

# An Assessment of Professional Talent Migration from Pakistan

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## Preamble

'Talent migration' or 'brain drain' is a global phenomenon whereby mostly developing and poor countries lose their educated, technically and professionally skilled and talented workforce, who prefer to be employed in the rich and advanced countries for better job and career prospects, better salary and for improving their living and working conditions. Brain drain or emigration of skilled workers has become the dominant pattern of international migration now-a-days, in the context of globalization, expansion of knowledge economy and ageing population in rich countries. Brain drain is, sometimes, also termed as 'human capital flight' as it resembles international transfer of resources in the form of human capital.

In this Research Paper, we have made a detailed assessment of migration or brain drain of professional talent from Pakistan, supported by data and statistics from independent sources. This Paper is broadly classified under the following heads:

- a) Definition and origin of term 'Brain Drain'
- b) Benefits and Losses of Talent Migration
- c) Why talented professionals migrate?
- d) Recent trends in international migration
- e) UAE most popular migration place for Professionals LinkedIn Study
- f) Statistics of Professional Talent Outflow from Pakistan
- g) Increasing migration trend of Pakistani Accountants
- h) UAE is the top destination for Management Accountants
- i) Pakistan ranks 2nd in Global Index of Support for Immigration
- j) Students Emigration A Great loss of Talent for Pakistan
- k) How to achieve reverse brain drain? some recommendations

## Definition and origin of term 'Brain Drain'

The term 'brain drain' originated in the 1960s when a good number of British professionals (i.e. scientists, researchers and intellectuals) emigrated to the United States for better working environment. This pattern followed during 1970s

with massive and permanent emigration of highly qualified and talented professionals from developing countries to advanced nations. This phenomenon had an adverse impact on economic growth and development of these countries.

According to the World Bank, 'brain drain population' are those who are 25 years old and above, hold a tertiary-level degree and do not currently reside in their country of birth. The United Nations (UN), defines 'brain drain' as a 'one way movement of highly skilled people from developing countries to the developed countries that only benefits the industrialized countries'.

Brain drain or human flight capital has been defined by the economists, intellectuals and writers in different ways but the meaning of all of them are almost similar. Some of these definitions are:

- a) Brain drain is the departure or emigration of individuals with technical skills or knowledge from organization, industries and geographical regions.

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**The developed countries, including USA are experiencing low birth rates and an ageing population (workforce), which is compelling them to look towards the emerging and developing markets for their requirement of skilled workforce and talented professionals.**

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- b) Brain drain is the departure of highly educated people from one profession, geographic region, or nation to another.
- c) Brain drain is the migration of engineers, physicians, scientists, entrepreneurs and other highly skilled professionals with university-level education and training.
- d) Brain drain is the movement of highly skilled individuals, referred to as knowledge workers, from their home countries to countries that offer them greater opportunities in their area of specialty as well as in terms of living conditions and life styles.
- e) Human flight capital means flow of human capital out of a country, particularly skilled individuals and tertiary graduates.

## Benefits and Losses of Talent Migration

Talent migration or international movement of skilled workers and professionals brings a number of benefits and losses for both the home country and the country of destination.

### Benefits of Migration

- Migration of professionals and talented workforce contributes positively towards social and economic growth both in the countries of origin and the countries of destination.
- Migration of skilled and unskilled workforce reduces poverty and unemployment in home country and expands access to talented and skilled labour force in the host country.
- Emigration of skilled people strengthens the knowledge-based economy. The returning emigrants bring back experience and knowledge and act as 'knowledge brokers' who facilitates in technology transfer, skills development and knowledge exchange.
- Migrants play the role of 'development agents' by linking the origin country with the host or destination country for achieving economic growth and development.
- Emigrants help their home country by sending back remittances and making investments in viable development projects.

