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9. ABSTRACT

Summarizes results of the first surveys in an ongoing project to evaluate the usefulness of sending professionals from less developed countries (LDC) to be educated abroad. The survey respondents, natives of India, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, and Greece, had studied or were studying in the U.S. and France. The survey focuses on the availability of appropriate employment in the LDC for the returning professional, the willingness of employers in the LDC to benefit from skills introduced by the returnee, and returnee attitudes toward the LDC's seniority system. The survey also addresses the extent to which the personal benefits of returning home are offset by the lack of professional benefits (i.e., research facilities, libraries) in the LDC. The study recommends that employers in the LDC should maintain close communication with students abroad to insure that their education remains relevant.

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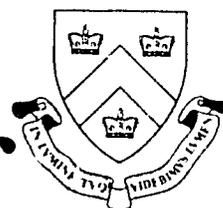
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THE RETURN OF THE PROFESSIONAL:  
THE VALUE OF HIS EDUCATION ABROAD

William A. Glaser

## ABSTRACT

As part of a multi-national questionnaire survey of students and skilled persons, professionals from several developing countries were asked how their foreign education was used (or could be used) at home. Many returned with skills that could be readily used. Some were "over-trained" by the West but expected to find appropriate employment as their countries developed. Meanwhile, they could help plan the creation of such more advanced positions. Very few persons seem to have been "unfitted" for return by excessively complex education abroad.

Some developing countries have plenty of openings for returnees. Others have trained many professionals at home and abroad, and the job market is tight.

Deficiencies in equipment and libraries handicap many returnees. Others are troubled by the entrenched positions of senior officials and professors, by jobs requiring too much administration and teaching, and by few opportunities for research.

The professionals recommended closer communication with employers while persons from that country study abroad, to ensure that education is relevant.

They were satisfied with higher education in the West and did not recommend that it be altered--or "lowered"--to fit the needs of developing countries.

THE RETURN OF THE PROFESSIONAL:  
THE VALUE OF HIS EDUCATION ABROAD

Whether higher education abroad helps or hinders development is much debated today. Are students from developing countries educated according to the requirements of the developed societies when they study abroad, and are they unfitted for the manpower requirements of their homes? If they return home, are they unable to find appropriate jobs, because none have yet been created? Does education abroad upset the balance between supply and demand at home: if jobs exist in fields that persons study overseas, are they already occupied because specialists in them are overproduced by universities at home?

Hardly any reliable facts exist about the experiences of foreign-educated persons after returning to developing countries. One of the few questionnaire surveys of professionals in developing countries has been conducted in recent years by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Foreign students from developing countries will ultimately be questioned in six developed countries; professionals from developing countries ("stay-ons") are questioned in several developed countries; and foreign-trained professionals ("returnees") are questioned after they have gone home to fourteen developing countries. The questionnaires have focussed on the reasons why persons study abroad, why some return home, and why others emigrate.<sup>1</sup> Considerable information is also obtained from stay-ons and returnees about the relevance of foreign education for work at home, how their skills have been used at home, how education abroad might be improved, and how employment of the foreign-trained after return might be improved. This paper summarizes the consensus among our respondents from the first surveys to be completed, viz., stay-ons in the United States and France, and returnees in India, Sri Lanka, Korea, Ghana, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, and Greece.

Ease in finding jobs. If foreign students are educated beyond the absorptive capacities of their home societies, a discrepancy occurs between two variables, viz., the level of economic and technological development at home and the courses of study pursued abroad. Some nationalities enter more complex curricula than other groups, but the latter could encounter as many employment problems as the former, if the latter's country is less developed. Table 1 reports experiences of the returnees at the time of return.

Brazilians and Ceylonese most often found no jobs yet existed. In both cases, some of their foreign students learned skills one step ahead of the current occupational structures of the countries, but the two societies are at greatly different stages of development: the Ceylonese respondents often were the first specialists in their fields in the country (such as food technology, audio-visual health education, and economic entomology); these fields had already existed for some time in the more industrialized and diversified economy of Brazil, but persons were now returning there with new skills.

