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The Intention to Migrate Among Malaysian Students in the United Kingdom

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Brain drain is a serious problem for developing countries that invest heavily in their human capital but eventually lose them to developed countries. The challenge for developing countries is to send their best and brightest citizens for education and training in developed countries and the chances of them not returning to their home countries. If brain drain can be stopped before it actually happens, the human capital investment in these best citizens will yield the fruits for the sending countries. Hence, the challenge is to understand the intention to migrate before it actually happens. This paper aims to determine factors affecting the intention to migrate among Malaysian students who are currently studying in the United Kingdom. The findings from self-administered questionnaire conducted on 102 Malaysian students who are currently studying in the United Kingdom revealed that apart from economic factor, Malaysian students viewed personal factor as an important push and pull factor that influence their migration decision.

Keywords: Brain drain, Migration, Malaysian Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration is as old as the history of human being. It is defined as the movement of people crossing the border of a state or crossing the international border with the intention to permanently or temporarily to move from the place where they are born to another place. The main reason for migration is the economic reason but in the modern time migration is also to fulfil other non-economic reasons. One of the non-economic reasons for temporary migration is to obtain education or training to become skilled workers. In fact, many developing countries sent their best and brightest students overseas to be trained with the hope that they will return as skilled workers to help to develop their home countries. However, many of these trained skilled workers may choose not to return to their home countries but choose to work in developed countries.

The migration of these skilled workers is known as

brain drain, and it is harmful to the sending countries which lost skills and knowledge needed for their nation building¹. On the other end, the host countries, mainly developed countries, which received these skilled workers will continue to enjoy social-economic growth. Hence, in the long run, the human capital investment by developing countries is wasted, and the economic growth of developing countries will worsen or at the best remain status quo.

Malaysia is one of the developing countries experiencing severe brain drain and if unresolved will cause shortages of skilled workers². The World Bank Malaysia Report³ states that for the last two decades the brain drain problem in Malaysia has risen to 300 per cent and it is expected to increase in the years to come. In the year 2013, a total of 308,834 Malaysians who possessed tertiary education moved and lived overseas. The situation worsened when these skilled workers gave up their birth country citizenship. It is alarming to note that from the