### Losses of Migration

- Migration of professionals and skilled workers is a matter of concern for the developing and emerging countries. International migration, as a result of globalization, has contributed to growing inequality across countries as human capital is becoming scarce where it is already scarce; and becoming more abundant where it is already abundant.
- Departure of professionals and workers overseas results in less tax revenue, loss of potential entrepreneurs and shortage of key workers in the developing countries.
- The reduction in human capital stock as a result of emigration of professionals slows down the economic progress in the host country.

### Why talented professionals migrate?

According to a research study, talent migration is directly proportional to the earning differential which means that more talented professionals will tend to migrate, in case there is reduction in their rate of return due to domestic tax and incomes policy. Secondly, talent migration also takes place when the state of affairs does not let the people to use their brain to best of their ability. Others reasons may be lack of opportunities; economic depression, law and order situation etc.

Research also suggests that there is a global and macro-perspective of massive movement of talented professionals to the advanced countries, especially to the USA. A major segment of business entities today operate in the global market place and they continuously need highly qualified professional managers and talented workforce, who are not only well updated with the industry but also know the global implications of their decisions. The developed countries, including USA are experiencing low birth rates and an ageing population (workforce), which is compelling them to look towards the emerging and developing markets for their requirement of skilled workforce and talented professionals. That is why; USA is now the top most destinations for all the international migrants, especially from the developing countries.

The 15th Annual Global CEO Survey, conducted by the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) in 2012, revealed that CEOs are finding it difficult to get the right talent they need to meet business demands and future prospects for the US economy are unlikely to improve without a long-term solution to existing talent shortages. This survey which interviewed 1258 CEOs in 60 countries, with 160 CEOs in USA, further reports that CEOs are looking for business growth in developing markets like Brazil, India and China by

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**The highest remittances of US\$ 4.12 billion during FY 2012-2013 were received from Saudi Arabia, which is one of the top most destinations for professionals and workers from Pakistan.**

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utilizing the home-growth talent base in these markets. The PWC survey concludes that during the past decade, global movement of talent has increased by 25 percent and by 2020 this talent migration shall grow by another fifty percent.

### Recent trends in international migration

According to the United Nations (UN), in 2013, around 232 million people or 3.2 percent of the world's population are international migrants, as compared with 175 million emigrants in 2000 and 154 million in 1990. This indicates the growing trend in international migration. Other important observations made by the United Nations in its released data are highlighted below:

- o USA remains the most popular destination for emigrants from the developing countries.
- o International migration from the Asian countries has increased substantially during the past decade. In 2013, Asians were the largest group with about 19 million migrants living in Europe; 16 million in North America and 3 million in Oceania.
- o Migrants from the Latin American and Caribbean countries were the second largest diaspora group with 26 million of them living in the North America.

**Table 1: Top 10 Destinations of International Migrants in 2013**

No.	Destination Country	Number of Int'l Migrants	% Share in Total Int'l Migrants (232 million)
1	USA	45.8 million	19.74%
2	Russian Federation	11 million	4.74%
3	Germany	9.8 million	4.22%
4	Saudi Arabia	9.1 million	3.92%
5	U.A.E	7.8 million	3.36%
6	United Kingdom	7.8 million	3.36%
7	France	7.4 million	3.19%
8	Canada	7.3 million	3.15%
9	Australia	6.5 million	2.80%
10	Spain	6.5 million	2.80%
<b>Total</b>		<b>119 million</b>	

(Source: United Nations – Analysis by ICMA Research Dept.)

- o Asia and Europe combined host nearly two thirds of all international migrants worldwide. In 2013, Asian region was home to 71 million migrants whereas Europe was most popular destination with 72 million international migrants.
- o From the Asian region, 36 million international migrants from the South Asian countries constitute the largest group, out of which 13.5 million settled in the oil-producing countries in Western Asia (Middle East and Near East countries).
- o Within Europe, Germany and France hosts the largest immigrant communities due to work migration and geographic routes with North Africa.
- o Out of 232 million international migrants in 2013, 136 million are residing in the North or developed countries, whereas 96 million are living in the South or developing countries.
- o In 2013, around 82.3 million international migrants who were born in the South were residing in the South, which is slightly higher than 81.9 million international migrants born in the South and living in the North.
- o Majority of international migrants are in the working age group between 20 to 64 years which accounts for 74 percent of the total migrants during 2013.
- o Women migrants are 48 percent of the total number of international migrants in 2013.

