

Skilled labor emigration: A recent case study of Afghanistan

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 16 Dec 2019

Keywords

Skilled labor, emigration, Afghanistan, Brain drain

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ABSTRACT

Skilled migration or so-called brain drain is importantly a thought provoking issue for developing and even developed countries. In the last two decades the number of skilled people that migrate to other countries has been considerably gone up. In Afghanistan, where uncertainty about the future course of work is staggering and the prospects for a prosperous Afghanistan in the near soon is dime, has caused a robust exodus of people out of the country. Afghanistan just after Syria, has been, for so long the top migrants producing country in the world. However, people fleeing Afghanistan is not a new topic in the research but the issue of skilled people going out of the country and how it cripples several sectors of the country in variety of ways is extremely significant issue that needs to be further researched and the likely prospects being analyzed. In this timely required research, I am trying to discuss the concept of the skilled migration in the context of Afghanistan. The research also attempts to find out the reasons and the likely impacts of the brain drain on Afghanistan. Some of the common understanding that I came up with are of two type of nature divided into Pull and push factors. Factors such as the weak economic situation, political instability, corruption and weak administrative system which is causing people to flee comes under push factor. The young and educated strata of the society is fleeing Afghanistan, this phenomenon is leaving Afghanistan crippled and brain drained country.

1. Introduction

Skilled human force has been playing an important role in the area of development and progress for millennia. The unprecedented development in the area of technology, science and economics is considered to be due to the availability of skilled and educated human resources. Hence, the less developed countries in order to catch up with developed countries is required to take serious measures and invest heavily on human labor in order to make them efficient and productive. But for less developed countries, in order to do so, they are faced with certain challenges and problems in this regard. Migration. Migration is one of the main challenges in the 21st century. As per the Ministry of refugees and repatriation of Afghanistan, in every seven people in the world, one is refugee (Ministry of refugees and repatriation of Afghanistan, 2016). In this regard, even more serious issues that LDCs are faced with is the phenomenon of skilled migration, which is also called " Brain Drain "

Skilled migration also called human capital flight refers to the immigration of individuals who are educated or have received advanced training at home. These include experts, intellectuals, artists who due to several problems such as social, political, economic and cultural are forced to flee the country in search of a better tomorrow.

The plight of the human flight capital is threatening the cultural and economic aspects of the developing countries now for more than half decade. On one hand, the miraculous advancement in science and technology in developed countries have given a tremendous rise to prosperity and economic

opportunities, while on the other hand, in the less and developing countries, the prospects of uncertainty and lack of prosperity has accelerated the process of brain drain and human flight capital out of these countries, which this include Afghanistan as well.

Afghanistan, just after Syria is one of the largest producers of refugees. A decades long war, prospects of uncertainties in particularly a dire economic situation that has caused a staggering rate of unemployment, and lack of prosperity has accelerated the process of exodus and flight of human capital out of the country. According to UNHCR, the second largest population of refugees in 2017 was from Afghanistan, whose refugee population grew by 5 per cent to 2.6 million people by end-2017 (UNHCR, 2018). Among these refugees, there are an abundant number of educated people who in the pursuit of economic opportunities and other prosperities are fleeing. These young educated skilled human capital, which is fleeing the country is extremely valuable asset in the rebuilding of a war-torn Afghanistan. Hence, the significance that this issue carries, we thought to go little deeper and understand and evaluate the weight of the brain drain in the context of Afghanistan.

2. Objectives of the research

The main objectives of this research paper are:

1. To find out the influential factors that is causing skilled labor emigration in Afghanistan.
2. To investigate and understand the weight of the brain drain in the context of Afghanistan.

3. How likely are Afghans inclined to emigrate from Afghanistan?

3. Research methodology

this research was carried out using mixed, quantitative and qualitative methods to attain research objectives. The research conducted based on Secondary data, which involves several resources such as: magazines, journals, research reports, the reports and statistics of national and international organizations as well.

4. Afghan Emigration

Humans and migration are two interrelated terms. Humans over time, due to several reasons have migrated to different parts of the world. For Afghans, emigration is like a natural phenomenon. Afghan have been emigrating to all around the world for decades. Afghanistan’s long history of migration dates back centuries. In recent history, emigration dramatically increased during the Soviet occupation of 1979–1989, with mass movements of refugees. By its peak in 1990, around 6.7 million Afghans had left the country and were living abroad, representing more than half of the total population living in Afghanistan at that time (around 11.7 million) (Garrote Snchez, 2017).

Migration make a significant chapter of Afghanistan's history. Over the course of last four decades, due to war and other economic and social problems, forced Afghans to flee the country and a significant proportion of these afghans traveled to in particularly Iran and Pakistan.

