

Beyond National Borders: Reframing the Global Brain Drain Debate

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Editor's Foreword

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Abstract

Economic and education policy in the UK, as in most other nations today, emphasises raising overall skill and education levels as the principal way to improve individual and societal well-being. Such policy, however, is challenged by the widespread phenomenon of “brain drain” – that is, the movement of the highly educated across national borders, as well as across regions, industries and occupations, movements that repeatedly leave some areas of society and the economy desperately short of much needed talent and labour. What matters in addressing brain drain is not simply how much skill and education individuals and societies have, but the kinds of skill and education involved, the social and political ends to which they are put, and the economic and cultural incentives that drive individuals toward some corners of the global labour market and away from others. To resolve the brain drain problem, we need to create societies based not just on elevated levels of knowledge, skill and education, but first and foremost, on firm commitments to protecting the public interest, broadly defined. The following paper extends this argument through a critical reading and reframing of the global brain drain policy and academic research literature.

Introduction

Nelson Mandela, in the late 1990s, condemned South African health workers who were flooding out of South Africa to work in richer countries as “cowardly and unpatriotic” citizens who were perpetrating a “fundamental betrayal of the nation” (Crush, 2002: 156). But Mandela forgot to say anything about the thousands of South African health workers who remained in the country but left the health sector for other occupations; or those many privileged and educated South Africans who had shunned health care work altogether in the first place in favour of more self-interested forms of employment. In countries on the receiving end of the brain drain, it is often said that states’ abilities to secure high skilled workers from abroad at low or no cost perpetuates under-investment in public education and training domestically that could enable their own disadvantaged citizens to access high paid, high skilled work. This fails to acknowledge, however, that under-investment in public education for the native-born poor and working class is perpetuated far more by the disproportionate numbers of native-born citizens from the middle and upper classes who tend to monopolize these nations’ top jobs and college entrance positions.

Nationalism is the starting and end point for most discussions of the global brain drain. Concern is triggered only at the moment at which a skilled individual sets foot across an international border. Nation-states, of course, with their control over education, trade and industry, labour and immigration policy, are pivotal to the brain drain process. But unless we can step beyond the boundaries of nationalism, we will fail to understand or resolve the problems associated with the brain drain globally. We will also misrecognize who and what we should be fighting against in the “war for talent” that has now spread across the entire world. The migration of skilled individuals from poorer to richer nations in search of better wages, working conditions and career prospects is but one example of a great number of similar migrations that take place within national borders (Skeldon, 2005; Vinokur, 2006). In this paper, I focus on one of the most critical of these internal brain drains – that across occupational and industrial sectors – and explain how an analysis that takes into account this broader framing of brain drain impacts not just on how we think about and address the problem of global, cross-border skilled migration, but the ways in which we think about and undertake educational theory, policy and practice more generally in our contemporary, neoliberal world.

The Global Brain Drain Debate

Concern over the loss of highly educated individuals to other countries, which first appeared in the 1960s, returned at the end of the 1990s, in nations both large and small, rich and poor, all over the world. Even the United States – recognized universally as the ultimate magnet for skilled and educated workers on the planet – has been beset, in the post-September 11 era, by fears that the historical tides of fortune are turning and other nations are emerging as significant competitors for attracting the world's talent. Popular and apocalyptic business press books on the subject have started to appear in America in recent years – Richard Florida's (2005) *The Flight of the Creative Class: The New Global Competition for Talent*, for example, or David Heenan's (2005) *Flight Capital: The Alarming Exodus of America's Best and Brightest*. Politicians and pundits, scientists and academics in the US are paying ever greater attention to the nation's alleged talent attraction and retention problem.

