

Migration and Human Capital Formation: A Review of the Literatures to Understand the Link in Indian Scenario With Respect to Inland Migration of Unskilled Workers

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Abstract

This article takes up the issue, the link between migration and human capital formation with respect to inland movement of unskilled workforces, which is by no means new, but about which there is no consensus. The importance of migration in accumulating human capital, for both urban as well as for rural areas, and thereby to play a role in poverty alleviation policies is considerable. The decision of investing in human capital depends on the gains and costs associated with these investments. Human capital formation is considered to be a central engine of economic development. In countries like India, migrants in cities generally continue to maintain close links with, and sometimes return to, their areas of origin. It is also observed that in many parts of the country the migration of unskilled workforces is permanent in nature. What may be the cases; the socio-economic background of migrants, the migrants' income and expenditure compared to non-migrating groups, and whether migrants are able to improve their income over time; these issues are still under the scanner. This article focuses on these above issues by surveying different literatures, initiates investigating the link between migration and human capital formation and also indicates that more research is needed to set a proper link between these two in real sense.

Key words: Migration, Human Capital, Unskilled Workforce, Economic Development.

The Perspective:

Human migration is an age old phenomenon. It is a fascinating and complex topic that has been explored in a wide variety of disciplines (Faggian *et al.* 2017). It is not a new topic of study as the development of

civilization and migration goes hand in hand. Though the reasons for migration are almost same in all around the globe throughout the history but the consequences or results may not be the same. It differs from place to place, country to country. There lies the importance of studying this topic under various socio-economic parameters. Generally, migration of people or workforces from one place to another, with the intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily can be categorized under different headings, such as:

Forced Migration: When people are forcibly uprooted from one place or territory to another due to political unrest, war, ethno-religious or communal conflict, human right violations or as a result of natural disaster and the like and thus there may be a shift of location of large number of workforces to settle down in a new territory.

Skilled Workers Migration: Often termed as ‘brain drain’ or immigration or emigration or out-migration, is generally between the countries, from the source (under developed or developing) countries to destination (developed) countries. The term brain drain designates the international transfer of resources in the form of human capital and mainly applies to the migration of relatively highly educated individuals from developing to developed countries.

Unskilled or Semi-skilled or Low-skilled Workers Migration: This is a common case mostly in developing economy, where the movement of workforces takes place within the country from rural to urban area or from less developed region to developed region. Unskilled migration can also take place between the countries that is from a country where there is surplus labour forces to a country where there are shortages of unskilled labour forces.

There are a lot of literatures that we find with regard to out-migration of skilled labour, but the literature in respect of inland migration (inter-state in-migration) of unskilled workforces, is very limited. In general, the literatures in connection to the issues of unskilled workforces are scarce due to the difficulty in tracking the nature of movement of these workforces be it inland or out migration as the movement is free from any kind of legal barrier.

Relevance of the Study:

In a perfectly competitive market free movement of labour is obvious like the capital and technologies. With the urbanization and industrialization of Indian economy we observe the

movement of capital and technologies are mainly restricted among the urban areas and as a consequence the unskilled workforce moves from rural to urban regions for better income potential, which actually suppress the shortages of labour in those urban and industrialized areas. Thus the root cause of migration of unskilled workers is low income, poverty and absence of alternative employment in rural areas.

There can be two variations when labours migrate from their native place of origin – viz permanent migration and temporary or seasonal migration. Permanent migration is often full family migration whereas in case of seasonal migration the head of the family or only a few members from a big family migrate to other places leaving behind their wife and children at native place. These phenomenal variations have altogether different kinds of impact at the source and destination; so far formation of human capital is concerned.

Apparently, it shows that both the rural and urban economy will equally and automatically get benefitted from migration of excess (surplus) labour from rural area to urban area where there are shortages of labor forces, that it is mutually beneficial for both source and destination. But if we go deep into the problems faced by the unskilled working class in India, we would observe that they are actually struggling to survive even though there is a growth in their existing income level. This may be because of the fact that growth is not yet optimal and thus there lies a question ‘to what extent this migration is actually helping in human capital formation?’.The increase in earnings is often compensated by increase in expenditure at urban places, when it is full family and/or permanent migration as the food, safety, health, education and shelter – all are expensive than the native place.

