



Echoes in an Empty Hall: How Brain Drain Is Silencing Nursing Education in Nigeria

Abdulrahman Ahmed RN., RNEA., Msc. N., MPH., MHE.,¹; Dr. Hadiza Yahaya Rn., Ph. D.²; Dr. Abba Jidda. RN., Ph.D.² Mairo Bukar Ngohi. RN., RNT., Msc.N³

¹College of Nursing Science Monguno, Borno State Nigeria

²College of Nursing Science Maiduguri, Borno State Nigeria.

³College of Nursing, University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, Nigeria.

Received: 25.06.2026 | Accepted: 22.07.2026 | Published: 30.07.2026

*Corresponding Author: Abdulrahman Ahmed

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.21700683](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21700683)

Abstract

Original Research

Nigeria's healthcare system is facing a profound and escalating crisis driven by the mass migration of nurses and nurse educators to developed countries. While the consequences of brain drain on clinical healthcare delivery have received significant attention, its devastating impact on nursing education remains underexplored. Across nursing schools and universities in Nigeria, lecture halls are becoming quieter, classrooms are increasingly understaffed, and experienced educators are disappearing from institutions that once nurtured generations of healthcare professionals. This phenomenon threatens the sustainability of nursing education, compromises the quality of healthcare workforce development, and undermines national efforts toward achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC). This paper examines the causes, consequences, and implications of brain drain on nursing education in Nigeria and proposes strategic interventions to address the growing crisis.

Keywords: Nursing Education, Brain Drain, Global Practice, Nigeria, Nursing Practice.

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Introduction

In many nursing schools across Nigeria, an unsettling silence now echoes through once vibrant lecture halls. The absence is not merely physical; it is intellectual, professional, and institutional.

Experienced nurse educators who once mentored aspiring nurses, supervised clinical practice, and contributed to research are increasingly leaving the country in search of better opportunities abroad (Adejumo, P. O., Akinboro, A. O., & Olaogun, A. A., 2022).



Figure 1: Nursing Education

The phenomenon, commonly referred to as "brain drain," has evolved into one of the most significant threats facing Nigeria's healthcare and educational systems. While discussions often focus on the migration of practicing nurses, the exodus of nursing educators presents an even more dangerous challenge because it directly affects the production of future nurses (Aiken, L. H., Sloane, 2021).

Nursing education serves as the foundation upon

which healthcare systems are built. When educators leave, the pipeline for producing competent nurses weakens, creating a ripple effect that extends far beyond classrooms and into hospitals, communities, and public health systems. The empty seats at faculty meetings, the cancelled lectures, and the increasing workload on remaining staff are becoming symbols of a deeper national crisis (Buchan, J., Catton, H., & Shaffer, F. A., 2023).

Understanding Brain Drain in Nursing Education



Figure 2: Brain Drain Infographic Illustration

Brain drain refers to the emigration of highly trained and skilled professionals from one country to another in pursuit of better economic opportunities, improved working conditions, professional development, and enhanced quality of life (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). In Nigeria, nurse migration has accelerated dramatically over the past decade. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, and the United States actively recruit Nigerian nurses due to global nursing shortages. The demand has expanded beyond clinical practitioners to include nurse educators, researchers, and academic leaders (Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria., 2023).

The migration of nursing educators is particularly concerning because these professionals possess specialized expertise that requires years of academic preparation, clinical experience, teaching competence, and mentorship development. Their departure creates a vacuum that is often difficult to fill (International Council of Nurses., (2024)

Drivers of Nurse Educator Migration in Nigeria

1. Poor Remuneration and Economic Instability

One of the most significant push factors driving migration is inadequate compensation. Many nurse educators in Nigeria earn salaries that are disproportionately low compared to their counterparts in developed countries (International Council of Nurses., 2024)

Persistent inflation, rising living costs, and economic uncertainty have further diminished the purchasing power of healthcare professionals. Consequently, migration becomes not merely a career choice but an economic necessity for many educators seeking financial security for themselves and their families (International Council of Nurses., 2024).

2. Inadequate Working Conditions

Many nursing institutions face severe infrastructural challenges, including overcrowded classrooms,

insufficient teaching materials, limited simulation laboratories, poor internet connectivity, and inadequate research facilities. These conditions hinder effective teaching and reduce job satisfaction among educators. In contrast, developed countries offer modern learning environments, technological support, and opportunities for academic advancement (International Council of Nurses., 2024).

