

Perspectives on Labour Migration

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Policy responses to skilled migration : Retention, return and circulation

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Summary¹

With globalisation trends, the emigration of highly skilled persons from developing countries has significantly increased. The implication of this movement of skilled labour (termed as “the brain drain”) has emerged as an important issue of international debate in recent years. The objective of the paper is to look at different possible policy responses which can minimize its adverse effects, and which can promote the sharing of gains between source and host countries. The paper focuses on three policy approaches: retention, return and circulation of skills. It argues that the best strategy to deal with the problem of loss of skilled labour is one based on the concept of circulation of skills, which yields mutual benefits for both sending and host countries. The paper highlights several measures that can facilitate the process of circulation, including greater cooperation between countries of origin and host countries than observed at present.

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Introduction

Recent years have seen increasing mobility of highly skilled persons from developing countries, popularly known as the “brain drain”, reflecting globalization trends, and associated developments in technology. Does this increased mobility reflect a ‘drain’ on developing countries in the traditional sense? Have globalization trends unleashed forces that counteract the expected negative impacts? Should this movement be completely left to market forces or are some interventions required? If so, what are the range of feasible options? These are some of the issues addressed in this paper. The treatment is selective given that some issues have been dealt with in greater detail in other presentations – such as the diaspora options discussed by Professor Meyer. The objective of this paper is to review selected policy options and their relevance, especially to sending countries. Following some general comments on the evolution of the debate, I shall highlight key trends in regard to skilled migration and the factors, which condition the extent of gain or loss. I have selected three policy responses – retention, return and circulation – for special attention. The main hypothesis is that a policy of circulation would contribute to mutually beneficial gains for both source and host countries. I shall argue that there is a large unfinished agenda in achieving this potential.

1. What is the brain drain?

1.1. Brain drain debates have a long history

The concept of the ‘brain drain’ in the context of developing countries generally refers to the permanent or long-term international emigration of skilled people who have been the subject of considerable educational investment by their own societies. The available literature points out that the implied transfer of skills and knowledge from the country of origin to the host country is a serious loss for the source country given the crucial role of human resources in the growth of these countries. Recent discussions have increasingly referred to migration or mobility of “highly skilled persons”, which does not imply a pre-conceived view (‘drain’) on the impact of the movement. (Cornelius, Thomas J. Espenshade et al. 2001; Lowell and Findlay 2002; OECD 2002). OECD has used the term *HRST – Human Resources in Science and Technology* – interpreted broadly to encompass a wide range skills in disciplines including the physical and life sciences, engineering, the social sciences, health, education and business”(Auriol and Sexton 2002).

The brain drain debates have a long history spanning about four decades. We can distinguish two phases: a) the sixties and the seventies when movements of highly skilled persons from the developing countries (South) to the developed world (North) received considerable emphasis; b) the current phase of globalization. In the first phase, there was extensive discussion among academics, researchers, and UN agencies on the consequences of the brain drain and means of compensation (UNCTAD 1975; Bhagwati Jagdish 1976; UNCTAD 1979).

The second phase of interest in skilled labour migration starts from the early 1990s with rapid advances in globalisation and phenomenal growth in information and communications technologies (ICT).

However, there are some differences in the context of this debate between the two periods. First, the current mobility of skills occurs in a context of globalisation and proliferation of

information technology. Second, the later period coincides with the transition to market-oriented economies in most parts of the world, dramatically so in the case of the former Soviet bloc. Third, modern movements are primarily in the area of temporary or contract or circular migration whereas concerns in the earlier brain drain debate related to permanent or settler migration. Finally there is a shift in the current phase in the composition of skill mobility with emphasis on IT workers and knowledge workers.

It must be stressed that the brain drain is not confined to developing countries only. It can occur at different levels within the developed world also. There is an extensive literature on the brain drain from Canada to the US, which has caused serious concern to the Canadian authorities. Movements from third countries to Canada, particularly from developing countries, are making up for this loss. Similarly Europe, particularly the UK, has long been losing skills to the USA. The magnet or the epicentre of movement has been the USA (Straubhaar and Wolberg 1999). New Zealand has consistently been losing skills to Australia, which in turn is losing professionals to the USA and Europe. In this paper however, I shall deal mainly with the outflow from the developing countries.

1.2. Reliable data on skilled mobility is scarce

It is a fact that no country has a comprehensive system for recording or monitoring skilled migration flows at the international level. Sending countries rarely keep track of loss of talent (Lowell and Findlay 2002). Developed host countries generally possess more comprehensive and reliable information on skilled migration than sending countries. Still there are serious limitations in data on skilled migration even in developed economies (Carrington and Detragiache 1998; Findlay 2002). In general, the data in both countries of origin and countries of destination need considerable improvement. Few countries have any system for recording return migration unless returns are associated with special programmes.

Moreover, mere counts of inflows and outflows do not reflect the extent of loss or the quality of manpower lost. Student migration is obviously less painful than migration of professionals with long experience. In Least Developed Countries where numbers of highly qualified persons are much smaller than in the OECD countries, even a minimal loss of skills can make a critical difference (Meyer 2001).