Compared to other nationalities in Table 1, the Ghanaians most often return with familiar skills. This variation might reflect government policy as well as the tastes of the students themselves: both Ceylon and Ghana are early industrializing societies whose foreign students are usually sponsored, but the Ceylonese government may encourage many to learn skills one step beyond Ceylon's current situation but valuable for future development. Some Ceylonese returnees are willing to be patient until their knowledge can be fully used:

On balance, I am completely satisfied with my education abroad. At the moment, my field of specialty is of limited interest to the country, but with the progress of technology, my field will be of extreme importance in the future.

Some stay-ons with skills attuned to the developed countries--such as aero-space engineers--say they could not return, since their careers would end and there seems no chance these jobs would be created at home. But some stay-ons are waiting for the day when the call will come from home:

I feel in the coming years that food industry research is going to open up. And I would desire to help by setting up training programs, processing new techniques, things along those lines. I feel that in five to ten years, that all my skills are going to be needed, and I will find a most rewarding position. Rewarding not in money, but in personal gratification that cannot be measured in terms of money. The chance to teach and stimulate people and educate people in the food industry presents a momentous challenge to me, that I could not achieve here in the United States. Therefore, speaking of income, I'd be better off in the United States, but speaking in terms of personal success, I'd be better off home, but I will stay at least ten years here in the United States until I have a more vast amount of experience and knowledge.

Countries vary in saturation of the available jobs. Because India and Argentina have so many universities at home and so many citizens studying abroad, their returnees find few unfilled jobs and must compete vigorously for existing positions. Newly developing societies with only limited numbers of persons educated abroad, such as Ceylon and Ghana, have many unfilled jobs, and the returnee can choose. Worry over competition after return is a common problem of morale among Indians overseas, despite all their other motives for going home; other nationalities return in a less anxious frame of mind.

TABLE 1  
JOB MARKET UPON RETURN

Wording of question:

"When you returned to this country, what were the relationships between demand and supply for jobs in your special field for people with your special qualifications?"

	<u>India</u>	<u>Ceylon</u>	<u>Korea</u>	<u>Greece</u>	<u>Ghana</u>	<u>Brazil</u>	<u>Colombia</u>	<u>Argentina</u>
"No such jobs had yet been created	14%	22%	7%	18%	9%	24%	17%	17%
"There was a great shortage of such jobs--i.e., the number of applicants greatly exceeded the number of jobs.	41	10	27	26	13	17	28	48
"Demand and supply closely balanced for such jobs.	36	41	34	41	28	33	26	21
"There were a great number of unfilled jobs--i.e., applicants were scarce."	<u>9</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>13</u>
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Total number of respondents)	(568)	(192)	(242)	(462)	(138)	(534)	(264)	(342)

Personal and professional gratifications. A very common experience of returnees is weighing the personal gain of being home against the pecuniary benefits of remaining abroad. For most, personal ties would have sufficed to draw them back. But for many, an added incentive is the prospect of contributing to their countries' development. The feeling that their cultural settings are essential to their happiness and that the West is too foreign is strongest among the Asians:

Ceylon seems superior to U.K. in life generally. Here the mood of the community is relaxed; people are not tense; they do not give the impression of living from day to day, wondering what problem the morrow will bring. The Ceylonese philosophy of living, derived from their ancient civilization and culture, makes them satisfied with much less of worldly comforts than would be accepted as reasonable in the West. In Ceylon living is cheaper and thus problems are not aggravated. The Ceylonese are a more friendly people and cultivate an out-going personality in contrast to the introspective Anglo-Saxon. . . .

I could quite easily have stayed abroad but I preferred to return to Ceylon to be of service to my own country. Economically I would have been much better off had I stayed behind in the U.K., but I doubt whether I would have been happy for long in the different cultural set-up. I would say that by returning I am better off, although not financially. I do not think I will be worse off in the future.

My principal satisfaction has come by using the latest methods and techniques I learned abroad. Another source of satisfaction is the recognition accorded to me in my field in the local scientific world on account of the qualifications and the training I acquired abroad.

The belief that pay and working conditions are better abroad is very common among returnees. It is an even stronger conviction among the permanent stay-ons; for many, it over-rides their attachments to families at home, and it over-rides their feelings of strangeness abroad. For example, in answer to the question, "Would your career be hindered in any way if you returned to your country of origin," one stay-on explained:

Yes. My research career would be less. Because of lack of resources and opportunities. Here you can get on the computer any time you want. There you may, just may, be able to do this.

