Chapter 5

Returnee Entrepreneurship and Occupational Health and Safety in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory paper focuses on the well-being of diaspora returnees seeking entrepreneurial opportunities in Nigeria, with an emphasis on health, safety and development. The paper is based, in part, on a review of literature on diaspora migrants’ returnees’ well-being. However, in the absence of large scale quantitative research, the report presents partial and anecdotal evidence on the well-being of specific groups of migrants in Nigeria that may not readily be generalized to the whole livelihood-seeking, cross-border migrant population in the SSA region. The paper concludes that returnee entrepreneurs should prepare to contribute meaningfully to controlling occupational health and safety in informal sector of Nigerian economy.

INTRODUCTION

Some scholars (e.g. Drori, 2009; Cerase, 1974) have documented the relationship between entrepreneurship and migration, exploring the choices returnees from the diaspora make after returning to their home countries. Some of these authors (e.g. Marchetta, 2012; Kenney et al., 2013; Dustmann and Kirchkamp, 2002; Gubert and Nordman, 2011) have provided evidences about returnees’ high inclination to engage in entrepreneurial activities after relocating to the country of origin. Typically, the returnees are confronted with a lot of challenges; ranging from trust issues, unfamiliarity with norms, time management issues, problems with workers etc. (e.g. Ojo et al., 2013). However, the particular issue of occupational health and safety (OHS) vis-à-vis returnee entrepreneurs is scarce in extant literature. This paper intends to fill this gap by examining the problems of OHS by returnees using the contextual perspective of the

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Nigerian environment. The OHS challenges in the informal sector are appraised solely because a large number of, not only returnee entrepreneurship but also the bulk of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, are carried out in this space (SMEDAN, 2013).

Understanding the OHS issues around their ‘newly’ arrived homeland will enables the returnee entrepreneurs to improve and promote a health and safety-oriented culture of cooperation among their workers. The best way to keep workers safe and healthy and to keep the business running well without injuries and unnecessary risk is to evaluate and take remedial action on how to make the work environment safer. Firms and organizations in developing countries and rapidly expanding economies, especially, face many challenges when it comes to protecting worker health and safety (Guidotti and Mustafa, 2012).

In essence, it is imperative to consider the challenges the returnees from the diaspora seeking entrepreneurial opportunities might have with regards to occupational health and safety in Nigeria. This is because OHS issue in the informal sector in Nigeria is not well developed (Adeogun & Okafor, 2013). Their experiences abroad might have enabled the returnees to acquire new skills and ideas, as well as accumulated some savings; these may spur them to make entrepreneurial actions in their country of origin (Barry & Jackline, 2001; Ojo et al., 2013). As good as this is, the experience they gathered especially in the area of health and safety might be quite different from what operates in their home country. This could pose a serious challenge for them, more so if they are coming from developed countries with more developed health and safety policy. It is on the basis of the problems that this paper will identify the range of challenges in occupational health and safety in the Nigeria’s informal sector and suggest ways it can be overcome by returnee migrant to the country.

Towards addressing the goals above, the paper is structured into 4 major parts. The first section introduces the concepts of return migration and returnee entrepreneurship, the second section identifies the various occupational challenges in the informal sector in Nigeria. How to overcome those occupational challenges is the focus of the third section while section four concludes the paper.

**RETURN MIGRATION AND RETURNEE ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Migrants could decide to return (temporarily, permanently, or circularly) to their countries of origin for a number of social and economic reasons. For instance, Ojo et al. (2013) listed four investments’ motivation for the UK’s black Africans to return to their countries of origin. These are:

1. Nostalgic-led Investment, which relates to the desire for reintegration into the country of origin by means of establishing a business venture that serves, not only to soar up their social standing, but for developmental rationale.
2. Phobia-induced Investment, which refers to investment based on concern over retirement worries in the UK and the desire to get reestablished in the country of origin in which they aspire to retire.
3. Altruistic Investment, which is motivated by the ambition to offer a nurturing income source for families in the country of origin.
4. Opportunistic Investment, which is a business initiative founded solely on exploiting of perceived opportunity in the country of origin.

Returnee entrepreneurship is a subcategory of diaspora entrepreneurship (Drori et al., 2009) encompassing immigrants’ entrepreneurs relocated to their country of origin to commence business ventures