing jobs as at when due is capable of rendering one poor, thus any available escape route out of joblessness and poverty would be utilized. While there is a general consensus that migration involves movement and crossing of borders, there is no agreement on the time frame which marks the end of migration. For this reason, migration is conceptualized from divergent perspective depending on the dominant interest (Dulo, 2022). International Organization for Migration (IOM) contends that migration refers to the movement of a person or people from their place of usual residence whether within a country or across international borders either temporarily or permanently for various reasons.

Critical issues as it relates to young Africans migrating to Europe

The current migration of Africans to Europe and North America evokes trepidation and fear among the citizens of European countries and their counter parts in America (Dulo, 2022). Despite clear lack of objectivity of the migration discourses, it continues to frame and condition migration policy responses and governance. While it is true that a sizable number of Africans are fleeing political persecution and violence in their home countries, a large proportion is perceived to be searching for economic opportunities (greener pastures) to better their lives and that of their relatives (Dulo, 2022). The bulk of young Africans leaving the continent for a better place and opportunities cannot be overemphasize, whereas Africa is termed the richest continent in the world with huge mineral deposit and abundant human resources. But poor leadership and relegation of the merit system and the politicization of appointments are making job placements quite difficult for young intelligent Africans who possess the requisite skills that can turn the entire Africa into the continent of destination for Europeans and others. But when will that time be? This article intends to address the politicization of job appointments and relegation of merit in Africa.

African countries that relegate merit system and politicization of appointments are product of corruption rigged political system. The story of election malpractice is quite visible in Africa. Election malpractice have brought massive acrimony and violence resulting in the death of both young and old. The post-election violence of 2007 and 2008 in Kenya are still fresh in the minds of Africans that claimed the lives of over 1,100 Kenyans and displaced another 650,000 (Stefan, 2022). Violence, ethnic tension and accusation of police abuse and vote rigging marred Kenya's democratic exercise even in relatively stable 2002 and 2003 elections (Stefan, 2022). For Adejumobi (2000) explained that, after about a decade in which the process of political renewal began in Africa, the democratic project appears to be in crisis in most African states. There seems to be a gradual but dangerous re-institutionalization of autocratic and authoritarian regimes clad in democratic garb. The scholar further posited that in some cases, yesterday's despots and military tyrants have resurfaced as today's "born-again" democrats to re-establish or perpetuate their rule, while in others a new genre of building autocrats is emerging (Adejumobi, 1998, Decalo, 1994).

Elections are supposed to produced political leadership strictly on merits in order to allow meritocracy to run the processes of job placement and appointments for only the competent. It is unfortunate that young Africans with the spirit of Pan Africanism are trapped in the quagmire of induced unemployment, poverty and starvation in the midst of wealth and natural resources. This is the reason why the justice system in Europe and other developed countries dangle a sharp axe on any perpetrator of election malpractice. Leadership is a process and the process must be characterized with merit and competence in order to drive political and economic development. According to the former presidential candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria, Mr. Peter Obi said that "Nigeria is not poor but poor leadership has made it poor". This can be attributed to the African continent that is the richest among other continents in terms of natural resources, but the people of Africa are poor which has prompted young people to seek for better lives elsewhere amidst the risk involved in travelling without the

required documents. In fact, the influx of young Africans seeking visa to travelled to Europe, America and other developed countries is alarming which has caused the visa processes quite cumbersome and difficult. The difficulty in processing visa to travel to Europe has caused young Africans to vehemently create an alternative dangerous rout that have cost their lives and properties. Desmond (2014) explained that Africa is said to be one of the most youthful continents on earth, with at least 75% of its population under the age of 35 and hungry for economic success and prosperity. The scholar maintained that, the rising number of Africans mostly young people, making the hazardous trip across the Mediterranean in a desperate bid to enter Europe illegally is of utmost concern. Using illegal route like the Mediterranean Sea to venture into migration has caused serious devastation to the continent in terms of the large number of youths that have died in the quest to cross the sea to Europe

