

## Impact of Brain Drain on the Quality of Education in Moi University, Kenya

<sup>1</sup>Mary Goretti Wosyanju; <sup>2</sup>J. N. Kindiki; and <sup>3</sup>J. Kalai

<sup>1</sup>Moi University, Students Affairs Department.  
P. O. Box 3900-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies,  
Moi University, P. O. Box 3900-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

<sup>3</sup>Department of Education Administration and Planning,  
University of Nairobi, P. O. Box 30197, GPO Nairobi

**Corresponding Author: Mary Goretti Wosyanju**

---

### Abstract

The loss of skilled personnel is a major drain on the development process and is not only a Kenyan but also global issue. The study examined the impact of brain drain on public universities in Kenya's Moi University Main Campus, which has seven schools from which a sample was drawn. Adopting a case study design, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to analyse the findings. Proportional stratified, random and purposive sampling techniques were adopted to make the sample all inclusive and to cater for all categories of respondents. The total population was 360 students and 120 staff members from academic and administrative divisions. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study revealed that the level of brain drain was rather high with staff moving to the Americas followed by Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia in that order. Based on the findings, the study recommended that universities should increase the budget on research and put a necessary package of incentives to counteract the negative impact of the brain drain. The findings contribute to calls for collective responsibility among stake holders for better understanding and formulating policies that will put structures in place to alleviate brain drain in public universities.

---

**Keywords:** impact, brain drain, quality, education, Moi university, Kenya

---

### INTRODUCTION

Brain drain, which has been on the increase, has been found to bear adverse effects on the country's economy (ECA, 2006; Ayodo, 2008; Amutabi, 2011). The term "brain drain" is frequently used to describe the movement of high-level experts from developing countries to industrialized nations (Odhiambo, 2004). It is the loss of academic or skilled personnel by emigration to settle in another country (Onsakia, 2003). Wikipedia (2007) defines brain drain or human capital flight as an emigration of trained and talented individuals to other nations or jurisdictions due to conflict, lack of opportunity and/or health hazards where they are living. Investment in higher education is lost when a trained individual leaves usually not to return.

"Brain drain" has yet to be stemmed since it continues to deprive the developing countries and those in transition, of the high-level expertise necessary to accelerate their socio-economic progress. Although it has been alleged that unemployment has fuelled brain drain (Korir, 2005), there are other causes. Quality of teaching staff has impacted negatively on teaching and research at the universities. It is estimated that up to two-thirds of lecturers at the universities have no pedagogical

training (Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2004). They have also not acquired their highest level of training as lecturers.

According to Odhiambo (2004), "African governments see professors as mere teachers rather than producers of knowledge and therefore as irrelevant to "development" and policy issues". This is a position taken by an academician whose opinion is that the few African scholars in the Diaspora who want to publish have both access to the relevant journals, and the intellectual capacity to do so while overseas but not recognized in their home countries. Policy matters are reserved for "experts", many of them colleagues coming from the west who are even engaged as "consultants" particularly in cases where the local professionals have superior qualifications yet they are answerable to them (Odhiambo, 2004). Gedamu (2002) posits that the presence of brain drain suggests that the provider nation is at risk of depleting its natural supply of intellectual talent. Migratory trends are stimulated both by the character of national educational systems, by lack and inadequate planning for the training of students from developing countries in developed states as well as the proper utilization of their skills in their home country (Tannock, 2007). Thu (2007) posits that for

governments to tackle brain drain, they should focus on who remains inside the country or the organization and create conducive environments to attract them to remain. To Mellon (2001), focusing purely on one side of the equation may not adequately address the problem of brain drain, but brain gain should be added to the equation.

### Critical Issues on Brain Drain

Brain drain has not only affected African countries but it is also a global phenomenon. UNESCO (2005) cites a massive emigration of skilled professionals from Croatia, Yugoslavia, Bosnia and members of the European Union (EU). Fearing that its top brains are leaving for greener pastures, the European Union has put measures to boost scientific career development so as to stem brain drain. They estimate that in the near future there will be a shortage of some 500,000 researchers. Contrary to the African scenario, seventy-five per cent (75%) of EU citizens who obtained doctorates in the USA between 1991 and 2000 remained there while others went to Canada and the United Kingdom (UK), Italy or Sweden. Intellectuals also move from USA to UK and vice versa due to change in technology and varied exposure.