How does one define skills? A major issue in regard to mobility of skills is how to define skilled workers. In general, researchers have treated all tertiary educated migrants as among the skilled. Occupations or jobs currently or previously held by the migrant workers are also treated as an indicator of acquired skills. There is also a distinction between highly skilled (highly qualified) and skilled (qualified) persons. Recent brain drain concerns have extended to middle level professionals such as nurses, teachers, etc. It is difficult to consider them at the same level as highly skilled professionals or high tech skills.

Researchers on skilled migration recognize that student mobility is an integral part of skilled migration. According to the OECD (OECD 2002) : *“Student mobility is a potential flow of qualified workers, either in the course of their studies or through subsequent recruitment....Student flows represent a form of migration of qualified labour and also a precursor of subsequent migrations, mainly of HRST”*.

2. How big is the brain drain?

The paucity of data mentioned above seriously hampers the assessment of the dimensions of the brain drain from developing countries. There is wide agreement (Beine, Docquier et al. 2002; Lowell and Findlay 2002) that the only reliable global estimates on the brain drain are from the 1998 IMF study on the movements of skilled workers for the year 1990 (Carrington and Detragiache 1998). This study estimated the brain drain defined as “the percent of highly educated persons from a given developing country who emigrated to OECD countries” from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, North, and South America. However, the reference year was 1990 which reflects the pre-globalization period in the 1980s rather than the more relevant period of the 1990s.

2.1. Some highlights on the extent of the brain drain

The main highlights of the IMF study are:

- The total brain drain from less developed countries to OECD countries stood at 12.9 million persons comprising seven million to the US and 5.9 million to the rest of OECD countries including Europe.
- The very well educated (defined as those with tertiary education) were the most internationally mobile group. The migration rate is highest for tertiary educated people in most developing countries, amounting to about 30 per cent or so.
- According to regions, the cumulative “loss of brains” in 1990 is estimated as follows: Central America –15 per cent; Africa - 6 per cent; South America – 3 per cent; and Asia, 5 per cent.

They conclude: “Our estimates show that there is an overall tendency for migration rates to be higher for highly educated individuals. With the important exceptions of Central America and Mexico, the highest migration rates are for individuals with a tertiary education. A number of countries—especially small countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America—lost more than 30 percent of this group to migration. We have also found a sizable brain drain from Iran, Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan Province of China. These numbers suggest that in several developing countries the outflow of highly educated individuals is a phenomenon that policymakers cannot ignore.” (Carrington and Detragiache 1999)

2.2. Africa shows high outflows with limited returns

Africa is hard hit by the brain drain. The following figures have been cited at the UN ECA Regional Conference on Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa, Addis Ababa, 22 - 24 February 2000 (Lalla Ben Barka 2000).

- Africa lost 60,000 professionals (doctors, university lecturers, engineers, etc.) between 1985 and 1990.
- There were more than 21,000 Nigerian doctors practising in the United States alone while Nigeria’s health system suffers from an acute lack of medical personnel (UN HDR 1993);
- 60 per cent of all Ghanaian doctors trained locally in the 1980s had left the country, while in Sudan, 17 per cent of doctors and dentists, 20 per cent of university lecturers, 30 per cent of engineers in 1978 alone had gone to work abroad.

2.3. ILO studies show diverse impacts of the brain drain

ILO carried out a research project titled “Skilled Labour Migration (‘the Brain Drain’) from Developing countries: Analysis of impact and policy issues” for the Department of International Development, UK, during 2001/02. The ILO research reviewed the experience of the USA and the UK, and also commissioned a series of studies in selected source countries in different regions: Bulgaria, Argentina and Uruguay, Jamaica and the Caribbean, India, Philippines, South and Southern Africa and Sri Lanka. Some key features of ILO studies on skilled migration for selected countries are shown in Table 1 below. They confirm the general findings cited earlier.

Table 1: Brain drain profile in selected countries

Features	India	Philippines	South Africa
Extent	High in absolute numbers but low in relation to national stock	High	High
Sectors	Scientists, IT workers, health workers	IT Workers Health workers	Health workers, academics, teachers
Domestic supply response of human capital	High: large tertiary education infrastructure and output; Local demand for IT workers projected to exceed supply	High, especially in the private sector	Low elasticity of supply; increases in different disciplines; possibility to recruit from the region
Perceptions	Necessary aspect of globalisation; migrants eventually return.	Govt. promotes migration; health services suffer	Media and politician concern; blame UK, Canada, etc. for drain
Strengths			
Return	Reasonable levels; persons with experience and capital	Mostly return of temporary workers from the Middle East	Low returns of skilled professionals
Diaspora	Diaspora investment in govt. bonds, etc; high tech parks in Bangalore, Karnataka tap diaspora; Liberalization policies not limited.	Remittances very high; Diaspora contribution not clear; unstable economic and pol. situation not conducive to circ.	Much hope on diaspora; SANSA about 2000 members; yet tangible impact to be seen.
Sources	(Khadria 2002)	(Alburo and Abella 2002)	(Bhorat, Meyer et al. 2002)

Considering the losses of 10 to 30 percent of the tertiary educated subpopulation in some countries, the ILO review (Lowell and Findlay 2002) concludes: “*There is little doubt that blanket statements about brain drain are not warranted, but that there is equally little doubt that the problem may well be faced by many developing countries*”.

