

**Deconstruction of Student Migration from Nepal to the UK:
Brain Drain, Brain Gain or Brain Circulation?**

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of
Sociology and Social Anthropology

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Budapest, Hungary

2007

Abstract

This study argues for a shift in the way student migration from Nepal has been studied. It shows that once we frame student migration from Nepal to UK as an international semi/skilled labor migration, rather than as an “elite migration”, we could understand the dynamics of this migration, in terms of its temporality and the directionality of the students’ mobility better. As a disguised labor migration, student migration operates on transnational networks and connections therefore its temporality has been diverted from temporary or linear migration to multi-directional transnational migration. The networks of migrants has been embedded on multiple transnational social spaces in which the migrants continuous interactions contribute to the economic and cultural reproduction of transnational households of which the student migrants become part of. Furthermore, I argue that transnationalization of the migration defies the conventional ‘notion’ of ‘brain drain’ from sending state perspective. It could even be ‘brain gain’ from the perspective of financial and social remittances which have an impact on the economic capacity and social mobility of the transnational household. On the bases of their jobs in the workforce, for which they are overqualified, the students’ position could be approached from the perspective of ‘brain waste’. However, as the student migration demonstrates the features of both ‘brain gain’ and ‘brain waste’, I suggest a more definitional as well as conceptual term, ‘brain circulation’ to designate and understand the phenomenon of Nepalese student migration to the UK.

Acknowledgement

Little attention has been paid in the international migration of Nepali students. This reality motivated me to conduct the study on the same which has finally appeared in this form. In this regard, my first thanks go to my supervisor Professor Ayse Caglar who guided me to conduct the study effectively and have provided with valuable suggestions, insights and ideas as well as encouragement to accomplish the task. Similarly, I also extend hearty thanks to my second supervisor Assistant Professor Alexandra Kowalski who guided me with suggestions and feedback on my work.

The whole academic year has become a memorable and life time achievement in my academic career in which all the professors from the department left no stone unturned to train me therefore I express my deep gratitude to all the professors from the department. I would also like to acknowledge thank to the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology for providing me support including a traveling grant which enabled me to go to London for my field study. My special thanks go to the host families in London where, besides participant observations, their hospitality always made me feel at home. In the similar manner, I take an opportunity to extend many thanks to all my respondents who have made this study possible. I give special thanks to the members of Worldwide Nepali Student Organization London, Minister Counselor Nepali Embassy London and members of Bracknell Nepali Society London for their valuable information and supports.

I am also thankful to my colleagues who provided me with valuable suggestions and comments on my progress during the thesis writing workshops.

Last but not least, many thanks are reserved for my wife; Dina and son, Ashwin whose love and encouragement from home always motivated me work hard in this endeavor.

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1 Introduction

Migration indisputably remains an attractive field of study in social sciences, particularly in sociology and anthropology. In recent years, migration has not only become a dynamic phenomenon involving number of new actors and agencies, but also the theoretical approaches have become wide, multi-stranded and more interdisciplinary. One of the newly established paradigm in migration studies is ‘transnationalism’ : an approach built on transnational networks which emphasize individual migrants and household as unit of analysis (Brettell 2000). Drawing on the transnational frame of migration, this study includes student migration from Nepal to the UK in its central them. Although this study focuses on the student migration from Nepal to the developed countries, it specifically concentrates on student migration from Nepal to the UK by the fact that there exists longest historical connection between Nepal and UK, perpetuating a long history of migration from the former to the latter.

Students, among others, are the dominant actors in migration; however student migration is unfortunately a understudied phenomenon. So is the case of student migration in Nepal. This study claims that, in recent years, student migrants have acquired more agencies in such a way that the paradigm of student migration has been gradually shifting to skill labor migration. In another words, contemporary student migration has increasingly become labor migration in the global labor market. This is the departure point of my study in which I aim to explore plausible answers to three research questions; **1) what are the grounds of shifting paradigms of student migration to skilled labor migration in Nepal?; 2) what does the shifting of paradigm imply in terms of temporality (temporary, permanent and**

transnational) of migration?; and 3) how could we identify effects of the shift from sending society prespectives: brain drain, brain gain or brain waste?

It can be commonly observed that the student migration in Nepal includes the skilled workers, such as nurses, doctors, engineers, IT professional, accountants, nevertheless the number of undergraduate / graduate students moving to the 'west' is equally significant. The category under the focus in this study includes those semi-skilled or skilled workers who migrate with a studentship. Although they are identified as semi/skilled workers in the host society, they also have studentship at present or used to have in the past. In some cases, it also include those whose student visa had been expired; however they have been staying behind; therefore working under illegal categories. It could be generally agreed that students find it easy to get admission in the host country academic institutions and at the same time they could find a job the receiving country's labor market as semi/skilled person. In this context, owing to the student migrants' active participation in the labor market, I argue that phenomena must be viewed as a paradigm of skilled labor migration.

The conventional migration theory regards student migration as a part of 'elite migration'. Fassmann and Munz (1994:11) also make a similar claim that "within the category of elite migrants, there is a large wave of students, whose experience has largely been paid attention to". This particular notion could be realistic in the case of student migration in the past when going to abroad as a student was a rare privilege available to handful of youths from the elite class. But the situation has now become flexible in such a way that new social classes and hierarchies also tended to participate in the discourses. Nevertheless, the student migrants still belong to economically better off group. It doesn't necessarily mean that the phenomena is now strictly limited to 'elite class' This study argues

that a shift in student migration in Nepal has dislocated the migrants not only from student to semi/skilled labor categories but also from 'elite' to 'public' category.

As I claim the paradigmatic shift, the study immediately necessitates to looking at how the shift readjusts temporality of migration into the new paradigm and what it means in terms of the linearity and directionality of the migration. In the migration literature, two divergent concepts are still implied to understand the temporality of student migration. Some scholars including Tremblay (2002), Dreher and Poutvaara (2006) conclude student migration a temporary cross boarder movement. This notion primarily argues in favor of return migration and 'brain gain' from sending state perspective. A group of scholars, on the other hand, look at the issue as permanent migration. It is this notion of migration which actually serves the foundation for the concept of 'brain drain'. Although completely opposing and divergent, the commonality in the two concepts could be that they de-emphasize social and cultural networks as well as migrant's transnationalism so the movement is postulated as uni-directional.

On the contrary, I would show that student migration, shifting to the paradigm of skilled labor migration, could be implicitly founded, mediated and operated on social and cultural networks. Through the connections of networks that exist at different social spaces, both at sending and receiving societies, it makes two discernible effects in the temporality of the migration: at first stake, the phenomena become multi directional and divergent therefore gradually gains the transnational character. In other words, when student migration makes a shift to the semi/skilled migration, it tends to become transnational migration. In transnational migration, migrants maintain multiple transnational networks, connections and attachments to the people, families and cultural and political discourses out side the

geographical boundaries of the nation-state to which they have moved to. (for detail see Glick-Schiller 1995, Vertovec 2002, Portes et al 1999). Secondly, by observing the personal, family and cultural networks activated in the student migration, I further claim that the temporality of the phenomena becomes transnational in which migrant student household becomes a transnational household. The transnational household provides financial, psychological and emotional support from migrants' movement to their incorporation in the host society. As an entity in transnational social spaces of which every migrant becomes a member, transnational household eventually reproduces economically and socio-culturally through the networks that are maintained either by modern communication or personal visits.

Hence, the conceptualization of transnationalism in student migration further leads my study to the debate on 'brain drain', 'brain gain' or 'brain waste' which are the terms generally ascribed to student migrant or to permanent skilled migration. Brain drain, as the term itself suggests, is a loss of educated and potential human capital from developing to developed country, in the form of linear migration. As Das (1978 : 145) suggests, "brain drain [implies] losses in the intellectual potential of developing countries, owing to the fact that students studying abroad do not come home once they graduate". A hypothesis in brain drain theory demonstrates that migrants who move from developing to developed country neither return nor make any economic contribution to their families therefore it is a net loss on the part of sending (developing) country and net profit on the part of receiving (developed country) (Hunger 2002, Faini 2003, Dreher and Poutvaara 2006). Such a conventional idea of 'brain drain' depicts the whole phenomena detrimental to sending state and beneficial to receiving state.

