

Article

Migration for Education: Perspectives from Nepalese Students

Raksha Sharma¹, Ajit Bhattarai², Shesha Kanta Pangeni³

Think Tank Foundation
Jorpati, Nepal

¹Far western University, Nepal

²Kumari Bank Ltd., Putali Sadak, Kathmandu, Nepal

³School of Education, Kathmandu University, Nepal

ABSTRACT

Nepal has invested a huge sum in education sector alone especially for the past 60 year. Lots of foreign inputs and educational program have been implemented for the betterment of education but still the trend of abroad migration for their study is increasingly growing. An estimated 20,000 students leave the country annually to pursue their education abroad according to the Ministry of Education, Nepal. This number seems to be increasing every passing year. This study focuses on the perspectives of the aspirant students preparing to migrate and discuss the pushing and pulling factor for such migration.

This study revealed some interesting facts like: the migrating students think that Earning while learning to lift their (and their family) economic status and the social network are the major pulling factor towards abroad and the political stability, social injustice, insecurity and uncertainty of nation are the major factor that create frustration among youths which act as an important pushing factor for international educational migration. If this push factor can be addressed the problem of huge migration which if not controlled then in future there will be dearth of intellectual resources and

scarcity of appropriate employment sectors to utilize skills gained abroad.

Key Words: *Migration, Migrants, Education, Educational migration, Pull and Push factor*

Background of the study

Education is a fundamental human right and a basic need of every citizen which should be ensured by the state and individual should have freedom of choice. While observing a recent trend of last few decades, the statistics exhibits that a large number of Nepalese youths have been massively migrating to foreign country for furthering their study. When people aspire to get further education move to some alien land, it is considered as International Educational Migration (Sharma, 2009). An estimated 20,000 students leave the country annually to pursue their education abroad according to the Ministry of Education, Nepal (NIDS, 2008). However, it seems to be the tip of the iceberg as we don't have proper body or commission to exactly look after these issues. Hence, the exact number of international student migration is still unknown. This number seems to be increasing every passing year. In the Fiscal year 2008-09 alone, the ministry of education has issued around 25,000 no-objection letters and the number was around 27000 in 2009-2010 (Awasthi, 2007). Again, the

number is still too high because we don't need No-Objection letter to study in most of the universities in India which covers above 30% of the total student migration (Editorial, Essence Magazine, Chaitra, 2067). Moreover, United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), Australia, other European countries and countries in East Asia are the preferred destinations of Nepalese students' migrants (Bhattarai, 2009).

From the economical point of view as well, such migrants are taking a bulky amount to pursue their education. According to a report in Kantipur (one of the popular national Daily in Nepal) dated 29th Shrawan more than NRs 20, 00 million was taken by student going abroad for higher studies in 2066-67 BS. If we compare it with the total Nepalese education budget of the same fiscal year which is more than 40 % of total national budget on education. The total budget allotted for education in 2066-67 was around 4600 million Nepali rupees. If such trend continues, it will have multi irrecoverable adverse impacts in Nepalese economy resulting into an alarming situation.

Statement of the Problem

Several literatures reveal the bitter fact that the government of Nepal has invested a huge sum in education sector alone especially for the past 60 year. Likewise, lots of foreign inputs and educational program have been implemented for the betterment of education but still the trend of abroad migration for their study is increasingly growing. They prefer some developed countries like America, Australia, U.K., Germany, etc. for their study rather than studying at their home land. Why are people diverted toward these countries for continuation of their study? Is it because of quality of education in homeland? Or it is because people are just blaming the

quality of education so that they can go abroad for their study? If it is due to quality, why is our country not being able to improve the quality of education in spite of so much investment? Or there are some other reasons responsible for the student migration. In order to answer these pertinent questions we selected this topic as our research.

Research question

The main purpose of this study is to find the reasons behind increasing trends of student migration to other countries for their education. Thus following were the research questions developed for our study:

1. Why international migration for education is increasing in recent years in context of Nepal?
2. How students preparing abroad study perceive about education in Nepal?
3. How the trend of student migration can be addressed (students perception)?

Delimitation

The study will focus on the perspectives of the aspirant students who are currently preparing to migrate soon.