Brain drain has reached alarming proportions in African countries, with Ethiopia ranking first in the continent in terms of rate of loss of human capital. Since 1990, 20,000 migrated around the world. Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco and Zimbabwe have also been affected. The brain drain of skilled workers from low income to high income countries is particularly alarming. According to a statement by the Minister of Planning and National Development, to fill the gap created by the skills shortage, African countries spend an estimated \$ 4 billion dollars annually to employ about 100,000 non-African expatriates (Marindi, 2006).

Thousands of Africa's professionals and students are leaving the continent for better prospects in the Western or Eastern countries (BBC, 2006). It is estimated that more than 10,000 South Africans left the country for America, Europe and India in the year 2005 (Marindi, 2006). Majority of those who leave the continent include lecturers, nurses, doctors and physiotherapists to go for greener pastures. Statistics have shown that brain drain costs the continent an estimate of 4 billion dollars per year which has been described as a slow death for Africa. Most African governments seem unable to attract and retain human resources who can contribute immensely towards the country's development. At the University of Nairobi, for example, only 40% of teaching force holds PhD degrees, 33% at Kenyatta University, 32% at Moi and 19% at Egerton. Although possession of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree is a benchmark qualification for most university lecturers

internationally, the converse seems to hold true for Kenya (Ngome, 2003). Kenyan public universities have fewer PhD level staff compared to many countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Attainment of a PhD is no longer a requirement for tenure, because lecturers who have Masters can teach undergraduate and even postgraduate students (Keriga, 2009). In most severe cases, due to rapid expansion of education, it has become common to find university departments with first degree holders teaching postgraduate classes (*Daily Nation*, 2011). This is mainly due to the brain drain phenomenon and other factors that cause this influx to foreign countries.

At the national level, both public and private universities have been affected. Twenty (20) lecturers left Kenyatta University (KU) in a span of just one year. A number also left Egerton and University of Nairobi. Private universities also continue to lose staff to public universities within the country or to foreign countries. This has led to private universities recruiting up to 75% of their staff on part-time basis employed from public universities (Abagi, 2006). Abagi further posits that although it is not easy to obtain data on staff in private universities, the following information was available: University of Eastern Africa, Baraton (UEAB) has a total of 59 lecturers and Daystar University has 84 but both could not specify those on either full time or part-time basis, while Catholic University of Eastern Africa has 115 of whom 58 are part-time and 57 on full time basis. United States International University (USIU) has 106 members of academic staff of whom only 41 are full-time, which translates to 57.5% being on part-time mainly from public universities.

The wave of violence after the elections disrupted the academic programmes in many public universities. According to Siringi (2008), lecturers, administrative staff and students sent requests for transfers from Moi, MasindeMuliro, Egerton and Maseno universities to be moved to universities they considered safe. The University of Nairobi, Kenyatta and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) received many requests for transfers as they were the most preferred.

In Maseno University, educational programmes were re-scheduled to resume lectures at a later date to avoid interruption due to violence and insecurity and transport crisis (Siringi, 2008). As for Masinde Muliro, a students' hostel was burnt down which affected a number of staff. They declined to return as some lecturers received death threats. The post-election violence in Kenya (of 2007-2008) also was enhanced by an increase of unemployed youth rendered poor by circumstances beyond their control. An opportunity to take part in the mayhem presented itself and as it raged on, took an ugly dimension of looting and destroying property, killing and forcible

evacuation of rival members of political parties or ethnic groups (Ong'ayo, 2008). The author posits that lecturers being the cream of society in these places were deemed to possess property, modern houses and therefore were also targets of violence in order to relinquish their property and go back to their "supposed" homes. It was also evident when the Vice Chancellor had dialogue with local communities involving the Chiefs and opinion leaders in society on the need to end the violence by preaching peace to the youths. The author at some stage was also in the delegation as majority of students were also affected. In Moi University, the University has been losing highly qualified staff partly due to better remuneration packages offered by other local, regional and foreign universities and other

institutions (Moi University, 2006). The report also posits that some staff members who go for further studies outside the country do not return upon completion of their studies. Available statistics have shown that there is a high turnover, which is a major concern. The data in the tables below shows the position of brain drain in the past five years, from various schools and departments of Moi University to the US, UK, Botswana South Africa and within the country. There are fourteen established schools of which School of Dentistry is relatively new and has admitted various cohorts of students. The academic programmes are divided into Schools for proper management.