According to a report released by the International Office of Migration (2024), since 2000, over 40,000 mainly young people have lost their lives as they try to illegally cross over into Europe from North African countries along the Mediterranean Sea. During the same period, over 3000 died in the Sahara Desert and Indian ocean. The International Office of Migration revealed that these victims were part of “an epidemic of crime and victimization”. The authorities in Italy which is one of the main destinations for migrants from across the Mediterranean Sea, have said that the rising wave of illegal migration has reached “Biblical population” (Desmond, 2014). In 2013, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some 63,000 not just from Sub-Sahara Africa made dangerous crossing. In the last six months of this year over 60,000 had already reached Italy and its Coast. Guard intercepts boats crammed with illegal migrants almost on daily basis. The International Office of Migration Report, compiled under the Missing Migrant Project, said Europe was the World’s most dangerous destination for “irregular” migration, costing the lives of over 3,000 migrants since May 2014. Besides country fatalities, the Missing Migrant Project is part of a broader effort to use social media to engage communities around the world (Desmond, 2014). According to the International Office of Migration Report (2014) the annual number of migrant deaths and disappearances in the Mediterranean jumped from 2,048 in 2021 to 2,411 in 2022 and 3,041 by the end of 2023.

This article is on relegation of merit system and politicization of appointments which propelled the escalation of young African migration. This article seeks to address the unpleasant situation that have escalated the migration of young talented Africans to Europe and other continents in order for the glory of Africa to be restored in order for the youths to be proud of Africa to stay, live and not to migrate for the sake of opportunities and greener pastures when actually there are greater opportunities in Africa if meritocracy and depolitisization of appointments is maintained.

Consequences of relegation of merit system in Job placement in Africa

A compromised system that relegates merit and allow incompetence and injustice to thrive is capable of deepening induced poverty, unemployment, poor justice system and a failed state. The effect of this maladministration is for the bright brains to plan for survival regardless of whatever risk that is involve. The implication of relegating merit is damming to the entire continent. The first consequence that the African continent is being confronted with is brain drain. Some of the reasons why young and vibrant Africans with requisite skills are leaving the continent are economic opportunities including new and better jobs characterized with merit in terms of appointments, access to housing and healthcare among others.

Romuald (2016) explained that in Sub-Sahara Africa, highly skilled young people are thirteen times likely to migrate than low-skilled ones. Surveyed has shown that one young adult out of three in Africa would like to migrate permanently out of Sub-Saharan Africa (Romuald, 2016), and one out of four potential migrants would like to enter the European Union (Angrist, Imbens and Rubin 1996). For many of them, education has proven the best asset to fulfill this wish. In early 2000s, 13% of the high skilled Sub-Sahara Africa population lived abroad. Individuals with tertiary education represented 43% of the migrant population, compared to the

3% of the resident population (Easterly and Nyarko, 2009). According to Romuald (2016) close to half of the high skilled migrates to Europe, in these destination countries pressure increase for further selective migration policies. While in the meantime, fears about brain drain and its negative consequences on development worsen in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The negative implication of brain drain is alarming to the African continent. According to Richard (2018) posit that, the impact of brain drain is particularly pervasive when it comes to public service delivery in the health sector. In many African countries, there are more locally born physicians residing outside their countries than in it. From the point of view of the foundations, thus placed an enormous strain on public health delivery on the continent, especially the fact that there are not enough physicians to attend to citizens in most African countries. According to the World Health Organization, the African average (calculated using the latest data years in the period 2012-2016 for 26 countries for which data is available at the time of calculation) is 0.45 physicians per 1000 people. The brain drain is not only in the medical sector, it is happening in educational sector as more persons with Doctor of Philosophy qualifications are migrating to Europe where they are paid commendable remuneration and access to jobs based on merits. The Information and Communication Technology sector is not left out in this catastrophic. African Union has enormous task to make by coming out with productive policy response to end this brain drain that is inimical to the growth and development of Africa (motherland). Migration of skilled African nationals, especially young professionals do not only result in the depletion of the continents skilled manpower. Africa also losses billions of dollars in cost of training these people who then migrate to seek better opportunities elsewhere. This is a clarion and urgent call to reverse this trend.