The trigger for this renewed concern over global brain drain has been the increase, in both absolute and relative numbers, of skilled individuals who are moving across national borders. As more and more governments jump into a "global war for talent," immigration laws in country after country are being increasingly and deliberately skewed to favour the entrance of the skilled over the unskilled (Kuptsch & Fong, 2006; OECD, 2006). As a result, high skilled migration increased at a rate two and a half times faster than low skilled migration globally between 1990 and 2000. By 2000, the college educated made up 34.6% of immigrants to OECD countries, up from 29.8% in 1990, and far out of proportion to the 11.3% of the world's overall labour force that they represent. Small and poor countries in the Caribbean, Pacific and Africa have been hit hardest by the recent global migrations of the highly educated. Over 50% of college-educated individuals from Sierra Leone, it is estimated, have left their home country to work elsewhere, as have over 60% of the college educated from Cape Verde and the Gambia, over 70% from Tonga and Samoa, and over 80% from Haiti and Jamaica. Large and wealthy countries often find themselves in the middle of global brain drain chains. Britain, for example, has lost more of its college-educated citizens overseas than any other country; but it has also been the world's fourth biggest draw for foreign college-educated talent, after the United States, Canada and Australia (Docquier & Marfouk, 2005; Docquier & Rapoport, 2004).

The global brain drain debate focuses on two issues. First is the question of brain drain impact, particularly on sending countries. While the early literature of the 1960s tended to assume a negative impact on developing countries' social and economic well-being from the large exodus of their most educated citizens, the trend in recent years has been to consider ways in which such emigration flows might have positive impacts back home. These may come via remittances; increased access to trade, investment, knowledge and technology from strong overseas ties with expatriates; and the return of migrants who come home with newly acquired skills and resources (Kapur & McHale, 2005).

A new, highly theoretical and abstract literature has emerged in the field of economics that proposes that brain drain can further benefit sending countries by raising overall levels of education among their populations. This "beneficial" or "optimal" brain drain hypothesis claims that the prospect of emigration for the highly educated to seek greater riches abroad leads individuals to make investments in education they wouldn't make otherwise. Since not all of these individuals end up emigrating, the outcome for the sending country is a net brain gain that is actually dependent upon the existence of a steady brain drain (Commander, Kangasniemi & Winters, 2003; Schiff, 2005). Concern over migration of the highly skilled, argues Oded Stark (2004: 16), needs to be turned "on its head," for such migration can be a "harbinger of human capital gain, not ... the culprit of human capital drain," irrespective of whether a sending country receives any remittances or returns from its expatriate population.

Finally, an argument popularised by the work of Anna Lee Saxenian (2002; 2006) on IT production in the United States, India and Taiwan, holds that, as globalisation develops over time, brain drain eventually leads to "brain circulation," a "win-win situation" in which "everyone" becomes "better off." Noting that Silicon Valley was built with the heavy input of immigrant engineers and entrepreneurs from India and Taiwan, who subsequently returned to their home countries to build linked IT sectors in Bangalore and Hsinchu-Taipei, Saxenian offers a staged or progressive model for thinking about the social and economic significance of skilled migration. The brains who leave today come back tomorrow, to the greater benefit of sending and receiving countries alike. Saxenian's theory has been given added traction by the rise of South and East Asia in the global economy. The brain drain, some would even

claim, is “over.” It is a concept that has “served its time” (Meyer & Charum, 1995; Teferra, 2005).

Most researchers and policy makers acknowledge that the global brain drain, at least under some circumstances, can have negative consequences for sending countries – especially when these countries are small in population and poor in wealth. The contemporary haemorrhaging of health care workers from regions such as sub-Saharan Africa constitutes an outright brain drain crisis. The numbers are staggering: over half of the doctors trained in Ghana have emigrated; of 200 nurses trained in Swaziland over the past two years, 150 have emigrated; since Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, 80% of the doctors, nurses and therapists trained at its primary university are thought to have emigrated (Boseley, 2005; De Mesquita & Gordon, 2005). In what is a perverse and obscene reversal of aid flow, poor nations’ investments of their own limited resources into training health workers often benefit not their own people but rich nations overseas (MedAct, 2005).