Table 1: Teaching Staff in Schools, Moi University from 2003 to 2007

S. No	School	No. of Current Staff	No. of Staff who Left	Percentage (%)
1	Education	121	10	8.26
2	Environmental studies	29	3	10.34
3	Human Resource Development	36	4	11.11
4	Information Sciences	40	7	17.5
5	Engineering	64	7	10.93
6	Arts & Social Sciences	89	8	8.98
7	Law	16	5	31.25
8	Public Health	21	2	9.5
9	Medicine	112	8	7.14
10	Agriculture and Biotechnology	37	3	8.1
11	Natural Resource Management	38	5	13.16
12	Science	76	9	11.84
13	Business and Economics	59	8	13.56
14	Dentistry	3	-	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>79</b>	

**Source:** Moi University Personnel Records and Approved Recurrent Estimates (2007/2008 Financial Year)

In Table 1 above, staff turnover has been high, considering that the university is struggling to recruit more staff due to the increasing student population. The Joint Admissions Board (JAB) has also increased student intake because of higher numbers of students that are now qualifying for university admissions. The data shows that each school has been affected. School of Law has the highest percentage turnover at 31.25% followed by Information Sciences at 17.5% and Dentistry having no turnover since it is still under establishment. Although the percentage seems small, the actual numbers are large because they affect teaching and learning and also getting a replacement is not commensurate with those leaving, which creates a major gap.

Administrative staff was equally affected just like the teaching staff. For proper management, sections have been divided into departments which are equivalent to Schools. The data in Table 2 shows the flow of

staff from the various administrative units over time that range from ten to two staff leaving.

The Library unit has been the most affected department with 44% of staff relocating followed by Students Affairs and Central Services departments both at (24%). The least affected is Admissions department with 11.4% of staff leaving. The magnitude of brain drain cannot be underestimated. Although the numbers seem small, the effect is felt in the provision of services with less people doing more work or no service being provided at all especially in areas of specialization.

According to Moi University Personnel records (2008), thirteen (13) houses of members of staff having been burnt down during the post-election violence was a strong impetus of brain drain as many of them were camped in Nairobi. Many asked for compassionate leave pending the University's decision to consider their transfer. Others commuted from Nairobi to assess the extent of the violence and security situation.

Table 2: Non-Teaching Senior Staff in Departments of Moi University from 2003 to 2007

S. No	Department	No. of Current Staff	No. of Staff who Left	Percentage (%)
1.	Students Affairs	33	8	24
2.	Library	18	8	44
3.	Examinations	18	3	16.6
4.	Admissions	35	4	11.4
5.	Finance	82	14	17.07
6.	Health Services	55	10	18.18
7.	Catering and Hostels	42	8	19.04
8.	Central Services	33	8	24.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>55</b>	

**Source:** Moi University Personnel Records, 2008; Approved Recurrent Estimates 2007/2008

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study site was Moi University which has various campuses that represent both urban and rural set-ups. The specific campus that was studied was Main Campus which houses seven (7) schools, namely School of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS), School of Business and Economics (SBE), Education (SE), Engineering (SOE), Environmental Studies (SES), Human Resource Development (HRD) and Information Sciences (IS). The authors adopted a case study design focusing on Moi University to allow an in-depth investigation of the problem at hand. The target population was the undergraduate students, lecturers at all levels, that is, professors, senior lecturers, lecturers, assistant lectures, graduate assistants and administrative staff. The administrative staff included senior and middle level staff.

The total sample size comprised 306 respondents, for a population of 10,000 students at 90% confidence level (Nyagah, 1995), and 145 lecturers and administrators. The authors used a questionnaire, interview schedule and Focused Group Discussion (FGD). The questionnaire was self-administered to a larger group of respondents. The interview schedule was administered to a smaller group while the focused group discussion was administered to groups of between six to ten respondents. Policy documents, minutes and personnel records were also analyzed. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Questionnaires were collected, coded then data collated and analyzed using Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Impact of Brain Drain

