

# **An Assessment of Homogeneity in International Student Migration: Evidence from South Asia**

**Kartik Vishwakarma**

## **Abstract**

Scholars treat International Student migrants as a homogeneous group thus tend to overlook fundamental difference in social roots, cultural and political background of students which hugely affect the experiences of international students in the destination. This current view is challenged by evidence gathered in this research which investigates experiences of south Asian international Students studying at post-1992 universities in London. The findings of this research cross-referenced with emerging literature that confers social, cultural and economic variations in the background of students discovering the heterogeneous nature of international student body and claims a new emerging trend of step migration taking shape in South Asia.

## **1. Introduction**

Student migrants from Asia and South Asia have long been perceived as a homogeneous ethnic group in the literature (Chadee and Naidoo, 2009; Chan, 2012; Collins, 2006; Doherty and Singh, 2005; Kell and Vogl, 2010). This serious neglect in acknowledging the diversity of multi-ethnic Asian population is not only a methodological misleading but remind us of the stereotypes continues in treating student migrants from these nations as equal, facing challenges and experience alike (Lee, 2006; Huang, 2007; Jackson and Heggins, 2003; Wong, 2004). Fearon argued, “*Ethnic group is a slippery concept*” Thus, homogeneity of the population coming from a vast geography (South Asia) could be an illusion (Fearon, 2003). The above perception often undermines the bundle of ethnic, national, and societal differences within the group that are at play in reinforcing pre-existing inequality in educational attainments in study abroad and beyond. There is a pressing need to honour differences exist in a migrant community- in the wake of personal storytelling or biographical account of student migrants- to better understand their personal experiences and their distinct migrant journeys.

South Asia consists of eight counties situated in the Indian subcontinent as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Khadria, 2008; Agrawal, 2008). The region is a home to many ethnic communities, a birthplace of religions- (e.g. Sikh, Jain, and Buddhism), inhabited old civilisations (e.g. Indus Valley), and covers a vast geographical area (Bose and Jalal, 2004). Historically the region has witnessed the rise and fall of many empires, invasions, and creation of modern nations after the colonial period. Regardless of common historic legacies, democracy has been successful in India, while failing in Pakistan or Bangladesh as claimed by Jalal (1995). Other South Asian nations had their own ways of learning the democratic ways of governance. Similarly, the region has long been regarded as a unique geopolitical area combining diverse faiths, cultures and social values, and ways of life into a cohesive communal harmony and co-existence (Gardner and Osella, 2003). The homogeneity among South Asian societies and cultures could be assumed mainly due to their shared

past-present and geographical proximity, facing similar economic and political challenges (e.g. Corruption, struggling to grow economically, demographic pressures, facing poverty, gender disparities, widening social inequality), being the third world and coming together in SAARC. In terms of education development nexus, all nations have been facing problems in higher education relating to its capacity, quality, and access, resulting in 'student migration' as part of the wider brain drain or skilled migration trend. In this line 'culture of migration' appeared to be a national character in almost all South Asian countries, whether it is a matter of brain-drain, student (Malik, n.d.; Collins, 2013) or skilled migration because of structural and operational problems or forced migration mainly due to civil war, political instability, poverty, ethnic conflicts or terrorism (Zamindar, 2007; Shah, 1995).

In contrast, the differences between and within society and culture outshine so-called homogeneity in South Asian countries as they differ in size, strength, vision, and global presence, making it even harder to compare one with another. They carry relatively distinct socio-cultural schemes exacerbated by colonial legacies that left countries with irreversible social and political divisions (Boss and Jalal, 2004; Ghani, 2012; Jalal, 1995). The variations among these nations, particularly, in ethnic-social dynamics, political ideologies and governing systems, uneven distribution of wealth and power, social-economic inequalities, ethnic and identity politics are so significant that makes them unique, thus far from being homogeneous. In this vein, education in South Asia has been presented in the literature as an area of systemic failure and political misuse (e.g. Sri Lanka), source of economic growth, privilege and social domination (e.g. India), linked to poverty, radicalisation and cultural resistance to modernisation (e.g. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh), means to escape economic and geographical hardship (e.g. Nepal, Bhutan). Given this diversity, globalisation, neoliberal ideology, and free market forces further intensify the social and cultural tensions that South Asian communities have been facing over a long period. As a result, educational migration, particular student, is on the rise and South Asia has become a major source region for students seeking academic excellence, soft skills', and mobility experiences through study abroad. It is important to look at country-specific factors in facilitating 'student migration' to assess the homogeneity claim. Based on country-specific factors, I put them together into four categories for analysis purposes- 1) Highland countries, 2) Standalone countries, 3) Troublesome countries, and 4) leading regional countries.