Many thus speak now of “virtuous” as opposed to “vicious” cycles of international skilled migration. A second focus of the global brain drain debate is the question of what should be done to stop the brain drain when it has clear negative impact, or how to turn vicious cycles of migration into virtuous ones. To address problems associated with the brain drain of health workers from the developing world, a number of countries have introduced “ethical codes of practice” and even outright bans on active health worker recruitment from “at risk” nations (Willetts & Martineau, 2004). But these codes and bans have been widely criticized, not just for their ineffectualness and narrowness in construing health worker migration as a root cause as opposed to symptom of global health care inequities, but also because they threaten to infringe upon health workers’ right to mobility (Klingma, 2006). Currently, migration experts and international organizations (including the UN, ILO, World Bank, IOM and OECD) are promoting bilaterally or multilaterally negotiated temporary migration programmes as a way to hold onto the real gains that can be won when individuals have the opportunity to work and study overseas, while ensuring that these gains are subsequently repatriated to these individuals’ home countries (Abella, 2006; Global Commission on International Migration, 2005). Migrant rights activists, however, charge that such programmes treat migrants not as free human beings but as commodities to be bought and sold in the global marketplace (Gencianos, 2005; Sen, 2006).

Debate over the global brain drain occurs not just between groups at opposite ends of the political spectrum, but among those who share political ideologies as well. The emigration of skilled individuals from developing nations and, conversely, the immigration of skilled individuals to developed nations has been a source of controversy and confusion for social progressives. While the American labour movement, for example, has moved away from its historical protectionism when it comes to low skilled immigrants, it retains its traditional stance with respect to high skilled immigrants, who it views as taking good jobs that should properly go first to American citizens (Freeman and Hill, 2006). Meanwhile, the negative impact of the brain drain on the developing world presents an apparent dilemma for those who would advocate for the basic justice of open borders (Hayter, 2004; Moses, 2006). In today's world, wouldn't this just exacerbate the global brain drain? Can anyone other than neo-classical economists, neoliberal market reformers and self-interested employers legitimately push for open global labour markets? Shouldn't those concerned with social justice and equality endorse greater restriction and control of borders, not the other way around (Castles, 2003)? To address these and other such questions, it is helpful to place them within a broader framework for understanding the brain drain phenomenon.

Brain Drain Within Borders

There are more Ethiopian doctors, it is said, working in Chicago than in Ethiopia, more Malawian nurses in Manchester than in Malawi, more African scientists and engineers in the United States than in Africa (Global Commission on International Migration, 2005; International Organization for Migration, 2005). But there are also more lawyers in America working in corporate than in public interest law, more communications graduates working in public relations production than in news reporting, more experienced and veteran teachers working in wealthy, suburban schools than in poor, urban and rural ones. "Any brain drain," writes Ron Skeldon (2005: 4), "is as much internal within any country as it is among countries." The migration of skilled individuals from poorer to richer nations is one of a great number of similar migrations that take place within national borders. These internal migrations take the skilled and educated from rural to urban areas, from poor to wealthy neighbourhoods, from lower to higher paying occupations, and from public to private sector employment. As with international skilled migration, the motivations

are largely the same: the skilled and educated move in search of better wages, working conditions and career prospects. Directly or indirectly, they tend to be pulled toward centres of privately-held, profit-seeking capital.

Geographically-framed brain drains within national borders – from rural to urban areas, and poorer to wealthier provinces, states, regions and neighbourhoods – constitute a critical development and equity issue (Artz, 2003; Skeldon, 2005). I focus here, though, on intra- and inter-sectoral migrations. Brain drain within occupational sectors is well documented. In the United States, for example, there has been growing concern within the legal profession about the shortage of public interest lawyers. Most public interest law employers in the country say they are having a hard time both recruiting and retaining lawyers, and this problem is getting worse. Only a minority of law students enter law school intending to go into public interest law; of these, at least half end up going to work for private law firms upon graduation. For those graduates who do take a public interest law job after law school, many quit after two or three years and transfer into more lucrative positions in corporate law (American Bar Association, 2003; Equal Justice Works, 2002). Several factors conspire to push law graduates away from public interest law, including the growing wage differential between public interest and corporate law, rising student tuition and debt levels, and social, cultural and ideological biases in law school, and society more generally, that favour private over publicly motivated forms of work (O’Neil, 2002; Stover, 1989).

