

# Brain drain problems in the Philippines

Brain drain, to be precise, is the exodus of skilled workers and professionals from less developed countries or underdeveloped nations to highly developed or industrial countries.

The Philippines for one has been plagued by this nagging problem, and yet, Filipino emigration to foreign lands continue to accelerate hitherto.

In 1961, only about 2,205 Filipinos migrated to the United States, accounting for 13.05 per cent of the total number of Asians who sought and were granted permanent residence in the U.S. and almost one per cent (0.85) per cent) of the world total of 260,032. This rose to 2,896 in two years. It then declined slightly in 1964 with 2,607.

A total of 2,489 Filipino workers migrated from the country in 1965. However, in 1966, it jumped to 5,204 representing 21.33 per cent or more than one-fifth of the Asian total of 24,392 and 1.80 per cent of the world total of 289,472. In 1967 it further increased to 8,546, representing 26.07 per cent and 2.90 per cent, respectively, of the Asian and world totals. In 1968 it climbed to 14,534, soared to 22,026 in 1969, and rose to an all-time level of 23,845 in 1970.

A recent study on the outflow of manpower in the country to foreign countries is the paper entitled "Outflow of Human Capital - High Level Manpower from the Philippines, with Special Reference to the Period 1965-1971." Conducted by Dr. M. L. Gupta of the ILO Manpower Assessment and Planning Expert of the UNDP in the Philippines, the in depth

study traces the magnitude of the outflow of Filipino professionals and highly trained workers to foreign countries considering the Philippine total to Asian and world totals, occupations, destination of work and foreign laws on immigration.

Dr. Gupta said: Migration embodies at least a two fold loss in terms of the direct costs of higher learning and the earnings foregone during the period of education. The costs involved and the losses incurred in the current level of annual migration (say 11,240 professional and skilled workers composed of 8,911 such migrants to the U. S. and another 2,249 migrants to Canada, excluding 1,859 such workers going to other countries on contract employment basis) from the Philippines are colossal.'

Likewise he pointed out that the Filipino immigrants to the United States in 1967, when the number admitted was 2,517 or less than 30 per cent of the level reached in 1970, the cost estimate was US\$5.24 million, the estimate for 1970 would be about \$17 million.

These money costs, though substantial, are not as important as the drain the country's stock of finest talents. According to Dr. Gupta, from 1969 to 1970, a magnitude of 13,000 Filipino workers has gone abroad, not mentioning their dependents and retired workers. From 1970 alone, 4.67 per cent of the country's architects, 6.19 per cent of its chemical engineers, and 2.59 per cent of its mining and metallurgical engineers migrated to the U. S. and Canada. In addition, 2.77 per cent of its doctors, 4.15 per

cent of its nurses, 3.58 per cent of its veterinarians, and an exceptionally high 22.445 per cent of dieticians and nutritionists migrated from the country in 1970.

Dr. Gupta noted that more liberal immigration laws are now being imposed among professionals in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom primarily because these countries would gain from an increased supply of people able to adapt to the demands of an increasingly complex society in which accelerating technological changes is reshaping the world as work more and more rapidly.'

Hence the acceleration of Filipino emigration to these countries, with the United States accounting for the largest number of emigrants. Such that in 1965, only 100 Filipinos obtained immigrant visas, in 1969 it was 20,000 reaching the annual numerical unit under the revised US Immigration and Nationality Act.

As of February 1972, there were 171,999 applicants registered with the US Embassy, decided to go to the United States.

Next to U. S. in absorbing Filipino workers is Canada. From 1965 to 1970 a total of 13,4429 Filipino professionals migrated to Canada. They accounted for about 15 per cent or one-sixth of the Asian total and slightly more than two per cent of the world total. In the past years, Filipino nurses comprised the largest volume of immigrants from the country into Canada. To date, the manufacturing and mechanical trade and clerical workers consist the bulk of Filipino migrants to Canada.

The causes of huge export of manpower and labor were given by Gupta, Watanabe, Kannappan and the Study Committee created by the Secretary of Labor of the Philippines pursuant to Administrative Order No. 195, such as the following:

1) The desire for an adequate income, i.e., the attraction of the dollar. Disparities in the standards of living and per capita incomes between developed and developing countries mean lower salaries in the latter.

2) Better opportunities and working conditions abroad. Research-oriented individuals are not satis-

fied with the research facilities in the country which compare unfavourably with that of highly developed countries.

3) Lack of professional opportunities in the country and poor prospects for the future. There exists a maldistribution of manpower resources as evidenced by the acute shortage of qualified manpower (particularly doctors and nurses) in the rural areas.

4) Under-utilization of professional skills. Gupta asserts that there exists a substantial under-utilization of skills in the country.

5) The desire to acquire additional training or enhance professional standing.

6) The growing structural imbalance in manpower supply and employment opportunities aggravated by the educational system.

The Office of Manpower Services revealed recently that 1,337 or 19.9% of a total of 6,688 Filipino workers who left the country from January to September 1972 consisted of professional, technical and related workers. These were doctors, nurses, midwives, engineers and other professionals wherein 40.3% or 2,696 were workers in transport and communication, while 1,915 or 28.6% were craftsmen. Services and related worker numbered 493 or 7.3% of the total.

In October 1972, professional, technical and related workers who migrated totalled 213 or 16.8% of 1,271, while workers in transportation and communication (seamen) reached 878 or 69.1%.

However, for November last year, more than 4,000 Filipino workers left the country. They have been absorbed, according to the OMS, by foreign industries, mainly shipping and air transport, in several regional locations in the world, namely, the South-east Asia, Trust Territories and Colonies in the Pacific, Europe, United States, Shipping Companies and Middle East.

Actually brain drain can be traced in the under-development of the country.