The loss of highly skilled professionals has several negative consequences for the economy of Kenya. A shortage of skilled people limits the economic growth. The implication of brain drain in public universities in Kenya was manifested through the questions and responses as discussed below. When asked about the status of staff turnover in their department, results were as follows: only 7(6.6%) said the staff turnover was very high while 35(29.5%) said it was very low. When cross-tabs were done, it

showed that majority of staff, who stated that staff turnover was high, were mainly from the School of Engineering, Information Sciences and Human Resource Development; 33(27.9%) stated that staff turnover was moderate. Although there was brain drain in Moi University, the magnitude was moderate. According to the author, the impact was still felt, as inferred from the responses from both students and staff during the interview and focused group discussions. Thus a major indirect cost of brain drain can be found in the cost of training professionals who leave as well as the country losing lost experience. People move their money and households abroad and do not contribute to the GDP of their home country.

When asked whether or not Moi University was their first work place, majority of respondents, 108(90.5%), said the present job was not their first and only 12(10%) said it was their first. The number of places respondents had worked at before moving to Moi University ranged from 1 to more than 7, as seen in Table 3 below. Four (4) respondents did not give any answer to this question.

Table 3: Number of Places Respondents had worked at Before Moving to Moi University

No. of Places Worked at	Number of Respondents (N)	%
1	15	12.5
2	42	35
3	20	16
4	15	12.5
5	15	12.5
6	3	2.5
7	2	1.6
More than 7	4	3.3
Did not answer	4	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority, 42(35%), had worked at two places before moving to Moi University, 20(16%) had worked at three (3) places and 15(12.5%) had worked at one (1), four (4) and five (5) places respectively. Of these, a majority fell in the age group of 25-35 years. According to the authors, those who moved, were in their early age, were energetic and vibrant. When asked to state the type of institutions they had moved from, seventeen (17) had moved from public universities, nine (9) from private universities, 18

from other public institutions and sixty-two (62) from private enterprises.

Majority had worked in other places before moving to Moi University. They had a variety of reasons for moving. One hundred and five (87.7%) said they moved to get a relevant job while only 3(2.3%) said they did not; 16(14%) moved to get any job while 103(86%) did not; 103 (86%) said they moved for higher salaries while 16 (14%) moved for other reasons; 107(89.3%) moved to develop or gain skills

while 12(10.7) said they did not. One hundred and fifteen (96.6%) moved for better career advancement opportunities and 89.1% for better perks while 4(3.5%) and 13(10.9%) did not respectively.

Movement from other institutions to Moi University and from Moi University to other places seemed to carry similar reasons from the study which have been identified as causes of brain drain.

**Table 4: Gender Equity and Brain Drain**

Gender Equity(General Staff)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
MU has specific programmes to facilitate the mobility of women lecturers	5(4.8)	5(4.8)	7(6.30)	60(50.8)	39(33.3)
MU takes into account family issues in the carrier of a lecturer/administrative	3(3.2)	7(6.3)	19(15.9)	49(41.3)	39(33.3)
The impact of brain drain on the work and effectiveness of your dept is positive	1(1.6)	1(1.6)	3(3.2)	47(39.7)	64(54)
Estimated no. of staff who leave for abroad is high	7(6.6)	29(24.6)	59(49.2)	3(3.3)	19(16.4)
All specific areas of competence in MU are highly affected due to brain drain	36(30.2)	60(50.8)	5(4.8)	7(6.3)	9(7.9)

Whereas there was brain drain in Moi University, majority of staff members moved from elsewhere because of the better terms and remuneration than where they worked previously. On gender equity, only 5(4.8%) respondents agreed that Moi University had specific programmes to facilitate the mobility of women while 60(50.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

On whether or not Moi University took into account family issues in the careers of staff, 49(41.3%) strongly disagreed while only 3(3.2%) strongly agreed. In response as to whether or not the impact of brain drain was positive, responses showed that 64(54%) staff members disagreed and 238(77%) students also disagreed. According to ECA (2004), there are negative impacts of brain drain such as reducing the already low quality skilled manpower available, slowing transfer of technology since qualified personnel move elsewhere, and it also widens the gap between developing and industrialized countries. It also reduces the income tax revenues and gross domestic product.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that public universities suffer from brain drain of both academic and administrative staff. This has been observed from responses that the push and pull factors have contributed. The views for staff and students from Moi University were similar on certain aspects of the causes and impact of brain drain. As such, the following recommendations were made:

1. Studies need to be conducted to ascertain the exact magnitude of the brain drain problem in the country.
2. Ways and means of attracting back qualified and trained professionals working abroad