Similar patterns arise in other occupations. Teachers often use their credentials, résumés and seniority rights to transfer out of poor schools and districts into wealthier ones, leaving some of the most under-resourced and difficult educational settings to the hands of the least trained and experienced, newest and youngest teachers. In Britain, hospital-based medical graduates move through a complex hierarchy of job positions that favour consultant over non-consultant posts, teaching hospitals over non-teaching hospitals, London-based work over more remote, provincial-based work, and high status specialties over low status ones. Regardless of actual patient need or overall public interest, jobs at the tail end of this hierarchy have been left chronically understaffed for decades (Gish, 1971; Decker, 2001).

Evidence of brain drain between occupations tends to be more anecdotal and indirect. Rates of attrition in jobs such as teaching and nursing are extremely high, with as many as half of all new nurses and teachers leaving the field within their first

few years of employment in many developed nations (Klingma, 2006). While some of these individuals drop out of the workforce altogether, many move on to higher paying and less stressful jobs in other occupations, located largely in the private sector. Likewise, researchers studying why more native-born workers in rich countries aren't entering science and engineering occupations argue that college graduates are opting instead for more lucrative careers in banking, consulting, business and law (Freeman, 2005). "If we compare what our best undergraduates get paid as a graduate student vs. what they get paid in investment banking," Rockefeller University President Paul Nurse says, "there's no doubt that there's tremendous economic pressure to suck you away from what is perhaps your first academic love" (quoted in Lemonick, 2006). Economist Richard Freeman spells out the logic: "They're not studying science ... because they look and say, 'Do I want to be a postdoc paid \$35,000 or \$40,000 at age 35, with extreme uncertainty working in somebody else's lab, and maybe getting credit for my work and maybe not getting full credit? Or would I rather be an MBA and making \$150,000 and hiring Ph.D.s?'" (quoted in Monastersky, 2004).

Migration of the skilled and educated across and between occupational and industrial sectors is by no means a phenomenon limited to the developed world. James Ferguson (2005: 379), for example, has described the brain drain from the public sector to international NGOs that has accompanied structural adjustment and the rollback of the state on the African continent: "higher salaries and better terms of employment by NGOs quickly 'decapitated' African governments by luring all the best civil servants out of the government ministries" (citing the work of Hanlon, 2000). As with skilled international migration, it would be a mistake to attribute the motivations behind such movement purely to economic and pragmatic interest. Whether we are considering lawyers moving from public interest law to corporate practice, college graduates passing over public school teaching for careers in investment banking, or African civil servants leaving the state for the NGO sector, dominant social, cultural and ideological frameworks that shape understandings of status, meaning, identity, priority and value are all powerful influences as well.

Reframing the Global Brain Drain Debate

Recognizing the existence of internal brain drain throws common ways of talking about the global brain drain into different light. Consensus opinion among world

health experts today holds that nations should aim for self-sufficiency in health worker provision and avoid relying on the international recruitment of foreign doctors and nurses (British Medical Association, 2005). The tremendous variation in population size among countries – with the smallest measuring in at under 12,000 inhabitants, and the largest having over 1.3 billion people – should immediately make the fetishisation of national borders seem questionable. Consideration of the problem of internal medical brain drain should raise even more questions about the ethical codes of recruitment and recruitment bans that are often prescribed as remedies for the global health worker brain drain. The main hospital serving Great Yarmouth, on the Norfolk coast in Britain, for example, has historically had great difficulty recruiting and retaining British doctors. Indeed, in the late 1990s, almost 100% of staff grade doctors at the hospital were international medical graduates recruited from overseas, far more than the national average (Decker, 2001). Norfolk, the county in which Great Yarmouth is situated, has a population of over 824,000, making it larger than a quarter of the world's nations. Should we demand a ban on London area hospitals from actively recruiting any and all doctors who happen to be born in Norfolk, as Britain has instituted for many so-called “at risk” nations? Or, should we say that redress of such health care inequity, though urgent, needs to be approached in other ways?