Others believe that they would not receive higher ranks and better pay in the industrialized countries, and that their responsibility and real income might be nearly equal at home:

I have no regrets in returning. My career has not been hindered. Whereas, if I had stayed abroad, I would have been subject to discrimination. This operates particularly at higher levels in the organisation, and I feel certain that I would have been shut out, as and when I would have become eligible for such posts.

Status at home is much higher in those fields where few trained people exist:

By returning, my career has been advanced more than if I had stayed abroad. Position-wise the smaller community here added to the paucity of people with high qualifications and training in my special field has given me larger opportunities of employment and recognition. I will be still better off in the future, as I would have increased my experience here and abroad.

A successful stay-on in the United States said that an important satisfaction from return would be greater influence:

Here is like a little fish in a big pond--as all your research people are professors at large colleges--and at home it would be a big fish in a little pond. . . . [Returning would help my career because] I can influence more people with my decisions than I can here.

The configuration of pushes and pulls varies by home country. Latin America resembles the industrialized countries in social structure and culture more closely than Asia and Africa do; Latin Americans encounter color discrimination abroad much less often than the Asians, Africans, and West Indians do. When describing their home societies, Latin American returnees do not draw so sharp a contrast as the Asians, would not have felt so strange abroad, do not emphasize the pull of family so

often in the decision to return, and do not mention family ties so often as their principal gratification after return. The difference is in degree: the Latin American returnees mention all these perceptions, but not so often or as saliently as the Asians.

Whether the returnee can obtain a good job and exert influence depends on the market. A very common complaint among Indians--and a barrier against return by Indian stay-ons--is the large number of incumbents and the seniority system. Because higher ranks are occupied, the average returnee must start at a low rank and low salary. (An Indian stay-on with considerable responsibility abroad/sometimes can negotiate a senior job in a newly created organization, but he must get a steady flow of tips from home about plans and he must sell himself energetically.) But the average person must rise more slowly, partly through seniority and partly through the judgments of superiors. Competing applicants for promotion enlist the help of influential relatives and of family friends. Some stay-ons fear that their absence has placed them at a disadvantage:<sup>2</sup>

(How is personal ability evaluated and rewarded in your country of origin?) Not very much. Most of the cases when you look for a job are a problem. It's a question of who you know. There is no [formal open] competition. Most of the people try to place their own people in good jobs. . . .

(How would your career be hindered if you returned to your country of origin?) There are suitable jobs, but it is difficult to get the suitable jobs. It is a question of who you know. I don't know anyone there and they don't know me. I don't give a damn and they don't give a damn.

Working conditions. A very common problem is the quality of equipment and libraries at home. The stay-ons and returnees had been taught to depend on facilities that are more developed. This problem is greatest in the less developed Asian countries and is mentioned least often in

the more prosperous Latin American countries. Many returnees were involved abroad primarily in research--as doctoral students, as post-doctoral fellows, or as employees in laboratories--and they complain they can do less research at home, in part because of shortages of equipment, books, and assistants.

Further obstacles to research arise from the returnee's work schedule. Most university jobs in developing countries are primarily teaching assignments; the time spent in the classroom and in grading papers reduces time for research. Many returnees who obtain higher ranks find the posts to be primarily managerial: senior titles and salaries are not given for full-time research. . . To gain high ranks, they must often forego research.

After returning, so far I have no complaints. I have had a very good deal here. I am doing as well as could be expected. Abroad I do not think that I would have been able to rise so far, so soon. But if I stayed there, satisfaction in academic work would have been there. Here I have no time for research. Because of administrative and teaching work, research interests are suffering. . . .

[In this country] at present the use of research trained persons for administration is bad. They should be made to engage in their specialization rather than pen-pushing in some office, and keeping in touch

Communication/with international developments are difficult, particularly in Asian countries with non-convertible currencies useless for international travel or for subscriptions to the leading periodicals.

I believe my return has not helped me in my career. I doubt very much whether things will become better for me in the economic changes contemplated for our country. I would have been better off in many ways if I had stayed abroad. I could have worked with more experienced people, with more advanced equipment and very much more literature in my specialty. I could have had many opportunities of attending conferences and exhibitions.

