



Economic and Social Council

Topic 2: Combating the issue of “brain drain” in LEDCs through the implementation of social-economic investments

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1. Definition of key terms

Brain drain: also indicated by human capital flight, the term is commonly used to describe the emigration of highly trained, qualified or skilled people from a particular country to another; either for better pay, equipment, political stability or living conditions.

Brain gain: increase in the number of foreign professionals moving to a country where they are given better opportunities.

Reverse brain drain: form of brain drain where professionals move from a more developed country to a less developed country. These migrants may accumulate remittances and improve skills abroad that can be useful in their motherland.

Human capital: knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies and experience possessed by an individual or a population affecting their productive capacity, economic potential or cost to a certain organization or country.

LEDC: Less Economically Developed Countries; this term indicates a country showing either a poverty level of income, a high rate of population increase, a substantial portion of workers employed in agriculture or unemployed, and/or a low portion of adult literacy.

MEDC: More Economically Developed Country; whose economy is characterized by large industrial, service sectors and advanced technological infrastructures.

2. Introduction

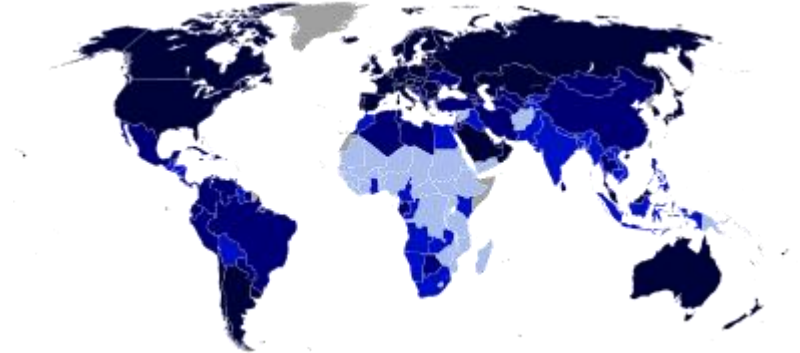


Figure 1: World map representing Human Development Index categories

The issue of “brain drain”, which is becoming increasingly alarming, occurs because of different factors such as unstable political conditions, reservation system (which consists in the facilitation of people belonging to higher classes in education, jobs and promotions), low standards of living, poor health conditions, lack of good employment opportunities or facilities. The migration of a country’s human capital, which may have otherwise benefited their motherland and contributed to its economy and improvement, results in major problems such as loss of talent and quality, and degradation of the economic system and the society as a whole (especially in the case of migration of doctors and engineers). Consequently, it increases the disparity in the economic and social prospect of the countries around the world: the already rich and developed nations grow richer while the underdeveloped ones stay poorer and backward.

3. Background information

Human capital flight first emerged as a major public concern in the 1940s when high numbers of European experts emigrated to the USA and UK.

In 1972, about 6% of the world’s physicians (140 000) were located outside their home country, mainly in the USA, UK and Canada. The majority of migrants were fleeing countries reflecting colonial and linguistic ties, with a prevalence of Asian countries such as India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

In 1979, the World Health Organization (WHO) carried out a detailed 40-country report on magnitude and flow of international migration by health professionals. According to this report, nearly 90% of all emigrants were moving to five countries: Australia, Canada, Germany, UK and USA.

In 2000, about 175 million people had been living abroad for more than a year: about 65 million of them were economically active.

However, the lack of reliability of data and the problem of distinguishing ‘permanent’ migrants from ‘temporary’ ones still exist.



At present, countries such as India, Pakistan and Russia are suffering from this problem and losing their human capital extremely rapidly. As a matter of fact, India is currently deprived of around 3 percent of its skilled professionals (including teachers, doctors, engineers, scientists etc.) to developed nations like USA.

Young, educated, healthy individuals are most likely to pursue higher education and economic improvements abroad. The majority of doctors obtain specialized and postgraduate professional qualifications during their stay in the host country. Half of the foreign-born graduate students in France, UK and USA do not return to their home country after having completed their studies. In 1995, in fact, 79% of the doctoral graduates in science and engineering in the USA from India and 88% of those from China, decided to remain in the USA.

In the majority of cases, the "donor" country is not only renouncing its investment in education in the medical field, but also the contribution of its professionals to health care. In fact, as a country loses its talents, its progress slows down due to the lack of the highly skilled workforce, which has left the nation. For example, the ratio of physicians to patients in India is 1:2083 compared to the USA where the ratio is 1:500.

Poorer continents such as Africa and conservative nations such as LEDCs suffer the most from this issue and, as a consequence, their development is hindered. The brain drain statistics for the world's 48 LEDCs are severe: among their citizens with a university-level education, about one in five leaves seeking for employment elsewhere, with the same proportion dropping to one out of twenty-five in the case of developed countries. For example, according to the African Union, every year about 70,000 of its skilled professionals and experts leave Africa, as the continent is only able to create about 3 million jobs per year.

4. Major countries involved

The countries suffering the most from brain drain are LEDCs.

The majority of them is located in Africa:

Nigeria: Nigeria is struggling with brain drain, which causes a conspicuous number of trained and skilful personnel, especially in the medical field, to leave the country. In fact, the development in the medical sector has further lowered the physician-patient ratio in Nigeria from 1:4000 to 1:5000, with the World Health Organization (WHO) fixing the recommended ratio at about 1:600.