Brain drain within and between sectors also throws into question Anna Lee Saxenian's currently popular notion of “brain circulation.” It may well be that the international drain of IT entrepreneurs and engineers, along with other workers employed in private commodity production, is reversible, as global capital shifts endlessly in search of lower production costs and new and increased profit-making opportunities (Vinokur, 2006). It makes little sense, however, to claim that the many other forms of brain drain – from public interest to corporate law, civil service to the voluntary sector, poor to rich school districts, and so on – are likely to change direction on their own as neoliberal globalisation continues to develop and expand. Instead, what we have witnessed over the past decades is a steady and sustained assault on the public sector, a decline in provision of needed social services across populations, and a rise in inequality between regions, sectors, occupations and individuals. Annie Vinokur (2006) argues that when we consider the question of how and when brain drains matter, we need at least to distinguish between migrations of skilled individuals involved in private commodity production, migrations of skilled

individuals involved in public or social reproduction, and migrations of skilled individuals between these two, productive and reproductive, spheres.

Global brain drain, in fact, is situated firmly within a linked chain of internal brain drains, both geographical and sectoral in nature. Internal brain drain in rich nations provides a motor that sets in motion a cascading series of labour decisions and migrations that end up spanning the entire globe. When a middle class college graduate in America opts for a career in banking over education, or real estate over nursing, because of better wages, working conditions and career prospects, quite often it is a teacher from Jamaica or a nurse from the Philippines who will be recruited to take his or her place. “The cycle, as I understand it,” the South African High Commissioner to Canada told a Canadian audience in 2001, “is that your city doctors go to the States for richer pickings. And then your rural doctors come here [to Canadian cities] and our doctors go to your rural areas. And we get Cuban doctors” (quoted in Crush, 2002: 147). The focus of the global brain drain debate on the actions and motivations of foreigners and immigrants is far too narrow: what is at issue is the employment choices we all make, native and foreign-born alike. Those who stand near the upper reaches of the global brain drain chain – the upper middle class graduates of elite universities in rich nations – should receive far more of our attention than they do now, for these individuals have more choice, power and wealth than most others in determining what the eventual form and extent of the global brain drain chain will be.

It is likely that the global brain drain chain is actually more of a circle – and a vicious circle at that. We can speculate how this circle operates. In Britain, the top “ideal employers” named by college graduates in 2006 were largely made up of a list of finance and consulting firms, such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, HSBC, Goldman Sachs, KPMG, Deloitte, and Ernst & Young (Universum, 2006). These are the companies that dominate the City of London, and that have made Britain, and London in particular, one of the world’s most important centres of global finance. However, these are also the companies that have played a central role in privatising and dismantling Britain’s National Health Service (NHS) over the past decades, leading to an overall deterioration of working conditions for doctors, nurses and other health workers that health activists blame for NHS staff recruitment and retention difficulties (Pollock, 2004). These are the companies, too, that have been directly involved in World Bank and IMF programmes of structural adjustment, economic liberalisation,

privatisation and fiscal austerity throughout the developing world – programmes that brain drain researchers have identified as being responsible for devastating poor nations’ health sectors, pushing health workers from the developing world to emigrate to rich countries like Britain, where they fill slots that have been left vacant by native-born graduates who opted instead for jobs at companies like PricewaterhouseCoopers and HSBC (Bond, 2006; Lewis, 2005).