### ***'Highland countries of Himalayas'- Nepal and Bhutan***

Nepal and Bhutan, situated in the remote highlands of Himalaya are landlocked small countries with limited resources and have a stable, but the small economy (Whelpton, 2005). People living in these remote mountains are known for their honesty, sustaining cultural identities and developing a self-sufficient way of life (e.g. Bhutanese idea of Gross National Happiness) (Adler, 2009). With a long history of monarchy, both nations have adopted democratic governance, which suits their historical legacies e.g. Nepal has become a federal parliamentary republic and Bhutan became a unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy. This adoption, however, has seen a violent political transition in Nepal. Nepal and Bhutan, in many respects, are at disadvantages due to geographical barriers, underdeveloped service sector and slow industrialisation resulting in huge unemployment, greater dependency on agricultural activities and production for livelihoods and capacity problem in providing access to primary and secondary education, therefore both of them mostly reliant on foreign aid and regional cooperation to build economic capacity and strength (Graner, 2006; Dorji and Kinga, 2013). An

overarching issue that is persistent in both nations for decades has been 'the culture of migration' (Sharma et al, 2014; Subedi, 1991; Valentine, 2012). A substantial portion of the young population chooses to migrate for a better life in either nearby states in South Asia or in western nations using foreign education as a vehicle to become mobile.

Globalisation, despite cultural resistance, has started influencing social and cultural dynamics of these societies, particularly in initiating the social demand of quality education, which has been unavailable domestically for long (Ghimire and Axinn, 2006; Des Chene, 1992; Collins, 2012). Despite the rise of private education at the primary and secondary level, higher education still a state's responsibility and has been suffering from financial lacking and limited infrastructure (LaPrairie, 2014; Carney, 2003 & 2008; Caddell, 2007; Bhattarai, 2009). These nations are also having the limited affordability to set up academies of excellence or invite International educational providers to help in filling the gap in the national education system. The serious inadequacies in national education and its low return in local labour market seem to influence the choices and decisions of middle-class families to seek educational advantages abroad and settle there (Paudyal, 2016; Pherali et al, 2011; Phuntsho, 2000). Consequently, 'student migration' becomes a large subset of migratory trends, which is growing rapidly (Ghimire, 2013; Gartaula, 2009; Ghimire and Upreti 2012; Wangyal, 2001).

Nepal has witnessed a long political struggle and instability affecting educational institutions and pushed people towards migration in seeking livelihoods and for many, advantages through study abroad (William and Pradhan, 2009; Adhikari, 2010; Rappleye and Paulson, 2011; Tiwari, 2010). In this regard, young Nepalese studying and migrating abroad is well documented while Bhutanese sharing similar endeavour yet is well known for the achieving 'happiness' at home (Ezechieli, 2003; Adler, 2009; Yezer, 2016). The local education system has failed to cope with the growing demand for quality education in both nations in one way or another, leaving young people to migrate. The student migration, therefore, provides an opportunity to escape such institutional incapacities and often linked with permanent migration in destinations or elsewhere. However, in a recent trend, return migration has been witnessed yet it is largely seen with difficult accommodation in a local labour market. This creates a social crisis for those who had a foreign qualification with questionable labour market opportunities available locally. In terms of destinations, western English-speaking nations are the favourite one yet not all students, with local education, are capable of securing places in top Western universities. Students with limited resources, in the face of the above challenges, tend to prefer a strategic step-by-step move by choosing regional study options (e.g. India, Pakistan or Bangladesh) to acquire the academic skills needed to access western universities (Sharma et al, 2014; Dongaonkar and Negi, 2009; Yeravdekar and Tiwari, 2016). This phenomenon of strategic 'step migration' has been missing from the 'student migration' debate and undermine the role of regional forces shaping international student migration. The open border policy between Nepal, Bhutan, and India, as well as India's approach to regional cooperation, lie behind developing trends of 'step migration', which is discussed later.