Stay-ons in teaching and research fear such isolation after return:

One of the problems if I returned is lack of opportunity to travel and to communicate with other professors. Right now I can go to England any time. There, I could not.

Problems of isolation confront the returnee who comes back with completely new skills:

My return has not helped my career at all. I have been reduced to the job of a full-time teacher. Also, I am unable to talk to anyone with even the slightest knowledge of my fields of interest.

[In the government's policy on educational exchanges and manpower] there must be a change of attitude towards the requirement of full-time teaching. Research must be encouraged, facilities and journals provided, and staff must be allowed to go abroad more frequently to study the progress in the fields of their interest and to learn new methods.

Even returnees who have no special problem of shop-talk about unique and avant-garde specialties miss the stimulation of colleagues who are in touch with new events overseas:

There is a certain amount of problem in readjusting to society here, after being used to a highly westernized and dynamic society. Our society is somewhat static and does not allow or encourage too much of change. This creates a lot of personal problems for me.

There are very few in the teaching profession who have had any professional training over and above their University training. Therefore, the theory and practice of education is not fully understood in the context in which I work and teach, and this creates professional problems.

A recurring theme is that advanced skills learned abroad are not used at home. Jobs often are less specialized than the narrow areas of one's doctoral or post-doctoral work. Some believe that the organization of work and the utilization of resources could be improved, thereby applying their abilities better. But perhaps even more consider these differentials the inevitable results of the lower levels of

technological and economic development at home. Some returnees think that the simpler organization of work is the inevitable concomitant of the traditional culture, less frenetic pace, and warmer human relations that determined their preference of home over the West. In their scale of priorities, the warm extra-professional environments are preferred over the less cohesive and more efficient developed societies--but most would prefer more efficiency at home without destruction of its essential values. For example:

In life generally this country seems superior to the U.K. or U.S. It is more disciplined there, but I have wondered for what purpose. We are more kind, more sympathetic and more humane. We are generally believed to be more hospitable and a warm and friendly people. Our family ties are strong, engendering security; those with our relations and friends are stronger than found in the U.K. or U.S. It is cheaper to live here than in the West. Climatically too, we have the advantage; it does not add to our problems of living. There is no stress or strain of living here due to our mental attitude of being content with what we have; we are far less material minded due to our religious background. But this makes us unreceptive to new ideas; we seem to cling on to our ancient traditions, customs and beliefs. . . .

In my special field this country is absolutely inferior to the U.K. or U.S. It is far below current international standards. Scientific training of any kind in my field is totally lacking; there is no educational institution providing a complete and comprehensive course of studies in this field. Equipment is lacking, as also any sort of incentive. There are no opportunities for advancing one's knowledge with a view to specialization. There is no future here for specialization, and hence nobody wishes to specialize even abroad. . . . Business organizations seem to be satisfied with mediocre work.

In work generally this country is inferior. Work is carried on in a lethargic manner; there is no drive as there is no incentive. The quality of work is good but conservative ideas prevent proper organization on a scientific basis. The importance of time or its value is not recognized by the worker here.

In every society, professional persons often take first jobs in fields that deviate somewhat from their formal preparation. In societies

in early stages of development, this discrepancy is common: few jobs are highly specialized, so the returnee inevitably receives more general assignments. The returnee may find the few positions for which he is best fitted already filled, particularly in small countries and particularly in the professional corps employed by the government. Our respondents thought private employers more flexible than the government in creating assignments best fitting the skills of returnees.

Utilization problems vary by home country. The last quotation is one of many from a less developed Asian country. The contrast with North America and Europe is described in less extreme terms by the Latin American returnees. Their facilities are better. Their economies are more advanced and have a larger scale, and it is easier for a returnee to find a job close to his specialty and lacking a heavy administrative burden.

Improving education abroad. Even if it outstripped the specific requirements of employment at home, our respondents almost uniformly commended education abroad in both selection methods and in curriculum. Hardly anyone--in response to a fixed-answer list of items about adjustment problems after return--checked the statement "I found my training was not relevant to the work in my field." If a utilization problem exists, the defect is in the absorptive capacities of home rather than in the educational program abroad. If a specialization is beyond the current requirements of the developing society, the average returnee is prepared for the time he will be needed. The different educational experiences in developed countries are valuable, many say, because they broaden perspectives and stimulate thinking.