Actual global brain drain cycles are no doubt much less simple than presented in this quick heuristic sketch. Many of the British college graduates who go to work in the financial sector have nothing to do with NHS privatisation in Britain or structural adjustment in the global South, and perform work that is vital to the functioning of the local, national and global economies. Nevertheless, this sketch helps to illustrate two key arguments. First, when considering the global brain drain, it is essential that we look across occupational and industrial sectors, and not just within them. Second, we need to analyse closely the relationship between the wealth that accrues in some countries, regions, occupations and individuals, and the poverty that arises in others. We need to ask whether the market-driven concentration of wealth in certain sites serves the broader (global) public interest, and whether, when, and where we should be making strong and clear value judgements and choices to embrace firmly a social politics of wealth redistribution.

Former California Governor Gray Davis once told reporters, in an infamous speech on the state’s teacher shortage problem he delivered in Sacramento in January 2000, that “there’s no way we can offer the kind of compensation [in California public schools] that, say, a 23-year old can command from Silicon Valley.” “I’m trying,” Davis said, “to tap into idealism... [to] make teaching a selfless act of patriotism, something young people will do for at least a limited period” (quoted in Dawson & Billingsley, 2000: 7). Davis was condemned quite rightly at the time for suggesting that public school teaching should be done as a temporary, stopgap occupation. But in the first half of his statement, Davis has a real point. Public sector compensation very often cannot compare to wages in the private sector – teaching pay cannot measure up to market trader pay, nursing wages to the riches available to today’s real estate broker. If we are serious about influencing where people choose to work, then we cannot focus just on increasing wages and improving working conditions in labour shortage occupations. We need to regulate and reform, and alter and eliminate those market incentives and cultural norms that now pull the skilled and

educated toward labour surplus occupations (or labour market hotspots) as well. Otherwise, from where exactly are we expecting the added finances for improving public health, education, social services, research and development around the world to come?

Rethinking Educational Theory, Policy & Practice

The beneficial brain drain hypothesis has gained much sway in recent years. Not only the World Bank (2006) cites it in support of its arguments for liberalising global labour markets, but progressives and leftists sometimes do as well, in order to buttress their call for a world free from national borders (Moses, 2006). We need to look more closely at what this hypothesis actually claims. Its argument is that the possibility of emigration can, under the right conditions, lead to an “increase in human capital formation,” an increase in a country’s “stocks of skills,” “average skill level” or “level of education,” or an improvement in overall skill distribution (e.g., Beine, Docquier & Rapoport, 2001; Mountford, 1997; Stark, 2004; Vidal, 1998). Nowhere does it distinguish what people are learning, the kinds of skills, ideas and ideologies they are acquiring, or whether youth are growing up to become teachers or traders, engineers or executives – or, indeed, industrialists or environmentalists, free market economists or socialists.

Once we acknowledge the importance of internal, intra- and inter-sectoral brain drain, we are forced to recognize the limitations of the entire beneficial brain drain edifice, as well as the human capital theory that underlies both this hypothesis and the vast bulk of immigration, education and economic development theory and policy around the world today. Human capital theory approaches education and learning as if it were no different to any other capital input, such as money or mineral ore. You can have more or less of it, and it can be of higher or lower grade quality. The language of human capital theory, as of educational policy that derives from it, is narrowly economic, politically opaque, and reductively unilinear in its measurements. What is at stake in sectorally constituted brain drain, however, is not just how much education individuals (and regions or countries) do or do not have, but the type of education they acquire, and the ends to which they put their education. To understand and resolve the brain drain phenomenon, we need to open up the black box of learning that remains sealed in human capital theory accounts, and investigate

the ideological contents within. What we learn, after all, can push us in diametrically opposing directions.

The phenomenon of brain drain also problematises both the dominant ideological frameworks we have now for directing educational endeavour: neoliberalism (or neoliberal globalisation) and nationalism, which sometimes operate in combination and sometimes in direct conflict with each other. The open education and labour markets, and unbridled pursuit of self-interest, that are prescribed by neoliberal ideology lead inevitably to the skewed distribution of talents and resources that favours some countries, regions and occupations over others, leaving barren and deserted areas of great need. “The flows seem to always go from the less developed “haemophiliac regions” to the more competitive places,” Meyer, Kaplan and Charum (2001: 309) observe.

