

A Result or Condition of Internationalisation of Higher Education: Brain Drain

Dr Touhidul Firoz

Assistant Professor Humanities Department
COMSATS Institute of Information Technology
Lahore Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This article aims to see whether the current spate of 'Brain Drain' from the less developed countries like Pakistan, is because of internationalization of higher education. The study explores this in the context of globalization and the resultant knowledge economy which has turned information into a marketable commodity. Globalization aided by faster means of communication and information, has internationalized knowledge, making it easily accessible and abundant. This has inscribed new ways of perceiving teaching and learning replacing traditional ways of regarding epistemology by equating it with economic benefits in technologically defined areas and activities. Brain drain can be seen as a necessary condition and result of this internationalization of higher education, as well as because of the socio-economic and political conditions of the sending country.

Key Words: Internationalization, globalization, knowledge economy, brain drain, ICTs

“A change is taking place in the global economy. It is simultaneously becoming more and more centered on knowledge. As always when there are changes in economy, there will be resulting changes in society and not least in education”

(Coulby, 2005)

Introduction

This article looks at the phenomenon of brain drain - immigration of high skilled personnel to other countries, due to the internationalization of institutions of higher learning, compounded within the context of globalization. Although immigration and exodus have taken place throughout human history, the current spate of huge numbers of skilled personnel migrating from the less economically developed countries (LEDCs) to the More Developed Countries (MEDCs) has raised concerns about the depletion of the human resource from the home country. This brain drain needs to be seen both as a condition as well as a result of the socio-economic conditions prevailing in these countries and of the changed role of higher education in the global economy. Assessing the determinants for emigration of skilled workers requires better knowledge of how globalization has impacted production and dissemination of knowledge as well as of the educational and socio economic structure of the sending country.

Although migration is an age old phenomenon in human history, but recent developments in the international scenario, the new world economy, political instability and fast flow of information and communication technology (ICT) has led to an unprecedented number of professional groups to head towards greener pastures. The availability of cross border education has increased the incidence of brain drain in doctors, students and teachers. Usually the direction for this exodus is from the LEDCs (Less Economically Developed countries) to the more economically developed countries MEDCs (More Economically Developed countries). Various theorists have contested this notion not as „Brain Drain“ but as a „Brain Gain“ for the hosting country. However for majority of the sending countries it remains a major loss. As Docquier *et al* (2006) say, “By depriving developing countries of human capital, one of their scarcest resources, brain drain is usually seen as a drag on economic development”. The notion of migration thus brings in the concepts of the sending country and the host country, implying one as the loser and the other as the gainer. The emphasis on the national ignores the economics of this problem, as has been identified by Johnson (1967) who says: “The expression of such sentiments can be dignified by the presentation of brain drain as a serious economic and cultural problem, by relying on nationalistic sentiments and assumptions and ignoring the principles of economics - especially the principle that in every transaction there is both a demand and a supply”.

The contest between the global and the national continues with both gaining and losing grounds at different times. The affects of globalization on the educational systems is seen as an increased emphasis on science and technology in national curricula, areas which are now increasingly related to production and dissemination of knowledge. Schools remain largely untouched by it, still holding on to national curricula, as Zambeta (2005) says, “Schools in particular are some of the most conservative social institutions where tradition prevails. Schools present immense resistance to change”. It is universities, majority of them with private or semi government boards, (which) particularly become the main site where the pressure of

globalization is felt (Coulby, 2005). They are the main areas which become sites for cosmopolitan, liberal thinking". Internationalization of universities can thus be seen as a condition of the globalization process. In the individual it is manifest in the form of shifting allegiances and political loyalties; and production of hybrid identities. The education of such individuals would have inculcated in them a liberal view, cosmopolitan view of life.

Globalization and the Knowledge Economy

Globalization is basically an economic phenomenon, which has crossed traditional borders to impact cultures, societies, communities and their education systems. Although difficult to define, one can try to do so by looking at how globalization has been described by theorists. One group sees it as a benign force which tends to bring modernity and prosperity and the other sees it as "unfettered Capitalism and dehumanizing technology" (Wright, 2006). It has been described as opposite to nationhood, focusing on monopolarity and homogenization, "associated with the increasing „interconnectedness“ between the economies and societies which transcend the territoriality of states" as opposed to nationalism which tends to underline difference, distinctiveness and separatism (Held, in Coulby, 2006). But the concepts of nationalism and globalization are not mutually exclusive, as Zambeta (2006) points out: "The intersection of these two are negotiated at the level of the state, changing power dynamics and producing hybrid formations". However one thing about which there is consensus is that because of the role of ICTs in the process of globalization, "the multidirectional cross border flows of goods, services, money, people, information and culture are going faster further than ever before, (Wright, 2005). The fast flow of cultural products made possible with swift means of transferring knowledge with the ICTs, has aided the global economy. This has impacted higher education all over the world in the form of making education an economic commodity. Globalization depends on the production and dissemination of knowledge and the modern economy is therefore defined as the "knowledge economy", where „know how“ and expertise is as important as traditional resources used to be in the industrialized economy. As Ruth et al say, "KBE (Knowledge Based Economy) has penetrated most domains of our Western societies and is also colonizing other parts of the world. Indeed, *globalization and competitiveness rhetoric* (Muntigl et al., 2000) seem to be ubiquitous, and the quantification and economization of knowledge serve to rank social institutions and individuals".