The revisionist approach, on the other hand, postulates movements of skilled migration as a 'brain gain'. We could come across several claims and hypothesis on brain gain in which migration-driven gain and benefits are the centrality of such claims. Few examples of 'brain gain' could be revealed in terms of the changes induced by the transformation of financial and social remittances to the household of the migrants (Levitt 2001). In the case of Nepali student migration, the study relates the phenomena of brain gain to the spheres of increasing economic capacities and social mobility of transnational household at the sending societies. At one hand, this study looks at how the social and financial remittances brings changes in social and economic life of the families and on the other hand, how the changes pave way to social mobility in terms of rural-urban migration as the by product of transnational student migration.

There have been cases in which the migrants have the jobs that require the skills for which they are over skilled. For sending society, it is generally known as 'brain waste'. According to Williams and Balaz (2005:442), brain waste is ineffective utilization in the destination (or origin) of human capital (permanently) transferred from the origin. My contention is that Nepali student migration also delineates some feature of 'brain waste' in the host society labor market; however it could not be the human capital permanently transferred from the origin. It has continuous connection with the origin therefore it is part of transnationalization of labor, albeit not as much productive as it could have been, from sending society perspective.

The existing cases of 'brain waste' therefore makes 'brain gain' hard to define. 'Brain gain' at the same time becomes a relativist term, posing duality from sending and receiving state perspective. On the other hand, the change it brings forth is hard to measure in

quantitative term. It is therefore; I would suggest that the concept of ‘brain circulation’ would better be employed to understand the contemporary skilled migration in Nepal. In my study, ‘brain circulation’ refers to the mobility of human capital in the global labor market as a feature of global capitalism. Human capital has been identified as an individual’s productivity embedded in his/her skills, ideas and knowledge (Duleep and Regets 1999, Blandy 1967). In this study, I propose that the Nepali students’ movement could be located within the circulatory trends of human capital in present world. This purpose, at the time, strengthens my principal argument that reveals the shifting paradigm of student migration into skilled labor migration.

The second chapter of this study deals with the existing debates and arguments on student migration and skilled labor migration. Primarily drawing on the transnationalism in migration studies, I build up my own theory which suggests to conceptualize student migration as part of skilled migration therefore to consider the phenomena as a circulation of brain in the present transnational labor market. The third chapter carefully deciphers the methodologies undertaken to collect primary information from the field. The fourth chapter serves the empirical evidences and findings that support my claims and arguments made in the study. Fifth chapter draws on the conclusions showing that, being the part of the skilled labor migration, the temporality of student migration should be viewed with in the frame of transnational process. At the same time, it calls for the broad approach to understand economic and socio-cultural dimensions of student migration for which ‘brain circulation’ would be a more definitional and conceptual term.

2 Review of Related Literature

The conceptual frame of my study has been invested to support two main claims: first, in the recent years, student migration has increasing commonalities with skilled labor migration therefore the entire phenomena must be studied through the lens of the latter. Second, as the issue could be part of skilled migration, it could not be conceptualized as ‘brain drain’ in the present situation from sending society’s point of view; rather it could be ‘brain gain’ Nevertheless, ‘brain waste’ could also be an inseparable phenomenon in skilled migration as well as student migration. In the present context when paradigm of student migration has steadily been shifting to skilled migration in global market which is mediated by extended transnational networks and ties, the 3Bs (brain drain, brain gain or brain waste) delineate a simplistic view of migration patterns therefore from a positivist stance, ‘brain circulation’ could be an appropriate term to the phenomena. This requires to re-theorizing ‘brain drain’, ‘brain gain’ and ‘brain waste’ in the context of Nepali student migration.

2.1 *From Student Migration to Skilled Migration: shifting paradigm*

Although it is commonly believed that Nepalese students occupy sizeable proportion in Nepalese migration discourses to the developed countries, no official data is available on it. Student migration has therefore been marginalized in migration studies, particularly in case of Nepal where literature on migration is very poor. The current out flux of students from Nepal to the ‘west’ brings forth a contemporary issue in migration studies: does student migration shift the paradigm into skilled labor migration? In what follows, I concentrate on

theoretical debate on skilled-labor migration and further show that students are inevitable part of it.

By looking at the discourses of student migration in receiving country, it seems that the almost all those who have migrated have been engaged in the labor market of receiving society. Estimation on Asian students in the USA conducted by Oh (1973:449) concluded that “the Asian students’ participation in local labor market is clearly higher than among foreign students in general”. By making examples of Nicaraguans, Haitians, Jamaican youths, Tanner (2005:3) shows that “young people from developing countries are increasingly participating in international labor market as students”.

Globalization of world labor market and international division of labor has been pointed out as key factors inherent in skilled labor migration (Martin 2003, Commander et al 2004). I assume that this generalization is equally realistic and applicable in student migration in Nepal. In this regard, it will not be otherwise to argue that student migrant’s participation in host society labor market as a skilled person could possibly be seen as out comes of two major causes: 1) globalization of international labor market and increasing demand of semi/skilled workers in the capitalist economy; and 2) increasing role of family, kinship and personal networks in finding jobs, settlement and migrants’ incorporation in receiving society. In case of former, it could be said that in the globalized capitalist world, work space has become internationally integrated, seeking skilled workers with out frontiers (Stalkar 2000, Stark 1991). Increasing demands of semi/skilled workers in the host society labor market therefore serves as the path way to the student migrants to enter into the international labor market. In case of the latter, it is believed that migrant’s existing family and personal networks in the receiving society serves as channel to their accession to labor market.

Vertovec (2002:3) asserts that “for migrants, social networks are crucial for finding jobs and accommodation”. Similarly, Poros (2001) shows that local labor markets can become linked through specific networks of interpersonal and organizational ties surrounding migrants. These two arguments provide a useful insight into my study to understand student migration as a part of skilled migration.

In migration studies, existing literature on students’ cross-border movement has been postulated as part of ‘elite migration’. Elite migration generally refers to an economic or more appropriately trade-oriented migration; motivated by economic push and pull factors. Similar logic can be found in the work of Subrahmanyam (1992) in which he has employed ‘elite migration’ to the well-to-do Iranian traders. O’Neil (2003) mentions that worlds very poorest do not migrate as much as the more educated. Making an argument in the line of O’Neil, Tanner (2005:3) further claims that “global labor migration is increasingly becoming a movement of educated with their families. These theoretical insights may have strong connotation to the phenomena of student migration in Nepal; however I will argue that class participation in student migration has become flexible in recent times. Consequently, it could be argued that student migration in Nepal has been gradually re-oriented from ‘elite’ to the ‘public’ domain.

It doesn’t necessarily imply that youngsters from lower social class and hierarchy are common actors in student migration. The point of argument is that owing to advance communication, transportation and growing transnational family personal and cultural networks, class participation has been broadened. It is therefore the discourse may not be rigidly termed as ‘elite migration’; rather it should be conceptualized as ‘skilled labor migration’. Pina-Cabral (2000:2) defines elite as “the groups that control specific resources

by means of which they acquire political power and material advantage”. Those participating in student migration in Nepal necessarily do not comply with the definition of elite made by Pina-Cabral; however they come from better off families. Considering the increasing class participation in migration, skilled workers would be an appropriate term which refers to the migrants are educated and generally come from well-to-do families. Thus, by virtue of changing class participation in student migration as well their participation in international labor market, I conclude that student migration could be part of semi/skilled labor migration. The thematic focus of this study on the shifting paradigm of student migration into labor migration is certainly a fresh and new approach. It is on this ground that the study has been highly expected to contribute to the discipline of transnational migration.

