Introduction

A fierce competition for resources is happening between the countries around the world, especially on human capitals. When talents consistently leave the country of birth for opportunities abroad, it creates a persistent drag on the home country’s domestic economy. This is a phenomenon recognized as brain drain.

Brain Drain is a worldwide phenomenon in which there is a large emigration of individuals with technical skills or knowledge, normally due to conflict, lack of opportunity, political instability, or health risks. It is also known as Human Capital Flight, or the loss of highly skilled or educated individuals from a particular geographic region, organization, or industry. It is considered as a social and economic problem because it leaves an area with a low skilled and undereducated workforce. Brain drain has an economic cost as emigrants usually take with them the fraction of value of their training sponsored by the government. Not only this similar to Capital Flight, but also it intrigues economic drain as it results in loss of finance both directly and indirectly.

Background History

The history of brain drain phenomenon started in the early 1960s, where most skilled migrants from the counties in South moved to the western countries. In 1963, the British institute Royal Society defined “brain drain” as the exodus of British scientists and intellectuals to United States, seriously jeopardizing the British economy. They were encouraged to go to the United States in order to challenge the launching of spuntnik by the former Soviet Union. They provided increased expenditure for highly skilled personnel that were met by immigration. During this period, both the less developed countries (LDCs) and
more developed countries (MDCs) were launching efforts to industrialize and catch up with the technical and scientific standards of the United States. The phenomenon, however, took massive dimensions in the era of globalization since 1991. The creation of basic educational institutions in the former colonies, the break-down of the scientific and academic powerhouse of the former Soviet Union, and the nature of the economic globalization, all contributed to the global dimensions of the emigration of skilled and educated people.

One of the main causes of Brain Drain has to do with the less desirable living conditions in LDCs. This section of the workforce tends to leave due to high unemployment rates, economic crisis, low average salary, political instability, human rights abuses, and lack of personal freedom. These factors are considered push factors because they effectively push people out of their homes, forcing them to look for better opportunities elsewhere. On the other hand, the pull factors of brain drain include higher wages, improved quality of life, growing economy, stable political environment, personal freedom, and prestigious educational opportunities. These factors interact to either dismiss or attract talents.

A high proportion of high skilled immigrants do not return to their home countries. Overall, up to one-fifth of students who study abroad do not come back, at least not immediately. According to the Organization Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has risen dramatically over the past decades, with Asian students making up 53% of the total in 2011. Between 2000 and 2011, the number of international students has more than doubled. Today, almost 4.5 million tertiary students are enrolled outside their country of citizenship.

In LDCs, brain drain phenomenon is much more common and the loss is much more substantial. LDCs generally do not have the ability to support growing industry and they need for better research facilities, career advancement, and salary increases. However, loss also occurs in MDCs; it’s just less substantial as MDCs see an emigration of these educated professionals. In many MDCs, skilled workers are beginning to feel threatened by the large amounts of skilled labor force entering their country because they have to compete for jobs with migrants.
India is one of the main countries that experiences brain drain. Indian-Americans are amongst the most highly educated; many of them, who are Indian-born, have completed college and most have at least a bachelor’s degree. India has a massive population, but ranks globally 163rd in terms of capita income at US $1070. Indians can’t get work for the degrees they obtain. Thus they must look elsewhere, hence creating the brain drain issue. Additionally, Indians often suffer from a quality of life issue, where many regions are plagued with poverty.

**Current Issues**

*Developing countries lose the ability to progress*

Despite the nation’s tremendous effort to cultivate people of talent, people’s tendency to seek employment abroad results in losses especially in the developing nations. The country loses people who can help improve the economy, and by extension, the country itself. With the lack of intelligent workforce, the developing countries continue to suffer from technological recession. Countries develop slower once they lose their talented and skillful citizens. Without skilled workforce and fresh ideas, the country’s infrastructure will start to collapse, or at least become stagnant with no improvement.

Whereas LEDC (Less Economically Developed Countries) lose their talent, MEDC (More Economically Developed Countries) end up gaining it and having an overabundance of skilled workers trying to enter the workforce and fewer available jobs. The United States remains as the central hub of the globally high skilled migrator’s destination. As shown in the figure right, the number of immigrants migrating to the U.S. has been increasing over the last few decades.

*Developing countries suffer from economic loss*

Developing countries also suffer from economic loss, which reduces their development even further and their production of more talented people. The drain effect
refers to the fall in stock of human capital that follows skilled emigration. In addition to the loss of expertise, the consumer spending in the country also suffers immense loss. With this suffering economy, there is also a reduced quality of life for the rest of the population. Without growth and the improvement that could have been provided by the skillful and educated people who left, the country can no longer attempt to compete globally and are left isolated from the rest of the world. This isolation can slow development and keeps poor countries poor, causing a nation to grow even poorer. In fact, many developing countries face currency crisis, which is brought on by a sharp decline in the value of a country’s currency. This decline in value negatively affects an economy by creating instabilities in exchange rates, meaning one unit of a certain currency no longer buys as much as it used to in another currency. The impact of currency crises on economic growth in a developing country is negative and persistent.

Healthcare Issues

The healthcare system of developing countries is in turmoil, and individuals are suffering due to the outflow of healthcare professionals. Brain drain has been affecting healthcare industry; simply because the working conditions in developing nation do not meet the appropriate standards that skilled individuals desire for. As a result, health system worsens throughout developing nations because it becomes increasingly difficult to help ill people with a lack of resource. To give an example, the sub-Saharan Africa region of Africa has faced a great impact from the effects of brain drain. It is estimated by the African Union that African countries lost around 20,000 qualified, professional medical individuals a year.

