

**Speaking Notes for Presentation at  
WES Symposium on Academic and Labour Mobility  
October 21-22, 2004  
Toronto, Canada**

**Introduction**

Given that many of the issues re' brain drain and brain gain', especially the push and pull factors of sending/receiving countries, were already addressed in other presentations, I focused on three major points. My comments reflect an educator's point of view and deal primarily with academic mobility.

- 1) the concept and meaning of Brain Circulation- including the introduction of the term Brain Chain
- 2) relevant issues and implications arising from increased academic mobility of education programs and providers to meet the growing demand for higher education
- 3) the need for greater policy coherence among different levels of governance and among various sectors.

**Point One: the Brain Chain**

- Puzzlement over whether my comments should be about
  - The rewards of brain gain
  - The curse of brain drain
  - The challenges of brain circulationOr
  - The realities (and inequities) of the "brain chain"
- The term brain circulation is often used in a 'sanitized way' to address and sometimes camouflage the critical issues of brain drain and brain gain. Brain circulation when understood as revitalization and connection between 'diaspora brains' and 'home based brains' (as a way to strengthen the human resource capacity (HRC) of a country) is relevant and of great importance - as clearly pointed out in Damtew's paper. But, when it is used to describe the mobility of brains/skilled and professional labour *between* countries it is a different situation.
- The term 'Brain Chain' is perhaps a more appropriate way to describe the mobility of brains/HRC. As one country loses HRC in a specific sector, it targets and recruits HRC from other countries to fill the gap. Each country suffers some brain drain but compensates by backfilling (i.e. brain gain) from another country. It is a chain reaction, except those countries near the top of the chain (usually developed and larger countries) benefit more from brain gain than brain drain and those countries near the bottom of the chain (usually developing or smaller countries) experience more brain drain than brain gain.... probably net brain loss.

- The Brain Chain model positions the mobility of HRC in a vertical dimension rather than the horizontal position of the Brain Circulation model.
- Brain Chain also recognizes the countries are at the same time, both sending and receiving countries and this brings a complexity to the push/pull factors and the policy/regulatory issues.
- An example of the movement of medical personnel was used showing that Ghana, a country near the bottom of the brain chain, has lost 80% of domestically trained doctors to more developed countries in the last ten year. It is estimated that about 50% of graduating doctors leave the country each year. This has significant consequences for Ghana in terms of loss of medical personnel for primary medical care and scientific research, as well as the loss of financial investment used to train the doctors and nurses who leave the country.

### **Point Two: A New Era of Academic Mobility-Movement of Programs and Providers**

- A recent report from IDP Australia predicts that the demand for international education will increase from 1.8 million students in 2002 to 7.2 million students in 2025. This is a staggering figure and has major implications for academic mobility (and perhaps future labour mobility)
- The movement of students to study in foreign countries will not meet begin to meet this demand. Therefore, we will see a significant increase in the delivery of ‘foreign or international’ education to students in their home country through crossborder movement of education programs and providers. Crossborder education is intended to augment domestic capacity, not replace it- but there are still questions about this.
- In order to meet this demand for tertiary education through crossborder mobility of programs and providers there are 1) new types of providers ( private for profit companies) in addition to traditional HEIs, 2) new types of delivery methods ( distance and on line) 3) new types of programs 4) new types of qualifications and credentials 5) new types of partnerships
- Some of the new providers are providing good academic programs, but there is a proliferation of low quality rogue providers and degree mills. This reflects the commercial motive that is driving many of the new providers and is resulting in a major shift from academic development cooperation to commercial competition .
- There are new challenges in terms of the receiving country being able to license and monitor the crossborder programs and providers. This is necessary to ensure that the programs and academic experiences are of high quality and to ensure that the qualifications/awards are recognized by the labour market for employment purposes or by other education institutions for further study. This last point has special significance for an organization such as WES.
- “Accreditation” is an important part of being seen to have an international profile and high quality and legitimate programs/credentials. As a result, there is an increase in the number of accreditation mills and self-appointed accreditation bodies which are in NOT bona fide or

recognized accreditation agencies. This also has important implications for credential evaluation.

- The delivery of education to students in their ‘home countries’ may be a positive feature in terms of the possible stemming of brain drain and a decrease in costs for students to have a foreign education; however, it is presenting new challenges to the education sector in terms of recognition of bona fide providers, programs, qualifications and accrediting agencies.
- Therefore the increase in crossborder mobility of programs and providers ( as opposed to students) presents new issues and some unintended consequences related to the question of recognition of qualifications for academic and labour mobility, and the more specific topic of brain drain/gain.

### **Point Three- Policy Coherence**

- The implications resulting from increased academic mobility – students, programs and providers- have attracted the attention of different policy actors/ sectors at both national and international levels. For instance:
- The growing commercial orientation of crossborder education mobility is of increasing interest to the trade sector. Education services (and labour mobility) are now included in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. This requires greater collaboration and cooperation between the education sector and trade sector in order to take advantage of new opportunities and to minimize new risks.
- At the same time, education (student) mobility has increasingly important ties to immigration policy and regulations. We are seeing that certain countries are mounting targeted recruitment campaigns to attract foreign students to fulfill HRC needs in specific sectors and favourable immigration arrangements are being offered to encourage them to come. Thus, the ties between trade, immigration and education are growing stronger and more complex.
- International development policy recognizes the importance of developing human resource capacity in developing countries in order to facilitate their participation in the knowledge society and economy. At times, it appears that immigration and trade policies from developed countries are counteracting their development aid and cooperation policies. For instance, development cooperation policies from many developed countries are trying to increase domestic HRC capacity in developing countries; while at the same time, trade and immigration policies from these same developed countries are attracting the brightest students and skilled workers away from developing countries by recruiting them to study/work and to stay - either on a temporary or permanent basis.
- Education is touching more policy sectors ( science and technology, culture, immigration, trade, employment, foreign affairs, industry, heritage) in significant ways and there may be greater degrees of collaboration and perhaps coordination at the national level. However, what is sorely missing is policy coherence and a strategic approach to balancing policy objectives, which can sometimes, be working at odds with each other. While this is not a

new phenomenon, it is a matter of increasing importance and concern for the international dimension of education policy and specifically crossborder mobility of students, programs and providers.

- Education in general, and academic mobility in particular, have increasingly key political and economic roles to play at national, regional and international levels. More attention needs to be given to the co-ordination of policy and regulatory frameworks between these three levels and among the different policy sectors involving and impacting education mobility.