3. Limited Career Advancement Opportunities

Professional growth remains constrained in many Nigerian institutions. Delayed promotions, bureaucratic bottlenecks, inadequate funding for conferences, and limited opportunities for postgraduate development discourage educators from remaining within the system. Many nurses who migrate report greater access to doctoral programs, research grants, leadership training, and academic recognition abroad (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

4. Global Demand for Nursing Professionals

The aging populations of developed nations have created unprecedented demand for nurses and nurse educators. Aggressive international recruitment campaigns have made migration easier and more attractive than ever before. The globalization of healthcare labor markets means that Nigerian educators are increasingly competing in an international employment arena where their qualifications are highly valued (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

5. Professional Frustration and Burnout

Faculty shortages often result in excessive teaching loads, multiple administrative responsibilities, and limited support systems. As more educators leave, the workload on those remaining intensifies, creating a cycle of stress, burnout, and further migration

(International Council of Nurses., 2024).

The Silent Crisis: Impact on Nursing Education

Faculty Shortages and Increased Student-to-Lecturer Ratios

The immediate consequence of brain drain is a reduction in qualified teaching staff. Many nursing schools struggle to maintain acceptable educator-to-student ratios, leading to overcrowded classrooms and reduced interaction between students and instructors. The shortage compromises individualized learning, mentorship, and academic supervision of all critical components of nursing education (International Council of Nurses., 2024).

Declining Quality of Teaching and Learning

The departure of experienced educators results in the loss of institutional memory, pedagogical expertise, and clinical wisdom accumulated over decades. Newly recruited faculty members, although competent, may lack the extensive experience necessary to provide comprehensive mentorship. Consequently, educational quality may decline, affecting graduates' readiness for professional practice (International Council of Nurses., 2024).

Reduced Research Capacity

Nurse educators play a central role in generating knowledge through research. Their migration weakens institutional research productivity, limits innovation, and reduces opportunities for evidence-based practice development. A weakened research culture diminishes Nigeria's ability to address local healthcare challenges through indigenous scientific inquiry (Buchan, J., Catton, H., & Shaffer, F. A., 2023).

Disrupted Clinical Training

Clinical education represents the cornerstone of nursing training. Experienced educators facilitate students' transition from theoretical knowledge to practical competence. When skilled faculty members leave, supervision during clinical placements becomes inadequate, potentially affecting students' confidence, competence, and professional preparedness (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

Loss of Mentorship and Leadership Development

Beyond teaching, educators serve as mentors, role models, and professional guides. Their absence deprives students and junior faculty members of critical support systems necessary for career development. The long-term consequence is a weakened leadership pipeline within nursing education and healthcare administration (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

Implications for Healthcare Delivery

The consequences of brain drain in nursing education extend far beyond academic institutions and have profound implications for healthcare delivery across Nigeria. Nursing education serves as the primary pipeline through which competent healthcare professionals are produced, and any disruption within this system inevitably affects the quality and availability of healthcare services. As experienced nurse educators leave the country, nursing schools face difficulties in maintaining adequate faculty strength, resulting in reduced training capacity and limitations in student enrollment. Consequently, fewer nurses are produced to meet the growing healthcare demands of an expanding population, thereby exacerbating existing workforce shortages in healthcare facilities nationwide (World Health Organization., 2023).



Figure 3: Health Delivery

Another significant implication is the potential decline in the quality of nursing graduates entering the healthcare workforce. Experienced educators play a critical role in imparting clinical knowledge, professional values, critical thinking skills, and evidence-based practice competencies. Their departure often leaves educational institutions relying on less experienced faculty members who may struggle to provide the same level of mentorship and clinical supervision. This situation can result in graduates who are less prepared to handle complex healthcare challenges, potentially affecting patient safety, quality of care, and overall health outcomes. In a healthcare environment where nurses constitute the largest segment of the workforce, any compromise in training quality can have far-reaching consequences for delivery service (World Health Organization., 2023).

Brain drain among nurse educators also undermines the development of specialized nursing expertise and leadership within the healthcare system. Nursing educators are instrumental in nurturing future researchers, administrators, policymakers, and clinical specialists. Their absence creates gaps in mentorship and professional development opportunities, limiting the emergence of a new

generation of nursing leaders capable of driving healthcare innovation and reform. Over time, this leadership deficit may weaken institutional capacity, reduce the implementation of evidence-based practices, and hinder efforts to strengthen healthcare systems and improve service delivery at local, state, and national levels (World Health Organization., 2023).