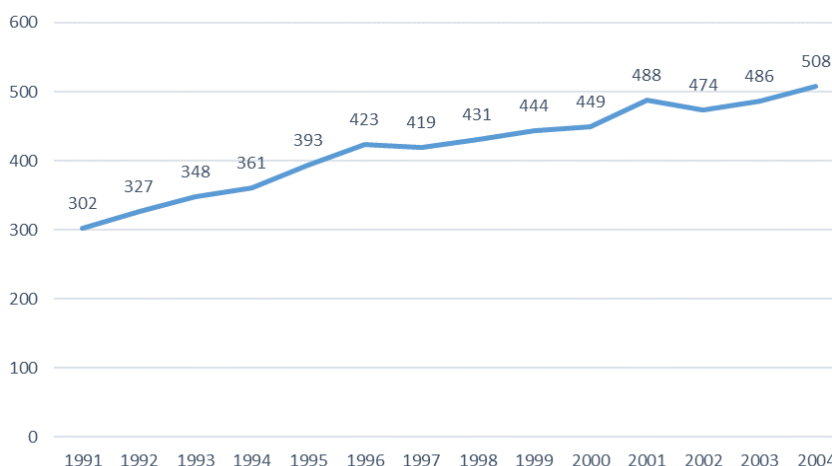
4.1 Afghan skilled labor emigration

A four decades long war in Afghanistan, forced a significant proportion of skilled labor afghans to flee the country. A remarkable number of these skilled afghans fled the country during (1980 – 1990). It was time when Afghanistan was invaded by Soviet Russia. Most of these emigrants were afghan civil servants, university lecturers, teachers, students, intellectuals and artists, who travelled to Europe, north America, Australia and other geographies. World bank statistics indicates that in 2000, skilled emigrants made 23.3 %. a continuous war has dimed afghan youth hopes for tomorrow and are constantly fleeing the country (UUR, 2017).

In the 1980s and 1990s, educated and highly skilled emigrants left the country for Europe, North America and Australia. According to the World Bank, the emigration rate of the tertiary educated was 23.3 percent in 2000. The continued conflict has led to the continued emigration of the highly skilled.

A brain hungry Afghanistan needs skilled human resources in every field, in particularly in the area of education and health. As per World health organization reports, during (1991 – 2004), for 5000 people there is only one doctor available. A poor and foreign aid dependent government cannot neither import doctor from abroad nor can provide domestics doctors with life sustaining salary. It causes the domestic doctors to flee the country and left the health sector a brain drains one (Katrin Marchand, 2014). See figure 1

Figure 1: Physician emigration from Afghanistan, 1991-2004



Source: IOM

4.2 Afghan Skilled labor abroad

Gathering statistical data about skilled labor is not an easy task done. The dispersions of migrants all around the world make it challenging to find our way to enough data. It is because Immigration is a phenomenon that is stuck to human life. Humans migrates form one geography to another due to several reasons, which make it difficult to collect relevant required data. In the case of Afghan migration, we also faced with the problems of collecting the relevant required data. In the following paragraphs, we will try to present you the facts about afghan skilled labor emigration which is collected by

some well-known international refugee and migration organization.

As per the reports of the Ministry of Migration and Repatriation, in 2018 the number of all emigrants and asylum seekers were 6486409 among which in Asian countries this number was 4550246. In European countries, America and Australia were 1155322. Among them, 541932 have been granted a permanent citizenship and 6047 have requested for citizenship (MORR, 2018).

In 2015, the number of all emigrants either in the members and or non-member countries of organization for economic cooperation and development (OECD) are shown in (Table 2)

Table 1: Emigrant population: Persons born in Afghanistan living abroad in 2010/11