### ***'Standalone countries'- Sri Lanka and the Maldives***

Sri Lanka and the Maldives are Island nations located to the south of the Indian subcontinent in the Indian Ocean. I call them 'Standalone' due to their physical setting and uneven geography consisting of a number of islands, which limit their prospect of economic and social integration. These nations have

their unique conical legacies and democratic history to appreciate (Sriskandarajah, 2003). However, they had entirely different trajectories of development. The modern history of Sri Lanka- a multi ethnic-religious island- has witnessed a long 30-year period of civil war (1983-2009) and ethnic conflicts, giving rise to many social-economic tensions that still influence contemporary life in an ethnic divide nation (Goodhand, Hulme and Lewer, 2000). Unlike other nations, Sri Lanka has been using education as a political means to disadvantage ethnic-religious minorities in favour of the Sinhalese. In doing so, the eradication of private education and schools, imposing certain policies to prefer language that favour Sinhalese in gaining access to education and government jobs were strategic stands through which government aimed to tackle other ethnic aggression particularly by Tamil. Due to civil war and conflicts, social-economic dynamics of Sri Lankan society suffered a lot with increasing youth unemployment, gender and ethnic wage differential among youths in conflict and war-affected area as well as discriminated by government policies favouring Sinhalese over other ethnic counterparts.

The educational disparities in policies and practice could be seen in the growing demands of private education in the absence of national educational opportunities for a large portion of marginalised ethnic groups (Tamil). However, in a strategic effort, private education was forbidden by the government to dismantle colonial legacies in 1961. The rise of 'international schools' which were established on Sri Lankan soil using loopholes in legal systems helped fill the gap in educational supply created by biased policies. English medium education privileges positional advantages in securing white-collar professions historically in Sri Lanka thus these international schools gained attention from privilege seeking families (Wettewa, n.d.). International schools became popular with their academic offering, which includes experiences of culturally diverse classroom, advanced curriculum, English language as the medium of instruction and academic facilities that were unavailable in national education, however, these schools tend facilitated social stratification as their fee structure favoured students with a privileged background thus allowing elite students to accumulate privileges (Wettewa, n.d.). In this vein, it is fair to say that despite free education to all from grade one to university and the existence of international schools, social inequality got worse over time in Sri Lanka. Educational opportunities by both national system and international schools become inaccessible to families trying to secure educational advantages for their kids (Ranasinghe and Hartog, 2002). The internationalisation of education comes to rescue thousands of middle-class families marginalised by tough competition to access education in Sri Lanka (Evans and little, 2007). In addition, Youth unemployment due to 'credentialism' (Salih, 2002), ongoing ethnic conflicts and violence in Sri Lanka (Gunatillaka, Mayer, and Vodopivec, 2010) together with gender disparity in education and its labour market return (Gunawardena, 2003) also contribute into choosing study abroad as a last resource. In effect, migration both political and economic is now accompanied by fresh trends of educational migration, however, there is a serious lack of evidence to describe such trends.

Compare to other neighbours, the Maldives is made up of over 1190 small, low-lying coral island with an uneven population spread over 200 islands (Ali, 2006). Studies reflecting national life, including social, cultural, and economic situations are not in abundance, thus our current knowledge about the Maldives is also limited by the lack of information. Existing evidence suggests that the Maldives faces challenges in providing quality education throughout the country due to variations in infrastructure, recourses, and standard of education between urban and rural part of the island (Maniku, 2008). Community run and government funded rural schools are inadequate and are of a low standard compared to the capital city

'Male' (Waheed, 2013). This is despite having equal access to education at primary level, thus; government devised a policy 'clustering schools' in 1999 to overcome disparities in the delivery of quality education which is found to be less effective in achieving its primary goals (Ali, 2006). Quality assurance in an education system, thus, is pursued in the Maldives not only by national and local stakeholders to protect the public interest and social demand of internationalisation of education but also influenced by globalisation and neoliberal pressures from world organisations (Moniku, 2008). In addition, as Ali claimed (2006) the geographically scattered islands with poor transport and communication services together with a pressure of growing population and unprecedented catastrophe, e.g. Tsunami in 2004, have been presented as constraints to economic development (Ali, 2006). In order to investigate the use of information and technology (ICT) in higher education to overcome above challenges, Kinaanath (2013) has discovered factors that limit the adoption of ICT in teaching and learning in the Maldives. The factors include- 'limited technological resources and willing to use them, financial constraints, the environmental issue at campuses with no culture to use ICT in teaching and spoon-fed pedagogic approach' (Kinaanath, 2013). The impact of globalisation and the presence of international education in the Maldives is missing due to lack of reliable sources, just like we have limited understanding of migration from the Maldives, especially educational.