Kenya: Kenya is suffering, as other LEDCs, from the migration of intellectuals. The push factors which have led to the exile or flight of writers, activists and other professionals are political instability, corruption, lack of security due to organized gangs and post election violence, poor working conditions, low salaries and few opportunities of employment. Nowadays around 51% of the country's physicians have migrated to more appealing countries.

Ethiopia: Ethiopia represents one of the most serious examples of countries suffering from brain drain, in spite of its huge number of experts, in particular in the medical field. Recently, a research presented to the National Symposium on Ethiopian Diasporas revealed that the



75% of its experts have been fleeing to other countries during the past 10 years, leaving behind too few scientists, doctors and engineers to fill the available positions.

Gambia: About 63% of its experts and professionals have left Gambia in search of better solutions. This issue is costing huge amounts of money, invested in human resource development over several decades.

Somalia: The educated and trained professionals, who should contribute the most to the region's advancement, are leaving to seek better opportunities in Western countries, knowing that since 2014 more than 4000 deaths have been recorded (the majority of migrant's fatalities are still unrecorded) each year on migratory routes.

Bangladesh: Brain drain is becoming an increasingly alarming issue in Bangladesh. In fact, according to the statistics, 65% of the newly-graduates in the medical field seek jobs abroad causing the country to lose about 200 doctors per year. Moreover, a study carried out by the World Economic Forum revealed that, among people from 15 to 29 years old, more than 80% would prefer to migrate.

Haiti: One of the main reasons of brain drain in Haiti is the fact that foreign policies (such as the twenty years abusive occupation by the US during the twentieth century) that were enforced placed the inhabitants' lives in danger. Due to a rising fear, professionals have been seeking better life conditions and workplaces in developed, or at least developing, countries. Human capital flight has affected both the political development and the economic development. On the political side, the policies and means needed by Haiti to tackle the problem don't exist yet, while as far as economy is concerned, the output of human capital is not enough to sustain the lack of professionals who moved towards other countries. Education has been influenced by brain drain the same way it has caused it: through the absence of necessary educational resources.

5. UN Involvement

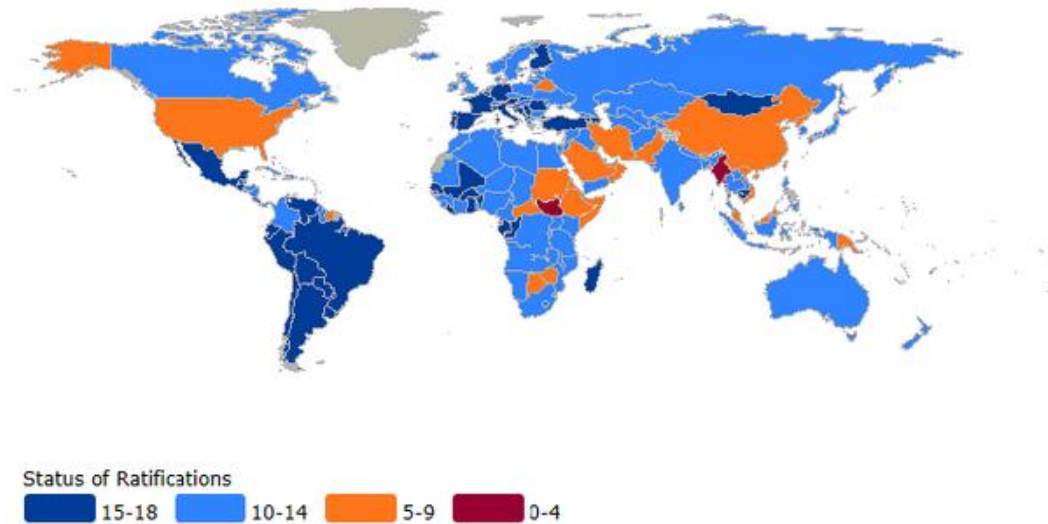
In the past decades the United Nations have tackled the issue of brain drain in many ways.

UNOMOZ, which stands for United Nations Operations in Mozambique, is an example of the UN involvement. UNOMOZ was a UN peace mission in Mozambique in 1992. On 9 October 1992, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, UN Secretary General, submitted to the SC (Security Council) a report aiming at guaranteeing security. As a consequence of the achieved security, many experts and highly-qualified professionals renounced to flee overseas.

The International Convention on Migrant Workers and its Committee held its first session in March 2004. It is formed by a body of independent professionals that monitors implementation aiming at safeguarding workers rights from potential violation.

The World Health Report 2006 - Working Together for Health, published by WHO, contains precise estimations of the current crisis in the global medical workforce. The study reveals an amount of 4.3 million doctors, nurses and support workers, with peaks of intensity in sub-Saharan Africa's countries, where medical field employments need to be filled.

Ratification of 18 International Human Rights Treaties



6. Useful links

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303984720_Brain_drain_in_less_developed_countries_Africa_in_focus/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Least_Developed_Countries/

https://www.who.int/entity/workforcealliance/brain-drain-brain-gain/CodeEC_Brain-DrainPresentationAfricaPlatform.pdf

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-brain-drain-in-economics-definition-causes-effects-examples.html>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1275994/#!po=0.892857/>

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_capital_flight/

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CMW/Pages/CMWIntro.aspx>