2.2 Social Reconstruction of the Student Migrants across time and space

Since transnationalism emerged up as a new paradigm in migration studies in the early 1990s, the focus on migration studies shifted from collective unit to the individual migrant and household unit (Brettlee 2000). Transnationalism draws on networks and connections embedded in multiple social spaces therefore it suggests looking at the social construction of the discourses (Brettlee 2000, Pries 2001). This practice in migration studies emphasizes qualitative studies of the phenomena in a micro-level so that the very language of the study may correctly reflect the migration-led changes and transformations. This theoretical insight provides a useful insight in my study on two counts: 1) I focus that study on the individual migrant’s level and household level, and 2) I adopt a more qualitative approach to observe the phenomena.

The debates on ‘temporality’, ‘linearity’ and directionality of the movements are central to the migration literature. There exist two contradictory notions on the cross border

movement of students as migrants. A theoretical strand conceptualizes the movement as 'temporary migration' assuming that students' movement is temporary; therefore pertinent to the 'circular migration'. Similar views can be observed in the work of Dreher and Poutvaara(2006:1) who claim that "lots of migration flows including students have temporary character in the present mobile world".

Some other scholars such as Brandi (2001), Faini (2003) and Commander et al (2004), on the other hand, characterize student movement a permanent migration. In my study, I argue that student migration is neither temporary nor linear or permanent phenomena. It makes sense for me to claim that student migration could rather be 'transnational' in recent times because it operates on transnational networks and links so that constantly interact within trans national social spaces; therefore the exodus is neither uni-directional nor totally cut off from the home land. According to Lima (2001:77); "transnational social spaces is a defined and institutionalized frame work of social practices, symbol systems and artifacts that span pluri-locally over different national societies". When student migrants interact with the frame of transnational social spaces and become part of it, I claim that it produces a new conditionality for a new directionality and temporality of migration which becomes transnational by character.

Since student migration shifts to the category of labor migration, the interpretation of temporality may require a reference to labor migration. A historical-structural approach in the anthropological study of migration depicts labor migration in the context of global economy and core-periphery relation as well as international division of labor (Brettelle 2000, Murphy 2002). In another words, this approach, similar to that of dependency model, theorize migration with 'push-pull' equation of 'core-periphery' relation in which macro economic

perspective marginalize the social and cultural aspects of migration. The ‘core-periphery’ principal at the same time delineates the uni-directionality in migration, demonstrating the linearity between periphery to core. Although core-periphery notion would make some sense in student migration, particularly regarding economic motivation of the movement, its emphasis on migrant’s linearity would need a modification by the fact that migrant’s multiple social and cultural networks and transnationalization of labor market make the movements divergent. It becomes embedded in multiple transnational social spaces Pries (2001); therefore the process ruptures the conventional meaning of linearity and directionality. This emphasizes that student migration as skilled labor migration enters the frame of transnational migration. Thus, by making an argument in favor of multi-directionality of student migration in the present globalized world, I claim that ‘core-periphery’ approach would better be replaced by ‘transnationalism’ to better understand the dynamics of student migration.

The thematic focus on family, kinship and cultural networks are equally important in migration not only to understand the movement and settlement but also to observe the migrant’s continuous interconnectedness to their homeland. (Boyd 1989, Glick-Schiller 1998). For migrants, social networks are crucial for finding jobs and accommodation, circulating goods and services, as well as psychological supports and continuous social and economic information (Vertovec, 2002:3). The role of social network suggested by Vertovec informs how migration operates on social and cultural networks and diverts the phenomena to a network mediated movement in which the linearity converts into multiple multiplicities. In my study, I emphasize that student migration operates on social-cultural networks between different transnational social spaces therefore; the temporality of migration becomes multi-focal within transnational social spaces.

Within the social and cultural networks and transnational spaces, migrant's household re-emerges as a 'transnational household'. Transnational household can be recognized as an entity within the networks and social spaces which reproduces economic activities through multiple interactions and connections between sending and receiving societies. To define a transnational household, Lima (2001:78) asserts;

Transnational household , both nuclear and extended, are dispersed across international borders, and their members tend to spend periods of time in one or another country and for a variety of reasons, they have [family members] on both sides of border. Their geographical location is fluid. They may have properties and businesses-some times on both side of border – and, more importantly they develop their work trajectories and projects in each of the two countries.

In transnational semi/skilled migration, transnational household builds cultural and economic networks and exchange and reproduce changes among those who migrated and who did not. At the same time, transnational scholarship points out that transnational household could play a crucial role in migrant's incorporation in receiving society. According to Lima (2001:79), "transnational families play key roles in distribution of work-related information. Information regarding employment opportunities and job requirements flow thorough transnational family networks and crucial decision regarding migration are made within transnational families". In this regard, I assume that, at one hand, migrant's household plays substantial roles in student migration preparation as well as in the process of migrant's incorporation at receiving society. On the other hand, by utilizing social and cultural remittances, it involves in the economic cultural reproduction. Transnational household therefore gains social mobility with in the existing social structure. In my study, I claim that while student migrants house hold become transnational household and the migrants as part of it, it strongly indicates the new dynamics in which temporality becomes transnational.

2.3 Perspectives on 'Brain Drain', 'Brain Gain' and 'Brain Waste'

While my study brings forth the shifting paradigm of student migration to transnational labor migration as well and suggests to adopt a transnational perspective, it immediately inserts a critical question in the discussion: is the student migration a 'brain drain' or a 'brain gain'? This question in fact leads my study to the second strand of discussion on 'brain drain' and 'brain gain' in the context of student migration in Nepal.

The term 'brain drain' first appeared in the report by the Royal Society of London published in early 1960s and the term specifically referred to the exodus of British Scientists to the US. From the start of the 1970s, however new political and economic realities led to a shift in focus and the term 'brain drain' was used also to refer to the burgeoning phenomena of students from poor countries opting to stay on in the developed countries where they had studied (Brandi, 2001:1). Williams and Balaz (2005:441) mentions that "brain drain is a (permanent) transfer of human capital from less to more developed economies". Early studies of brain drain looked at the issue from the perspective of centre-periphery relation based on structural model. A conventional definition of 'brain drain' could be the one made by (Das, 1978 : 15) who asserts that "brain drain [implies] losses in the intellectual potential of developing countries, owing to the fact that students studying abroad do not come home once they graduate". Although defined in number of ways, the term commonly refers to the permanent loss of human capital from a developing country.

Although both student migration and skilled labor migration have been studied as 'brain drain' in conventional migration theories, my contention is that this approach sheds partial, incomplete and incorrect perspective in my study on two counts. First, as student migration eventually shifts its category into skilled labor migration, its temporality extends

and directionality becomes divergent in global labor market. A student migrant then becomes a transmigrant whose mobility could not be limited to a unidirectional linear process. Hence I define a student migration as a transmigrant in similar way Glick-Schiller et al (1995:48) does:

transmigrants settle and become incorporated in the economy and political institute, localities and patterns of daily lives of the country in which they reside. However at the very same time, they are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions and influence local and national events in the country from which they emigrated

Secondly, brain drain theory perceives the exodus a complete loss of human capital therefore detrimental to sending society's socio-economic development. I contend that in the migrant's transnationalism, the links and connections forged and sustained by the migrants make a substantial economic contribution to the transnational household. For this reason, the conventional essence and meaning of brain drain is increasingly eroding in the present context.

A revisionist approach on loss of skilled human capital has been replaced by another emergent yet hard to define notion of 'brain gain'. The revisionist approach, which partly draws on migrants transnationalism and partly on globalization of international labor market, believes that transmigrants have continuous connection with the homeland and also they contribute to the economic and social-cultural changes and transformation of the 'transnational household'. In the revisionist approach, some key issues have commonly been pointed out to exhibit that skill migration may turn into 'brain gain' for sending country (Faini, 2003:1). The revisionist claims could be brain gain from sending society perspective for two reasons: 1) by playing role in the development of home country, particularly sending

social and financial remittances; and 2) bringing along the ideas, values and skills on return migration. Hunger (2002:2) suggests the similar opinion that

the brain gain hypothesis is based on two basic assumptions. First, the third world elites that immigrated to an industrialized country are able to play an important role in the development process of their home country through return migration and/or transnational networks. Second, it is possible to give the emigrated skilled workers for developing country sufficient incentives to re-migrate. The second assumption eventually promotes remigration and in this case the sending state policy could play important role to create conducive environment to attracted immigrants for return migration.