### ***'Troublesome countries'- Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh***

Compared to small countries, Afghanistan (31.6 million), Pakistan (193 million), and Bangladesh (161 million) are a relatively big nation with large economies and demographic advantages. Apart from Afghanistan, the education system in Pakistan and Bangladesh represent a mix of government-funded education, private and to some extent international education offering educational services and goods at home via collaboration and online. The social and cultural dynamics of these nations also put them together in a religious bond where the majority of the population is Muslim and Islamic style education has been a part of the state-funded curriculum. On the negative side, political instability, ethnic conflicts and civil war, military ruling and the failure of democratic institutions on various occasions are undeniably influenced society and institutions (e.g. Education) in these countries one way or another. Education, in particular, has suffered from ethnic violence and civil war in Afghanistan and Pakistan as rival groups (e.g. Taliban) seek to abolish modern education to replace by Islamic education using Madarsa and Masajids schooling. The ethnic inclination towards Islamic education often influences national politics thus initiatives to promote modern education often criticised by conservative groups and occasionally are a source of ethnic tensions. These drawbacks of cultural inflexibility often exacerbate social tensions among families seeking advantages through modern education. Disregard to the so-called domination of Islamic education at primary, secondary level, tertiary level education accommodates much of the demand for education producing human capital, which is vital for economic development. Higher education provides opportunities for scientific and technical education, yet underdeveloped and running with poor infrastructure, faded academic environment and lack of resources. Access, security, rural-urban and gender disparity, as well as quality concerns, are among the top challenges to Afghan academia (Baharustani, 2012).

In a country-specific note, *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan* has been devastated by war, Soviet invasion, ethnic clashes, and Taliban-led violence for decades, still fighting terrorism, and conservative forces (. Forced migration is now part of the reality with displaced Afghans living on foreign aid in refugee



camps in Pakistan and elsewhere. As Sandy suggests Afghanistan is a traditional multi-ethnic developing country stuck in ethnic conflicts, violence, and migration-refugee crisis (Samady, 2001). Education -in particular for girls- has suffered a lot during Islamic state and the Taliban, However, Afghan cultural values do not contradict with international effect to modernise institutions including education (Eggerman and Panter-brick, 2010). Regardless of all devastation and ongoing ethnic violence, Afghan has a keen interest in education to rebuild their lives and living (Samady, 2001; Houte, Siegel and Davids, 2015). Higher education, in particular, became an instrument to distribute status in the society where education has been an exclusive privilege, hardly available to ordinary people (Daxner and Schrade, 2013). Graduates with foreign qualification are gaining recognition among local graduates with state or private education (Baharustani, 2012). Due to ill-resourced, poorly financed, and ethnic-religious polarised state education does not promise a great deal in labour market returns as the government is often reluctant to go against conservative ethnic forces to avoid clashes and ethnic violence which has already traumatised communities in Afghanistan (Babury and Hayward, 2013; Eggerman and Panter-Brick, 2010). Religious education has been an unshakable basis on which common people take refuge in learning cultural values and morality (Karlsson and Mansory, 2002). Despite all devastation to Afghan society, the left behind middle class seems to favour private and more employable education than traditional one, to secure advantages in ever competitive and problematic local market (Daxner and Schrade, 2013). Private HEI's e.g., American universities are thus used to generate 'symbolic capital' as a status symbol (Daxner and Schrade, 2013:20)