1. The impacts of migration in the place of origin of the respondents will not be considered.

Literature Review:

The present status of Higher Education in Nepal:

Nepal has twelve university level institutions which providing higher education degree. Nepal Sanskrit University (NSU), Tribhuvan university (TU), Kathmandu university (KU), Pokhara university(POKU), Purvanchal university (PU) are full-fledged university providing degree from their own and also give affiliation to other colleges and schools

(Sharma, 2009). BP Koirala Institute of Health sciences (BPKIHS), Nepal Academy of Medical Sciences, Patan Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS) is the Specialized Deemed Universities. One Agriculture and Forestry University is under plan and it is currently providing university level degree from TU. Lumbini Buddha University is again next full-fledged university which has not yet brought any courses.

Factors for International Educational Migration:

The principal motivating factor causing the movement of people from one place to another since the beginning of human civilization is the desire to live in relative peace along with secure and prosperous social condition. (Haan, 2000; Upreti, 2002). However, there is diversity in causes of external and internal migration which is not only reflected in empirical analysis but also in different theories and models of migration (OECD, 2001; Thieme, 2006). There are several theories like Theory of Push and Pull factors, Social network theory similar to Social Capital Theory, Human Capital Theory, Rational Choice theory etc. on the basis of which migration can be explained. Since migration varies with the condition at which it takes place all migration cannot be analyzed with the same theoretical framework.

Push and pull factor for migration:

Ravenstein (1885) in his "Law of Migration" concluded that migration was governed by "push-pull" process; that is, unfavourable conditions in one place "push" people out, and favourable conditions in an external location "pull" them out. His theory explains the reasons of human migration all over the world. Having almost similar conviction, Lee (1966) states, "push factors are things that

are bad about the country that one lives in and pull factors are things that attract one to another area" Levie (2007) explained that decision to migrate is mostly driven by push factor of the less developed region (as cited in Sharma, 2009).

Social Capital Theory:

Social capital is a broad term that encompasses the 'norms and networks facilitating collective actions for mutual benefits of the individuals in the society globally. It can be seen as a notion that is based on the premise that social relations have potential to facilitate the accumulation of economic or non-economic benefits to the individuals (Massey et al, 1993). "During recent years, the concept of social capital has become one of the most popular exports from sociological theory into everyday language" (Thieme, 2006, p. 49). As the social capital theory states, people's decision to migrate is mainly influenced by interpersonal ties that bring the migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin (Massey et al, 1993). Social capital consists of network of long lasting relations or contacts of an individual (Thieme, 2006, p. 48). Social factor can be one of the useful factors for migrant to settle in the alien country. It is far more important particularly for the first time mover. One may use various forms of social networks such as family network, network of friends and neighbor and also sometimes through marriage bond. Sometimes social factors can be the reason for migration to many people. It means people migrate because their friends are there or their family members are there.

Human Capital Theory:

Human capital theory bears the notion that human beings are the factor of production in

any businesses along with certain other factors, like land, labour, and capital goods. It connotes any number of things, but it is usually represented to mean the human traits that a person applies in business. Schultz (1971), human capital theory rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and even necessary to improve the production capacity of a population. In short, the human capital theorists argue that an educated population is productive population. Thus people migrate from the place of their origin to the destination to make one fit and competent to the competitive world.

Review of related literature:

According to TNN (Banglore), published on July 13 2009, Global Education Digest 2009 compiled by Unesco looked into the reasons for students across the globe pursuing higher studies abroad. It reveals that for some, it's a chance to broaden cultural and intellectual horizons. Others go abroad to avoid the frustrations of under-resourced universities at home. Many have no choice but to cross the shores in order to pursue a particular field of education or type of academic programme.

In terms of Nepal, high unemployment rate, difficulty of finding job and political instability are few causes of international student migration (Editorial, 2067), which can be considered as the pushing factor. Similarly, Sharma (2009) mentioned that more employment opportunity, higher salaries, better education and other facilities pull one to migrate to developed region. Nepal Migration Year Book (2008) mentions that availability of better opportunities in terms of education, employment and income and quality of life pulls student abroad. Basnyat (2010) has pointed out peer influence as a pulling factor and political

instability as a most important pushing factor of international migration of Nepalese students. Bhattarai (2009) has stated 'learning and earning while learning' is one of the most important reasons that attracts student abroad. The ongoing conflict and chaos in the nation, including the frequent *bandhs* and curfews, seem to be a primary reason for students enrolling in foreign universities (Basnyat, 2010).