From the revisionist stance, it has been well noted that student migrants play important role in economic and social changes of their households. This has to be normally understood in terms of the effects of remittances; therefore it is believed that the remittances' effects in student migration can be noted as the major component of brain gain, from sending state's point of view. As the consequence of the revisionist thoughts, it has been tried to show that 'brain drain' is not a negative concept to developing countries therefore it needs to be redefined as the forms of human capital transfers exists in present globalized world (Williams and Balaz 2005, Jordon and Douvel 2002, Ghosh 1985, Kuznnetsov 2002, Faini 2003).

Although remittance, in general, loosely refers to money or cash transferred by the migrants, it has now been broadly categorized as 'financial remittance' and 'social remittance'. Financial remittances include all monetary transactions transmitted by migrant workers to their families and communities back home (Sorensen 2004, Van Doorn 2001). In migration studies, mostly in economic theories, the effects of financial remittances have been counted in terms of total cash turn over and its macro-economic effects in the national economy. Since transnational approach of migration shifts its focus from collective unit to

individual household unit (Brettlee 2000), I intend to see the general effects of financial remittance in terms of economic mobility of transnational household. From a sociological perspective, changes in economic capacity of a household could consequently be a source of social mobility (Payne 1989). The Liberals' assumption in social mobility could be enhanced through the occupational opportunity in the open competitive market (Goldthorpe 1980).

Social remittances, on the other hand, are ideas, behavior, identities, and social capital that flow from host to sending country communities (Levitt, 2001:54). Social remittances are seen as local-level migration-driven form of cultural diffusion (Levitt 1998:926), that consist of transformative power and has long term social effects than financial remittances. Apart from the increases in household economy, I will try to see how ideas, values, knowledge and skills experienced by the migrants, while transmitted to the household, bring a change in ways of life.

The brain gain theory at the same time emphasizes the developmental effects of migrants' skills in sending society upon their return. In recent times, it is increasingly belied that both student migration and skilled migration returns home. In the case of studies of Indian software engineers Commander et al (2004) show that there exists strong return possibility of skilled migrants abroad. However the case of student migration in Nepal doesn't indicate the strong possibility of return migration in near future. In another words, from return migration perspective, Nepali student migration could not be implicitly considered as a 'brain gain'.

Is every skilled migration a 'brain gain'? The best possible answer could be 'it depends'. This obviously means that every skilled migration is not a brain gain and neither is it 'brain drain'. A term 'brain waste' is attributed to the phenomena in which a skilled person

undertakes the profession for which he/she is over qualified. Williams and Balaz (2005) define brain waste as ineffective utilization in the destination (or origin) of human capital transferred from the origin. The notion of brain waste has also a particular insight into my study. It has normally been noticed that a considerable number of students have been working for low paid jobs. They have not been successful in finding the jobs that suits their qualification. I observe this phenomena from the 'brain waste' point of view.

My positionality in the 'brain drain' and 'brain gain' argument is inclined to gain side however; I still acknowledge that conceptualizing brain gain in student migration could be very slippery. From the transnational perspective, I would suggest that student migration should be understood as 'brain circulation'.

At one hand 'brain waste' becomes an essential feature of student migration, on the other hand, 'brain drain' makes no sense when skilled labor migration have tended to shift from long term to short term mobility (Benson-Rea and Rawlinson, 2003). 'Brain gain' at the same time becomes hard to define and difficult to measure in quantitative terms. It also delineates different meaning in different circumstances; for instance, what is brain gain from sending society perspective may be otherwise from receiving society perspective.

Salt (1998) mentions that 'brain' drain', 'brain gain' and 'brain waste' can be broadly seen as representing brain exchange. Regets (1997) further argues that instead of 'brain' drain', 'brain gain' and 'brain waste', a term, 'brain circulation' provides a more apt conceptual frame within which skilled migration study may have two main objectives: 1) to examine individual economic benefits realized by different types of migrants; and 2) to provide a better understanding of their acquisition and valorization of a more broadly interpreted human capital. Both the definitional and conceptual frame of 'brain circulation'

therefore refers to the free move movement of ‘human capital’ in the forms of skills and knowledge as means of production in global capitalism. Duleep and Regets (1999) shows that human capital could be means of investment and source of productivity in case of immigrants too.

In my study, I suggest to understand the student migration as ‘brain circulation’ by the fact that student migrants’ mobility has become dynamic the internationally integrated and transnationalised labor market. The suggestion further helps to emphasize my principal claim in this study which demonstrates that the paradigm of student migration has been shifting to skilled labor migration. It is therefore, the notion of brain circulation become more dimensional in the study of student migration and it also exhibits a more positive appraisal of student migration. At the same time the notion of ‘brain circulation’ could correspond to circulatory networks in migrant’s transnationalism.

From the arguments and debates so far, it can be concluded that the student migration is a paradigmatic form of skilled migration which is not unidirectional as theorized from core-periphery approach; rather it operates on transnational networks and connections, further constructing transnational social spaces and transnational household. The notion of brain drain loses its significance under the transnationalization of labor market where as brain gain and brain waste could be un-dimensional to study the phenomena in different circumstances. Therefore this study suggests a more concrete and revisionist approach of ‘brain circulation’.

In the following section, I will shed light on the empirical findings by making an interpretation and explanations of the interviews and observations. The empirical findings are crafted on the primary information in order to support my claims and arguments.

3 Methodology

The subject of this study is emigration of skilled persons as students from Nepal. The emigrated skilled persons include nurses, engineers, doctors, IT personal as well as students from undergraduate and post graduate level. These categories of people are generally considered as educated and skilled people therefore are in a comfortable position to obtain a visa and working scope in the host society. My study focuses on those workers in the host society who still hold a studentship at present or used to have in the past. Although this study aims to capture the phenomena of student migration from Nepal to developed countries, the study has purposely focused on an ethnographic study in London. I chose London as the field in my study for two specific reasons: First, the UK is the country which has longest historical connection to Nepal therefore obviously it has longest history of migration. Secondly, it is commonly observed that the UK has higher scope for skilled people like Nurses, IT technician, engineers and accounts. As its consequence, the exodus is always tempted to migrate to the UK. In addition to this, unlike in the US, university students in the UK are legally allowed to work maximum 20 hours a week which most of the student migrants take as an advantage. This helps them earning while studying. For these reasons, London has remained as the attractive place for Nepali student which motivated me to make the study there. This group is important in my study because it clearly demonstrates the shifting paradigm of student migration into labor migration, which is the central issue in the study. To highlight this focus in my study, I looked at how both the individual migrants and their household at home land act to their accession to the host society labor market.

The purpose of the study includes exploring three key issues: 1) find the grounds of shifting the paradigm of the student migration into skilled migration; 2) explore the effects of

shift in terms of temporality of the movement; and 3) map the socio-economic effects of student migration to conceptualize brain drain, brain gain and brain waste. In my study brain gain refers to the phenomena in which the migrants have actively contributed to the economic and social changes of their family. The concept of 'brain waste' is applied to those categories who have not been able to work up to their education and skills. In order to operationalize the field as per the objectives of the study, a three week-long ethnographic study was conducted in London in April-May 2007. During the field study, I conducted twenty in-depth interviews as well as participant observations. During my participant observation, I was a guest of the migrants. It allowed me to observe their every activities and interactions both at their residences as well as at working place. Very personal and informal interactions during the field study revealed information and insights in key areas such as connection to homeland, temporality of the migration as well as some information about the possibilities of relocation and return migration.