In a similar case, but not as bad as Afghanistan, *Pakistan* -a home of many ethnic groups with a Muslim majority- was created in the name of Islam in 1947. The ethnic-religious dynamics pull down public and private effort to bring about change in education, leaving education as a severely neglected part of national life (Khan and Mehmood, 1997; Ashdullah, 2009). Moreover, Khan and Mehmood (1997) are holding feudalism and elites responsible for years of neglect. Pakistan is a divided nation by feudalistic political and social structure, while India and Nepal by caste. Educational inequalities could be seen in differential access by class and gender, together with disparities in English medium private education exclusively accessed by elites and public education in Urdu for the rest of the population (Malik and Courtney, 2011). Pakistan faces deficiencies in educational standard and quality together with poor infrastructure, under-investment and mismanagement resulting in stress and dissatisfaction among both students and staff at the University (Yusoff and Khan, 2013), corruption, party politics, and inclination towards religious education to benefit their political agendas (Memon, 2007; Hayward, 2009). The shortcoming in the education system is not threatening to national economic and social life, but beyond it by posing terrorism threat globally. *Madrassah* and *Madaris* come as a last resort to families in localities with no public education. However, their religious outlook and Islamic fundamentals often contradict with ongoing national and international efforts to rescue education system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hathaway, 2005; Choudhari, Iqbal and Gillani, 2009; Dean, 2007; Hayward, 2009). The serious lack of opportunities and socio-political conditions in Pakistan has been found to be behind making highly skilled migration- temporary or indefinite- in Western host nations (Imran *et al*, 2011; Sheikh *et al*, 2012). 'Economic misery increases human capital outflows, particularly income inequality, foreign remittance inflow, depreciation in local currency' (Ali *et al*, 2014). Following internationalisation in Asia, Pakistan too strives to raise educational standards to become a host nation for foreign students (Tarar, 2006). As Zakaria *et al*. (2016) stated, the government's effort to establish educational hubs, has

resulted in a limited amount of student inflows from neighbouring countries, particularly on cultural scholarships and other grants (Zakaria et al. 2016). However, it is still a challenge for Pakistan in decades to come.

*Bangladesh*, on the other hand, was created out of Pakistan in 1971, a high dense populated nation facing poverty and demographic problems along with a low literacy rate, youth unemployment at large. Migration, therefore, is perceived as a way to become respectable by gaining social recognition and material abundance (Roy and Hossain, 2012). The education system is composed of both state-funded Islamic style education at a primary-secondary level and a parallel public schooling, open to all which follows a state governed syllabus. Education system suffers from problems related to access, capacity, and quality at all levels. Access to primary and secondary education tends to disadvantage a large proportion of the population due to mainly extreme poverty (Ahmed et al, 2007). The obsession towards religious education-*Madarsa and Madris*- has been associated with needs of basic education to those who cannot afford to access state-funded education or in an area where education is unavailable (Ahmad, 2004; Ahmed et al, 2007). However, these religious institutions often targeted for their alleged role in producing Islamic militants, jihadist, and promoting sectarian violence and terrorism (Ahmed, 2004). Urban-rural divide in educational access, gender disparities and a serious lack of finance to expand education lead government to reliant on foreign aid to support primary and secondary level and international import of education in private sector higher education (Ashraf, Ibrahim and Joarder, 2009; Naher, 2006). This liberal approach to widening access to education led to creating more choices for families obsessed with education, as well as to allegedly help stop Bengali youths being brainwashed by religious hardliners. However, the neoliberal shift in higher education in Bangladesh has resulted in the privatisation of university education with a commercial approach to contribute to ‘Credentialism’ (Kabir, 2013). Furthermore, the public-private divide in higher education widens social inequality as poverty still a national challenge and has an exclusionary effect on access to education while public universities are facing a funding crisis, the business of private universities are on the rise (Islam, 2011; Khan et al, 2012). This inequality in access to higher education could be associated with student migration from Bangladesh, as students either do not have access to quality education or using their privilege education, enabling them to pursue study abroad that facilitate the social mobility process (Hossain and Zeitlyn, 2010).

### ***Leading regional country- India***

India, with a world’s second largest tertiary education system and one of the fastest growing economies, has enormous potential for becoming a regional academic hub; however, there are many obstacles in becoming so. Despite pressure on providing education to an ever-increasing population, Indian education system- particularly tertiary- is facing problems in terms of both capacity and excellence. The Indian education system has been coping, on one hand, to ease its access to people with lower caste and socially disadvantaged groups while on the other raising the educational standard to keep up with the demands of quality education. The Indian education system is largely recognised as “*islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity*”(Altbach, 2014) combining both state-funded elite (e.g. IITs, IIMs and AIIMS) and general education with tough competition for admissions in elite HEIs due to their academic excellence and standard compare to general education which lacks quality and infrastructure.

