General Article

Brian Drain in India: Problems and Prospective

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Abstract

After completing their education in India, people often leave for foreign countries in search of better working environment and pay package on account of unemployment. This concept of taking education in a country but earning for another is known as brain drain. Asian countries have been a victim of such concept since the west opened up job opportunities for eastern countries. The opportunities inside the country suddenly seem small and worthless in front of the starry image of the west. More than anything else, better lifestyle and a developed country name to flaunt, has lead people into migrating their working areas from their native place to a western country. After all, everyone is Human, more interested in his self interest. If those in power do not recognise the value of merit, then this trickle of a drain will become a torrent. Other countries would welcome this Brain drain only to suit their own interests.

Introduction

The issue of brain drain and loss of labor force to foreign countries have been talked a lot within India and out of India. The US, India, China, Bangladesh, Singapore, Russia, Australia, Canada, Germany, UK have been some of many places Indians go for further studies. India going to the labor market of Middle East, Eastern Asia and other countries are told to be underpaid and usually return back after a certain period. But the question on weather they are impacting the Indias development and well-being is still questioned in spite of the country’s economy driven by their revenue. Indian students and workers in developed countries generally try to settle in the host country. They tend to turn deaf ears to some well wishers’ plea to return the cream of the country back to India.

The expression ‘brain-drain migration’ was popularised in the 1960s with the loss of skilled labour-power from a number of poor countries, notably India. Of particular concern was the emigration of those with scarce professional skills, like doctors and engineers, who had been trained at considerable expense by means of taxpayers’ subsidies to higher education. It is impossible for political reasons to forbid emigration. This was a strategy closely associated with the repressive regimes in the Soviet Union and East Germany and would not be feasible or acceptable in virtually any country today. What, then, are the possible solutions to the brain drain?

India, the giant of Asia and the country many see as the rising world power, may be suffering from an acute case of brain drain. A new report from the India Daily indicates that two-thirds of the India students who study abroad do not return to India. Of the 100,000 students who have gone abroad since 2002, only 20,000 to 30,000 have chosen to go back and live in India. Unfortunately for India, this number likely includes some of India’s most talented scholars; leading at least one of the authors, Gupta, to conclude that India is in “dire need of people of expertise.” Some now argue that the Indian government needs to foster an atmosphere that will encourage students to return home after their studies.

India has no problems in meeting the demands of any technology driven industry. Medicine is also a field where Indians are quite advanced and are on par with developed countries in most segments in this filed. Indian hospitals and doctors are state of the art and it
comes as no surprise that, medical tourism is on the rise because of the professional and competent staff and facility sand also because of the low cost involved. These days it’s become the norm for many patients from advanced nations to come to India for treatment making use of the facilities offered here. Apart from all these, India has progressed in all technological areas with most of the development made in-house and also investment into research and development has gone up many folds indicating our self-sufficiency and also the need to constantly update ourselves to be on par with the rest of the world. But we are facing a bad problem called brain drain in many sectors Increasing numbers of Indian educated overseas never return to their home countries. In addition, many Indians educated in their own countries leave for better employment opportunities abroad. Others leave to avoid political repression or turmoil caused by war. Whatever the reasons for the migratory trend that economists call the "brain drain," the departure of so many Indian minds is having a devastating effect on the continent.

In the last couple of years the number of Indian students studying abroad has increased rapidly. While studying in Canada is difficult for Indian students, the number of students going to the US and Australia is increasing yearly. According to the Institute for International Education in New York, the number of Indian students studying in the US increased by 27.9 per cent between 2006 and 2007, bringing the total numbers of enrolled Indian in the US to 7,754. Nepal now ranks 13th by number of students studying in the US, compared to 23rd in 2004.

The number of Indian students going to the UK has decreased from 704 in 2000 to 292 in 2005. But according to Australia Education International, 7,884 Indian students went to Australia in 2007 alone. Indians now is in rank 6th among countries sending students to Australia. An estimated 200 students apply for visas every day at the US embassy. With the visa fee of Rs 11,000, the embassy earns more than Rs 80 million just from visa fees every month.

A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report in 1969, had defined brain drain as, 'an abnormal form of scientific exchange between countries, characterised by a one-way flow in favour of the most highly developed countries'. Almost four decades later, the definition of brain drain has not changed a great deal with talented students still leaving the shores of developing countries in pursuit of better opportunities in the developed nations.

To think of it, India has become the outsourcing hub of the world, where all international companies are also setting shop. But this outsourcing has also meant that the talented bunch of students, who cannot find good job opportunities in India have to travel abroad in search of better job profiles. More than 25 per cent of the medical staff in America and the Britain consists of doctors, who attended medical school elsewhere. These are the same students who got trained in India, Pakistan or China and have now moved abroad for better opportunities. In the year 2008, maximum students going to the United States of America in order to study were from India. Most of these students, after finishing their education, get recruited and more often than not settle abroad.