Some of the common problems the migrating working class of India often experience either in their new destination or for those who are left behind (especially wife and children) at their native places are mentioned below:

1. Poor health, malnutrition and unhygienic lifestyle.
2. Semi or no educations of the children i.e. increase of dropouts.
3. Class conflict and feeling of discrimination due to identity, eligibility and location exclusion.
4. Problems of understanding due to language differentials.
5. Increase of urban slums and also the urban population.
6. Increase of child labour.

7. Addiction for drugs and liquor.
8. Domestic violence and increase of crime.
9. Human trafficking.
10. Problem of balancing life and work due the nature of work or due to conjugal separation (when it is partial family seasonal migration).
11. Uncertainty relating to safety and security and economic instability at back home when it is partial family seasonal migration.
12. Increased cost of farming and agriculture at the source place due to shortages of labour.

As per the Planning Commission, Government of India, over a period of time, the per capita incomes in rural India have increased, but at a slower pace than that of urban India. Moreover, the situation of institutional credit is also poor in rural parts of the country as compared to the rest of the nation, particularly when we consider deposit credit ratio and per capita industrial credit. Apart from agriculture, farming, animal husbandry, and tourism and allied businesses there are hardly any economic potential of employment opportunities for the rural unskilled or semi-skilled populace, and thus, a large number of them have no other option than to migrate in urban parts of the country with a hope of better option and better earning.

A Survey of Literatures:

On Skilled Migration -

There are many available literatures related to the impact of skilled migration on human capital formation. Beine, Docquier and Rapoport (2008); in their study on effects of skilled migration (brain drain) on gross human capital formation in a cross-section of 127 developing countries have found that the countries with low levels of human capital and low skilled emigration rates are prone to experience a 'beneficial brain drain' in the form of remittances (the winners are the most populated countries of the world viz China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Egypt and Bangladesh) and the losing countries are those who have high skilled migration rates (above 20%) and the proportion of highly educated in adult population is also high (above 5%). According to this study – when 'brain drain' acts as a serious constraint on poor countries' development with relatively small population, this can be an aid to many developing countries, which are highly populated, by raising expected return on human capital and fostering investment in education at home. There is a long-term, self-sustaining

gain from immigration to both destination and source countries. Ehrich and Kim (2015) have shown that, how immigration, when treated as an endogenous variable, interacts with income growth and income distribution within and across both sending and receiving countries in a balanced growth global equilibrium regime. Omolola S. Olarinde in studying the impact of migration of Nigerians to OECD countries has found that migration is strongly correlated with growth and human capital formation at the country of origin. Dinkelman and Mariotti (2015) have witnessed the net long-run effects of migration from Malawi to South African mines by showing that migration can positively affect the lives of those who left behind and can have a long lasting effect on human capital formation in rural communities of origin. The demand for education for child has the potential to reduce the demand for child time in labour market. Akira S. (2013) has opined that with the increase in the cost of education in labour-sending country, migration possibilities to foreign country do not necessarily enhance the human capital formation in the home country; rather the foreign country's restrictive immigration policy can have a positive effect on home country's human capital. Podra O. et al. (2020) in describing the 'Theoretical Aspects of Human Capital Formation through Human Potential Migration Redistribution and Investment Process' have viewed human capital as a factor of production that brings a profit (income) and thus the productive abilities of employee become his property – an individual human capital. However, among the disadvantages that migration of skilled population generates for the developing and under-developed countries (source) are unbalancing of internal labour markets both for home and host country, the diminishing of cultural homogeneity, the loss for the origin country generated by the fact that the investment in education of those that migrate are not fully refundable, the future losses of national income (since more skill accounts for more productivity), the amplification of fiscal burden, the increase of technological gap between the developed and developing countries, increase of aging population etc.; whereas the advantages goes for the receiving ends only, in the form of better human capital accumulation by attracting young and talented people, by creating better technology with lower costs and by increasing national income (Diaconu, Maxim and Popescu, 2014). Jellal and Wolff (2003) made an analysis on 'International Migration and Human Capital Formation' with two types of agents migrants from poor country and natives of the rich host country and have come to the conclusion that migrants with return intentions invest less in the host country specific human capital formation, thus it is important to form the public policy of the host country in such a manner that the post-migration human capital formation takes place too lesser the divergence in labour market outcomes for both migrants and natives of the host country. Thus the