The interviews were conducted among three different categories of people. The first category included those who migrated to UK as student and have been working as skilled person after completion of education. The technical persons as such doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, IT professionals and university graduates belong to this categories. Those from the second category came as student but could not complete the education however they have been working in the local market in as semi skilled or skilled worker. The third category of student are working and studying simultaneously. It is therefore they are engaged both in education institution and labor market. From gender perspectives, the ration of male and female respondents was sixty percent and forty percent respectively. Regarding the age factors, the respondents ranged from twenties to forties.

Apart from the students, some other key persons were also interviewed. In this category, the Minister Counselor from Nepali Embassy, the president of Bracknell Nepali Society, the founding President of World Wide Nepalese Student Organization (WNSO)¹ and President of WNSO the UK were interviewed. The purpose to interview them was to obtain information on the issue from the third person's point of view on trends of student migrant's accession to labor market, their connections with homeland, and development effects of migration. This information could be beneficial to verify some of the information of the key respondents.

The in-depth interviewed were focused three key areas: 1) what factors make the students to join the local labor market in the receive society. This aspect helped to have insights into how an individual students gradually shifts into workers in the international labor market and what could be its impact in their life as well as at their household. 2) By focusing on why and how students follow the social and cultural networks in the migration, it helped explore the temporality and directionality student's transnational migration. 3) The final emphasis on the interviews implicitly revealed the social and economic effects of migration in terms of financial and social remittances. The interviews were led to the discussions on the changes they have induced in their homeland through remittances, personal visits and by the use of internet and telecommunication. It was useful to explore the extent of economic freedom and social mobility of the migrant's transnational household. In case of some respondents who are working the job for which they are overqualified, I focused the interview on their experiences of stigmatization and self-esteem. This part of interview

¹ World Wide Nepali Student Organization (WNSO) is student organization formed by Nepali student in the UK however the network has now extended all over the world. At present WNSO have the networks in 21 countries as on May 2007. WNSO, which is a non-political student organization, works for the welfare of Nepali student abroad. Apart from providing information on the abroad studies, WNSO has been providing scholarships for the bright students from Nepal. It also organizes a e-forum which is the platform to exchange ideas on study, working opportunity and many more. For detail visit: www.wnsso.org

emphasized to extracted information on 'brain waste'. All the interviews expect with the Minister of Counselor were unstructured. I used semi-structured interview with the counselor because I wanted to receive specific interview from him regarding the role of government in facilitating the migrants in receiving society.

The respondents were selected from a 'snow balling' technique. It was based on the 'serial interview' strategy based on the notion of Cook and Crang (1995). Opportunity sampling and 'snowballing' were the tools adopted for sampling to interviewees. Although usually a former respondent used to refer to the next respondent for interview however in this process, I was aware of the fact that snow balling could lead me to wrong direction in choosing a respondent therefore I had been very selective among the available respondents so as to cover the right person who fit into my target category. The founding president of WNSO was the main gate keeper to reach to the respondents. All the respondents in my study come from London as well as those living outside London namely Bracknell, Reading, South Hampton and Guildford.

Since this is an ethnographic study, all the interviews were recorded in the field; however field notes were also maintained as or when necessary. To maintain the moral and ethical aspect, a prior consent for recording was always sought from the respondents. The data from the field were interpreted in a way what Lofland and Lofland (1995:181) calls "an inductive and emergent process". The data and information were categorized, prioritized and decoded in accordance to the primary focus of the study. In subsequent manner, the information were rephrased and interpreted in the narrative forms. In this regard, I used direct quotations, description of the particular important observations and brief summarization and

narration of interviews. A careful attention has been paid not to manipulate, exaggerate or over extrapolate the data.

Due to the limitation of time, I could not collect the actual data on the total number of student migrants in London. On the other hand, limitation of the study prevented me from interviewing the student migrant from other parts of the UK. In order to explore the changes that the student migration enforced at the home land, some in-depth interview with the family members of the students would be definitely be very useful in the study. This has remained as a limitation.

4 Findings

This section consists of the interpretations of the information collected during the filed study. In order to directly relate the findings to the puzzles and the research questions, this chapter has been further divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section presents the findings to show how the student emigrated from Nepal to the UK have become semi-skilled or skilled labor migrants. It shows the different actors and agencies involved in this process of shifting the studentship into semi/skilled workers categories. The second sub-section deals with the temporality, linearity and transnational character of student migration. The third sub-section is all about the issue of circulation of human capital. To avoid the ambiguity of ‘brain drain’ and ‘brain gain’, it is suggested to understand the phenomena as ‘brain circulation’. The findings also delineate information on how some form of student migration has become ‘brain waste’ in the receiving society, from sending society perspective.

It is important to note in advance that the names and address of the respondent of my study have been changed to maintain the privacy and anonymity.

4.1 *From Student to Semi/skilled workers: The shifting categories*

This study was concentrated on the student immigrants, from Nepal to the UK, who followed the different trajectories of international migration in Nepal. Being understudied phenomena, no records and updated data are available on Nepali student migration. However it is widely believed that students occupy large proportion of Nepali immigrants in the UK.

One of the founders of Worldwide Nepali Student Organization (WNSO) informed that there could be nearly one hundred thousand Nepali immigrants in the UK, out of them about forty percent belong to the student category either at present or used to be a student in the past.

In this study, by referring to students, the category broadly includes there types:

- 1) The educated and skilled person of the country who migrated as students and settled in the UK as skilled workers. Nurses, IT professionals, engineers, chartered accountants, doctors, hotel management graduates generally fall in this category. For these professionals, it would be easy to find admission to an institution. Upon upgrading of further qualification they could easily get work permit as well as suitable jobs. The status of the migrants in this category is legal.
- 2) The second category includes those who also come as student and have a good qualification however; they have been doing jobs in which their skills and qualification are not directly applied to. Those in this category have been working in different sectors such as chefs, waiters, taxi-drivers, security guards, on sales in shopping complex. Nevertheless, they have somehow been working as a semi/skilled person, albeit not up to their actual academic standard. Some of them in these categories were found in an illegal status for their student status had been expired.
- 3) The third category is mixed. The students who are enrolled in undergraduate or graduate level and still pursuing the education belong to this category. Although they are still full or part time students in the universities, they actively and constantly participate in host country labor market. The UK government allows students to work a maximum 20 hours a week. All the students in this category were found to take advantage of this legal provision however; most of them work beyond twenty hours to boost their income. Indian and Nepali restaurants care homes and security services are the common employers' categories which offer students jobs more than twenty hours

a week. Since this is not legal, students are paid their remuneration in cash so that their local authorities can not trace the working hours of the students.

All these three categories of students were found as inseparable part of the labor market in the host country, given the fact that whether still a student or already graduated, every student migrant is essentially participated in the labor market. All the students are doing semi-skilled or skilled job; therefore it can be said that the student migration delineates the traits of (semi) / skilled labor migration.

In some cases, during my field study, I came across many students who migrated with their spouses. According to the respondents, “one who is allowed to travel to the UK with spouse would be considered lucky”. As a spouse receives ‘dependent visa’, it allows the legal rights to work as a full time employee. It was interestingly observed that most of the male students preferred a wife who graduated as a nurse in Nepal. Among my 20 respondents, I found that six of them married a nurse from Nepal. The reason is that nursing jobs are in high demand in the UK and are also well paid. Generally minimum wage, according to the UK government, is 5.5 pound per hour. If a nurse holds a registered license to practice, she could earn nine to twelve pound per hour, which is almost double than what an unskilled person earns. Even if a nurse doesn’t have a practice license, one could find a career job in nursing homes which pay seven to eight pound per hour.