Furthermore, the cumulative effect of educator migration contributes to the broader challenge of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and strengthening health system resilience in Nigeria. A well-trained and adequately staffed nursing workforce is essential for delivering preventive, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative healthcare services. However, when nursing education is weakened by faculty shortages, the healthcare system struggles to generate sufficient human resources to meet population health needs. This can lead to increased patient-to-nurse ratios, healthcare worker burnout, reduced access to quality care, and widening health disparities, particularly in underserved and rural communities. Ultimately, the continued loss of nurse educators threatens the sustainability of Nigeria's healthcare workforce and undermines national and global health development

goals (Connell, J. (2020).

1. Reduced Production of Nurses

One of the most immediate and visible consequences of brain drain in nursing education is the reduced production of qualified nurses. The migration of nurse educators significantly diminishes the teaching capacity of nursing schools, colleges of nursing sciences, and university departments. As experienced lecturers and clinical instructors leave the country, institutions often struggle to maintain the required educator-to-student ratios stipulated by accreditation bodies. Consequently, many schools are forced to limit student admissions despite the growing demand for nursing education and healthcare services. This situation creates a bottleneck in the production of nursing professionals at a time when Nigeria is already facing a critical shortage of healthcare workers (Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2023).

The reduced availability of qualified educators also affects the ability of institutions to provide comprehensive theoretical and clinical training. Large class sizes, insufficient supervision during clinical placements, and increased workloads for remaining faculty members can compromise the quality of instruction and learning outcomes. As the population continues to grow and healthcare needs become increasingly complex, the inability of nursing institutions to produce adequate numbers of graduates threatens the country's capacity to meet present and future healthcare demands. Ultimately, a weakened nursing education system translates into a weakened healthcare workforce, with far-reaching implications for service delivery and public health (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2023).

2. Compromised Quality of Graduates



Figure 4: Quality HealthCare

The quality of nursing education is heavily dependent on the availability of experienced and competent educators who can effectively transfer knowledge, skills, and professional values to students. When nurse educators migrate, educational institutions often face challenges in replacing them with equally qualified personnel. This shortage can lead to gaps in curriculum delivery, reduced mentorship opportunities, and inadequate clinical supervision, all of which may negatively affect students' learning experiences. Consequently, graduates may enter the healthcare workforce without fully developing the competencies required for safe and effective nursing practice (Connell, J. (2020).

Educational deficiencies resulting from faculty shortages can manifest in several ways, including weaker clinical judgment, limited critical thinking abilities, poor communication skills, and insufficient exposure to evidence-based practice. These shortcomings may affect the ability of newly qualified nurses to manage complex patient conditions, make informed clinical decisions, and adapt to rapidly evolving healthcare environments. Over time, compromised educational quality can undermine patient safety, reduce public confidence in healthcare services, and hinder efforts to improve health outcomes. Therefore, protecting the quality of nursing education is essential not only for professional development but also for maintaining high standards of healthcare delivery (Connell, J. (2020).

3. Exacerbation of National Nursing Shortages

The migration of nurse educators contributes significantly to the worsening shortage of nurses in Nigeria by disrupting the pipeline through which new professionals are trained and prepared for practice. As educators leave academic institutions, the capacity to train future nurses declines, resulting in fewer graduates entering the workforce. At the same time, many practicing nurses are also migrating abroad in search of better employment opportunities, higher salaries, and improved working conditions. This dual loss creates a vicious cycle in which the educational system produces fewer nurses while the healthcare system continues to lose those already in practice (Connell, J. (2020).

The consequences of this workforce depletion are evident across healthcare facilities in Nigeria. Hospitals, primary healthcare centers, and specialized health institutions increasingly face staffing shortages that place enormous pressure on the remaining workforce. Nurses are often required to manage excessive patient loads, work longer hours, and perform multiple responsibilities simultaneously, increasing the risk of burnout, job dissatisfaction, and medical errors. Furthermore, shortages are often more pronounced in rural and underserved communities, where access to healthcare services is already limited. As a result, the continued migration of both nurse educators and practicing nurses poses a significant threat to the sustainability and effectiveness of Nigeria's healthcare system.

4. Threat to Universal Health Coverage



Figure 5: Health Care Coverage

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) aims to ensure that all individuals have access to quality healthcare services without suffering financial hardship. Achieving this goal requires a sufficient number of well-trained healthcare professionals capable of delivering comprehensive and equitable care across all levels of the health system. Nurses play a central role in healthcare delivery, particularly in primary healthcare settings where they often serve as the first point of contact for patients. However, the migration of nurse educators weakens the educational structures responsible for producing these essential healthcare workers, thereby undermining efforts to achieve UHC (Dovlo, D., 2025).