role of government and bureaucracy in developing immigration policies is of utmost important so that the negative effects of immigration in the host country is minimized and at the origin country the problems of 'brain drain' can lead to 'brain gain' (Meghna S., 2013). On the other hand, Docquier and Rapoport (2004) have claimed that the countries that would impose restrictions on the international mobility of their educated residents, arguing for example that emigrants' human capital has been largely publicly financed, could in fact decrease the long-run level of their human capital stock. Maria and Lazarova (2009) in their empirical investigation of a sample of 203 countries have found that the growth performance of the sending country has a relation with their skill composition. They observed that the least and most developed countries would suffer as a result of skilled migration, whereas the developing countries with high rate of population density benefit from migration. Olimova (2010) in studying 'The Impact of Labour Migration on Human Capital: the case of Tajikistan', have pointed out that labour migration has both positive and negative effects on education. Further, the return migration has a significant contribution to small and medium businesses of and agriculture in Tajikistan, bringing new technology, mechanism, instruments, knowledge and skills. Oded and Dorn (2013) in their analysis on 'International Migration, human capital formation and saving' have found that a worker who saves when migrating is not possible, and who does not save when migrating is possible, increases his investment in human capital in response to the prospect of migrating by more than in a comparable setting without an option to save.

On Unskilled Migration -

As mentioned earlier, the literatures on unskilled migration are very limited. Thomas A. E. (2016) in her analysis on 'Labour Migration in Kerala: a Study on Working Conditions of Unskilled Labourers' has observed that Kerala being one of the most attractive states in India for the unskilled migrant labourers is facing lot of security threats due to overflowing of migrant labourers. The situation is very threatening relating to working conditions and exploitation by the employer as majority of these labourers do not appear in any of the official records of the state. When an emigration of skilled/unskilled labour lowers the urban unemployment of unskilled labour, it widens the skilled-unskilled wage gap (Choudhuri S., 2004) but the unskilled immigrant workers with relatively low formal human capital can still contribute to productivity improvement by helping to increase efficiency and upgrading the skills of the native labour force (Devdas S., 2017). Kugler A. and Yuksel M. (2008) have also found the positive wage and employment effects of Latin American immigration on both

natives and earlier immigrants while explaining the 'Effects of Low-skilled Immigration on U.S Natives: Evidence from Hurricane Mitch'. Whereas Kallevik S. S. (2014) has mentioned that the lack of sufficient work opportunities in the country side compel the low-skilled labourers to move to the city for better earning but this extra earning , in many cases , is not enough to make a living for a whole family in an urban situation.

Objective of the Study:

Migration is viewed as an aid to human capital formation. The main objective of this study is to review this concept and to understand the real link between migration and human capital with respect to migration of unskilled workforces by studying different literatures.

The other issues that this study will focus on are:

- The reasons of migration of unskilled workforces.
- The nature and types of migration.
- The socio-economic background of the migrants.

Present Status of Inland Migration of Unskilled Workforces in India:

As mentioned above, migration is sometimes permanent or this may be seasonal in nature. If we look at inland migration, it is well established that a large number of rural population, the unskilled workforce, from less developed states of India have migrated to various other comparatively developed and industrialized states with the intentions of better earnings and are working in informal or unorganized sector; this workforce contribute more than 50% of India's total output. The two main secondary sources of data on population mobility in India are the Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS). NSSO (64th Round) 2007-08 reveals migration scenario in India; it provides inter-state in-migration and also the out-migration data. Net Migration rate is calculated by subtracting In-Migration and Out-migration rates for all states. It has been found that net-migration is highest for Delhi and Maharashtra receiving highest number of in-migrants followed by Haryana, Punjab and Gujarat. Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Tripura also record positive figures, indicating inmigration being higher than out-migration. Negative net-migration rate is observed in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur; here out-migration rate is higher than in-migration (Sources: Migration in India 2007-2008; NSS 64th Round and NSSO Report

No. KI. (68/1.0) in 2011-12, NSS 68th Round). The latest government data on migration comes from the 2011 Census. As per the Census, India had 45.6 crore migrants in 2011 (38% of the population) compared to 31.5 crore migrants in 2001 (31% of the population). Between 2001 and 2011, while population grew by 18%, the number of migrants increased by 45%. In 2011, 99% of total migration was internal and immigrants (international migrants) comprised only 1%. As per the 2011 census, the rural-urban and urban-urban movement of inland migration accounted for around 8 crore migrants in each category.