Globalization and Knowledge

Globalization has impacted the centuries old traditions of disseminating knowledge, inscribing new patterns of learning, teaching and research. As Tarar (2006) says, "the ideal of the university propagated by Alexander von Humboldt - influential in Europe from the 18th to

the 20th centuries – began to erode. This perspective saw the academy as an autonomous sphere insulated from economic pressures devoted to the cultivation of the intellect and the raining of young minds”. He goes on to say that, “Following the widespread university upheavals of the late 1960s, the universities in the western world underwent a transformation which changed their role from producers of knowledge to producers of knowledge workers”. With greater ease of access to information, through information and communication technology (ICT), knowledge flow has crossed conventional channels of transmission and become internationalized: “These include a system of mass higher education, a global market place for the mobile population of students and faculty, aided by the global reach of internet-based technologies”(ibid). Bash (2005) brings attention to the technological changes brought about by globalization which suggest a difference from the traditional classroom where the teacher was the sole transmitter of knowledge. Increasingly students log into a variety of information sources - the Internet, television, news reels which can be accessed for faster and latest developments in the any field: “The locus for learning is increasingly to be found beyond the teacher-led classroom, with access to non-traditional modes of learning support and to diverse, frequently electronically based sources of knowledge”. Even in schools the ICT is “now a taken for granted dimension” (Griffin and Bash, 1995; in Bash, 2005). In the „network society“ of the twenty first century, higher education in the future will be characterized by „networks between nodes of information, classrooms“ sites, and students „individual locations“(Castells, 2000: in Bash). Seen in this way, it can be argued that internationalized nature of higher education is a condition as well as a result of globalization.

Internationalization of Higher Education

Internationalization of higher education institution therefore needs to be seen in context of global knowledge economy and how this has impacted societal perceptions regarding higher education.

Internationalisation of higher education has two types – cross border education in which one leaves his/her home country and goes to one of the OECDs (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries to get a professional degree. This is termed as career student mobility. The second option is program and institution mobility, involving cross-border distance programs, under various arrangements, on the pattern of twining franchises or partnerships. Institution mobility, in which a foreign university opens its campuses off shore, is less common. “The typical form of institution mobility is the opening of foreign campuses by universities and of foreign learning centres by educational providers” (OECD Policy Brief, 2006). In UAE you find campuses of major US Ivy League colleges, earning the name of „A super market of universities“. Yet another form of cross border education is through distance learning or e-learning. Cross- border student mobility might in some cases involve a risk of “brain drain” for the sending country. This might be alleviated by offering cross-border foreign

education in the home country, without student mobility and by creating job opportunities at home for the students. However competing curricula would affect the learners of the marginal communities by authorization of grand narratives of the home university.

Besides marketization, easy accessibility and superabundance of knowledge, which characterize Knowledge Economy, internationalization of knowledge features as one aspect which is of relevance for the present study. Internationalization of knowledge covers, besides formal education, such diverse things as sports news, glossy magazines, Hollywood movies and other cultural products (Coulby, 2005). He further argues that universities in the anglophone countries now compete with each other to recruit students from all over the world, with UK and Australia in the lead. "This multi-million-pound enterprise has led many students to study outside their own countries". As far as content is concerned there is now more homogenization, and a more unified and constrained way in which economics, politics, philosophy and sociology are seen. In this internationalization, the role of English as the language of instruction can be seen as further reinforcing the homogenizing factor. "Non-anglophone countries are increasingly developing modules or even whole academic years where a range of subjects are taught in English". The affects of this phenomenon on professionals/students in opting for the western way of life by leaving the home country can be seen in the increasing numbers opting to settle abroad.