As nursing schools struggle with faculty shortages and reduced training capacity, the healthcare workforce becomes increasingly inadequate to meet population health needs. This shortage can result in longer waiting times, reduced access to care, and lower quality healthcare services, particularly among vulnerable and underserved populations. Additionally, a limited supply of qualified nurses can hinder the implementation of public health interventions, disease prevention programs, maternal and child health services, and emergency response

initiatives. Consequently, brain drain in nursing education not only affects individual institutions but also poses a broader challenge to national health development objectives and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 3, which seeks to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all (Dovlo, D., 2025).

5. Socioeconomic Consequences

The migration of nurse educators represents a significant socioeconomic loss for Nigeria. The government invests considerable financial resources in the education and training of healthcare professionals through subsidies, scholarships, public educational institutions, and professional development programs. When highly trained nurse educators leave the country, these investments often benefit destination countries rather than the nation that funded their development. This loss of human capital reduces the country's return on educational investment and weakens the capacity of institutions to contribute to national development through teaching, research, and innovation (Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria. (2023).



Figure 6: Health Care Delivery

Beyond economic losses, brain drain has profound social implications for communities and the healthcare system. Reduced availability of qualified educators and healthcare workers can limit access to quality healthcare services, particularly in underserved regions where health disparities are already prevalent. Communities may experience poorer health outcomes, increased disease burden, and reduced confidence in healthcare institutions. Furthermore, the migration of experienced nurse educators creates intergenerational gaps in mentorship and leadership development. As fewer seasoned professionals remain to guide and inspire younger nurses, the profession risks losing valuable knowledge, expertise, and institutional memory. Over time, this cycle can weaken the development of future educators, researchers, and healthcare leaders, further threatening the sustainability of nursing education and healthcare delivery in Nigeria (Hagopian, A., Thompson, M. J., Fordyce, M., Johnson, K. E., & Hart, L. G., 2024).

Strategies for Addressing the Crisis

1. Improve Remuneration and Incentives

One of the most effective approaches to addressing

the brain drain crisis in nursing education is the improvement of remuneration and incentive packages for nurse educators. In many Nigerian institutions, nurse educators receive salaries that are often insufficient to meet the rising cost of living, making international employment opportunities considerably more attractive. The substantial disparity between local and international compensation packages has become a major push factor driving migration. Therefore, governments and educational institutions must prioritize the implementation of competitive salary structures that reflect the expertise, responsibilities, and contributions of nurse educators to national development (Dovlo, D., 2025).

Beyond basic salaries, additional incentives such as housing allowances, transportation support, health insurance coverage, research grants, and performance-based rewards can significantly enhance job satisfaction and professional commitment. Financial incentives linked to academic achievements, research productivity, and years of service can further motivate educators to remain within the system. By creating an environment where nurse educators feel valued and adequately compensated, institutions can improve retention rates, reduce migration intentions, and

strengthen the sustainability of nursing education (Hagopian, A., Thompson, M. J., Fordyce, M., Johnson, K. E., & Hart, L. G., 2024).

2. Strengthening Educational Infrastructure

The quality of the teaching and learning environment plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining qualified nurse educators. Many nursing schools in Nigeria continue to face challenges associated with inadequate infrastructure, outdated teaching equipment, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to modern educational technologies. Such conditions not only hinder effective teaching but also contribute to professional frustration and dissatisfaction among educators. Addressing these infrastructural deficiencies is therefore essential for strengthening nursing education and reducing workforce attrition (International Council of Nurses., 2024).

Investment in modern classrooms, simulation laboratories, digital learning platforms, internet connectivity, libraries, and research facilities can significantly enhance both educational quality and faculty satisfaction. Simulation-based learning environments, in particular, enable students to acquire practical skills in controlled settings while reducing dependence on limited clinical placement opportunities. Furthermore, access to modern teaching resources allows educators to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches that improve student engagement and learning outcomes. By providing a conducive academic environment, institutions can foster professional fulfillment among educators and create conditions that encourage them to build long-term careers within Nigeria (International Council of Nurses., 2024).

3. Expand Professional Development Opportunities

Professional growth and career advancement are important factors influencing the retention of nurse educators. Many educators seek opportunities abroad because of better access to advanced training, postgraduate education, research opportunities, and

leadership development programs. When such opportunities are limited within the country, professionals may perceive migration as the only pathway to achieving their academic and career aspirations. Consequently, expanding professional development opportunities is critical to retaining skilled nurse educators and enhancing the quality of nursing education (International Council of Nurses., 2024).