The access to education and its end product ‘credentials’ have played an exclusionary role in widening social inequality in India (Unni, 2008). The caste system and religious majority-minority divide in India privilege access to educational advantages in favour of the Hindu upper castes at the expenses of Hindu lower castes and religious minorities. As Deshpandey argued, the Hindu upper caste is most likely to secure a place in the national elite institutes offering academic experiences of ‘first world’ at the cost of ‘third world’ (Deshpandey, 2006). Consequently, the only few privileged are able to secure admission into state-run elite institutions while many turns away with options to choose institutions, that are still safe to gain employable currencies, while the majority of students and their families experience the effect of ‘massification’ and ‘credentialism’. To make India a just society, reservations in access to education, public sector employment, and democratic institutions has been introduced as well as continuing efforts to expand education at the primary and secondary level. However, these initiatives do not seem to help India in achieving its desired educational flagship, at least in South Asia. The caste based reservation filter access to the state elite institutes for medical, science, and technology aiming to support disadvantaged communities, yet at large, it has been contributing to widening social divisions and inequalities (Deshpandey, 2006). Apart from access issues, scholars also spot the disparities in the language of instruction, different educational initiatives, and policies at the state level and political reluctance to welcome foreign interests in providing direct education or investment in the sector. This uneven distribution of educational opportunities bi-polarise states where states in South India has been able to maintain English and quality that attract students from other states in India and abroad while states in North fails to do so (Ashdullah and Yalonetzky, 2012). As a result, interstate educational migration persists as few states gains at the expense of another state (Chandrasekhar and Sharma, 2014). In addition, Murthy and others (2007) have identified various structural-political and financial barriers to the Indian academic regime that includes, traditional curriculum, exam-based evaluation and lack of quality teachers, poor infrastructure and under-resourced facilities, political reluctance to give autonomy to institutions, inadequate funding, bureaucratic governance and corruption , insufficient public-private linkage, limited contribution to knowledge creation and sharing, reluctance to collaborate with global institutions (Murthy et al. 2007). In addition, education at all levels in India is primarily sponsored and funded by Indian states and private supply of education is still not fully-grown. Foreign import of education is not welcomed due to distrust in its commercial outlook, however, limited initiatives have been undertaken to connect India with global educational providers, e.g. foreign partnerships, joint-degree programs, franchised arrangements in parts of the education system. Due to this shortcoming in educational deliveries, the demand for quality education among fast-growing middle class remains unfulfilled thus tend to push families to choose study abroad options and contribute to an ever-growing pool of student migrants seeking class advantages. After all, it is to admit that regardless of structural and operational challenges discussed above, India has a reputation for hosting foreign students from abroad, particularly of neighbours. As discussed earlier, families in other South Asian nations, which face many constraints to access standard education, if not quality, India has been a welcoming place to be. The majority of foreign incoming students is sponsored either by the government or exchange programmes and usually attend universities of southern Indian states with few in Delhi and other metro cities. India, as being a secular nation with political-economic stability and having a large young population as ‘demographic dividend’ is an advantage than other South Asian countries. In this respect, India has much to offer its neighbours to reinstall and educational capacity, strengthen the economy, and brain gain in the age of migration. By providing near home access to cost-effective educational



opportunities, India has adopted an unprecedented role of being a ‘stepping-stone’ for bright students and their families to become mobile and seek a better life beyond South Asia.

## Conclusion

### *The emerging trends of step migration in South Asia*

Compared to India, other South Asian nations struggle to cope with many challenges thus find it hard to satisfy the expectations of their middle-class families and youth. Indian educational infrastructure and access to cost-effective study options, hence come to rescue these families pursuing class advantages through Indian education. By providing fairly standard, cost-effective and close to home educational opportunities, India not only become a favourable regional study option but also become a stepping stone. Undeniably, India seeks to play an active role in regional development by helping neighbour countries. India has open borders with Nepal and Bhutan with easy access to education and employment. Similarly, India offers scholarships and du-spaces for their brightest students to help them develop essential ‘soft skills’ and linguistic competence required to become successful far away in the west. The role of India in shaping the process of ‘Step Migration’ has not been picked up by scholars earlier, however, it is equally important to understand the ways in which skilled migration from problematic nations in South Asia is formed. There is a serious lack of information on other South Asian nations for their active role in step migration. It could be assumed that Pakistan and Bangladesh may be hosting foreign students from nearby states too but we cannot be precise about the trends due to lack of evidence.

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