Another example is the problems in Nigeria. Brain drain is the major cause of underdevelopment, loss of task revenue, and lack of skilled workers in Nigeria. These human capital exports have raised many concerns about the consequent deprivation to many of Nigeria’s struggling sectors, particularly the health sector. Due to brain drain in Nigeria, health care professionals who should contribute to disease prevention and treatment have migrated to other countries. In light of this, there is an increase in death rate and maternal mortality. World Health Organization (WHO) reported that Nigeria has a Doctor-
Patient ratio of 4 doctors per 10,000 patients and five hospital beds per 10,000 patients. Due to the high rate of brain drain in Nigeria, eight out of ten Nigerians are currently receiving substandard or no medical care at all.

**International Actions**

*African Union (AU)*

The African Union (AU) is a formation of African states. It has been declared by the United Nations that one of the biggest impairments to Africa’s development is the issue of Brain Drain. The people who do have the capabilities to further help their nations supersede are unable and unwilling to sustain themselves with the poor living and working standards. Keeping in mind that in African nations there are such prevalent diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and so on and so forth, there is a desperate need for work to be done in this field.

As Africa is lagging far behind in its numbers of medical doctors and specialists, the AU argued that there is an urgent need to stop outflows of doctors from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. In this regard, the AU urged all African countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, to counter the effects of brain drain by encouraging nationals in the diaspora to contribute to the development of their countries of origin through transfer skills, knowledge, and technology. This should include establishment of policies that would ensure replacement of qualified persons who left their countries of origin with local talent, as well as attracting experts in the diaspora to return.

*United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)*

The assembly of (UNCTAD) generated profound discussions on the issue of brain drain in November 29th, 2012. To counter negative effects caused by brain drain, UNCTAD proposed a new international support mechanism aimed at enabling highly skilled members of LDC Diasporas to contribute to specialized knowledge transfer and to channel investment to their home countries. UNCTAD has contended for some years that improving LDCs’ productive capacities is the key to enabling them and their populations to achieve long-term economic growth and to escape poverty.

*International Organization for Migration (IOM)*
IOM is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governments and other partners. IOM helps to ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues. To enhance the role and utilization of highly qualified and skilled African personnel, IOM set-up The Reintegration of Qualified African Nations (ROQAN), an initiative which attempts to reduce the effects of brain drain by creating incentives to those who have left.

**Key Terms**

*Brain Drain:* Immigration of highly skilled, qualified, educated, and at times experienced personal, commonly to a more developed country in the hope of finding better pay, as well as better working and living conditions.

*Brain Gain:* The exact opposite of brain drain; it is the action in which a nation receives highly skilled, qualified, educated, and at times experienced personal that seek a better standard of living.

*Human Capital:* The skills, experience, knowledge, and other intangible assets of a person that are used in generating economic value for individuals.

*Developing Nations:* Developing nations are countries in which the average income of individuals is relatively low in comparison to that of individuals from industrial nations. It is a nation that seeks to develop its resources through industrialization.

*Globalization:* Globalization is the spread of products, technology, information, and jobs across national borders and cultures. In economic terms, it is defined as the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries.

*HIV/AIDS:* HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) targets the immune system and weakens people’s defense against many infections. The most advanced stage of HIV infection is AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome), which can take many years to develop if not treated. HIV continues to be a major global public health issue, having claimed 36.3 million lives so
far. There were an estimated 37.7 million people living with HIV at the end of 2020, over two thirds of whom are in the WHO African Region.

**Possible Solutions**

The issue of brain drain should be taken very seriously due to its potential implications not just for developing country’s economy, but for both the world’s economy and social sphere. Tackling the pervasive problem of the brain drain of human capital is clearly a very difficult task. A clear way to promote brain gain for developing countries would be to launch campaigns and educate individuals, as it would create a more knowledgeable society that is aware of the dangers that it can bring to an economy. Some of the measures that could be adopted to prevent brain drain include:

1. **Improving the Education System**

   Expanding educational infrastructures at all levels and offering better educational qualifications to individuals will prevent youths from leaving their country in pursuit of education elsewhere. Improved education standard will definitely reduce the number of people that study in developed nations. Offering opportunities for further academic developments and promoting links with other skilled nationals and internationals will also keep students from leaving their home countries.

2. **Encouraging the Startup Environment**

   Governments should create organization with noteworthy individuals who are skilled and experienced in their specialized field, in which they encourage future generations, pass on knowledge, and help the entrepreneurship spirit of any country to develop and flourish. Home countries should combine investment in human resources development with economic incentives to strengthen labor markets and institutions; they should also facilitate and foster indigenous entrepreneurship and innovation.

3. **Creating Jobs for the Future**

   One of the ways of curbing brain drain is creating job opportunities with adequate remuneration. The government should help in creating more jobs for the citizens. Thus, the government should implement policies to create a favorable socio-economic environment for
job creation for highly skilled workers and for attracting talents. One of the reasons why individuals with high technical skills migrate to other countries is to seek for better jobs. If government creates job and career opportunities for graduates, people won’t move out of their country in search of better job opportunities.
Reference