Methodology:

Methodology includes the philosophy and strategy of the research. It is the way in which researcher approaches the problem and try to answer it (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.3). The study was concerned with the causes for the individual to migrate abroad countries for the purpose of achieving education. In order to analyze the reasons behind migration, in depth study from the perspective of the respondent is needed. This is only possible through qualitative research methods. Thus qualitative analysis along with various theoretical perspectives was used to explain the findings of the study.

As we are trying to answer the research questions in the perspectives of the student trying to migrate, we will be using inter-subjective discourse for data generation through Focus group discussion so we will be standing on interpretive paradigm. So multiple realities will be our ontology with subjectivity as epistemology.

We choose 6 respondents who were planning to go abroad for their study through one of the consultancies in Kathmandu. We took informed consent with them to participate after informing them about purpose of our study. We set up a venue and time for FGD and had FGD with the help of Guidelines we prepared beforehand. It lasts for about one hour. The data were recorded with the help of

video and audio recording. After FGD, we transcribe the discussion and code it. We categorise that data into different themes with the help of available literatures. While thematizing the data we felt the need of clarification which we did through email.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

After collection of data from FGD, next step was analysing and interpretation of data. For the analysis of data; the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used which consists of the sequential steps i.e. data organizing, data reduction, data display and data interpretation or description (as cited in Sharma, 2000). Interpretations of data were made using various theoretical perspectives. We mainly focused on Push and Pull Factor theory, social capital theory and Human capital theory which we felt were relevant for interpreting the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Among, six participants all of them have completed their higher secondary level education, two of them were planning for joining course in Information technology program other three are not particular about the course, they want their interest seems to go abroad than continuing their education. One of them wants to join hotel management course. They all discussed about the factors influencing them to go abroad, their perception about education in Nepal itself and similar topics. Several probe were used to facilitate FGD. The relevant data that answers the research questions are discussed under following themes:

1. Earning while learning: lifting economical status
2. We learn from our society
3. Education should be practical and applicable

4. Global experiences broaden the mindset
5. Sathibhai dherai utai chan: social network
6. Hopeless about future of Nepal: frustration
7. If condition improves, why should we go abroad? (Solution)

Earning while learning: lifting economical status

Almost all of the respondent shared that the opportunity of learning while earning as an important factor that influenced them to plan their education going abroad. This seems to be the strongest pulling factor from destination countries like America, Australia and European countries that motivates Nepalese student to migrate to those countries. One of the participants (R1) expressed:

'.....talking about abroad, we can earn money while studying. We can do part-time work to survive. We have also several choices of subjects now a days in Nepal but earning while studying in several countries like US, UK, Australia and many others is one of the most important facts leading Nepalese students migration to those countries.....that's what i feel.....'

The Next respondent (R5) shared similar thing like this: *'Education in Nepal is also excellent. But most of Nepali wants to go abroad so that financial condition can also be improved along with education.'* Other (R6) expressed confidently: *'I see the main cause (of going abroad as students) is economic cause (ie for earning rather than studying), if possible to settle there too.'*

It seems that they are sure that they will get some part-time job there to finance their education and earn bit some of money. Respondent 6 shares that : *'they will get tit-*

bit of part time job there.....'. He further express 'One should not say that i will not do this or that type of job but has to do whatever job they get in foreign land.' This shows that the notion that they are not comfortable doing any sort of job in their homeland but can do any sort of job in foreign land. This also represents the social thoughts (or prestige) as the factor that pushes them abroad.

We learn from the society

From last two decades lots of people are migrating to foreign lands from Nepal. Majority of migration is labour migration but in recent year another significant migration is that of student.

'Everybody in our society feel proud to share about their son studying and their income. When we listen to them we feel that Oh! their son are earning lots of money and degree abroad, we' shared one of them.' Shares R2.

Next respondent also has similar view in this regard he thinks that it's our society which is influencing us to move abroad. He shares "Son or Daughter of someone has gone abroad" is a matter of talk or topic of discussion in Neighbourhood. 'What societies says or expect from us we do the same' is his response. So it is a pressure in form of prestige from the society which is one of the important pushing factors for international student migration.