Brain Drain in Pakistan

Pakistani students have been going to western universities for higher education and returning to land good jobs, even before the inception of Pakistan. However what is of growing concern is that many of them continue living there acquiring the nationalities of those host countries. The current wave of Pakistani institutions of higher education entering into partnerships with UK can be seen as internationalization. In Pakistan several universities have formed partnerships with foreign universities, e.g. COMSATS Institute of Information Technology with Lancaster University, UK; University of Lahore with a number of UK and American universities; NAMAL College, Mianwali with University of Bradford, UK; and NUST has collaborated with numerous US, Chinese and European universities. USA Universities offer distance learning to students all over the world. Some Ivy League universities offer scholarships to promising South Asian students in order to enhance their reputation (Rajput, 2002). There are various arrangements under which the local universities promise the benefits of a foreign degree to local students. They students pay the extra cost in shape of additional fees to acquire the stamp of the foreign university on their local degree. The foreign university promotes its own band of education and quality control to emphasize the worth of their degree which is offered to learners after completion of four year course. However in most cases no visa facilitation is offered. What is the worth of this foreign degree in the international/local job market and what are the employability prospects for these student,

only the future will tell. As a post colony, Pakistan retains most of the colonialist systems, structures and language especially in the domains of power - the armed forces, judiciary and bureaucracy (Rahman, 2002). The parallel system of education, also a colonial legacy, continues to be practiced for all intents and purposes although state rhetoric of successive governments persists to gloss over its existence. The language of the colonizer continues to be a guarantor of power and prestige. English is taught from the preschool level to the graduate level and its importance is emphasized through the National Education Policy and its outcomes in shape of value placed on it in terms of employability and economic/social rewards. This placing of value and authenticity on a foreign language and a foreign degree is not new. Even during British rule, the elite had sent their wards to acquire foreign degrees, a trend which has continued after independence. Docquier *et al* (2007) say. "The brain drain is strong in small countries that are close to major Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) regions that share colonial links with OECD countries". Johnson (1967) has pointed out the correlation between migration and the ex colonies. He says, "There is generally assumed to be a net flow of trained professional people from the former colonial territories to the ex-imperial European nations, and from Europe and elsewhere to North America and particularly the United States". The societal perception regarding western education and English language has further made internationalization of educational institutions seem lucrative to peripheral communities. In the interactive global economy, English fulfills the need of an international lingua franca. English has become a prerequisite for progress and development in the knowledge based economy. This is evidenced by the fact that the four leading English-speaking countries alone (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada) take more than half (54%) of all foreign students in the OECD area. The placing of value on foreign education and language certainly becomes an incentive for professionals to seek education and livelihood abroad.

The economic factor remains paramount in any formulation of human society. Exodus has occurred in all eras of human civilization sometimes for religious reasons, because of natural calamities or to escape from dictatorial political regimes but most of all in the lure of greener pastures. Some even count this as a blessing, which for the unskilled worker it certainly is, defusing the load of unemployment and distribution of resources in the sending country whose economy benefits from the huge remittances send back by the émigrés. But it is immigration of high skill labor which is usually termed „brain drain“.

The sociopolitical conditions of the home countries play its part in the emigration of the disfranchised section of society. A huge number of Ahmadies have migrated, mainly to Canada following the amendment in the Constitution of 1973, in Pakistan. The partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947 led to vast numbers of people crossing over to either side of the border. Lack of security is also incentive to leave the home shore. Docquier *et al* say, "Interestingly, the brain drain increases with political instability and the degree of fractionalization at origin and decreases with natives“ human capital". Even for the intellectuals, with higher sensibilities the current situation in the country is a valid reason to immigrate. Political and financial

instability, sky rocketing inflation via a vis less earning power, is added incentive for the professional to seek a better life abroad.

The deplorable state of education in Pakistan has been pointed out by many (Rahman, 2002; Tarar, 2006; Abedi, 1991). Largely because of political mismanagement of the education sector, a large part of the academia remains alienated. For David Bloom, managerial reforms are needed for strengthening higher education in Pakistan which has been rendered more difficult by its poor health and education indicators and the burgeoning deficits in government spending and foreign trade. (In Tarar, 2006). While it spews constructs of inequality through the dual system of education at the same time the system suffers from apathy, corruption, mismanagement and beauracratic apathy. The Task Force established to find out the causes of the ills in Pakistan's education system suggested measures to diversify the "resource base of public universities in order to attract high quality faculty and generate research. According to Tarar (2006) the report, identifies the "structural problem" lies with "archaic financial management" rather than with inadequate funding as such" and argues for freeing the universities from " political, governmental and bureaucratic or other extraneous influences", which freedom is to be earned through financial autonomy. Rajput (2002) relates the brain drain in the Indian context to the basic "rot in the education sector" which is intent on meeting targets of turning out cadres of "educated students" and in this shortsightedness refuses to acknowledge the quality of education. This has caused many students to leave the country.