Standing opposite the forces of neoliberal globalisation are defenders of public education. The “public” in public education, however, is most often framed, whether implicitly or explicitly, at the level of the nation-state. This is the patriotism invoked by Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Gray Davis in California as they seek to lure their citizens into serving the public through health and education work. Contemporary schooling, all over the world, is based on the goals of developing national citizenship, protecting national security and improving national competitiveness. Even our notions of educational justice are defined largely as the provision of equal educational opportunity for those living within the borders of the nation. Public education, and appeals to collective national interest, break down when privileged individuals use their own personal education to get ahead and leave everyone else – and even their entire countries – behind (Labaree, 1997). Yet, for resolving the problems of global and internal brain drain, reactive invocation of nationalist loyalty and interest is neither sufficient nor desirable, for the reasons that have been discussed throughout this paper. Competing nationalisms, in the form of the global war for talent, after all, are part of what is driving the global brain drain in the first place. What is needed, instead, is a full rethinking of educational theory, policy and practice that moves us beyond the twin antinomies of neoliberalism and nationalism, so as to reorganise education as not just a local, regional and national, but a truly global public good.

Conclusion: Mice in the Maze, Skilled Migration in a Neoliberal World

If there is an image to keep in mind when thinking of the broader set of phenomena of which brain drain is part, it is the parable told in Spencer Johnson's (1998) best-selling business book, *Who Moved My Cheese?*, a book which, not uncoincidentally, has been endorsed and distributed to employees in the thousands by many of the world's largest corporations (Exxon, Chase Manhattan, Citibank, General Motors, Marriott, Xerox, etc.). The parable is of two miniature humans, Hem and Haw, and two mice, Sniff and Scratch, who live in a room filled with cheese in the middle of a large maze. When one day, they all wake to find the cheese missing, Hem and Haw learn that they must do like the mice do, and chase through the maze to find more cheese at any time the cheese they have been eating before disappears. The moral, at its simplest, is not to expect good things to come to you or fall into a sense of entitlement to what you have had in the past, but to be constantly prepared and willing to strike out in search of new and better opportunities, wherever they may be.

There is much to admire in the lessons and actions of Hem and Haw. Many good things can come from the kinds of persistence and bravery they display in venturing out beyond the realm of the comfortable and familiar. But certain questions are never raised in Johnson's story. Who is moving the cheese around the maze and why? How can Hem and Haw work to make sure that the cheese goes to the places in the maze where it is actually needed and can do some good? These are precisely the kinds of questions we need to be asking of the global and internal brain drain, if we do not want our education systems to simply train us to act like mice in a maze, blindly chasing privately held capital all over the world to wherever it might choose to land next, knowing that at any moment it might pick up and move yet again.

So who and what should we be fighting against in addressing the brain drain problem? What we speak of today as a "global war for talent" has been mis-framed as a battle between nations, as if it were populations as a whole in competition with one another. But it is not. Talk of national competition, talent wars and brain drains, Annie Vinokur (2006: 21) warns us, can, if we are not careful, serve "a welcome function: to disguise as a conflict between countries and populations what is fundamentally a conflict between capital and labour." Jeff Faux (2006: 1), in his book *The Global Class War*, likewise argues that "global markets are creating an international upper class of people whose economic interests have more in common with each other than with the majority of the people who share their nationality." The struggle between

capital and labour is certainly a central part of the story. But the spread of skilled migration is giving rise to complex systems of social stratification (based on skill and education, wealth, nationality, gender and race) that belie easy talk of a binary world of global elites battling working masses (Favell, Feldblum & Smith, 2006). More broadly, the story of brain drain is about what happens to systems of education and learning in an unconstrained market economy, and the inadequacies of the dominant ideological frameworks (neoliberal, nationalist, human capital) that shape how we think about and practice education and training in an ever-changing globalised world.

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