Another huge consequence for the relegation of meritocracy in job placement or appointment is the fact that it gives room for developed countries with job opportunities and better life to spread their dragnets of visa lottery in order to select the best brains who are not fortunate to secure jobs in Africa to leave. Young Africans have been taken away to America under the guise of visa lottery. A proper check can be viewed that the visa stuff is in line with second slavery. Besides the visa lottery activities, there are job agents from developed countries all over Africa interviewing young Africans with professional expertise with the hope of securing jobs for them abroad. This is another way young Africans leave the shores of the continent. This has affected the development of the continent.

When a level playing ground is not given to people who are competent to compete in terms of job placement and appointments. Those who lack the requisite skills and expertise are given opportunity to have access to jobs. The resultant impact is low productivity. African population is supposed to be an advantage in producing high productivity. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case, in Nigeria for instance, despite her high population in both public and private sectors productivity is low. This is due to the fact that most of the people who secure appointments are products of political patronage and corruption. There are African extractions who are in the United State of America's Military, England Military, Canadian Armed Forces and that of Scotland. The reasons they enlisted in the armed forces of other countries were that they tried several times to be enlisted into their countries of origin military, but were dropped because they had no political connection or political power to influence their placement in their native country military even when they are fit and strong. These are young African men and women who would have been fighting to end insecurity and insurgent in Africa. The case is similar in sport where young Africans decided to ply their mark for other countries and they are doing quite commendable. The last Olympic games is a testament to this fact where Africans represented European Countries and won laurels. This is a source of concern for the future of Africa and the African Union has to engage a policy response on this unfortunate incidence in order to save the future of the Africa.

The massive migration of young African to developed countries is responsible for the poor state of the economy in Africa. Economic growth and development have to do with human resources management. Technology cannot drive development without human being controlling

it. This is the reason why China, despite her population, is doing everything globally to protect its citizens no matter where they are in the world. The government of Israel cannot stand the death of one Israelis without a proportional and heavy response to whoever is responsible for the unfortunate death. Same with the American government who can go sleepless to rescue one American in an unpleasant situation. Young Africans must stay back to fix, maintain and sustain economic growth and development in all sectors of the economy. The countries where these young Africans travel to have high regards for the human population because they understand the contribution of what these Africans can bring to develop their countries.

The escalation of the migration of young Africans to other countries can further deepen poverty. Productive young Africans that have the opportunity to stay back in Africa can create jobs for others. Jobs can be created in sport, Information Communication and Technology, health sector, banking and other fields. Unemployment bring poverty, therefore, the government of African countries that tend to fight poverty must carry out action that would discourage migration of productive young Africans.

Solutions to the relegation of merit and politicization of appointments

The African Union Migration Policy Framework (2018-2027) made several recommendations on how to curb brain drain in the continent. These include generating gender responsive economic development programmes to provide meaningful and gainful employment, professional development and educational opportunities to qualified nationals in their home countries. While African countries must endeavor to put in place the necessary mechanisms to implement these recommendations. They will have to be complemented by strict adherence to meritocratic recruitment procedures, development of infrastructure and the provision of incentive mechanisms to attract and retain highly qualified African nationals (Romauld, 2016). Even the umbrella body of all African countries, African Union (AU) recognized that merit is relegated to the background when it comes to job offer and placement in most African countries. This act has negatively affected the interest of young Africans who are ready to contribute their expertise to the development of the African continent.

The former President of the United States of America, Obama on his visit to South Africa made the following statement “If we have African leaders, governments and institutions which are creating a platform for success and opportunity then you will increasingly get more talent wanting to stay. Once you reach a tipping pint, not only will you stop, the brain drains, then it will start reversing”. Similarly, as the President of African Development Bank, Akinwumi Adesina remarked at the G7 Summit in 2017, “The future of Africa’s youth does not lie in migration to Europe, it should not be at the bottom of the Mediterranean, it lies in a prosperous Africa. We must create greater economic opportunities for our youth right at home in Africa”. By reversing the brain drain and creating safe specs for young people to realize their potential, Africa will begin to reap the benefits of its demographic bulge (Romauld, 2016).

The merit system must be enthroned in all public and private sectors in order to give a level playing ground for young people with competence and capacity to compete and have access to jobs. Having access to jobs through merit gives African youths a sense of belonging and entrenched the pride of Africa in them. When young people are proud of their continent, then there is a great hope in the future. The West and other developed countries will do everything possible to stop their youths from travelling to other countries.