For 2007-08 in urban area male migration is higher in inter-district (39.31%) followed by inter-state [31.9% (23.57% in 1999-00)]. Likewise, for female inter-district (42.51%) followed by intra-district migration (38.32%) dominated the migration flow [Source: NSSO (64th Round) 2007-08]. In 2011, intra-state movement accounted for almost 88% of all internal migration including male and female (39.6 crore persons) and there were 5.4 crore inter-state migrants [Source: Census 2011]. Leaving apart other reasons of movement viz. marriage and forced migration etc.; as of 2011, overall, 8% of people moved within a state for work (21% of male migrants and 2% of female migrants); while the movement for work was higher among inter-state migrants- 50% of male and 5% of female.

As per the Census 2011, there were 4.5 crore migrant workers if we consider the number of migrants moved for working in other places within the country on temporary basis i.e. for temporary employment. However, according to the Working Group Report on Migration and the Economic Survey, 2016-17; census data underestimates temporary migrant labour movement and the total migrant worker population within the country. In 2007-08, the NSSO estimated the size of India's migrant labour at 7 crore (29% of the workforce). The Economic Survey, 2016-17, estimated 6 crore inter-state labour migrants between 2001 and 2011. The Economic Survey also estimated that in each year between 2011 and 2016, on average 90 lakh people travelled for work.

But it is argued that, these surveys often underestimate some types of migration flows; such as temporary, seasonal and circulatory migration; due to empirical and conceptual difficulties. Furthermore, migration data generally relate to population mobility and not worker mobility, as 'migrants' are defined in terms of change of their birthplace and change in last usual place of residence. Migration is not always employment related. Therefore, there is a lack of suitability of data on migration of unskilled workforces and also on migrant characteristics that hinders the advancement in knowing the actual trends of inland migration.

Introspection to the Present Situation:

As per the estimates from NSS, though there is a considerable decline in out-migration, which can be attributed to the process of economic liberalization, i.e. due to greater movement of capital and natural resources and growing immobility of population (as stated by Kundu and Gupta ,1996) , but a steady increase in internal migration has been witnessed in the post reform era (from 24.8% in 1993 to 28.5% in 2007-08). That is because the overall employment situation within the country (post-2005) is sluggish in India. Only Sikkim and Tripura have recorded positive growth in employment sector and other states have negative growth' (Sahu, 2013). Migration is influenced both by the pattern of development (NCRL, 1991) and the social structure (Mosse *et al.* 2002). In India, NSSO has listed five reasons, for both in and out migration; these are employment, study, marriage, forced migration, movement of parent or earning members and others. So far inland migration is concerned the most specific reasons have been the absence of employment opportunity at the place of origin and poor economic background of the labour forces.

In explaining the nature of employment of the inland migrants, Srivastava (1998) has found that unskilled or semi-skilled migrant workers in small towns and suburban areas are normally employed in construction, textiles, small-scale industries, brickmaking, stone quarries, mines and hospitality services. A large number of tribals, mainly from drought prone areas of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, migrate to work in construction, tile factory, brick kiln and crop cutting in Maharashtra (Pandey, 1998). The construction industry mainly depends on migrant labour. 90% of the labourers are migrants (Vaijanyanta, 1998). Around 40,000 girls migrate from Kerala annually to other state to work in the fishery industry (Sarodamoni, 1995). Among the Saora, Munda and Santhal tribes we see a general trend of migration and working in plantation cultivation in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. For the youth from north-eastern states to other parts of India, the long histories of insurgency and lack of economic prospect have created strong 'pull factors', which geared in driving out from the region. All these above studies have pointed out the poor economic background of the migrants at their place of origin. The low economic condition of the family is one of the major factors responsible for large scale migration. Major areas of concern have been the problem of housing (semi pucca or kachcha), poor health (malnutrition), poor sanitation and hygiene and, poor drinking water facility. Thus the socio-economic condition of the migrant families is one of the important aspects that need to be focused.