Governments, universities, and nursing institutions should invest in scholarships, funded postgraduate programs, continuing professional development courses, conference sponsorships, and faculty exchange initiatives. Access to doctoral education, specialized certifications, and leadership training programs can empower educators to advance professionally while remaining within the national education system. Additionally, mentorship programs that support early-career educators can facilitate knowledge transfer, enhance job satisfaction, and strengthen academic capacity. Providing clear pathways for career progression not only improves retention but also contributes to the development of future leaders in nursing education and healthcare (International Council of Nurses., 2024).

4. Promote Research and Innovation

Research and innovation are essential components of a vibrant and sustainable academic environment. Nurse educators contribute significantly to healthcare advancement through research that informs evidence-based practice, healthcare policy, and educational improvement. However, limited funding, inadequate research infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support often constrain scholarly productivity in many Nigerian institutions. These challenges can discourage educators from pursuing research careers and increase the appeal of opportunities abroad where research support is more readily available (Labonté, R., Packer, C., & Klassen, N., 2026).

To address this challenge, institutions should establish robust research support systems that provide access to funding opportunities, mentorship,

publication support, and collaborative research networks. Universities and nursing schools should encourage interdisciplinary and international research partnerships that expose educators to global best practices while enabling them to address local healthcare challenges. Investment in research centers, innovation hubs, and digital research

resources can further strengthen scholarly activities. By fostering a strong research culture, institutions can enhance professional fulfillment, increase academic productivity, and create an environment where nurse educators are motivated to remain and contribute to national development (Labonté, R., Packer, C., & Klassen, N., 2026).

5. Develop Retention Policies



Figure 7: Health Care Workplace

Sustainable solutions to brain drain require deliberate and comprehensive workforce retention policies that specifically address the needs of nurse educators. While general healthcare workforce strategies are important, nurse educators occupy a unique position within the health system because they are responsible for producing future generations of nurses. Therefore, retention policies must recognize their strategic importance and provide targeted interventions that encourage long-term commitment to academic careers.

Effective retention policies may include improved employment conditions, transparent promotion systems, and opportunities for career advancement,

workload management, retirement benefits, and recognition programs for outstanding contributions. Governments and educational institutions should also establish workforce planning frameworks that identify potential shortages and implement proactive measures to address them before they become critical. Regular assessment of faculty needs, migration trends, and job satisfaction levels can provide valuable data for policy development and implementation. Through evidence-based retention strategies, Nigeria can strengthen its nursing education workforce, safeguard institutional capacity, and ensure the continuous production of competent nurses needed to support healthcare

delivery and national health goals (Labonté, R., Packer, C., & Klassen, N., 2026).

1. Foster International Collaboration Without Permanent Migration

International collaboration offers a viable strategy for enhancing the capacity of nursing education in Nigeria without necessitating the permanent migration of nurse educators. Through academic exchange programs, short-term faculty fellowships, visiting scholar initiatives, and institutional partnerships, nurse educators can gain exposure to global best practices, innovative teaching methodologies, and emerging healthcare technologies while maintaining their professional commitments within Nigeria. Such collaborations enable the transfer of knowledge and skills, strengthen educational standards, and promote professional growth without contributing to the long-term depletion of the country's academic workforce. By creating opportunities for international engagement at home, institutions can reduce the push factors that often drive educators to seek permanent employment abroad (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

Additionally, advances in digital technology have made virtual teaching, online mentorship, joint research projects, and international conferences more accessible than ever before. Collaborative research partnerships between Nigerian institutions and international universities can facilitate knowledge exchange, increase research productivity, and provide access to funding opportunities while allowing educators to remain actively involved in local nursing education. These arrangements not only strengthen institutional capacity but also foster global networks that support innovation and evidence-based practice. By promoting international collaboration without permanent migration, Nigeria can benefit from global expertise while preserving the critical human resources needed to sustain and advance nursing education and healthcare delivery (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

2. Strengthening Policy and Governance

Addressing the growing challenge of brain drain in nursing education requires strong policy direction and effective governance mechanisms. Government agencies, educational institutions, regulatory bodies, and professional nursing organizations must collaborate to develop comprehensive and evidence-based strategies aimed at retaining nurse educators and strengthening the nursing workforce. Such policies should be informed by reliable workforce data, migration trends, and projections of future healthcare needs to ensure that interventions are responsive to the realities facing the nursing profession in Nigeria. A coordinated national approach is essential to prevent fragmented efforts and ensure long-term sustainability (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