A report by the World Bank had placed India third in terms of brain drain, even ahead of China and Germany. The first two slots were taken up by Britain and Philippines. Even though the numbers represent more than a million, the percentage of Indian immigrants to foreign countries represents just five per cent of the total graduate population. When we compare this to some of the African and central American countries, it is still a low figure. Almost 47 per cent of the student population of Ghana goes abroad, whereas 89 per cent of the student population of Guyana goes abroad. Well, this just can’t be called brain drain, this is brain haemorrhage.

But still brain drain continues to be a cause of concern for India, for we are getting
used to thousands of students going abroad every year for education. Former Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam had said that reverse brain drain will have to begin if India is to become a developed nation in the future. But the percentage of students coming back after studying overseas is not very high and hence efforts will have to be made to reduce the number of students going out in the first place. For this, we will have to revamp our education system and also include more higher education institutions in the country so that students do not have to look for alternatives elsewhere. The migration of students might have helped in 'brand India' becoming more powerful, but the image of India needs to change in the future. We shouldn’t just be a country that produces great talent, but also the one that nurtures and builds on it. Every Indian is proud of the fact that he is an Indian, but we will have to wait for the day till he is proud of being in India.

Indians in the Diaspora can and should be important partners in the development process. They are numerous and many of them are highly skilled. Some have capital to invest. The sooner that Indians in the Diaspora, the Indian government, non-governmental organizations, the international donor community and the private sector appreciate this fact, the faster Indians can take advantage of this resource. Here are some thoughts on how to facilitate return of talents to (beef up intellectual capital in) Indians

- Enabling Indians everywhere to share their expertise by participating in projects at home.
- Enabling those who desire to return to the continent to take up jobs and consultancies to do so
- Pooling funds and other resources together to undertake major investment projects at home
- Indian government, perhaps assisted by international expertise, draw up a strategy for making the best use of the skills and knowledge in the Diaspora

As children of the brain drain (literally as well as figuratively) we are conditioned to think of India’s million-strong brain drain represents just 4.3% of its vast graduate populationthe free market in labor as a good thing for all parties involved. Certainly, free movement of talented professionals has been good for migrating professionals and for the people of the first world — 25% of the doctors in North America, Britain and Australia are immigrants who attended medical school abroad.

A trickier question concerns the implications of the brain drain for the people in the sending country, the country that the doctors are being drained from. The effects of the brain drain there can be ambiguous - while it leeches away many talented professionals, it also creates incentives for others (who might not have seen education as lucrative before) to get educated, and can therefore create a more educated population than would have existed without brain drain. Some people argue that this is why India has benefitted from/despite brain drain while other countries have been damaged by it. According to the Economist:

Indian students had little reason to learn computer coding before there was a software industry to employ them. But such an industry could not take root without computer engineers to man it. The dream of a job in Silicon Valley, however, was enough to lure many of India’s bright young things into coding, and that was enough to hatch an indigenous software industry where none existed before.

India’s valley-dwellers represent just one contingent in a much larger diaspora. According to the most exhaustive study of the brain drain, released last month by the World Bank, there were 1.04m Indian-born people, educated past secondary school, living in the 30 relatively rich countries of the OECD in 2000. (An unknown number of them acquired their education outside their country of birth, the report notes.) This largely successful diaspora is more than just something to envy and emulate. Its members can be a source of know-how and money, and provide valuable entrées into foreign markets and supply chains.
The expression ‘brain-drain migration’ was popularised in the 1960s with the loss of skilled labour-power from a number of poor countries, notably India. Of particular concern was the emigration of those with scarce professional skills, like doctors and engineers, who had been trained at considerable expense by means of taxpayers’ subsidies to higher education. It is impossible for political reasons to forbid emigration. This was a strategy closely associated with the repressive regimes in the Soviet Union and East Germany and would not be feasible or acceptable in virtually any country today. What, then, are the possible solutions to the brain drain?

Emigration can be delayed. Normally, delay strategies involve some element of public service. For example, doctors may be asked to stay on for two years after their training to ‘pay back’ what they ‘owe’ to society. A more sophisticated strategy is to incorporate delay within the training period, thus ensuring that certification follows rather than precedes a spell of public service. (This is the position advanced by South Africa’s Minister of Health.)

Emigration can be inhibited either in the destination or source countries. The main constraints in the destination countries are the labour market and immigration policies, but at high skill levels another important consideration is the portability of qualifications. Increasingly, this inhibition is falling away as educational franchise operations and international certification expand. Emigration can be inhibited in the source countries by developing special privileges for scarce groups through pay incentives, enhanced research budgets and laboratory and hospital subsidies.