Here is an example of how student migrants always want their family dependents to join the labor market. One of my respondents, who recently married to a nurse in Nepal, and has been living in London, told me:

My family was pressuring me to get married². I asked them to find a nurse if they want me to get married at this stage, as I am still a student and has not been able to find a well paid job. I traveled to Nepal last November. There was a proposal from her (pointing to his wife) family. I liked her (both of them smiles blushing) and we got married in the same month. After the marriage, she applied to the embassy for a dependent visa, but she was refused as I could not show the enough fund to ensure them that I would feed and take care of her. Then I traveled to the UK leaving her behind. Once I was here, I contacted an employment agency run by Indian people who supply nurses to Nursing homes and care homes. They suggested I enroll her in a university. With their assistance (for that I paid them well) she was enrolled as a nurse in a University. I sent her all the university documents. This time, both her paternal family and my family managed to show enough money in the bank account. Fortunately, she got a student visa and now we are here. She is in the process of registering in NHS³, however she working as a senior career in a nursing home. I was lucky to find a nurse.

Depending upon the type of program that students are involved in, they are normally granted visa for two to three years but could be prolonged if readmitted in a university / college. It is commonly observed that the students try to find a permanent skilled employment so that upon the request of the employer, Home Office the UK issues work permit to the applicant. Unless, one can find such opportunity to switch student status into work permit status, students have been found to extend their visa by seeking readmission to college. One of my respondents who has been working as a ‘cab driver’ revealed that he has to get admitted to a college every year. In doing so, he has been seeking admission in different short term programs every year, for example, videography, computer programming and accountancy. The only reason is to prolong the stay in the UK and participate in the labor market for better earning. This leads me to conclude that ‘student status’ is a gate way to participate in the host society labor market. In other words, it is a disguised labor migration.

² In Nepal, marriage is still arranged by the family. This is still more applicable in the case of girls, however practices of love marriages have been growing among the urban youths. Even if the couples chose a partner, it is usually the families (both bride and groom’) who arranges the marriage.

³ It is mandatory for all nurses to be registered in National Health Services (NHS) to receive a work permit to practice at the capacity of a nurse. In case of overseas nurses, one should score IELTS score of 7 and must have at least three week long adaptation course in an THE UK university under a senior supervisor. After fulfilling this criteria, an overseas nurse can apply for work a permit. For detail please visit: www.nhs.uk

It was interesting in my study to observe that every student's family encouraged them to go to the UK for education as well as employment. During the preparation and settlement phase, the students needed a large amount of money, basically to pay tuition fees and some settlement costs which is always managed by the families. In return to such arrangement, the respondents revealed that the family wants them to earn money and send some back home regularly. Directly and indirectly, every student's family wants them to undertake a full or part time job so that the family would not be financially bothered in future; rather the family would benefit by their employment / remittance. Mohan is one my respondents who asserted:

My parents have invested a lot of money in my process of migration so it is my responsibility to pay them back. Honestly they want me to earn and send them as much as possible. Therefore I have almost a dual responsibility. I have to continue my study at one hand and on the other hand, meet the expectations of my family. For this reason, I have been enrolled (in University of Reading) as a part time student so that I can have maximum time to earn.

Another respondent, who is now well employed in an IT software company, mentioned that he completed Bachelor of Engineering from Tribhuvan University Nepal. He made his destination to the UK as a post graduate student in IT and Management. He was completely supported by his family during the course; however he worked twenty hours a week to supplement his expenses. Immediately after completion of his study, he received a job and now has been able to support his family back. At some point, he wanted to go back to Nepal but his family urged him to stay behind and earn as much as possible.

As the empirical evidences shows the student migration shifted its paradigm to semi/skilled labor migration, the phenomena has become transnational through different social networks. Consequently, the individual household of the migrants have emerged up as a transnational household. The empirical evidences have shown that the transnational

household have been in facilitating migration as well as helping migrant's incorporation in the host society. Finding nurse as wife for the migrant's family member could be an example of how it functioned to facilitate migrant incorporation in host society.

These studies clearly reveal that a new tradition is being developed among the better off people in Nepal who want their family members to travel to the 'west' as student and participate in the international labor market. Such phenomenon however was not very common in the past. The migrants see the host society as a space of economic freedom and independence from parents. Their families, on the other hand, see the phenomena as potential economic prosperity and a matter of social prestige. The exodus, above all, suggests that the students' identity sooner or later shifts from student category to semi/ skilled labor category. Thus the conditionality of individual and family expectations reproduces their positionality as semi/skilled worker in labor market.

Labor migration in general is a common phenomenon in Nepal. Earlier studies on labor migration by some scholars show that temporary and circular labor migration is mainly directed to the Gulf countries like UAE, Qatar, Israel, Bahrain, Kuwait, and also to Malaysia, and Korea. The workers traveling in this category normally come from poor or lower middle class. I have used poor and lower middle class in an ordinary sense which means that these workers are normally not very educated, economically backward and belong to unskilled or semi-skilled categories. On the other hand, what is commonly observed it that the students who participate in the international labor market in developed countries are educated and belong to economically better off families so that they can afford to migrate as students. In this study, an observation of the migrant's class belonging in their community showed that most of the students come from the well-to-do family. In this connection, they may rather be

rightly classified them as ‘high class labor migrants’. This notion is similar not but not strictly limited to ‘elite labor migrant’.

4.2 *Student Migration: Temporality, Linearity and Network-mediated transnationalization of Skills*

The conventional notion of student migration generally describes the phenomena as a ‘temporary migration’. The general assumption of this notion is that students return home after completion of their education so as to make the migration temporary. The temporary nature of the student migration therefore dominated the literature in early studies. Paradoxically, surveys and research on students from Asia and Africa in 1970s and 80s revealed that the students belong to the category of permanent migration therefore the phenomena was categorized as ‘brain drain’ (Oh 1973). This perception assumed that after completion of education, students run through the process of assimilation. In the assimilation process, they find job and settle in the host society in such a way that they eventually they become disconnected from the home so that completely become integrated into the host society. In my study, both of these theoretical assumptions were found incorrect for two reasons: neither student returned home immediately after education nor they were found completely assimilated in the host society and become disconnected from host society.

I observed that the respondents who have already completed the education in the UK have not returned home; instead they have been employed in local labor market. On the other hand, I interviewed some students, still going to university as well as doing jobs, who mentioned that they will not return home as soon as they finish the education. One of my respondents told me that he has invested some amount for his education in the UK therefore he needs to work in an international organization for some time. That is what the expectation of his family. From my general observation, I came to see that the return rate after education

is almost nil at present, the dynamics of student migration can not be understood as temporary migration.

I also endeavored to explore whether student migration could be a permanent migration. One of respondent who is working as a chartered accountant said:

I don't want to stay long here (in the UK). My parents have recently moved to Kathmandu and at present the building a home. I need to help them for which I have to earn more. After a few years, I hope the situation of Nepal will improve⁴, so that I can go there and run a good business of my own. Although I have good earnings here, you can feel that it always lacks something when you are away form your homeland. Although I have a good job and an earning, I am always a second class citizen here. I will definitely return to Nepal in few years time.

I received the similar response from all of my respondents. I participated in a Nepali New Year Celebration Program organized by Bracknell Nepali Society, the UK. It was a good opportunity to interact with many Nepali immigrants engaged in different jobs, both 'white color' and 'blue color'. At the end of my interaction, I was convinced that everyone has strong network connections and active interaction with the families and household at homeland. The active connection has hopefully opened up the possibility of every one's return in due course of time. In this sense, the notion of permanent linear migration couldn't delineate the temporality and directionality of student migration from Nepal to the UK. At the same time, my study revealed that the student migration operates on family and cultural networks.

When I graduated Bachelor of Arts from the Mahendra College Dharan Nepal, I decided to go abroad for further study as well as to get a well paid job. I did not have any specific idea where to go but from a general suggestion of family, friends and

⁴ Nepal suffered from twelve years long armed revolution declared by Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) since 1996. The major political aim, as announced by the party, was to through monarchy and oligarchy and established People's Republic of Nepal. The revolution has now come to a peace negation paying a priceless cost of 13,000 lives. After the peace negation, Nepal Communist Party Maoist has also joined the eight-party-coalition interim government and the state is heading towards Election for Constitution Assembly , therefore the situation at present is facing ups and downs under transition for peace and democracy.

relatives, I thought to going to the USA, the UK or Australia. Among these three choices, the UK was the best option for me for a single reason: my brother-in-law was already in the UK and was doing a good job who readily offered me cooperation by helping me to get enrolled in the university. When my visa process was successful, it was very easy for me to come and settle in London with the great help of my brother-in-law. Actually I did not choose the UK as my destination because I could meet better job prospects but certainly because I had existing family connections there.