One of the respondent who seems to be bit frustrated about his family mentality shares beautiful experience like this;

'.. .. i have just passed my higher secondary education. Parents think we are immature and do not believe on us to invest in some work/projects. Rather they are ready to invest on us to go

abroad without any objection as if we will bring money just picking from a tree of money. They don't sense the hard life there.'

He further shares in surprise that even loan providers do not provide loan to invest in Nepal but easily provide heavy loan for going abroad. This is the mentality of our society and as said by previous respondent this young people learn this mentality from society and the craze of abroad migration is increasing. This social and family pressure is one of the strongest 'push factor'.

Education should be practical and applicable

This theme tries to respond to all three research questions especially second research question about perception of respondents towards Nepalese higher education. Four out of six respondents seem not to be satisfied with the quality and relevancy of higher education provided in Nepal. But two of them expressed that the quality of education in Nepal is satisfactory but we don't have much option or choices of subjects. One of them showed their concern about number of students in a class and care given to student. He shares:

'....., The quality of education is not good. For example in a class of higher education there are 40-50 students and out of them 3-4 are capable and learn best but rest are without clear direction of system of the study too.'

The relevancy of higher education provided in Nepal is questionable. One of the participants' expresses his view as: *the education should be practical and applicable to life.* In this regard, next respondent expressed his dissatisfaction in aggression like this:

'.....,most of the university and colleges in Nepal is old fashioned. Same old subjects in arts, commerce and education. Where can we sell our selves after getting the degree. No new and updated subjects. It's just waste of money. Instead colleges should introduce new subjects, new concepts as IT, 21st century updates courses...'

These responses showed by participants shows that according to their perception the university product is not relevant to the market. Similar view is expressed by respondent two as: *'Here in Nepal we can study and get degree but can't do anything after getting the degree. It means its about hoarding the degree without output.'*

Lekha Nath Poudel, under secretary, at the Ministry of Education opines: *"University opportunities are limited in Nepal. We have to develop our educational system and make it qualitative and research oriented,"*. Many youth choose to go overseas as it provides more educational opportunities. One can choose from a number of subjects that are lacking in the universities of Nepal. Kaushal Silwal chose to study in America in the discipline of chemical and bio-technical engineering. *"There is a demand for pharmaceutical companies and opportunities can be created here,"* informs Silwal. He wishes to establish a bio-tech firm which focuses on gene therapy in Nepal. However, he is sceptical as he sees better opportunities in the west. Similarly, in context of relevancy of higher education, Dhungel (2011) states:

'We don't have any mechanism that survey the job market and find out the job demand of any professional degree provided by University in Nepal. Students in Nepal has tendency to join any faculty in higher education as

rituals without knowing the demand of the subject in the market.'

Global experiences broaden the mindset

Studying abroad will increases the horizon of the students. Respondent 5 expresses his views as:

'... , apart from degree and money, knowledge and experiences is surplus,, Travelling abroad itself broadened your mind. So after returning after earning experiences and knowledge from abroad we can do lot in Nepal...'

Even a growing number of U.S. students are heading abroad for international study opportunities. Results from an Experience survey of nearly 400 students show that 77% have studied abroad. (Lebel, 2010). The respondent of same study in US expressed "Exposure to new people, foods, cultures, and languages-- the broader your awareness and experience, the better you are able to handle the uncertainty of life." They say their time abroad helps them develop on personal, academic and professional levels. And they come back encouraging their friends to go too; as one student put it, it doesn't matter where, when or why you go, as long as you go. This helps the source country to develop their human capital as said in human capital theory that migration helps in building human capital. The human capital theorists argue that an educated population is productive population. Thus people migrate from the place of their origin to the destination to make one fit and competent to the competitive world (Schultz, 1971).

Social network: most of our friends are abroad ('Sathibhai dherai utai chan)':

Social networks theory (Massey et al., 1987) adapts concept of social capital to migration, arguing that social contacts with individuals

who have migrated, or are currently resident at a destination, provide information and assistance to the new migrant, thereby decreasing the costs and risks of migration. As the number of out-migrants from Nepal has increased very rapidly in last two decades, these migrants seem to influence the new students to migrate. One of the respondents (R6) shared:

'....., My Friends are there in Australia. Many friends from 11-12 are now in foreign land. They have good earning and also getting higher education abroad. So I also want to go along with them.'