3. Consequences and impact of skilled migration

Some researchers have posed the brain drain issue in extreme positions such as ‘curse or boon’ (Commander, Kangasniemi et al. 2002) or ‘winners and losers’ (Beine, Docquier et al. 2002). In the real world, the truth is somewhere in-between. Benefits and losses from skilled migration are never one way flows; they tend to be shared in some degree between the sending and receiving countries.

3.1. Summary of impacts of skilled emigration

Table 2 attempts to summarise in a highly simplified manner the main benefits and losses to sending countries, based on review of recent literature.

Table 2: Brain Drain Balance Sheet: Sending Countries

Positive effects	Negative effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provides rewarding opportunities to educated workers not available at home. ➤ Inflow of remittances and foreign exchange ➤ Induced stimulus to investment in domestic education and individual human capital investments ➤ Return of skilled persons increases local human capital, transfer of skills and links to foreign networks ➤ Technology transfer, investments and venture capital by diasporas ➤ Circulation of brains promotes integration into global markets (India, Taiwan, (China)). ➤ Short term movements of service providers (GATS Mode 4) generate benefits for both receiving and sending countries. ➤ ICT allows countries to benefit from diasporas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Net decrease in human capital stock, especially those with valuable professional experience ➤ Reduced growth and productivity because of the lower stock of human capital ➤ Fiscal loss of heavy investments in subsidized education ➤ Remittances from skilled migration may taper off after some time. ➤ Reduced quality of essential services of health and education ➤ Students educated at government expense or own resources in foreign countries imply further drain ➤ Opportunities for short-term movement of natural persons is seriously constrained by immigration policies of developed countries. ➤ Causes increasing disparities in incomes in country of origin.

3.2. Selected impacts

I shall elaborate on some of these points below, especially positive ones.

Possibility of emigration promotes higher investment in human capital in countries of origin

The possibility of emigrating to higher wage countries may stimulate persons to pursue higher education in anticipation of pursuing higher paying work abroad. (Mountford 1997; Reichling 2000). If emigration is possible for some people, and not for everybody, then it may spur individuals to pursue education in the hope of emigrating to increase their expected earnings. As the incentives to pursue education in the source country are enhanced, average human capital is increased which contributes to stimulating overall growth. Beine et al. (Beine, Docquier et al. 2002) have found some empirical support for this in their research.

Remittances are important, but there is uncertainty on continued remittances from skilled persons

It is well established that remittances constitute the greatest benefit from migration with total reported remittances to developing countries around \$60 billion annually (Gammeltoft 2002). If informal remittance flows are added, the total may be even higher. Given the global communications system, even remittances from banks in developed countries may reflect earnings originating elsewhere. No country has a breakdown of remittances by skill profile. On the one hand, highly skilled workers can be attracted to home country investments through incentives. India has a long record of special programmes for NRIs (Non-resident Indians), which broadly conform to those permanently settled abroad. Likewise many countries studied in the ILO project on skilled migration have reported special provision for foreign currency accounts with premium rates of exchange and prime/assured interest rates. The Non-Resident

Foreign Currency Scheme (NRFC) in Sri Lanka is an example. It is usually the more educated migrants who would make use of such schemes. Unskilled workers tend to send money through informal channels such as the ‘Hundi’ system popular in the subcontinent of India. Skilled emigrants usually migrate with their families, and over time, their remittances may decline. Moreover, they are highly sensitive to economic and political developments at home and may prefer to keep their savings abroad. Thus there are both positive and negative effects, and the net result is not clear. This is an area which obviously requires further research.

Return migration and brain circulation

There is a considerable amount of literature on the beneficial effects of return migration and “brain circulation.” The idea is that returnees bring back human, financial and social capital, and can thereby positively contribute to development of home economies. This issue of return migration is discussed further in section 4.3. Even if people do not permanently return, their frequent contacts and movements back and forth can contribute to growth.

Diasporas networks and linkages

In recent times, there has been increased emphasis on tapping the potential of overseas diaspora for home country development. The diasporas have been seen as investors, welfare providers, knowledge communities and technology harbingers to the home countries. (Meyer and Brown 1999; Devan and Tewari 2001; Lowell 2002; Lowell and Findlay 2002) (West African Regional Ministerial Meeting 2000). Devan and Tewari (Devan and Tewari 2001) state: “Governments shouldn't view emigrants as entirely lost resources, however, for they can be used to promote economic growth. The emigrants' technical and business skills, commercial relationships, and financial capital can all be harnessed to make long-distance economic contributions through foreign direct investment, venture funding, financial investments, and commercial and educational exchanges.” The inflow of vast amounts of FDI to China and India from their overseas diasporas are often cited as examples (Devan and Tewari 2001). In addition to capital, they can also mobilise transfer of technology and know how. The Thai Reverse Brain Drain project and the South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA) are based on these assumptions. The Internet has played a key role in this regard, and SANSA is said to comprise an active network with more than 2000 members (Bhorat, Meyer et al. 2002).