In the above context, it is pertinent to inspect the extent of the migrants' own human capital in terms of their added income and whether this unskilled migration is helping in forming human capital at the place of origin in real sense. It is often argued by the scholars from social science and economics that migration is positively correlated with the human capital formation. At the same time there are studies which have shown a negative impact on human capital formation due to migration, especially in source/origin when it is out migration. But all these studies are related to migration between the countries and have been conducted for skilled workforce, where the problems of 'brain drain' or the prospects of 'brain gain' are basically addressed with respect to human capital formation. But there are only a few studies, so far, that have been conducted with regard to inland migration of unskilled or semi-skilled workforces and those are also almost silent on the topic of human capital formation. If we look at Indian example, where migration within the country from one place to another is huge in number and most happening in nature due to the regional disparity/ variations within the nation and amongst its states, substantial evidences of addressing the issues of migrant working class are not found. Thus, it can be emphasized that there is an urgent need to analyze the issues of unskilled workforces with utmost care and empirical evidences from various regions of the country to see the effects of inland migration towards formation of human capital. The other reason that this topic should be studied extensively is rooted from the recent distress situation of migrant labours we witnessed during the lockdown of Indian economy in Covid-19 pandemic in the beginning of year 2020. The country had never seen thousands of people (migrants) queuing for days in bus depots or railway stations to return home and many of them returning by walking miles after miles and also mothers carrying the newborns in their arms. We even have seen the miserable ends in few cases those who were sick or met with accident. All of a sudden they become homeless as their shelter was temporary due to the temporary nature of their work. After they returned at their native place they become jobless for an indefinite period. And finally they were penniless for a pretty long time. This unpredictable situation acted as an eye opener for the policy thinkers as these workforces no less important than the white-collar employees. These labours are also the drivers of economy and help the economic activities rolling within a country.

The after effects of Covid-19 pandemic on migrant class and their persistent economic problems made it clear that though this working class is immensely helping in economic development of the country but their own economic development is still under the scanner. The basic three needs- food, shelter, safety; are in question. And when poverty is a reality, formation of human capital is a luxury (to even

think). But we should not forget that the growth rate of a country depend on both the share of skilled workers (level of human capital) and the distribution of skill types (composition of human capital).

According to Ehrlich and Kim (2015) the accumulation of human capital is subject to three types of externalities, or knowledge spillover effects: across generations, within countries, and across countries. When the inter-generational spillover effects involve the transmission of knowledge from parents to children, the within-country spillover effects result from social interaction across skill groups, analogous to the interaction between teachers and students. These spillover effects are thus likely to flow from higher to lower skill groups via shared educational channels, such as schools and colleges, neighborhoods, and social communication channels. But this shared education will only be possible when they can afford to education. In reality they are not in a position to pursue quality education even if it is free. Sanyal and Maity (2018) in analyzing the impact of labour migration in India have opined that the poorer migrant workers have meager personal assets and suffer from deprivations in the destination areas.

It is believed that, when unskilled workforces moves from less developed region to developed region, they are generally better remunerated and if the investment in education increases in the place of destination (in case of full family permanent migration) then it is actually benefitting the destination state at the expense of originating state so far human capital accumulation is concerned. On the other hand, when migration is partial and temporary, only then it can benefit the originating state (place) in forming its human capital as the inequality of income can be compensated by the positive remittances that the migrants send to the source for those who are left behind. But, Cashin and Sahay (1996) in analyzing the impact on inter-state migration have argued that the linguistic and cultural barriers at the place of destination may appear as a hindrance to the education of the migrants' family. Kumar(2011) have stated that the difficulty to recruit teachers with knowledge in languages such as Oriya, Bengali or Assamese is one of the problems related to the education of migrants' children in Kerala. Apparently, we can say that when migration is due to better employment opportunity at destination (i.e. not forced migration), it is a win-win situation for both source and destination to curb with the problems of regional disparity; but in practical sense there is question with regard to real development of the region if we consider sustainability issue and human resource development.