3. should be identified and explored. It may be necessary to put in place a package of incentives that matches or if possible surpasses those they are currently enjoying.
4. The public sector should be made more attractive, particularly to young graduates, in the form of better remuneration and incentives, increased prospects for further studies, more room for innovativeness and initiative. Many feel stifled by the routine nature of public service, particularly at the lower echelons. Remuneration is also an important factor in retaining people in the face of increasing cost of living and sophisticated wants.
5. At a wider level, professionals should be encouraged to stay in the country by providing a conducive environment which is amenable to positive criticism, free of harassment and persecution. African countries in general must be made more politically, economically and socially attractive to their citizenry.
6. Cross fertilization in human resource should be the country's best interests.
7. The authors recommend an increase in spending on scientific research and preparation of a strategy for science development as part of a strategy to counteract the impact of the brain drain.

#### REFERENCES

- Abagi, O. (2006). Private Higher Education in Kenya. In Growth and Expansion of Private Higher Education in Africa. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/iiep>

- Amutabi, M. N. (2011, April 7). Why Nation is Losing Teaching Staff and Students to Regional Universities. Daily Nation. Nairobi: Nation Media Group.
- Ayodo, H. (2008). Kenya: New Brain Drain Threat Looms. The East African Standard. The Nairobi: East African Standard Ltd.. Retrieved from <http://www.eastandard.net>
- BBC (2006). Why is Africa Losing its Best Brains? BBC: Africa Live Programme.
- Daily Nation. (2011). Enrolment Chaos Dent the Quality of Kenyan Degrees. Daily Nation. Nairobi: Nation Media Group.
- Economic Commission for Africa, (2006). Brain Drain in Africa. Facts and Figures. Images. Retrieved from <http://www.derstandard.at/20080615/facts&figures.pdf>
- Gedamu, A. (2002). Causes and Consequences of Brain Drain- How long should Africa Tolerate this? M.Phil Thesis, Germany
- Keriga, L., & Bugira, A. (2009). Social Policy, Development and Governance in Kenya: An Evaluation and Profile of Education in Kenya, Research Report. Nairobi: DPMF.
- Korir, J. (2005, December 27). Mass Brain Drain Blamed on Unemployment. Kenya Times.
- Marindi, R. (2006). Africa's Brain Drain global calamity. Kenya Times. Nairobi: Kenya Times.
- Mellon, C. (2001). Plugging the Brain Drain. Centre for Economic Development.
- Moi University, (2006). Strategic Plan 2005-2015. Eldoret: MU Press.
- Moi University, (2008). Draft Recurrent Estimates. Eldoret: Moi University Press.
- Ngome, C. (2003). African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook (pp. 359-371). Damtew Teferra, & Philip. G. Altbach (Eds.), Indiana University Press,
- Nyagah, G. (1995). The Research Proposal. In Issues in Educational Research in Africa. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Nyaigetti-Chacha, C. (2004). Reforming Higher Education in Kenya: Challenges, lessons and opportunities. Paper presented at workshop. Naivasha: IUCEA.
- Odhiambo, A. (2004). Africa's "Brain Gain": Whose Shibboleth? University of Michigan Library passages. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.4761530.0009.004>
- Odhiambo, A. (2004). Ethnic Cleansing and Civil Society in Kenya 1969-1992. Journal of Contemporary African Studies, 22(1): 29-42. G10
- Ong'ayo, A. O. (2008). The Post-election Violence in Kenya: An overview of the underlying Factors. Nairobi: Pambazuka News.
- Onsakia, M. D. (2004). The Brain Drain. Unpublished Concept Paper. Nairobi: JKUAT
- Siringi, E. M. (2008). University Education Liberalization Process and Challenges in Kenya: Options for Strategic Planning and Management. Maseno University IPPS.
- Tannock, S. (2007). Beyond National Borders: Refraining the Global Brain Drain Debate. SKOPE RESEARCH PAPER NO. 73. Cardiff University
- Thu, (2007). Better Brain Drain than Brain in the Drain. In The Economist (2005). Survey. Higher Education, Wandering Scholars, 10<sup>th</sup> September.
- UNESCO, (2005). Towards knowledge Societies. UNESCO Publishing.
- Wikipedia, (2007). Education in Kenya. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kenya>