This is a summary of a response of my interviewee who has had student status from the last seven years. In response to my question if he would have come to the UK had he not had a kinship network, his straight answer was “I would probably not”.

During my field study, I came to know that all my respondents had some family members, kin relatives, and fellows from ethnic or religious groups or a community member who assisted them in different ways in preparation, movement and settlement phase. For all of them family, personal and cultural network was crucial in migration.

The field study also suggested that, in recent times, student migrants have also been following institutional networks. Normally, the institution networks included the admission agents of colleges, educational consultancy as well as skilled manpower recruitment agencies. In case of some of the respondents, the institutional network was mostly a complementary form of networks which they preferred to follow to avoid administrative and official hassles. One of my respondents, who is now admitted as a dental student in a Nursing College in London said that although her uncles were already in London, her admission was mediated through an educational consultancy in Kathmandu. She could have accomplished the task on her own as well as through her personal networks but she wanted to make sure that the documentation was perfect so that she would not be rejected for a visa. Another respondent from London told me that he utilized his family networks to receive financial

supports as well as supports in settlements and finding jobs, but for the admission process he went through an educational consultancy in Kathmandu.

In skill labor migration, many scholars point out the important role of institutional networks (Boyd 1989, Dreher and Poutvaara 2006,). Such networks function at national, regional and international levels in labor recruitment, placement, relocation and return. The evidence from my study also shows the increasing role of institutional channels within the transnational frame helps to understand the discourse of student migration.

Although there exist some institutional networks, it would be wise to mention that family, kinship and cultural networks have more dominant roles in student migration. One of my respondents, who has been working in a security company, emphasized the importance of such networks over institutional ones. According to him, he experienced insecurity, instability, emotional crisis in the first few months of his arrival at London. At some point he wanted to return home. For him, his family networks were the most important place to turn to in such crisis. During our conversation, he repeatedly insisted on “emotional support” which, according to him, is something that family, personal and cultural networks offer to the migrants. Another respondent from Portsmouth informed me that she had acute ‘adjustment problem’ in her working place during first six months. She confidently said, “had there not been my relatives and friend around, I would have already returned back home”.

The study has shown that student migration as a part of skilled migration has gained multi-directionality. My respondents mentioned that some of the students migrants recently relocated to the US and Canada. I even found some of them looking for such. For this, they have been using both personal and institutional networks. One of my respondents working as

an IT professional in London told that he can get a good job in an IT industry anywhere, be it in the UK, Silicon Valley or in India. It is not always necessary that he should settle in the UK. In the distant future he may also return to Nepal and start his own business. Hence, the essence of his response emphasizes that skilled labor movement should not be viewed as a unidirectional core-periphery or push pull phenomena. The movement is essentially transnational mediated by formal and informal, and institutional and personal networks.

While one of my respondents was working as a chef in Dubai, he came in contact with a employment agency that offered him a job in an international chain hotel in London for which he had to enroll as a student of hotel management in the UK. The prospects in the UK could be better than Dubai so that he decided to relocate. My point here is that the conventional mathematics of push and pull or core-periphery again could not understand the current circulation of human capital. As seen in the cases of my respondents, working as a chef and IT professional, the labor market is now internationally integrated and therefore has become transnational. Thus student migrant's directionality has been redirected. It is therefore my study claims that the shift in the way Nepali student migration has been viewed has diverted it temporality towards transnational frame of migration.

4.3 *Student Migration: Changing Rhetoric of 'Brain Drain' and 'Brain Gain'.*

Since I have shown that student migration is a network mediated transnationalization of skilled brains, it is now time to observe the effects of migration, from sending society perspectives. The study shows that there are constantly increasing contributions to the economic and socio-cultural changes, particularly when transnational household becomes the part of student migration. In order to further explore the migration-driven changes, I focused

on 'brain gain' relating the phenomena to the spheres of economic changes, social mobility at individual household level.

On 23 April 2007, one of my respondent's house was full of life. Being Monday, those Nepali who work in restaurants had the day off so that five fellow Nepalese were gathered in the house. In fact, it was a day of celebration for two reasons: first being a day off and secondly they had a special a message from each of their home – a video record of their family activities brought over by one of the fellows who had recently visited Nepal. For me, it was interesting to observe that the disk contained the video records of their houses (being) constructed in Kathmandu. The immigrants shared the joys by making comments and comparison among the houses, in which they have never been to but have all made investment from the distance. This was a visible effect of migration-driven resources, precisely remittances.

The migrant driven remittances have high transformative character in regard to economic, socio-cultural and political changes in the sending countries (Levitt 2002). The discourses of skilled migration and flow of remittances delineate important socio-economic changes in Nepal: the economic capacity of migrants household increases so that it fosters economic freedom and social mobility.

Social and financial remittances are the resources of the social, economic and cultural changes; therefore a more microscopic view on remittances is needed to understand the local change process. The development dimension of financial remittances is visible in the form of material changes such as building a house and acquiring more household appliances and using. To illustrate these effects, the respondents informed me that their families have now

access to materials like computers, the internet, televisions, DVD players, micro woven, washing machine etc. In migration development studies, it is commented that large proportion of remittances has been invested in purchasing physical materials. In my study, this notion makes equally important sense nevertheless I have considered this phenomenon as an indicator of increased economic capacity of the household.

In my opinion, the effects of financial remittances as mentioned above are also inseparable effects of ideas, values, and knowledge transferred in the form of social remittances. It is believed that financial remittance yields better effects if it transferred together with social remittances (Levitt 2002). In the case of the respondents families, the access to modern life-style have become possible due to financial remittance however, the ideas, experiences, belief and value of the migrants are also clearly reflected in the adaptation of material life of their household, indicating the changes in way of life. Santosh asserted that:

My family did not have a PC and never used the internet. In my last visit, I purchased a computer and subscribed to internet access. This facility has now become very efficient and smooth to communicate with my family. Every day I make video chat which makes me feel that he is always close to his family.

One of my respondents, who has been working as a senior nurse in London informed me that she visits her family every two years. Traveling every year is quite expensive. According to her experience, she believes that she has not only supported her family in terms of money but also by exchanging ideas and information. Her father-in-law and mother-in-law visited them two years back. Upon their return, so many new values and ideas were also transmitted with them which she could realize in her recent visit. She noticed that behavior towards female members have been more liberal. In other words, gender roles in the house were changed. Even male family members also started to themselves engaged in household

work which was not the case before. She particularly observed great changes in the health and hygiene consciousness. She amusingly mentioned that her mother-in-law has now become the leader to teach sanitation, health and hygiene to the women in her community after she returned from the UK. These micro social and cultural changes are as important as economic changes. The enforcement of these changes are the best possible evidences to show that student migration is a 'brain gain' phenomena from which migrant household takes advantage endlessly.

In the study, out of twenty interviewees, fifteen of them originally come from villages in Nepal. The rest come from cities including Kathmandu, Biratnagar and Pokhara. According to the information that I received from the field, those who have had a semi/skilled job in the receiving society have now invested to build a house in the capital city or in the city near by their village. During the field I talked to the president of one of the Nepali communities in London. He confirmed that there are many Nepalese in the community who were formerly students. Now they have a fixed job. To the best of his knowledge, most of them have been investing to build a house in the capital city; consequently the families are migrating from rural to urban areas.

The study shows that rural-urban movement of the transnational households could be an effect of migration-led-local development which could be understood in terms of social mobility. As student migration has opened up a new space for occupational mobility, by shifting the paradigm to labor migration, it has subsequently opened up a possibility of social transformation in the form of social mobility. The increasing social mobility of the house has been enhanced by the shifting paradigm of student migration into semi/skilled labor migration.