A relaxed, market-driven solution is to ignore the emigration of skilled workers and let a brain-drain from poorer countries replace lost skills. A more interventionist variation of the market solution is to recruit in target countries while developing immigration incentives. (In Canada, for example, foreign doctors working in rural areas are given accelerated immigration status.) It might be possible to reduce the negative effects of the brain-drain by promoting links with skilled nationals and former nationals abroad. Spending some time abroad to complement its formation is not a bad thing and should be encouraged even before post-doctoral studies.

The key issue consists more in providing resources to allow a return after few years abroad. The lack of good contacts between the expatriated and his country can have very negative aspects.

What is the other side?

From a universal point of view, brain drain will help talents develop and not be shattered. Here is a plain example, a very intelligent friend of mine got a medal in the International Physics Olympics as well as entered the university with no concourse. He graduated with most excellent marks, passed the Masters Entrance exam however was failed for some silly reason. For some time he unsuccessfully tried to get around the difficulty, but at the end he gave up and determined to study his masters out of the country. Now he is a PhD as well as lives happily and works in the States. Would someone else in his condition have done something else? I think no.

Also the knowledge that those young brilliant people gain overseas will be very helpful if they choose in a later phase to go back as well as settle down or engage in their country. The fact that young cultured people leave the country in the present situation is not only good for they however is also good for the world.

On the other hand on the other side, brain drain is a severe loss due to the flow of the competent and effective sector of the country particularly oil producing states which are now in terrible need for trained and highly skilled employees. Brain drain influences all level of education in the world which suffers illiteracy estimation at 70 million people. The economy can also be affected due to expenditure on study whether state funded or privately. The migration even broadens the gap.
between the rich and poor countries. Brain drain is advantageous to the beneficiary countries as well as loss to countries of origin, because it deprives these countries from the innovations of their subjects. Such countries as a result have become culturally and technologically dependent on the

**Reverse brain drain**

What propelled them to return home? Some 84% of the Chinese and 69% of the Indians cited professional opportunities. And while they make less money in absolute terms at home, most said their salaries brought a “better quality of life” than what they had in the U.S. (There was also some reverse culture shock—complaints about congestion in India, say, and pollution in China.) When it came to social factors, 67% of the Chinese and 80% of the Indians cited better “family values” at home. Ability to care for aging parents was also cited, and this may be a hidden visa factor: it’s much harder to bring parents and other family members over to the U.S. than in the past. For the vast majority of returnees, a longing for family and friends was also a crucial element.

A return ticket home also put their career on steroids. About 10% of the Indians polled had held senior management jobs in the U.S. That number rose to 44% after they returned home. Among the Chinese, the number rose from 9% in the U.S. to 36% in China.

When we asked what was better about the U.S. than home, 54% of Indian and 43% of Chinese said that total financial compensation for their previous U.S. positions was better than at home. Health-care benefits were also considered somewhat better in the United States by 51 percent of Chinese respondents, versus 21 percent who thought it was better in their home country. (Indian respondents were split more evenly on this).

These were a self-selected group, people who had already left. But what about the future of the immigrants presently studying at U.S. institutions for their higher learning?

We surveyed 1,224 foreign students from dozens of nations who are currently studying at U.S. universities or who graduated in 2008. The majority told us that they didn’t think that the U.S. was the best place for their professional careers and they planned to return home. Only 6 percent of Indian, 10 percent of Chinese, and 15 percent of European students planned to settle in the U.S.

**How to stop brain drain**

Enacting a law to stop brain drain may be unconstitutional, while laws imposing restrictions an regulations of brain drain shall be unconstitutional ,lawful and acceptable by all. INDIA has the law as such....Now there is no brain drain from India, that time is a history. Its govt,s responsibility to stop them by good opportunity in india. I think one could lead by example by working for the benefit of the nation for a start,...by giving more salary &more , and it is the their duty to work for the poor and the country which shaped them....by giving them more chances in India. India has the best brains do not get enough good opportunities according Brain drain- To put it in simpler language means the people who study in their own nation and after study they go to foreign countries to work and earn money.

**Conclusion**

You can't stop brain drain as long as persons lacking integrity are allowed to head scientific institutions and are given enormous powers to tyrannise scientists who dare to point out their dishonesty. The power of these tyrants does not end even after they retire. The government gives them sinecures, awards, commissions and so on, and enable them to keep a stranglehold on science management in the country, and to control the careers of thousands and thousands aof scientists. The govt should realise that many of these tyrants have risen to powerful positions only with the help of foreign agencies that are interested in stifling science in India. These agencies prop up scientifically incompetent but pliable persons by giving them huge grants. This is a fairly old stratagem.
References


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