

Human Capital Circular Migration and International Student Enrollments:

The Case of Jordan

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Draft: Please Do Not Cite or Quote

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Abstract

Student mobility is a particular type of migration and graduate students decisions concerning either returning home or remaining in the host country or relocating to a third country, are related to the arguments of brain drain, drain gain and brain circulation. Jordan has supported its human capital circular migration, through government policies in sending Jordanian graduate students abroad to achieve their PhDs, where eventually many of them return back to Jordan to serve into different Jordanian universities. Hence, Jordan managed in building strong reputation of Jordanian universities among Arab countries in the Middle East region. Consequently, a regional demand on Jordanian higher education services started to appear in the 1990s and afterwards, especially from Arabic neighboring countries like: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, West Bank and others. Rather, the political unrest situations in some countries lead to uncertain environments' for top destination countries for some Arabic international students. A survey among academic staff at Jordanian universities detecting reasons for retuning back to Jordan was explored, and another survey among international students at Jordanian universities was preformed to highlight the reasons for choosing Jordan as a destination country. Finally, a regression analysis was computed to test the relationship between international students' enrollment and academic staff human capital formation in terms of their PhDs sources. Preliminary results indicate that political, social and familial factors are responsible for Jordanian students retuning home, and the same determinants apply to international students' choice of Jordan. Hence, Jordan managed in turning brain circulation and human capital gains associated with its graduate students while abroad into benefits to their home countries, and in attracting international students, whom in the end will upgrade their skills and either stay in Jordan, or migrate again to log into other labour markets, depending on economic opportunities in occupations which they majored in.

Key words: human capital, circular migration, international students, Middle East, higher education

Introduction

Brain circulation paragon is one step short of the more recent brain reversal or brain gain issue, which suggests that highly skilled migrants from developing countries who have emigrated to an industrialized country represent a potential resource for the socioeconomic development for their home countries. Accordingly, migration is considered a temporary stage for some migrants, whom by return to their country of origin will bring in skills and knowledge learned abroad (Hunger, 2002). Student mobility is a particular type of migration (Murphy-Lejeune 2003; King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003) and graduate students decisions concerning either to return to their home countries- or remaining in the host country or relocating to a third country, are closely related to the arguments of brain migration or more precisely: brain drain; drain gain, and /or brain circulation. The literature aspects of decision making is limited at best, and much remains to be learned about students' foremost motivations and intentions to migrate and the impact of the "study abroad" experiences (Szelenyi, 2008).

Moreover, where macro-scale economic analyses present much insight into the determinants of brain migration by foreign students, undoubtedly, too, there are innumerable of micro-level factors included in students' decision to stay in the host country or return to their home countries. A combination of such variables are economic costs and benefits, non-return issues, political loyalty of graduates, the availability of needed specialists, the chance of educated unemployment and the pressure from the articulate middle classes in the Third World, are all part of the complex series of concerns that go into the making of study abroad policy in the sending countries (Altbach, 1991). Hence, the number of international students going overseas tends to ebb and flow as a react to government policies, familial, economic and political conditions in particular countries.

Jordan has supported its human capital circular migration through government polices to send Jordanian graduate students abroad to achieve their PhDs from different universities World Wide. Afterwards many of Jordanian students return back to Jordan to serve into different Jordanian universities. Therefore, Jordan has managed in building strong reputation of Jordanian universities among Arab countries in the Middle East region. Consequently, a regional demand on Jordanian higher education services started to appear in the 1990s and afterwards, especially from Arabic neighboring countries like: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, West Bank and others. This demand has amplified since 1993/1994 by 8.7% annually.

The pattern of international student flows is complex and multidirectional. The demand for higher education by foreign students particularly from the Third World have increased during the past decade from no more than 150,000 foreigner students to around 2.12 million students in 2003 (OECD, 2005; UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, various years). Undergraduate education has attracted attention traditionally and predominates numerically as it comes in the forefront priorities of budgeting and public attention for governments and universities (Taylor, 2002). Toady there are considerable theories explaining causes for international students to choose a destination country to pursue their higher education studies. A "push and pull" model developed by Mazzarol and Soutar, (2002) and McMahon (1992) was introduced to capture the reasons behind the flow of students internationally and in making their student choices (Cantwell *et al.*, 2009). This model is responsible for the worldwide trend of international student flows (Roberts, 2009). This multi dimensional reasons ranges from a lack of local education opportunities, to the prestige of a foreign certificate, rather still examining the causes behind studying overseas is difficult and demanding.

In addition, the political unrest situation in some countries have lead to uncertain environments' for common top destination countries for international students(Rhee and Sagaria, 2004),

especially for Arabic international students whom originating from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and from other Middle Eastern countries, who were prone to such changes.

The aim of the paper is threefold: In the first stage the reasons for Jordanian graduate students' returning back to Jordan are explored, and their educational, social and professional characteristics are highlighted. Second, I question what is determining international students' choice of Jordan as a destination country to pursue their higher education studies and whether these choices differ by their socio-demographic characteristics. As a final stage, I compare between foreign and domestic human capital formation of the academic staff at Jordanian universities in their effect on international student enrollments at specific faculties and what are the interpretations behind these discrepancies.

Data and Methods

In order to answer the previous questions, a survey among academic staff at Jordanian universities to detect the reasons behind "human capital graduate students" retuning back to Jordan was explored; in addition their social, educational and professional backgrounds were highlighted.

A stratified sampling technique was used to determine the sample of the study. Hence a total number of 250 academic staff of different ranks at six Jordanian universities (both public and private) was surveyed. The sample constitutes three scientific faculties, these are engineering, Information Technology (IT) and nursing. For the other three faculties, it was three humanities faculties: Faculty of Law, Business Administration and Arts. The survey took place in the second semester of the academic year 2008/2009.

Another survey among international students at Jordanian universities was performed among six Jordanian universities located in different geographical places were chosen, that is three public universities and three private ones. In addition, these universities combined different enrollment ratios of international students, in order to have unbiased interpretations.

Applying a stratified sampling by faculties and then having a simple random sampling, our sample resulted in 280 of international students into the main six faculties described earlier, and the respondents were from different nationalities.

In the end, a regression analysis was computed to test the relationship between international students' enrollment at specific faculties and academic staff acquisition of specific human capital. For that purpose each faculty of the six designated ones were used to measure the relationship between international students at that faculty and the academic staff PhD place of gradation.

Preliminary Findings

Academic staffs do show similarity in their reasons for retuning back to Jordan after they finish their PhDs from abroad. Rather these reasoning differ between private and public universities and between financing sources for their PhDs. For international students' choice of Jordan it appears that common reasons for choosing Jordan dominate their choices and that familial and political determinants play a prominent role in international students' choice from different nationalities. These reasons were different according to international students' home country political, economic and social structure, and also different by sex and source for their study finance. It was found that human capital at Jordanian universities and according to their PhD place of graduation vary in their effect on international student enrollments at Jordanian universities. In addition, these differences do exit between scientific and humanity faculties. Hence, this study synthesizes the provision of human capital formation among academic staff at higher education institutions in their effect on other human capitals demanding higher education services in order to enhance their skills, studies and their well beings.

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