

The Brain Drain Catastrophe: The Migration of Junior Academic Staff in Government Universities amidst the Economic Crisis in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The development of any state or an institution is influenced by its human capital and competent workforce. However, the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka has been a predicament for most of the citizens and has caused drainage of skilled labor in academia. In this context, there is a tendency among young scholars who recently graduated from government universities in Sri Lanka to migrate to foreign countries aiming for permanent residence and privileged professions. This has created a loophole in academia by creating a scarcity of qualified junior academic staff. Hence, the objective of this study was to analyze the reasons, the consequences of the excessive migration of young scholars in academia and the recommendations to uplift favorable conditions in the Sri Lankan context. Hence, random samples of 30 participants who graduated after 2020 and have experience of being a junior academic staff member in a government university were selected to collect primary data. Thus, a questionnaire comprising 6 close-ended questions and 6 open-ended questions was administered and 5 interviews were conducted while the collected data was analyzed using graphs and thematic analysis. According to the findings, low standard of living, new taxation system which affected the salaries of the academics, lack of opportunities for professional growth, job insecurity, lack of facilities for their post-graduate studies and lack of incentives were presented as reasons for migration. According to the perceptions of the participants, the consequences of brain drain were unveiled as loss of human capital, and its impact on the quality of tertiary-level education in Sri Lanka. In conclusion, the development of new opportunities in the academic arena including permanent vacancies, imposing a fair taxation system and improving privileges for the junior academic staff were regarded as recommendations by the participants.

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