4. Benefiting from the brain drain: Selected policy options

The previous sections highlighted the dimensions of the outflow of skilled migration and argued that it can remain a serious threat to certain countries. The main debate has been on how to minimise the adverse impacts of the brain drain or how to create a mutually beneficial situation for both sending and receiving countries. Many prescriptions have been made since the 1960s to combat the brain drain.

4.1. The six R's

In the early 1990s, Papademetriou and Martin (Papademetriou 1991) identified three areas (3 R's) as critical for analysing the development impact of migration: *recruitment, remittances and return*. The ILO synthesis report (Lowell and Findlay 2002) has categorized the possible policy responses into six convenient categories under the rubric “Six Rs”.

1. *Return* of migrants to their source country
2. *Restriction* of international mobility to own nationals and foreign workers
3. *Recruitment* of international migrants
4. *Reparation* for loss of human capital (compensation)
5. *Resourcing* expatriates (Diaspora options)
6. *Retention*: through educational sector policies and through economic development

In my view, retention and return may not be clear options for developing countries in the current context. Therefore, it is important to focus on the issue of brain circulation, which is implicit in policy options 1 and 5. Return does not need be on a permanent basis and diaspora options could involve continuing contacts or visits. In this paper, I shall only focus on three policies – retention, return and circulation. Lowell and Findlay (Lowell and Findlay 2002) and Wickramasekara (Wickramasekara 2002) discuss a wider range of policy options.

4.2. Retention: Keeping Skills at Home

If skilled persons voluntarily decide to remain in the home country, it can be regarded as the best policy in the long run. International experience highlights that several conditions need to be fulfilled for this to be achieved depending on the root causes of emigration.

There is clear evidence that rapid economic growth is a primary condition for attaining this. It will create adequate and rewarding opportunities to remain at home. Even if students and skilled persons may leave for professional advancement, they are more likely to return.

This is partly because rapid growth reduces the income gap between the source and host countries thereby affecting the motives for emigration. The migration transitions observed in the case of a number of countries – the Republic of Korea, the Taiwan province, and the new immigration countries of Europe (Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal) – may support this conclusion.

Rapid economic growth also makes it possible for countries to create an overall conducive environment for research and development which is considered quite important in stemming the outflow of professionals. Many African expatriates mention this as a major factor for staying overseas – the lack of any research facilities or exchange facilities to upgrade or keep their skills up to date. Lucas (Lucas 2001) finds evidence of efforts made by some countries to create an educational infrastructure that can keep skilled graduates at home. He notes that China, the Republic of Korea, and India have consciously expanded graduate technical training during the 1990s as reflected in the fact that these countries had more engineering doctorates in 1997 than the total earned by Asians in the US. At the same time, incentive schemes have been launched to encourage the return of the highly skilled diaspora.

Investment in primary or tertiary education?

A major policy issue is the relative emphasis to be placed on primary education versus tertiary education. Improving tertiary education, the brain drain may increase in the short term as the marketability and mobility of graduates is also increased.

Khadria (Khadria 1999), on the other hand, argues that investment in primary health care and primary education is the best option to raise the average productivity of the poor.

It is also important to avoid the internal brain waste – where qualified nationals cannot find opportunities in their fields of specialization. The Indian civil service is an example which draws engineers, medical doctors and scientists where they do not have the opportunity to use the special skills acquired.²

Retention policy: is it a vicious circle trap?

Devan and Tewari ((Devan and Tewari 2001) correctly point out:

“... the hard reality is that few emerging markets have any hope, in the foreseeable future, of creating the type and volume of economic opportunities needed to reverse or even substantially slow the brain drain.”

In this sense, it can be regarded as a vicious circle. Developing countries cannot stem the outflow of skills until they develop rapidly: but the loss of skills itself acts as a major constraint on achieving growth.

The ILO Philippines study (Alburo and Abella 2002) has shown the potential of the internet in generating virtual mobility and keeping people at home.

“The pervasive use of the internet as real time communications media has effectively closed the gap between users and suppliers of high skill work without actual physical dislocation. In particular, programming and software services are being transacted through the internet without the necessity of worker migration. This has had notable experiences in India and even in the Philippines. This has been enhanced by the ready availability of broadband services and communications backbone. Aside from this, the development of labor services in this area has had ripple effects on other related and ancillary service”.(Alburo and Abella 2002).

The widespread exploitation of these opportunities should support the retention option because it minimizes the sacrifices involved in migration to another country.