Apart from the evidences mentioned so far, I could make the following important points to show that student migrants have been beneficial to the sending country. These are the opinions of my respondents which I have summarized as:

- The straight forward benefit is the education they the students have acquired in the receiving society. Their education has direct effects on their families in terms of learning new ideas, in realizing the importance of education among the youngsters in the family as well as within kin-network;
- They believe that they remit their families with cash and ideas which have opened up the possibility of class mobility in the society. By class mobility, I refer to a family shifting from a lower to higher social class. Increased economic capacity and better life style determine the mobility;
- All the respondents did not hesitate to mention that after all they are ‘Nepali’ and always belong to Nepal. They are ready to contribute to the reconstruction of Nepal. Three of my respondents are involved in a charity that raises fund for the education of underprivileged children in rural Nepal.

This is how I observed that the students are making a significant contribution which can be regarded as ‘brain gain’, for homeland.

So far ‘brain gain’ is counted in terms of remittances as well as migrants direct indirect participation in the everyday life at homeland is concerned, I observed an interesting interactive relation between remittances transfer and physical presence of migrant’s dependants: those migrated with all immediate dependents, precisely spouse and children, have less amount of financial transfers. In another words, the migrants’ dependents have

potent effects in sending remittances, that is, in such circumstance, they send remittances less frequently. By acknowledging this fact, one of my respondent put it that “it is obvious because living with family in the UK is relatively expensive in that condition one can not save much which results into less volumes flow of resources”. From the responses, I could say that these phenomena could be absolutely true in case of financial remittances whereas in the case of social remittances, it hardly makes any difference. One of my respondent mentioned that in such a situation, social remittances may however increase. What he meant was that the more family members migrate together, the more possibility to experiencing new ideas, knowledge, values and new skills, which when transferred to the home country actually increase the volume of social remittances.

The empirical evidences from the field demonstrated that some student migrants have been undertaking jobs for which they are overqualified. I came across some of them who are university graduate but working as waiters, taxi drivers, security guards and in some cases doing petty jobs. In their personal experiences they are themselves not happy with the situation but are compelled to do so. Bimal, who has Masters Degree in economics and working as a security guard, told me that he is trying for a job that suits his qualification but has not become very successful. There is very stiff competition, and he has also sensed racism many times. Whenever there is competition among the ‘whites’ and ‘non-whites’, preferences are given to the former. This form of racism may exist in lesser degree in the employment sectors in which major of the employers come from ‘third world’- such as IT professionals, Nurses and Charter Accountants. But in general administrative works there exist high completion, racism as well discrimination. The respondents mentioned that, as consequence of racism or discrimination, the migrants may prefer to relocate them to a new destination. For example, in my study, I came across some student migrant who wants to

relocate to US. Due to transnationalization of international labor market, workers mobility and job flexibility is always progressive. Similar conclusions can be made in case of those so called 'brain waste'.

Bimal prefers working as a security guard than going back to Nepal. The deteriorating socio-political situation Nepal makes him take this decision. By making a calculation, he told me that he was still earning many times higher than what he could earn in Nepal. Nevertheless, he is thinking of relocating in the global labor market. He has decided to apply for Permanent Residence (PR) in Canada.

So, the cases, in which skilled persons are doing unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, aptly show that 'brain waste' exists among Nepali student migrants. However an essence of 'brain waste' is also the permanent loss of skilled workers. But in the case of Nepali student migrants, 'brain waste' is not a permanent loss. It could be taken as a temporary loss by the fact that everyone in this category showed their plan to return home sooner or later; therefore upon their return their skills could be utilized in the sending country. At the same time, in my field study, I observed that the migrants in this category have possibilities of relocation. Though the student migrants keep on circulating in the labor market, it could be observed that the migrants have been participating in the economic and cultural reproduction of the transnational households. From this perspective, 'brain circulation' would be an appropriate term to term to understand the dynamics of student migration.

Circulation of human capital or skilled labor is has become a common phenomena in the world. Salt (1998) mentions that students are one of the categories who represent brain exchange or circulation in the world. According to the information provided by a senior

official at Nepali Embassy in London, in recent years, there have been increasing practices of relocation among Nepali students in London. A member of Worldwide Nepali Student Organization has the similar opinion. He told that the semi/skilled Nepali students have been moving to different countries like the USA, Canada for new jobs. Even among the semi skilled categories, the students are moving from one place to another either within the UK or outside. The study shows family, kinship and cultural as well as formal and informal transnational networks of employers have been mediating the circulation. Based on this information, I would conclude that as Nepali student migration, being a paradigmatic form of labor migration, follows circulatory networks; therefore has become transnational. Regarding the effects of the shifting paradigm in the sending country, the study suggests to look at the phenomena as 'brain circulation' which provide an insight to accommodate both 'brain gain' and 'brain waste' in the transnationalization of labor market

5 Conclusions

The study focused on the discourses of student migration from Nepal to the UK to explore how the paradigm of student migration has now shifted to semi/skilled labor migration. Since the student migration has become ‘disguised labor migration’, the study concludes student migration should be understood as transnational semi/skilled labor migration rather than as an ‘elite migration’. The new perspective, built on transnationalism, therefore necessitates a concept of ‘brain circulation’ to understand the student migration.

By making an investigation among three different categories of students and their participation in the host society labor market, the study reveals that student movement has become a passage for the students to enter the international labor market. In migration literature, student migration has often been featured as ‘elite migration’; however the study has suggested little significance of the term in the context of Nepal at present.

In migration, particularly in student migration, two paradoxical views exist simultaneously. A theoretical strand suggests that student migration is essentially temporary, pointing return migration. This view, on the other hand, has been opposed by a linear notion of migration in which movement of student has been conceptualized as permanent migration. This study, however rejects both contradictory views and, in turn, suggests that migration of student has not only shifts the domain but also temporality; therefore the transnational frame could better understand the new temporal and directional character of student migration.

This study also concludes that student migration operates on micro-level social and cultural networks and requires a both economic and non-economic focus to understand the change that takes place in the sending society. It also emphasizes the role of social and cultural networks in student migration. Social and cultural networks include the family and kinship connections, networks of friends, community members as well as ethnic networks. By establishing transnational network, the individual household becomes a transnational household, of which an individual migrant become a part of. At one hand the transnational household facilitates the migration and the migrant's incorporation at receiving society and on the other hand, by maintaining transnational ties, it reproduces economically and culturally.

The study brings forth some empirical evidences which show that student migration in recent time can be understood as 'brain gain'; however 'brain waste' also exists in from sending state perspective. The migrants send remittances which not only increases economic capacity of the household but also foster social mobility of the same. On the other hand, ideas, values, skills and knowledge transferred as social remittance could bring substantial changes in the way of life in transnational household. These social cultural effects also could be taken as positive effects of brain gain. However, such effects as brain gain are hard to define and measure in quantitative terms.

The study, at the same time, demonstrates that there have been ample cases of student migrants where they hold a position in labor market for which they are over qualified. This can be perceived as brain waste from sending state's perspective. The brain waste could be temporary on two counts: the migrants opt relocation in such situation for better prospects; 2) it also increases the possibility of return migration in which case the migrant could be

productive in the homeland. Therefore, it shows that ‘brain waste’ becomes a fluid and temporary phenomena in student’s transnational migration.

As the student migration demonstrates the features of both ‘brain gain’ and ‘brain waste’, a more definitional as well as conceptual term ‘brain circulation’ has been suggested to understand the dynamics of the student migration. At one hand, the paradigm of student migration shift to semi/skilled labor migration, on the other hand, it become transnational in which movement is multi-direction and connection is transnational mediated by networks. Therefore ‘brain circulation’ could be the appropriate term which not only rightly interpret the discourse but also provide a broader frame to understand the effects of contemporary student migration from Nepal to the UK.

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