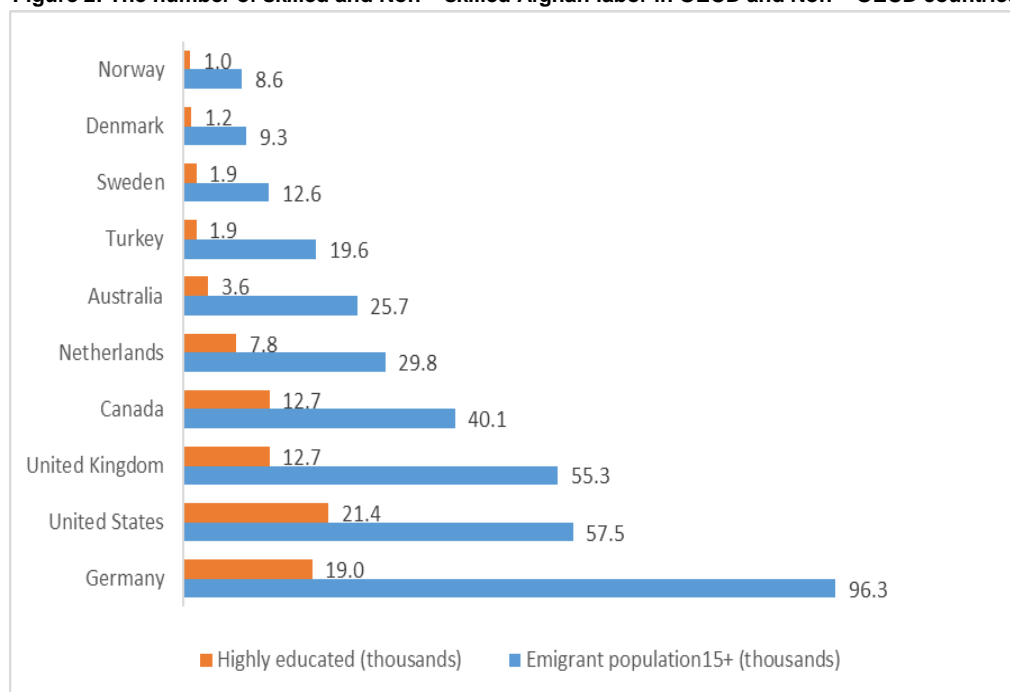
	OECD and selected non-OECD destinations			OECD destinations		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Population 15+						
Emigrant population (thousands)	232.6	174.9	407.5	223.2	170.9	394.1
15-24 (%)	26.4	22.0	24.5	26.8	21.8	24.6
25-64 (%)	68.5	71.3	69.7	68.0	71.4	69.5
65+ (%)	5.1	6.7	5.8	5.2	6.8	5.9
Low educated (%)	43.0	48.0	45.2	43.6	47.5	45.3
Highly educated (%)	24.7	21.5	23.3	24.0	21.8	23.0
Total emigration rates (%)	3.0	2.4	2.7	2.9	2.3	2.6
Emigration rates of the highly educated (%)	4.4	12.9	5.9	4.1	12.8	5.7
Total low educated	94947.5					
Total highly educated	184190					

Source:(OECD, 2015)

The above table, all the Afghan migrants who are born in Afghanistan and are currently residing in OECD and Non – OECD member countries. In these countries all those afghans who are educated are around 94947, and the number of Afghan migrants who have completed their primary and secondary education are around 184190. However, the above statistics regarding skilled and educated afghans are only confined with OECD and Non –

OECD member countries, but there are still unknown millions of afghan skilled migrants who are residing in other countries as well. Even though, we are not having a concise figure of all the afghans but it can be said that Afghanistan has lost a huge number of educated and competent human capital over the course of last few decades. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2: The number of skilled and Non – skilled Afghan labor in OECD and Non – OECD countries



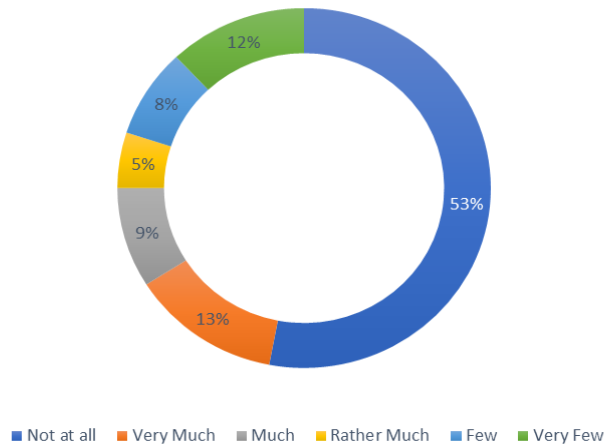
Source: (OECD, 2015)

4.3 How likely are educated Afghans interested to emigrate?

As per the findings of the SDFO research, the respondent's reaction to question about their desire to emigrate

was overwhelming. As per the research findings more than 53% did not show any inclination to emigrate. Only 21.2% showed interest much and very much. See figure 3.

Figure 3: Desire to migration



Source: SDFO

The research also indicated that the residents from Kandahar province were more interested to emigrate 36% than other major four provinces: Kabul 28.2%, Herat 27.1%, Balkh 18.4 % (Hassani, 2017).