4.3. Return of skilled emigrants to the home country

Traditionally, return migration has been viewed as a popular strategy to ‘reverse the brain drain’. There has been considerable interest in return migration of skilled professionals as a major positive or beneficial factor for the development of source countries. (King 2000; Ammassari and Black 2001; Olesen 2002) Many initiatives by national and international agencies have been directed at encouraging return migration – especially of the highly skilled (Ghosh, 2000b). It is logical to assume that return of skills will compensate for the outflows.

The right to leave a country including the country of origin and the right to return to the country of origin is a basic human right of migrant workers recognized in international Conventions. Of course, there is no corresponding right of entry or right of admission to other countries, which is governed by a complex set of immigration laws and regulations in host countries.

² Author’s discussions with Profs. Suresh Tendulkar and K. Sundaram, Delhi School of Economics.

Benefits of return migration are not clear-cut

There is extremely limited data on return migration except when it is on an organized basis because no country has a monitoring system to capture return of nationals who have been employed abroad.

Benefits of return depends on a number of factors such as the type and nature of return migration, which obviously affect the impact. (King 2000)

- Motives or intentions: Cerase (Cerese 1974) in his analysis of Italian return migration from the USA listed four categories of reasons: a) *failure*; b) *conservatism*; c) *retirement*; and d) *innovation*. The last group – return of innovation - is the one most relevant to development of the home country.
- Time pattern: occasional *returns*, seasonal returns, temporary returns and permanent returns (King, 2000).
- Timing of return: The timing of return is crucial for several reasons. If people return after a reasonable period of time, they are better equipped because of additional qualifications and skills, work experience, accumulated resources, and social capital (networks and linkages with those back in the host country). A person who returns after a brief spell abroad may not be able to offer much benefits to the home country in the form of diverse forms of capital (human, financial and social).
- Nature of return - assisted or voluntary.

Special return programmes: are they sustainable?

Given the belief in the high potential of return migration, a number of countries have implemented programmes to attract their expatriates back (Ghosh 2000). Turkey, the Republic of Korea and the Taiwan province of China have been pioneers in this respect initiating such programmes since the 1970s.

Along with this, a number of development agencies have also supported similar programmes to facilitate return of migrants to their home countries. These can be described as “Assisted Return” programmes. The International Organization for Migration has been involved in such programmes for a long time where its expertise in migration logistics has proved to be an asset. The programmes have been sponsored by concerned source country governments, the UNDP, EU and several European countries. The UNDP TOKTEN programme (Transfer Of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals) is one good example. The appeal of such programmes lies in the possibility of replacing expensive expatriate workers by nationals with similar of better qualifications

The IOM has implemented return of talent programmes for several regions: Africa (Return of Qualified African Nationals), Latin America (Reintegration of Qualified Latin American Nationals (RQNLA), Return of Talent Programme in Jamaica, among others. It established the Return of Qualified African Nationals (RQAN) Programme in 1983 with the main objective of mobilizing and promoting the utilization of highly qualified, qualified and skilled personnel in the development of African countries through voluntary migration. (IOM 2000). The RQAN is currently used by 10 African governments and has succeeded in returning and integrating 1,500 skilled Africans to fill positions in important sectors of the economy.

Yet there are several problems with these special programmes: limited numbers assisted, high unit or per head costs, sustainability and equity issues. At the same time, there has been limited evaluation. For instance, the RQAN was evaluated only in the third phase of the

programme. Equity criteria should also be considered because special incentives and facilities are provided only to those who left whereas those professionals who stayed back and continued their contributions to the home country are not given similar assistance. Thomas-Hope (Elizabeth Thomas- Hope 1999) also found no strong evidence of the benefit of the programme for Jamaica.

A major problem has been the lack of sustainability given the absence of ownership of the programme by governments. To quote from IOM: *“The ‘ownership’ of the programme by governments is almost non-existent, although the benefits are understood and welcomed. There is almost no evidence that the activities of the programme itself will be continued by the governments of the countries concerned, in spite of efforts to provide exposure and training”* (IOM 2000).

IOM has now replaced this programme for Africa with MIDA (Migration and Development for Africa). The major difference is that it no longer stresses the systematic return of migrants, but instead tries to encourage mobility of people and resources (IOM 2002).

Experiences of the Taiwan province of China and the Republic of Korea.

The experiences of the Republic of Korea and the Taiwan province are instructive in this respect. They established active programmes combined with incentives from the early 1980s – well before the current wave of globalization. The lessons from their experiences are several.

- Rapid growth of the local economy was crucial in attracting back skilled persons.
- Active government policies and special incentives under particular political regimes were important.
- In the Republic of Korea, the emphasis was on return whereas investments and brain circulation was given more priority in the case of Taiwan (China). The establishment of parallel Silicon valleys, especially in Taiwan (China) was very important: e.g. the Hsinchu industrial Park, Taipei.
- The emigration was mostly of students, and a large proportion of the returning migrants were seasoned experts with 10-15 years’ experience abroad. In both cases, high priority was given to Research & Development at home.
- There was major involvement by private sector industry which went “head-hunting” for talent in developed countries.