Foreign degrees and jobs are similarly regarded as high profile and ensure better jobs and remunerations. HEC's initiative to reform higher education has increased emphasis on teaching and research in science and technology. Some have pointed out that unless these efforts are coordinated with lower levels of education, they cannot really bring any worthwhile change in the overall infrastructure of education in the country. The reforms are intended to help improve teaching and research thereby meeting the challenges posed by the internationalization of higher education. HEC's reform in higher education has paved the way for postgraduate and doctoral students to pursue higher education in western countries. Many of these students get job offers in those countries and come home only to complete the bond signed with their home institution to go back to land lucrative jobs there.

Brain drain is not a particularly Pakistani phenomenon. Other countries in the region, notably India have also huge IT population immigrating to USA and western countries after the IT boom. Doctors and other health practitioners have for years now found the professional and economic benefits of migrating to western countries. Although it is a universal phenomenon happening all over the world, but it afflicts the LEDCs more than the MEDCs. Asia heads the list of regions sending students abroad for higher education, accounting for almost half (43%) of all international tertiary-level students in the OECD area. However others have pointed out the benefits of emigration, pointing it out as not necessarily brain drain but as a brain gain. The recent empirical literature shows that high-skill emigration need not deplete a country's human capital stock and can generate positive network externalities. Alumnus of universities has

helped their alma mater, in placement of prospective candidates, guidance in jobs and financial assistance.

Conclusion

The internationalization of higher education needs to be studied as a necessary condition of the globalizing process which has impacted nations and institutions the world over. Since knowledge has become internationalized, accessible to all through faster means of communication, national curricula had to adjust according to the needs of the 21st century. The resultant brain drain of human capital has been mainly because of this but the role of the socio political conditions of the home country cannot be ruled out. The jury is out there to decide whether a majority of these learners will leave Pakistan for good or will their degree entitle them to a better future by virtue of the stamp of authenticity of a foreign university in the home country. The long term outcomes of studying in foreign universities in terms of formation of hybrid and anglophonic identities can be studied to establish the extent to which they contribute to brain drain from the home countries.

Focusing on areas that can be influenced by public policy, such as promoting education and improving the political climate at the country of origin, could help to reduce the brain drain. It is not overnight that the current day student/ professional decides to leave the home shore to seek their fortune abroad. He has been nurtured to leave his country to seek greener pasture through a number of influences he is exposed to since his childhood. The colonial association, putting of value on any and every thing foreign, the local apathy towards talent, the social corruption and nepotism, law and order situation, all make the opportunity to go abroad a godsend. As things are at present, not to seize this opportunity would be regarded by many as folly. Since it is difficult for the nation state to curb the exodus of human capital through legislation, it would be advised well to improve the conditions in the home country. In the absence of reliable comparative data on international migration by skill level, the debate on the consequences of the brain drain for developing countries has long remained purely theoretical. More research is needed to investigate empirically how the internationalization of higher education and living conditions of the home country affect people to opt for migrating to other countries.

References

- Abedi, R. (1991). *Educational Chaos. Observation on the deteriorating condition of education in Pakistan*. Lahore: Rohtas Books.
- Bash, L. (2005). Teaching and the Globalization of Knowledge. *Globalization and Nationalism in Education*. Eds. David Coulby & Evie Zambeta. London and New York. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Coulby, D. (2005). The knowledge economy: Institutions. *Globalization and Nationalism in Education*. Eds. David Coulby & Evie Zambeta. London and New York. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Docquier, F., Lohest, O. & Marfouk, A. (2007). Brain Drain in Developing Countries. THE WORLD BANK ECONOMIC REVIEW. Oxford University Press. Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 193–218
- Harry, G. Johnson, H.G. (1967). Some Economic Aspects of Brain Drain. *The Pakistan Development Review*. Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad. Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 379-411
- Internationalisation of Higher Education (2004). OCED Policy Brief.
- Rahman, T. (2002). *Language, Ideology and Power*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Rajput, J.S. (2002). Brain Drain and Education Systems. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 37, No. 33. pp. 3404-3405 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4412482>.
- Rassool, N. (2004). Language and Communicative Competence in the Twenty-first Century: Examining the Role of Education. In *Language Policy Planning and Practice. A South-Asian Perspective*. Ed: Sabiha Mansoor, Shaheen Miraj, Aliya Tahir. Aga Khan University, Karachi: Oxford University Press. 8, 16-17
- Tarar, N. O. (2006). Globalisation and Higher Education in Pakistan. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 41, No. 49. pp. 5080-5085. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419007> .
- Wright, S. (2004). *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalization*. London: Palgrave