

ABSTRACT

BRAIN DRAIN FROM TURKEY: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE DETERMINANTS OF SKILLED MIGRATION AND STUDENT NON-RETURN

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This study deals with skilled migration from a developing country perspective. The migration of skilled individuals from developing countries to developed countries is often viewed as a costly subsidy from the poor nations to the rich, and a threat to their economic development. The first part of the study brings up to date both the theoretical and the policy debate on the impact of skilled migration on the sending economies. The second purpose of the study is to take a closer look at the motivations for skilled emigration from Turkey.

The emigration of skilled individuals from Turkey has attracted greater attention in recent years, particularly after the experience of back to back economic crises that have led to increased unemployment among the highly educated young. A survey study was undertaken during the first half of 2002 in order to collect information on various characteristics of Turkish professionals and Turkish students residing abroad. Over 2000 responses were received from the targeted populations. The information from this survey was then used to determine the empirical importance of various factors on return intentions by estimating ordered probit models for the two samples.

In the migration literature, wage differentials are often cited as an important factor explaining skilled migration. The findings of the study suggest, however, that other factors are also important in explaining the non-return of Turkish professionals. Economic instability in Turkey is found to be an important push factor, while work experience in Turkey also increases non-return. In the student sample, higher salaries offered in the host country and lifestyle preferences, including a more organized and ordered environment in their current country of study increase the probability of not returning. For both groups, the analysis also points to the importance of prior intentions and the role of the family in the decision to return to Turkey or stay overseas.

Keywords: Labor Economics, Skilled Migration, Brain Drain, Student Non-Return, Higher Education.