Another great solution to the relegation of merit system and the migration of young African, electioneering preprocess should be free, fair and transparent devoid of any electoral malpractices aided by government institutions. The process that produces political leaders is the reflection of the entire country. If the process is faulty and rigged, then merit system would be relegated and job offers and appointments would be only for the incompetent that aligned with huge corruption and political patronage with all alacrity. Therefore, Africa need strong and vibrant institutions that can contend and sanctioned “strong men” who think they have Africa in their pockets by thwarting the electoral process in Africa and have the capacity to breach

constitutional law without being prosecuted. African Union has key role to play by placing heavy sledged harmer on election riggers. Rigging of election in Africa has become a social problem and must be put to a stop by African Union. Electoral malpractice and bad governance are responsible for some of the crisis and military coups bedeviling the growth and development of Africa. Leadership process must be characterized with decency, inclusiveness, decorum and high level of integrity.

Judicial institutions in Africa must be ready to sanction those who are responsible for breaching applicants right to jobs by collecting bribe and perpetrating corruption. When young people in Africa whose rights have been breached and the justice system cannot give them justice when approached, these people are frustrated and discouraged to remain in Africa. The case of the former Deputy Senate President of Nigeria, Ike Ekweremandu who is currently serving jail terms in England with his wife for organ controversy of a young Nigerian who was taken to England to donate kidney to his daughter and when the kidney donation and transplant did not work, he wanted the young man to returned back to Nigeria without fulfilling the promise of good life earlier made to the young man. The young man had to report the issue to England police and justice was served on the former Nigerian Deputy Senate President. This should be a source of concern to the African justice system that always protect the political elites by giving them favourable judgment when they do not deserve it. If the former Deputy Senate President of Nigeria was to have such issues in Nigeria, he would have been cleared by the judicial system or frustrate justice and then punish the young man for daring to report such a high-profile political elite. In England the justice system is perfect and always ready to maintain the strictness of the judicial process regardless of who is involve.

Conclusion

This article has done justice to the escalation of African youths migrating to Europe and other developed countries to secure jobs based on merit. These vibrant young African have devised all manner of means to travel abroad including travelling via the risky Mediterranean Sea where lives are lost. The massive migration of young talented Africans out of the continent should be a source of concern and worry African Union and governments. Thus, the needful must be done by the African Union Migration Policy Framework (2018-2027). Merit must be enthroned with all resentful alacrity in order to give these young people a pride of place in Africa. Africa is their birth continent and “Motherland” to all black race globally thus making the atmosphere of Africa conducive and attractive to African youths is a task that must be done by all the government of Africa.

Recommendations

Much has been written about the massive migration of young Africans to Europe and other developed countries for greener pasture and how to put an end of this dangerous trend. Yet the migration continues which is catastrophic to Africa’s development and future. The following recommendations are made

1. The enforcement of the African Union Migration Policy Framework (2018-2027) in all the countries of Africa. This includes generating gender responsive economic development programmes to provide and make available meaningful and gainful employment, professional development and educational opportunities to qualified nationals in their country. While African countries must make the atmosphere conducive by putting in place the adherence to meritocracy recruitment procedures, development of infrastructure and the provision of motivation mechanism to attract and retain highly qualified African nationals in Africa.
2. Africa has abundant natural resources which is not found in most of these developed countries African youths are migrating into. In the world of oil economy, Nigeria is the sixth crude oil producing country in the world. Nigeria is in Africa. Same with other agricultural products. African government should rise up and harnessed these resources

for the development of Africa. It would add value to African economy. A vibrant economy with robust infrastructural development and value orientation would prevent the migration of youths to other continents, rather they would remain in Africa and display their talents of greatness,

3. The enthronement of merit in the entire African system and the de-politicization of appointments will enhance human capital development. The reason why many young Africans are migrating to America and other European countries is because of the political patronage and lack of merit system when it comes to job offers (Omini and Nnana 2023). In countries where there is thriving merit system, African youths are topnotch in education, medicine, engineering, nursing and other aspect of human endeavors. According to Everest-Philips (2015) meritocracy can promote social mobility and can benefit individuals and society at large. The scholar used Singapore as a case study that turned meritocracy into a development factor.

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