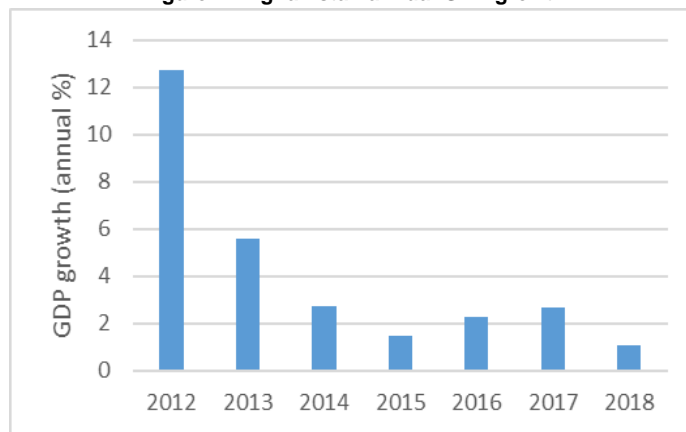
4.4 Reasons for Afghan emigration

In a more general terms, Afghan emigration is driven by push and pull factors. The push factors are the prime reasons that encourage Afghans to flee for foreign countries. Factors

such as intensifying insecurity, Afghanistan’s worsening economic condition, increased and deepened poverty and unemployment.

As per the findings of Statista data indicates that Afghanistan’s economy witnessed a severe decline after a huge portion of International security forces withdrew the country in the year 2014. This had a severe impact on the overall people economic condition and had encouraged people to emigrate.

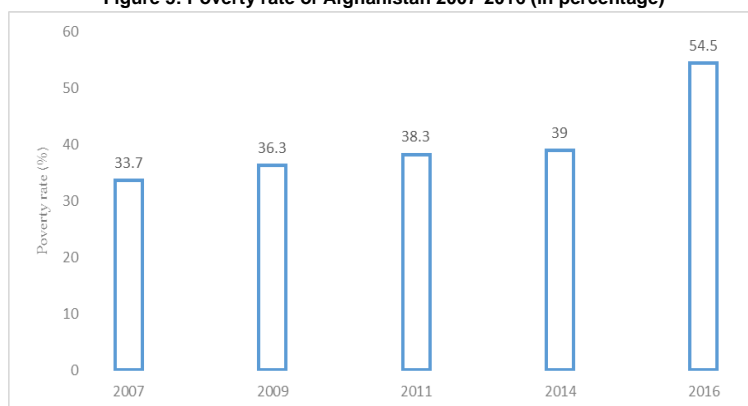
Figure 4: Afghanistan annual GDP growth



Source: World Bank

World Bank data also indicates that a rising poverty in the country also played a major role for people to flee the country.

Figure 5: Poverty rate of Afghanistan 2007-2016 (in percentage)



Source: world Bank

In Afghanistan, it is not only the security and lack of opportunities that force people to leave the country, but a huge number of these leave the country for further educational and working opportunity abroad which comes under pull factors category. The SDFO further research findings on why people leave the country indicates that due to economic issues 10.17% of the respondents implied they would leave, reasons like unemployment 4.6%, Political stability 5.5 % whereas for educational opportunities it is 16.2% (Hassani, 2107).

5. Analysis and conclusion

In 21st century, skilled labor migration is a serious, threatening and a burning issue not only in the entire world but in particularly in developing countries. One of developing countries which has been facing and suffering the serious problem of skilled labor emigration is also Afghanistan. These people that are fleeing Afghanistan, comprised a big number of educated youth who are in quest of settling down temporarily or permanently in one of these countries and chose to be refugee. Unfortunately, this way Afghanistan lose a valuable asset. This make a vacuum of competent and professionally skilled labor that Afghanistan desperately needs to utilize them in various sectors of rebuilding and improving of Afghanistan.

Emigration in Afghanistan has a long history, it goes back to soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in the years 1980s to 1990s. For decades' civil wars and the after effects has caused a major exodus of people to flee. But wars, poverty and other misfortunate events have not been the only reasons for Afghans to emigrate, Afghans have also departed on their

quest for further opportunities in abroad. A huge number of these skilled and competent Afghan fled the country during Soviet invasion. Most of these people comprised of the employees working in the civil services and as situations got deteriorated at the times, other followed the lead.

The inclination of Afghan people to flee the country has always been up and down depending on the type of situation the country is going through or facing with. Several national and international organizations have surveyed all across the country to find out the desire of Afghans for emigration to foreign countries. A survey conducted by The Asian Foundation has found out some interesting findings about the interest of Afghans if possible would emigrate and work abroad during the years 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017, which the findings of the survey in the years above are 33.8%, 38.4%, 39.9% and 29.6% respectively.

Any national events that dime the political and economic conditions of the country further escalate the interest, in particularly of educated Afghans. Events such as presidential elections and news of the withdrawal of American forces of Afghanistan make afghans to flee the country, as they find that Afghanistan without the assistance of foreign forces will deteriorate the security of the country and will create a gap where country would go to unsafe hands.

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