4.4. The case for brain circulation rather than one-way return migration?

Yet there are several arguments against expecting much from return. First, it is very clear that few developing countries can create conditions conducive to return and retention in the short and medium term. Second, there is a potential or actual conflict between return and remittances. The more people return the lesser will be the volume of remittances. Moreover, there is no guarantee that people will send more remittances, as they stay longer according to the ILO research.

Ammassari and Black (Ammassari and Black 2001) in their analysis of West Africa believe that there is much uncertainty about the impacts of migration and return on development. *“... policies to support the return of migrants have often been seen as disappointing at best, or worse, motivated primarily by exclusion from the north, rather than a commitment to development in the south”*.

This may obviously be too pessimistic a view. In the case of India, author's discussions with Indian groups (early 2001) revealed a feeling that the typical cycle for some Indian expatriates is to return after 10-15 years, who are thus able to contribute to the home economy more effectively.

The main argument against the concept of return is that it indicates the '*closure of a migration cycle*' (King 2000). Yet current globalization trends mean that there are many types of return and circulation. As Russel King (King 2000) rightly observed "*Transnationality should replace the fixedness of emigration and return*". Circulation and recirculation have many obvious linkages with the diaspora options, but are not exclusively confined to it. There should be conducive factors at both sending and receiving ends such as good infrastructure at home and circulation-friendly migration policies at both ends.

There are several types of circulation of skills:

Transnational entrepreneurs

Saxenian's research has emphasised the importance of this development. (Saxenian 2000). The emergence of parallel Silicon valleys in cities such as Bangalore, Bombay, Beijing, Shanghai, and Taipei has been primarily facilitated by expatriate scientists in the US Silicon Valley. (Saxenian 2002) Instead of draining their native economies of human skills and resources, these "circulating" immigrants have brought back valuable experience and know-how to local economies. It is different from brain exchange in that the same skilled persons are commuting back and forth between source and destination countries. A recent survey of Silicon Valley emigrant professionals found that 80-90 per cent of Chinese and Indians having business relations in their home countries travel more than 5 times a year to their countries (Saxenian 2001). Box 1 provides a case study of brain circulation in the Taiwan province of China.

Scientists/ academics networks

There are several established diaspora networks which promote active circulation of scientists to help the home economy. Meyer and Brown (Meyer and Brown 1999) describe a number of promising initiatives including the South African Network of Skills Abroad, the Thai Reverse Brain Drain project, and the Colombian experience. The Thai RBD encourages exchanges of scientific personnel and contribution of expatriate scientists to return for short periods to promote knowledge in the home country.

Devan and Tewari (Devan and Tewari 2001) admit that most developing nations have done little to strategically leverage their expatriate talent. They propose three strategies: the creation of networks of emigrants, an infra-structure that allows them to exchange information easily with people in the home country, and targeted incentives that generate productive business investments there.

Networking with expatriate intellectual and scientific diasporas can mobilize their resources while still abroad for home country development. On the basis of the Indian experience, Khadria argues that these arrangements work best when expatriates are well established in their careers abroad and have already accumulated adequate capital. Meyer and Brown (Meyer and Brown 1999) also argue that source countries can benefit both from the embodied human capital of its skilled emigrants, and also from their social capital in being part of new

social and economic networks in their host society. They identify 41 expatriate knowledge networks that explicitly exist to exchange or promote the exchange of skills and knowledge in order to assist with the development of their country of origin. But there exists only limited evidence of the success of such networks in generating real net economic gains (Khadria, 1999).

Saxenian (Saxenian 2002)] argues that while the Taiwan province of China, and China have managed to produce a class of transactional entrepreneurs through active state support, India has failed to exploit this and remains a low value added producer in the global chain.

Service providers (GATS Mode 4: movement of natural persons)

The GATS agreement from the Uruguay round represents the first multilateral and legally enforceable agreement on the international trade in services. Its central objective is the progressive liberalization of trade in services.

In our view, GATS mode 4 seems to provide the best of both worlds for promoting circulation at least in theory. On the one hand, developing countries have surplus skills in the service sector, and GATS provides an opportunity for them to earn higher rewards in developed countries. On the other hand, the strictly temporary movement of GATS allays developed country concerns about permanent settlement. As OECD (OECD 2002) has pointed out, *“the combination of a range of factors – increased trade and investment, global business networks, skills shortages in developed countries, development of export capacity of skilled labour by developing countries – has meant that interest in greater freedom of mobility is now shared to varying degrees by a wide range of WTO members.”*

Yet developing countries have found a number of obstacles in exploiting GATS provisions. First, the limited commitments by developed countries are a major obstacle to GATS benefits for developing countries. Developed countries have more commitments in GATS under other modes than under mode 4 (movement of natural persons). Developing countries rightly feel that the system is biased against them, and in favour of multinationals. In fact MNCs have been at the forefront of the fight for greater liberalization of GATS as seen from initiatives of the European Services Forum (Hatcher 2001). There is a definite bias towards MNCs and related intra-company transferees against independent service providers from developing nations.