Regulatory bodies such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, alongside universities and schools of nursing, should play a central role in establishing standards and frameworks that promote faculty retention, career progression, and professional development. Policies that support competitive remuneration, transparent promotion processes, improved working conditions, and opportunities for continuing education can significantly enhance job satisfaction among nurse educators. Additionally, institutions should develop succession planning mechanisms to ensure the transfer of knowledge and leadership skills from experienced educators to younger faculty members, thereby safeguarding the continuity of nursing education (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

Furthermore, governance efforts should extend beyond retention strategies to include broader healthcare workforce planning and international engagement. The Nigerian government can negotiate bilateral agreements with countries that recruit large numbers of Nigerian nurses to promote ethical recruitment practices and support workforce development initiatives within Nigeria. Increased investment in nursing education, research funding, and institutional capacity building should also be prioritized as part of national health and education

policies. Through effective leadership, stakeholder collaboration, and sustained policy commitment, Nigeria can create an enabling environment that supports nurse educators, strengthens nursing education, and ultimately enhances the quality and resilience of healthcare delivery across the country (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

Recommendations

Addressing the growing challenge of brain drain in nursing education requires a multifaceted and collaborative approach involving government agencies, educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies, healthcare organizations, and international partners. Given the strategic role of nurse educators in producing the healthcare workforce necessary for national development, deliberate efforts must be made to create an enabling environment that promotes retention, professional growth, and institutional sustainability (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

1. Establish Competitive Compensation and Welfare Packages

One of the most critical interventions for reducing the migration of nurse educators is the provision of competitive remuneration and improved welfare packages. The Federal Government, state governments, and educational institutions should review existing salary structures to ensure that nurse educators receive compensation that reflects their qualifications, responsibilities, and contributions to healthcare workforce development. In addition to salary improvements, comprehensive welfare benefits such as housing schemes, health insurance, transportation allowances, pension security, and performance-based incentives should be implemented. Such measures would enhance job satisfaction, reduce financial pressures, and make academic careers in nursing more attractive and sustainable (Siyam, A., Zurn, P., Rø, O. C., Gedik, G., & Ronquillo, K., 2025).

2. Increase Investment in Nursing Education Infrastructure

Governments and institutional administrators should prioritize investments in modern educational infrastructure to create conducive teaching and learning environments. This includes upgrading classrooms, establishing state-of-the-art simulation laboratories, strengthening digital learning platforms, expanding library resources, and improving internet connectivity. Access to contemporary teaching technologies and educational resources not only improves instructional quality but also enhances the professional experience of educators. Improved infrastructure can significantly reduce workplace frustrations and foster greater commitment among academic staff, thereby contributing to faculty retention and educational excellence (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria., 2024).

3. Strengthen Faculty Development and Career Advancement Opportunities

Educational institutions should develop comprehensive faculty development programs that support continuous learning, academic progression, and leadership development. Opportunities for postgraduate education, doctoral training, specialized certifications, and continuing professional development should be expanded through scholarships, grants, and institutional sponsorship. Clear and transparent promotion pathways should also be established to reward academic excellence, research productivity, and years of service. By investing in the professional growth of nurse educators, institutions can enhance motivation, strengthen academic capacity, and reduce the desire to seek opportunities abroad (Salami, B., Dada, O., & Adelakun, F., 2024).

4. Promote Research Excellence and Academic Innovation

Research productivity is a major determinant of academic satisfaction and professional advancement. Universities, nursing colleges, and research

institutions should establish mechanisms that support nursing research through dedicated funding, mentorship programs, research collaborations, and publication support services. Creating research centers and innovation hubs focused on nursing and healthcare challenges can further stimulate scholarly engagement and professional fulfillment. Increased research opportunities not only improve institutional reputation but also provide nurse educators with meaningful avenues for intellectual growth and contribution, thereby reducing migration intentions (Siyam, A., Zurn, P., Rø, O. C., Gedik, G., & Ronquillo, K. (2025).

5. Develop and Implement National Retention Policies for Nurse Educators

The Nigerian government should formulate and implement a comprehensive national retention strategy specifically targeted at nurse educators. Such a policy should recognize nurse educators as a critical component of the healthcare workforce and provide tailored incentives to encourage long-term service within academic institutions. Retention strategies may include enhanced career progression opportunities, reduced administrative burdens, improved working conditions, recognition awards, and targeted financial incentives. Regular workforce assessments should also be conducted to identify emerging gaps and inform evidence-based policy decisions (Shaffer, F. A., Bakhshi, M., Jacobs, A., & Johnson, M. (2022).

