

THE DRAIN TO U.K.

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International migration prior to the 1960s had consisted largely of semi-skilled or unskilled labour movements. In the past fifteen years or so there has been a marked change in the pattern and occupational character of international migration. One of the most significant features of this migration has been the high proportion of those who belong to the professional grades. Apart from the character of migration, the most important factor which has aroused international concern about this problem is that the direction of migration is from developing to developed countries. It has been estimated that between 1960-1972 the developing countries provided 23,000 skilled personnel to the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

The origins of the international market for professional skills can be traced to the expansion of medical services and space and defence programmes in the United States in the mid 1950s. The large demand created for technically qualified personnel in the United States was met by the emigration of trained personnel from the United Kingdom. The man-power shortages created in the United Kingdom were filled largely by the professionally qualified persons from the developing countries of the Commonwealth. The magnitude of this flow of professional skills into the United Kingdom was controlled by immigration laws. The Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1965 and 1968 established the principle that immigration into the United Kingdom was to be closely related to the economic and social needs of the country. The problems of emigration of professionally qualified personnel from Sri Lanka to the United Kingdom must be viewed against this background.

One of the factors which facilitated Sri Lankan participation in this international market for professional skills was the recognition in the United Kingdom of local professional qualifications. This is particularly so in the case of doctors and engineers. The British Medical Council, from

In this article Lalitha Goonawardene sets down some of the preliminary results of a study on the brain drain, specially quantifying the net social gain to the U.K.

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colonial times, ensured the maintenance of a common standard of medical education in Britain and the colonies. Apart from marginal changes made in the undergraduate curriculum over the years, and the use of Sinhala and Tamil in teaching, the syllabus content of medical training remains geared to the British medical degree. This is further reinforced in the case of post-graduate teaching in medicine and surgery. While the preliminary parts of the British degree are held in Sri Lanka full qualifications can only be obtained by appointment to a recognised training post in a British hospital.

A similar situation prevails in engineering where the London University degree first granted by the Technical College in 1942 is still 'accepted' by the engineering faculties of the universities. Even today, the final paper in the engineering examinations are externally examined by British examiners.

The creation of an international standard in professional education based on a system of inter-recognition, though it has been a condition for the growth of an international community of professional colleagues, has endowed such professionals with a mobility that has facilitated the brain drain from developing to developed countries.

It is possible to conceive of a system of training for a developing country that does not promote this mobility, while still meeting socially relevant needs. For instance, in medicine a radical shift from curative to preventive medicine could achieve the desired social objectives in terms of disease and mortality while not necessarily producing skills that are prone to migration. Similarly, in

engineering, an attempt to develop an intermediate technology and associated skills must necessarily result in the production of an engineer whose skills are less readily marketable abroad.

Developments of this sort are inevitably associated with attempts to transform the internal balance of power and privilege within a society.

However, the factors that accelerated emigration of professionally qualified persons from Sri Lanka to the United Kingdom were due to conditions inherent within the society. The results of a survey by the present author of doctors, engineers and accountants resident in the United Kingdom point out that one of the primary factors that motivated emigration, particularly in the case of doctors and engineers, were political factors. These referred to the increasing intrusion of political factors

The table below (compiled by reconciling gross data from the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka) indicates that doctors and engineers constitute the most significant group of migrants to the United Kingdom. Though the overall outflow appears to be small, the loss from the total stock in 1968 is quite substantial. For instance, the departure of doctors from 1968-1974 represents 16.5% of the total stock of doctors in the country, while in the case of engineers, it amounted to 18.5%.

Professionally Skilled Personnel Admitted to the U.K. 1968-1974

The real significance of this emigration could only be brought out if the losses and gains to Sri Lanka and the U.K. of emigration are quantified. For this purpose, the methodology of the UNCTAD Secretariat has been used.

by this procedure to a measure of social benefit. In other words, the benefit to a country is not limited to the additional money income earned by a migrant whose contribution to total output is likely to be greater. From this figure of gross social benefits, deduction is made for the gross social cost sustained by the country of emigration, again on a basis of discounting expected life-time earnings at home, back to the year of calculation to arrive at the net benefit to the recipient country. The net benefit in this sense represents the amount which the United Kingdom ought to be willing to pay Sri Lanka to allow the brain drain to the United Kingdom to continue. In this sense it also represents a "net loss" to Sri Lanka which it is open to her to recoup by bargaining with the United Kingdom upto the limit of the benefit accruing to the United Kingdom.

Professionally skilled personnel admitted to the U.K. 1968-1974

Categories	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	Total
Doctors and Dentists ...	27	14	28	43	101	99	118	430
Engineers ...	7	26	48	75	71	25	8	260
Nurses ...	10	9	12	15	18	1	—	65
Teachers ...	40	10	5	5	29	10	4	103
Technicians ...	1	3	6	14	8	—	8	40
Accountants ...	—	—	—	—	14	6	6	26
Lawyers ...	—	—	—	—	5	20	5	32
Other professions ... (include economists, administrators, etc.)	5	15	16	21	—	—	—	57
	90	77	115	178	261	146	146	1013

in appointments and promotions as well as to the general socio-political climate. Another set of factors related to economic considerations. One of the significant economic factors that affected migration was the steady decline of middle class living standards. This is shown in the drastic cuts made in personal consumption goods, especially over the period 1959-1974 when the content of non-essential goods, according to the Central Bank Reports, 1960-74, declined from 28 per cent to 4 per cent. A third factor related to racial and linguistic discrimination. These three factors influenced migration from Sri Lanka in the order listed above. The results of the survey run counter to the conclusion of *a priori* theorising that the economic factor had been overwhelmingly predominant.

(The Reverse Transfer of Technology. Its dimensions, economic effects and policy implications. TD/B/C.6/F 1975).

The gross social benefits of migration to the United Kingdom is computed by discounting the expected

The net social benefit to the United Kingdom from migration from Sri Lanka over the period 1968-1974 is shown below. Since the official exchange rate may overstate the net benefit, the purchasing power parity rate has also been used. The annual figures of aid total £57 million which however, translates to a capital sum with reference to 1974 of £81.5 at the social rate of discount used in the exercise.

The significance of these figures may be appreciated in the context of the total flow of aid from the United Kingdom to Sri Lanka. Over the same period 1968-1974, this figure amounted to £81.5 million while the

Net Social Benefit of Migration from Sri Lanka to the United Kingdom 1960-1974

	Calculated at official exchange Rate	Calculated at Purchasing Power Parity Rate
Doctors ...	42	36
Engineers ...	24	20

life-time earnings of a migrant back to the year of which the calculation is made after adjustments which convert the purely private cash benefit yielded

net social gain to the United Kingdom from the migration of engineers and doctors alone amounted to nearly £56 million.