Second there are extensive immigration barriers in developed countries against service providers from developing countries. As OECD (OECD 2002) has rightly pointed out, this is due to an unfortunate confusion in the public debate over mode 4 migration with longer term migration needs. GATS migration should be treated quite separately from permanent migration. In general, there is a need for movement from a migration to a trade framework (OECD 2002).

There are several areas where tangible improvements can be made including standardising and expanding occupations or market access. Developing nations, particularly India, have been lobbying for expansion of Mode 4 service definitions. The European Service Forum has recommended the simplification of administrative procedures through a special GATS visa (Hatcher 2001).

Box 1: Brain circulation: Case study of Taiwan Province

Within two decades since 1960 or so, Taiwan (China) had transformed itself from a source of cheap labour economy into an industrialised economy engaged in high tech manufacturing.

Over the years, Taiwan (China) has experienced a sizeable 'brain drain', as more than 80% of its students who completed their graduate studies in the United States have failed to return. Instead, they obtained jobs in American universities and colleges, in various research organizations and industries. Chang (Chang 1992) argues that Taiwan's (China) brain drain into the United States is primarily a case of 'education and migration'. "It is an outflow of college graduates, not an exodus of trained scientists and engineers; therefore, Taiwan's manpower loss in the short run is not as serious as the case where mature and experienced scientists and professionals leave."

How did Taiwan (China) reverse this situation?

State support was very important. Saxenian (Saxenian 2000) highlights that policymakers played a key role in creating a bridge between Taiwan and overseas workers in the 1970s and 80s. "State policymakers, many of whom were Ph.D-level engineers educated in the U.S. themselves, established ties with Taiwanese working in Bell Labs and IBM on the east coast, for example, and, more importantly, with those working in big Silicon Valley companies on the west coast. The Taiwanese technocrats sought policy advice from overseas workers and consequently steered industry away from Asian-style developmental state models and towards American-style market-oriented models."

The state also facilitated more industrial growth by setting up a venture capital industry in 1985 (long before other regions in Asia), launching the Hsinchu Science-Based Industrial Park, and investing in research and education. As the economy picked up there were voluntary returns as well as aggressive recruitment by various local agencies for talents. This resulted in a reverse brain drain in the late 1980s and 90s, which reversed the flow of "brain drain.". Saxenian points out that while many returned and started investments at home, some began to commute frequently between Taiwan and the U.S. exchanging information, technological skills, and human resources, between the Silicon Valley and Taiwan. Over half of the companies in the Hsinchu Science-Based Industrial Park have been started by Silicon Valley returnees. This new phenomenon of "brain circulation" has contributed much to the high tech success of Taiwan, China.

5. Sharing of gains: What can be done to promote mutually beneficial brain circulation?

While globalisation has promoted labour mobility, all countries have not been able to exploit the opportunities to their advantage (Stalker 2000). Receiving countries have generally taken a laissez-faire attitude and allowed market forces to dominate the outcomes. The USA policy has shown little concern at the official level on the impact of skill losses on sending countries. A recent UK government White Paper on International Development, "*Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor*", (DFID 2000) has correctly drawn attention to the need on the part of developed countries to be more sensitive to the impact of the brain drain on developing countries. At the same time, labour-losing countries also have to maximise benefits from migration.

The ILO synthesis report (Lowell and Findlay 2002) concludes that: "*International migration is in the best interest of developing countries. The immigration policies of developed countries should facilitate movement; yet, they should incorporate mechanisms that encourage developing country economic growth.*" The same study suggested a number of ways in which this could be done.

The discussion up to now suggests the need for policies based on the following principles:

- Policies that are circulation-friendly;
- Policies that leverage the diaspora contributions through transfer of remittances, investments and technology
- Policies that promote human capital formation in skill-losing countries
- Targeted aid and trade policies which help promote development and reduce migration pressures in the source countries.
- Specific policies to deal with at-risk countries

Table 3 has compiled a list of Do's and Don'ts in this regard. I shall briefly comment on some of the components below.

Elements of a circulation-friendly policy package

The need for promoting temporary and circular migration is clear. Findlay (Findlay 2002) has argued that the UK should issue work visas with the clear message that return is required after a given period of stay. This will help maximise gains for both source and host countries. The U.S. "cultural exchange" visa (J) issued for varied durations of stay to work in a variety of disciplines for the purpose of fostering international exchange and experience has been suggested as a good practice model in this respect.

The GATS Mode 4 on the natural movement of persons which supports the idea of circular and short term work visas is a clear choice in a circulation-friendly policy package. The vast potential of this option is hardly tapped as pointed out above. EU and other receiving regions and countries should make a concerted effort to expand commitments to liberalizing the trade in services to benefit source countries.