Almost all of our respondents have their relatives or friends who are ready to support them for migration. Thus social networks may increase the probability of out-migration. So peer-pressure and peer-support is one of the major 'Pull factor' from destination country for student migration. Basnyat (2010) has also found peer-pressure as important Pull factor in similar type of study. Bhattarai (2009) in his UK based study on Nepalese students has emphasised about social Network as one of the factor of student migration. He has mentioned about Global Nepalese Network (NRN-network) as supply side factors.

Several empirical researches have consistently shown social contacts to be a strong determinant of out-migration (Thieme, 2006; De Jong, 2000; Nathalie, 2008). According to the social capital theory the decision to migrate is mainly influenced by interpersonal ties that connect migrant, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin (Massey et al., 1993). Social networks theory (Massey et al., 1987) adapts concept of social

capital to migration, arguing that social contacts with individuals who have migrated, or are currently resident at a destination, provide information and assistance to the new migrant, thereby decreasing the costs and risks of migration. This theory seems to be one of the most appropriate theories in our context of student migration.

Hopeless about future of Nepal: frustration

As FGD went on, the participants get more open and deeper things get revealed during discussion. The body languages and the responses from the respondents are clear enough to say that most of them were very much frustrated about the political, social and poverty situation of Nepal. The following response from one of the participant will speak a lot about their frustration about political instability: (translated)

'...., I am sure that something will happen there (abroad), I can do. But in Nepal nothing will happen in next 100 years. It will rather worsen up here, nothing will happen here in Nepal. Nothing will happen here till the political stability.'

He further expresses his frustration as:

'Government is not ready to create opportunity here, If I wish to invest 1 lakh rupees, my investment (will definitely) collapse. Where is security? People like us have no support. Secure atmosphere should be created (by government) to invest work and stay here. Why to take risk of finance and security? Rather, it better to invest 10-12 lakh and go to UK or Australia. If you think investing here nothing is there to gain here, neither will you gain knowledge nor money! Waste of

time , waste of money and waste of everything.'

The frustrations shown by respondents are mainly due to social and political injustice, political instability, about security and uncertainty in Nepal and so on. These are the strong Push factors that push the migrants from the source country to destination (Lee, 1966; Levie, 2007). One of them expresses his frustration as:

'Here, Who has power plays the game and are worshiped by other " Jasako sakti usko vakti". It is good to be example investing and staying here but, there is no suitable environment. How to do? If one does good other pulls the leg. No security, worst security. No persons to encourage us.'

Social injustice or discrimination from state or by people is the push factor that favours migration from source country. One of them expresses his frustration of social injustice as:

'As most of us know that how much education we get, whatever score or marks we get, we will not get good job. You need some powerful parents or relatives to get better job. Nepotism and favourism is everywhere.....'

If condition improves, why should we go abroad? (Solution)

This theme attempts to answer the third research question of the study. Except one participants who don't believe at all that anything good can happen to Nepal, all agreed that if government create a lucid situation (peace and security) where it assures its students for job opportunity (part-time) to fund its students education or provide loan (without collateral), the respondents think that they will remain in the country to get higher education provided they get their

subject of choice in the country. For this, according to the respondents first thing is the need of stable government. After that slowly other problem can be solved if there will be political commitments.

CONCLUSIONS

In the last few decades, we have seen lots of youth migrating to foreign country from Nepal for their study and very few of them have returned and most of them are settled abroad and many are trying to do so. From this study it was found that the migrating students think that Earning while learning to lift their (and their family) economic status and the social network are the major pulling factor towards abroad and the political stability, social injustice, insecurity and uncertainty of nation are the major factor that create frustration among youths which act as an important pushing factor for international educational migration. If this push factor can be addressed the problem of huge migration which if not controlled then in future there will be dearth of intellectual resources and scarcity of appropriate employment sectors to utilize skills gained abroad. So these factors are to be addressed soon. Furthermore, as suggested by Dhungel (2011), government of Nepal needs to take an initiative and measures to develop the domestic education system in such a way that it can fulfill the demand of the job market. It has to involve some regulating bodies that can perform the trend analysis of man-power needed in the market and can suggest the universities to supply those. Government also needs to provide employment and utilization of skills gained abroad which will help to minimize the main international migration and non return of student from abroad after completion of their study.

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Correspondence to:

Raksha Sharma
Far Western University
rakshatuktuk@gmail.com