Many returnees teach in universities. An important benefit of foreign study outside the particular subject matter is learning the

educational methods of developed countries:

The system of education here is outdated. In most cases we are still following the pedantic style that existed in the mediaeval era. In our universities, the relationship that exists between the teacher and student is more like that between the ruler and ruled. A more healthy relationship exists in Western universities at present. . . . My education abroad has helped me in my lecturing--in my method of teaching--at my university and also in my approach to student problems.

Also, returnees can introduce into the traditionally theoretical higher education of developing countries a more empirical and "applied" subject content.

Our respondents had mixed advice on the widely discussed question whether curricula abroad should be adapted to the needs of developing countries. Many believed that special courses should be added abroad about how to apply their knowledge to the situation at home. Some thought the curricula in developed countries were too biased toward the situations there and would benefit all their students--both domestic students and the heterogenous foreign students--by becoming more international in outlook. However, a few deplored any tampering with the established programs:

Foreign students should be trained in establishments which cater primarily for students of the host country. Courses specially devised for foreign students tend, from my own experience, to be of a very much lower level than those followed by the students of the host country.

Following are suggestions by our respondents for the improvement of education abroad:

Employers and returnees should have a voice in the organization of educational exchanges. Planning and administration should not be limited to the educational authorities.

Managers of educational exchange programs should learn far more about the specific universities and curricula abroad than they know at present.

Before leaving home, the student should receive an orientation course about the society and educational system that he will enter.

Better language training should be provided. The only foreign students prepared well enough are those who spoke English or French at home. Eventually the foreign student picks up enough of the language to work adequately but some never do, and many are handicapped during the first months.

The student should not specialize too narrowly, since his job will probably not be specialized and will demand versatility.

Practical training on the job should be added, since education now in nearly every field is exclusively formal.

At the present time it appears that students trained in foreign countries are brought back, especially if they are from state institutions, soon after completion of their academic or professional courses. The greatest knowledge is obtained not so much at the time of completion of these courses as immediately thereafter. It is my view that students trained abroad should be given the opportunity to work in those countries for at least a couple of years to obtain good post-qualifying experience enabling them to contribute in a greater measure to the development of their countries.

Persons other than the professionals should be included in educational exchanges:

Most of the scholars who go overseas are of the staff grade. The more talented people in the grades of technician and craftsman do not have as many opportunities

for training abroad. I suggest that in future, for industries especially like the ceramics, teams of people should be sent. The team should include staff graders, technicians, craftsmen. They must be sent for a shorter period of training. The idea of sending a team, rather than a few higher graders is to relieve the strain of one person having to train different categories of personnel here. Further, it would be too much to expect one person to learn about the different aspects of work in the same field. A team is the remedy to it.

Parts of the educational program should be spent at home, and not all of it abroad. Either some introductory courses or the dissertation research can be done at home. This will remind the student to adapt his foreign education to domestic needs.

Before returning home, the foreign student should visit other laboratories or universities. His lessons from abroad will not be based on one site alone, and he will get better insight into the range of institutions that can become models.

Since the returning professional is often promoted into management, his curriculum abroad should include courses in management and leadership.

There is no clear consensus about improving the method of selection. Since all our respondents were included, they thought the system worked pretty well. A few thought older students (i.e., aged 25 to 35) should be preferred, on grounds they were more mature and had enough prior occupational experience at home to identify relevant features of Western curricula. But others thought young students were best because they were most flexible, were not distracted by family obligations, and would provide the most energetic leadership upon return. Everyone commends selection by merit; some fear that too much

favoritism enters the selection process conferring scholarships or the right to buy foreign exchange.

Relations with employers. A widespread complaint is that employers are too set in their ways, they cannot comprehend everything the new returnee has acquired abroad, and they are unable to take the fullest advantage of the returnee's specific skills. Private employers are often thought more responsive and more inquisitive than the officials of universities and of government agencies.

A common recommendation is that returnees should be consulted by employers about modernizing the system. Some employers do, and some do not. As in many other aspects of manpower utilization, the employer is more responsive to returnees if professionals are scarce.