At present, the immigration laws and visa regimes of developed receiving countries act as major barriers to the concept of circulation of skills. Some elements in the French Immigration Law of 1998 have tried to rectify these gaps. But much more remains to be done, especially in GATS mode 4. Source countries should also attempt to promote short term movements. One option is to actively lobby for GATS commitments.

Leveraging the Diaspora

There is mounting recognition of the potential role of the diasporas in source country development. As argued by the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD 2000), host countries can mobilize them in technical cooperation programmes directed at source countries. The DFID White Paper on International Development, *Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century*, DFID committed the British government to build on the skills and talents of migrants and other members of ethnic minorities within the UK to promote the development of their countries of origin. AFFORD (2000) has pointed out that this has not happened in practice.

Source countries have to promote linkages with nationals abroad in cooperation with receiving countries. Dual citizenship and arrangements for diaspora recognition and according them special status would also contribute to more return and circulation. They also have to improve domestic policies to encourage diaspora interest and contributions through improvements in governance, democratic procedures, and transparency in the local economy.

The brain waste which results from monopolistic practices of professional associations in host countries minimizes gains for both source and host countries. Skilled emigrants are not able to contribute to the host economy on the basis of their expertise, and also cannot develop capacity to contribute to home country development.

Table 3: Check list of Do's and Don'ts in skilled emigration

Do's	
Sending countries	Receiving countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Incentives to remain and return ➤ Promote linkages with nationals abroad: promote diaspora networks ➤ Promote short term movements of professionals using GATS Mode 4 and other means ➤ Attain fast growth and diversified economy ➤ Targeted investments in human capital to compensate for losses experienced ➤ Dual citizenship and diaspora recognition arrangements ➤ Greater emphasis on R&D and creation of centers of excellence with support from receiving countries ➤ Incentives to attract expatriate investments ➤ Information about opportunities at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A brain-circulation friendly visa regime ➤ Promote networking with home countries and support diaspora for source country development ➤ Reduce student fees especially from major source countries ➤ Follow ethical recruitment practices and regulate recruitment companies ➤ Honour and promote GATS commitments ➤ Encourage temporary movements of qualified staff ➤ Divert technical assistance to education and training fields ➤ Support diaspora arrangements ➤ Awareness-raising of nationals on the contribution of skilled migrants to the host country.
Don'ts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Excessive reliance on administrative controls ➤ Suppress democratic and human rights ➤ High taxation of returnees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Restrictive visa practices which discourage temporary departures or brain circulation ➤ Brain waste through monopolistic practices of professional associations ➤ Mass recruitment campaigns in at-risk countries.

Specific policies for at-risk countries

Control of recruitment from at-risk countries: Recent experiences have suggested that some sectors (education and health) or some countries are especially vulnerable to skill exodus. Receiving nations should therefore, manage recruitment only in close consultation with the countries concerned. Bilateral agreements provide a broad framework for such labour movements. The UK Department of Health of Guidelines on the International Recruitment of Nurses produced in 1999 is an example of good practice (UK Department of Health 1999). The Department of Health's *Code of Practice for NHS Employers involved in the International Recruitment of Healthcare Professionals* clearly states that developing countries should not be targeted for the recruitment of healthcare professionals (UK Department of Health undated). The Department has produced a definitive list of developing countries and countries that should not be recruited from in consultation with the Department for International Development. The list also includes a number of countries with whom the UK has agreed not to actively recruit from. The economic status of the countries and their relative position with regard to numbers of health personnel have been used as criteria in drawing up the list. The Commonwealth Secretariat also has produced a code of practice for international recruitment of health workers (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002).

The above codes of practice accept the principle that international recruitment agencies should be regulated and expected to follow ethical guidelines or code of practice in recruitment. Mass recruitment campaigns in at-risk countries should especially be avoided.

It is also a contradictory policy to levy excessive education fees on students from source countries, and then employ them in receiving countries. This acts as a double drain on sending countries.

6. Concluding remarks

The analysis up to now has argued that the movement from a 'brain drain' approach to a more broad based view of 'brain exchange and circulation' is a step in the right direction and in current parlance, – means a 'win-win' situation. The sending countries can reap benefits from continuous circulation, and do not suffer a one-way loss, while the receiving countries also benefit because the talents basically remain the host country. But it must be stressed that this has up to now largely remained a potential to be realised.

Extended cooperation between skill-sending and skill-receiving countries is essential in realising this potential. At the moment, there seems to be limited evidence of such cooperation. Some concerned departments or agencies in receiving countries have developed voluntary codes of conduct, and some diaspora networks have been promoted on an ad hoc basis. The overall impact of such initiatives has been limited.

There is need for intensive research and debate on mechanisms for sharing of the gains of skilled migration between host- and source-countries and evolving circulation-friendly policies. While compensation or taxation for the brain drain was a popular policy prescription and topic of debate in the sixties and the seventies, there has been little discussion of such options in recent years. Yet the scale of current skilled migration flows highlights the need for reviving the debate.

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