6. Foster Strategic International Partnerships without Permanent Workforce Loss

International collaboration should be encouraged in ways that promote knowledge exchange without contributing to permanent workforce depletion. Universities and nursing institutions should establish partnerships with foreign institutions to facilitate faculty exchanges, virtual teaching programs, collaborative research projects, and short-term training opportunities. Such initiatives enable nurse

educators to gain global exposure, access advanced knowledge, and participate in international academic networks while maintaining their professional roles within Nigeria. This approach allows the country to benefit from global expertise without sacrificing its educational workforce (Siyam, A., Zurn, P., Rø, O. C., Gedik, G., & Ronquillo, K. (2025).

7. Strengthen Workforce Planning and Data Management Systems

Effective workforce planning requires accurate and up-to-date information on the nursing education workforce. Government agencies, educational institutions, and regulatory bodies should establish robust data management systems capable of tracking faculty numbers, migration trends, retirement projections, recruitment patterns, and workforce needs. Evidence generated through such systems can support strategic planning, resource allocation, and policy development. A data-driven approach will enable stakeholders to anticipate workforce shortages and implement timely interventions before they become critical (Yaya, S., Uthman, O. A., Amouzou, A., & Bishwajit, G., 2018).

8. Enhance the Professional Status and Recognition of Nurse Educators

Nurse educators play a fundamental role in shaping the future healthcare workforce, yet their contributions are often underrecognized. Governments, professional associations, and educational institutions should implement initiatives that elevate the visibility and status of nursing educators within society and the healthcare sector. Recognition awards, academic honors, leadership opportunities, and public acknowledgment of outstanding contributions can foster professional pride and increase commitment to the profession. Strengthening the social and professional prestige of nurse educators may also encourage younger nurses to pursue academic careers (Yaya, S., Uthman, O. A., Amouzou, A., & Bishwajit, G. (2018).

9. Encourage Public–Private Partnerships in Nursing Education

Public–private partnerships offer significant opportunities to strengthen nursing education through shared resources, infrastructure development, faculty support, and research funding. Collaboration between government institutions, private healthcare organizations, non-governmental organizations, and development partners can provide additional financial and technical resources needed to address faculty shortages and educational challenges. Such partnerships can also support innovative educational initiatives and enhance the overall quality and sustainability of nursing education programs (Yaya, S., Uthman, O. A., Amouzou, A., & Bishwajit, G. (2018).

10. Adopt a Whole-System Approach to Addressing Brain Drain

Finally, addressing brain drain in nursing education requires a comprehensive and coordinated response that tackles both the push and pull factors influencing migration. Efforts should extend beyond financial incentives to include improvements in governance, institutional culture, professional autonomy, workplace satisfaction, career opportunities, and quality of life. Policymakers must recognize that retaining nurse educators is not solely an educational issue but a national development priority with direct implications for healthcare delivery, workforce sustainability, and population health outcomes. A whole-system approach that integrates education, health, labor, and economic policies will be essential for achieving long-term success (World Health Organization., 2023).



The silence increasingly heard in Nigeria's nursing classrooms is a warning that demands urgent action. Reversing the effects of brain drain in nursing education requires sustained political commitment, strategic investments, and collaborative partnerships among all stakeholders. By prioritizing the welfare,

professional development, and retention of nurse educators, Nigeria can strengthen its nursing education system, secure the future healthcare workforce, and build a more resilient and equitable healthcare system capable of meeting the needs of its population. The future of healthcare in Nigeria

depends not only on training more nurses but also on retaining the educators who prepare them for service (Yaya, S., Uthman, O. A., Amouzou, A., & Bishwajit, G. (2018).

Conclusion

The empty lecture halls in Nigeria's nursing schools symbolize more than faculty shortages; they represent a growing threat to the future of healthcare itself. Brain drains are not merely removing educators from classrooms it is eroding the very foundation upon which the nation's healthcare workforce is built. If left unchecked, the migration of nurse educators will continue to weaken training institutions, reduce healthcare workforce capacity, and compromise the quality of healthcare delivery across the country. Addressing this challenge requires urgent and coordinated action from policymakers, educational institutions, professional bodies, and government agencies (Shaffer, F. A., Bakhshi, M., Jacobs, A., & Johnson, M., 2022).

The echoes in these empty halls should serve as a wake-up call. The future of nursing education in Nigeria depends not only on training more nurses but also on retaining the educators who shape them. Without decisive intervention, silence may become permanent, and the consequences for healthcare could be profound and far-reaching (World Health Organization., 2023).