Following are suggestions by our respondents about improving the employment of returnees:

The employer and the returnee should communicate better before he returns. The employer should make clear the details of the job, and fewer returnees will be startled by the common experience of entering work that differs from the specialty he studied. The employer might be able to order precisely the equipment the professional needs if the latter can look up the specifications abroad. The employer needs lead time to order the equipment and to obtain the foreign exchange from the government.

Returnees should be encouraged to participate in international research projects. They can maintain the skills

acquired as students and learn the newest developments in their field in the countries where they formerly studied.

Returnees should move around among employers, in order to spread their skills.

Employers should use the returnee as a permanent liaison with his country of study. He knows the language, the professional literature, many of the people, and the general situation.

Employers should be more helpful in arranging satisfactory living conditions and local transportation for returnees. Sometimes these are severe problems handicapping work.

If they don't yet have them, governments should create manpower registries for the foreign-trained.

Returnees should occasionally go abroad later for short "refresher" periods of work.

The structure of employment. A widespread grievance is the difference between generations. Foreign-trained persons complain that the best jobs at home are held by older and by sometimes locally-trained men who are not in touch with the newest developments in the field and who do not appreciate what the returnee learned abroad.

This conflict in generations is inherent in modernization, but the feeling of being trapped is not the same everywhere. Developing countries vary in rigidity of seniority, in degree of centralization in organizations, and in the ability of young professionals to change jobs. Some of the more affluent developing countries, such as Brazil and Iran, create many new organizations, and the expansion of jobs permits a beneficial reshuffling of personnel throughout the system. But in much of

Asia, opportunities are more limited and seniority is more rigid. Protests about the pyramid and the seniority system are particularly serious in India.

#### CONCLUSION

Fitting foreign education to domestic needs. The usual recommendations for educational exchange are to avoid training that is too complex for the needs of the developing country. However, some of our respondents did not agree with such a rigid policy. Even if a returnee seemed over-trained for the current capacities of the country, he would be needed before too long, as the society develops further. Graduate work often is conducted in areas more specialized than the person's later employment; what is important is versatility and ability to adapt knowledge to new situations.

If a returnee has received very specialized education that may be useful to the country, it is important that he keep abreast of developments after his return. Otherwise, he will be too "rusty" when the demand for his skills arises.

Utilization of skills. Ideally, all knowledge should be used to its maximum. But this requires large expenditures of domestic currency and foreign exchange. Enabling a professional to keep up with new developments overseas requires high spending for foreign journals and for air tickets. Each country must make its own decisions about priorities. At least the leaders in professional sectors should regularly inform the decision-makers of the disadvantages from not supplying all the needs of their followers.

A serious problem is the complete lack of time for research by many returnees at universities. Teaching and administrative loads are too high. If the returnees can be given enough time to do their own research and to supervise the work of others, their knowledge will not stagnate, their morale and teaching skills will be greater, and more persons will be able to learn how new knowledge is created. Returnees particularly need free time to deduce applications appropriate to their home societies from the theories and techniques learned in the most developed countries.

Creating a feeling of opportunity. A trend in developed countries is to reshape inflexible pyramidal hierarchies and create more room at the top, and developing countries can produce more opportunities for returnees at higher ranks by this method. The creation of more senior posts will give the many discontented returnees the essential safety valve of changing employers and positions; at present, too many feel trapped at intermediate ranks, with their futures limited to the slow rise by seniority in a hierarchy whose other members are all too familiar. Increased morale and reduced complaint should justify the increased salary costs. As in many other problems of national purpose, better leadership by the government and within the profession are essential. The young returnees and the older executives need to communicate better: the young may be able to contribute constructive ideas and energy to the leadership of the country, and the young may discover that the senior people are not lacking in wisdom and in problems themselves. Home country embassies and universities abroad should teach students how to readjust successfully to home, and not merely to make invidious comparisons with idealized models from the West.

## NOTES

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1. The purposes and design of the project are described in Mehri Hekmati and William A. Glaser, "The Brain Drain and UNITAR's Multi-national Research Project on the Subject," Social Science Information, Volume XII, Number 2 (April 1973), pp. 123-138. The first results are reported in William A. Glaser, The Brain Drain: Emigration and Return (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1978).