Conclusion, Suggestion, and Recommendation for Future Research:

As a universal concept, for many developed countries of the world we see the presence of concrete migration policies. These policies are basically to address the issues of skilled migration, since it is quite easier for a nation state to deal with the problems (brain drain) or prospects (brain gain) of permanent or temporary skilled migration from or to a country, because the tracking of movement is an easier task. Whereas, in case of inland movement of unskilled labour, which is a common issue for the developing and highly populated countries like us with huge income differential, is a big task to address. For inland movement of workforces imposition of restrictions does not arise, as the movement is within the country and not a cross-border issue. That is movement is free from any kind of legal barrier, and thus tracking of the same is quite impossible, unless a proper mechanism is developed. But a nation cannot ignore the problems of these kind of unskilled or semi-skilled migration of workforces as it is directly related to human capital formation of a nation in general and the region of source/origin and destination in particular. Thus, the issues of unskilled migration within a country claim a serious retrospection of their nature and condition and also the measures of way forward to deal with future consequences. In India a large section of the rural populace, have a tendency to migrate in urban cities and/or industrialized zones with an expectation of better earning. Now it is time to investigate that how far this extra income is actually benefitting the migrants in real sense that this can be claimed as an input towards human capital formation.

Since the issues of migration are related to the workforces who are abandoned in a certain region, whose future is also uncertain, and who generally belong to marginalized section of the society, we cannot ignore the fact that the role of government is very vital. The matters related to unskilled migration at national, regional and local level should be safeguarded by forming proper plans and policies, because the underestimation of positive impact of migration towards building human capital will certainly hinder upon the process of socio-economic development of a country. The following suggestions can pointed out as a whole for the policy makers at different levels and at different capacities:

- i) Not only education, but 'Health' should also be considered as a component and as a parameter of measurement of human capital. The status of physical or mental health has a direct relation with the level of knowledge potential of a person. Thus when we talk about

forming of human capital, it is not only the investment in education but the amount of investment in health should also be taken care of.

- ii) There is an urgent need that the policy makers should come out with a system of maintaining a repository where the data related to the inland movements of the migrant workforces can be properly stored and maintained.
- iii) Over the years it is being observed that there was a poor implementation of protections under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 (ISMW Act). The nation should come out with more laws and rules to protect the interests of the unskilled workforces and a proper system of surveillance should be ensured. The stakeholders at the state level and at regional/local level should come out with the measures that the existing Acts related to factory, minimum wage guaranty etc. are strictly followed by the employers.
- iv) Unskilled workers often face the problem of lack of affordable housing at the destination. They should be entitled with the national schemes like Prime Minister Awaas Yojana (PMAY).
- v) Unskilled workers should be given access to entitlements under the PDS. The concept of 'one nation one ration card' should be promoted so that they get the access under PDS irrespective of their movements to any state.
- vi) All migrant workers should be provided with the benefits of national health scheme (Ayushman Bharat Yojana) and to be ensured that they do not face any technical difficulties of enrollment into the scheme and also in availing the benefit. It should also be ensured that the employers of the migrant workers provide certain basic health benefits at enterprise level and maintain basic standards of working condition towards promotion of good health and safety.

In fine, we can say that without knowing the structural imbalances at micro level i.e. in the place of origin it is not possible to address the issues of unskilled (or semi-skilled/low-skilled) workforces migrating within India. Not only the reasons but also impact of inland migration on the families of the migrants either at source (when the family is left behind) or at the destination (when it is full family migration) should be studied extensively by taking up some specific and pertinent socio-economic variables. The future researches should be directed in knowing the answer of the following questions to set up a proper link between migration of unskilled workforces and human capital accumulation:

- How is the improvement in migrants' living standard over time?
- Is migration detrimental to who left behind?
- Is mobility of workforce likely to contribute to the concentration of economic activities in specific regions at the expense of the origin region?
- Do the migrant's optimal investment in human capital decreases with uncertainty of unemployment and return migration?
- To what extent migration helps building human capital at source?
- What is the impact of migration at destination?
- To what extent migration helps building human capital at destination?

Only with multi-dimensional, multi-regional, and multi-level studies with respect to above research questions it can be possible to set a positive link between migration and human capital formation when the migration is related to the movements of unskilled workforces within the country. Otherwise, in countries like India with so much of regional differences in development yardstick claiming the positive relationship between migration and formation of human capital may be still a myth.

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