References

1. Adejumo, P. O., Akinboro, A. O., & Olaogun, A. A. (2022). Migration intentions among nurses in Nigeria: Causes and implications for healthcare delivery. *International Nursing Review*, 69(3), 355–364.
2. Aiken, L. H., Sloane, D. M., Ball, J., Bruyneel, L., Rafferty, A. M., & Griffiths, P. (2021). Patient satisfaction with hospital care and nurses in England: An observational study. *BMJ Open*, 11(1), e045577.
3. Buchan, J., Catton, H., & Shaffer, F. A. (2023). Sustain and retain in 2023 and beyond: The global nursing workforce and the international migration of nurses. *International Council of Nurses Report*.
4. Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria. (2023). *National Policy on Health Workforce Migration*. Abuja, Nigeria.
5. International Council of Nurses. (2024). *Nursing Retention and Workforce Sustainability Report*. Geneva, Switzerland.
6. Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria. (2024). *Annual Nursing Education and Workforce Statistics Report*. Abuja, Nigeria.
7. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2023). *Health Workforce Migration and International Recruitment Trends*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
8. World Health Organization. (2023). *State of the World's Nursing Report 2023*. Geneva: WHO.
9. World Health Organization. (2024). *Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 2021–2025: Progress Review*. Geneva: WHO.
10. Adejumo, P. O., Akinboro, A. O., & Olaogun, A. A. (2022). Migration intentions among nurses in Nigeria: Implications for healthcare delivery and workforce sustainability. *International Nursing Review*, 69(3), 355–364. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inr.12735>
11. Aiken, L. H., Sloane, D. M., Ball, J., Bruyneel, L., Rafferty, A. M., & Griffiths, P. (2021). Patient satisfaction with hospital care and nurses in England: An observational study. *BMJ Open*, 11(1), e045577. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-045577>
12. Buchan, J., Catton, H., & Shaffer, F. A. (2023). Sustain and retain in 2023 and beyond: The global nursing workforce and

the international migration of nurses. International Council of Nurses.

13. Connell, J. (2020). Migration and the globalisation of health care: The health worker exodus? *Edward Elgar Publishing*.
14. Dovlo, D. (2005). Wastage in the health workforce: Some perspectives from African countries. *Human Resources for Health*, 3(6), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1478-4491-3-6>
15. Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria. (2023). *National policy on health workforce migration*. Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja, Nigeria.
16. Hagopian, A., Thompson, M. J., Fordyce, M., Johnson, K. E., & Hart, L. G. (2004). The migration of physicians and nurses from sub-Saharan Africa to the United States of America. *Human Resources for Health*, 2(17), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1478-4491-2-17>
17. International Council of Nurses. (2024). *Nursing retention and workforce sustainability report*. International Council of Nurses, Geneva, Switzerland.
18. Labonté, R., Packer, C., & Klassen, N. (2006). Managing health professional migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Canada: A stakeholder inquiry into policy options. *Human Resources for Health*, 4(22), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1478-4491-4-22>
19. Mlambo, M., Silén, C., & McGrath, C. (2021). Lifelong learning and nurse educator development in Africa: Challenges and opportunities. *BMC Nursing*, 20(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-021-00569-2>
20. Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria. (2024). *Annual nursing education and workforce statistics report*. Abuja, Nigeria.
21. Obansa, S. A. J., & Orimisan, A. (2013). Health care financing in Nigeria: Prospects and challenges. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 221–236.
22. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2023). *Health workforce migration and international recruitment trends*. OECD Publishing.
23. Salami, B., Dada, O., & Adelakun, F. (2024). The migration of nurses from low- and middle-income countries: Implications for workforce planning and health system resilience. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 32(2), 155–164.
24. Shaffer, F. A., Bakhshi, M., Jacobs, A., & Johnson, M. (2022). Nurse migration and the global healthcare workforce crisis. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, 46(4), 321–329.
25. Siyam, A., Zurn, P., Rø, O. C., Gedik, G., & Ronquillo, K. (2013). Monitoring the implementation of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 91(11), 816–823. <https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.13.118448>
26. World Health Organization. (2020). *State of the world's nursing 2020: Investing in education, jobs and leadership*. World Health Organization.
27. World Health Organization. (2023). *State of the world's nursing 2023 report*. World Health Organization.
28. World Health Organization. (2024). *Global strategic directions for nursing and midwifery 2021–2025: Progress review*. World Health Organization.
29. Yaya, S., Uthman, O. A., Amouzou, A., & Bishwajit, G. (2018). Disparities in maternal healthcare utilization in sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for healthcare workforce distribution and policy. *BMC Health Services Research*, 18(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-3072-z>