The above **Table 1** indicates that in 2013, out of 232 million international migrants, 199 million which comes to 51.29 percent of total world migrants were living in ten countries. Further, USA remained the first choice destination for 19.74 percent international migrants. During 1990 to 2013, USA attracted 23 million emigrants, equal to one million additional migrants every year.

### UAE most popular migration place for Professionals – LinkedIn Study

**LinkedIn** – the world's largest professional network carried out a global study with regard to trends in talent migration among the 300 million members on the network. Out of twenty nations covered in the study, UAE has emerged as the most popular destination for the talented professionals, of which 75 percent migrants hailed from outside the Middle East. UAE attracted more professional talent at 1.3 percent of its workforce than by other countries including Saudi Arabia, India, Canada, Singapore, Australia, South Africa, Switzerland and Brazil.

The major source countries from where talented professionals migrated to UAE included India at the top position followed by UK, Pakistan, USA and Saudi Arabia. The main professional industry skills that were mostly attracted in UAE included (1) management and leadership; (2) engineering; (3) Sales; and (4) Lifestyle. This growing talent inflow into UAE is due to the fact that UAE is embracing to host Expo 2020 in Dubai for which it is steadily building up a 'talent pool'. The Expo 2020 will be a 6-month long mega event that is expected to provide upto 277,000 new job opportunities in the market and boost the UAE economy.

The LinkedIn study further concluded that Saudi Arabia is also the second popular destination for the global talented professional, especially from the sub-continent, USA, Europe and other Arab nations, with talent attraction of 0.9 percent of total workforce. This shows that Gulf States still

**Table 2: TOP Employment Destinations of Pakistani Professionals and Workers**

No.	Countries	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
1	Saudi Arabia	201,816	189,888	222,247	358,560	270,502	1,246,013
2	U.A.E	140,889	113,312	156,353	182,630	273,234	866,418
3	Oman	34,089	37,878	53,525	69,407	47,794	242,693
4	Bahrain	7,087	5,877	10,641	10,530	9,600	43,735
5	Qatar	4,061	3,039	5,121	7,320	8,119	27,660
6	Italy	5,416	3,738	2,875	3,361	2,068	17,458
7	Malaysia	2,435	3,287	2,092	1,309	2,031	11,154
8	Kuwait	1,542	153	173	5	229	2,102
9	U.K.	556	430	308	183	158	1,635
10	U.S.A	184	196	182	164	226	952

(Source: Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment – Pakistan)

**Table 3: Top Nationalities of Successful Applicants to UK Entrepreneur Visa**

No.	Country	%age visa acceptance
1.	Pakistan	21%
2.	China	12%
3.	USA	9%
4.	India	7%
5.	Russia	5%
6.	Australia	5%
7.	Iran	4%
8.	Canada	4%
9.	Egypt	3.5%
10.	Nigeria	3%
11.	Hong Kong	2.5%

retain the attractiveness for employment by global professionals.

The above study of LinkedIn is supported by the statistics of CMAs qualified from ICMA Pakistan working overseas which shows that UAE and Saudi Arabia are the two top destinations (**Table-5**)

### Statistics of Professional Talent Outflow from Pakistan

According to the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, around 2,765,789 Pakistani nationals have proceeded abroad for employment during the last five years i.e. from January 2008 to September 2013. In one of its earlier released reports, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis had stated that 5,873,539 Pakistanis have emigrated from 1981 to 2012 out of which 41,498 professionals and technical workers left Pakistan for abroad in 2012 alone.

According to statistics released by the Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), a total number of 7,072,530 Pakistani workers registered during the period from 1971 to 2013 for overseas employment through the Bureau of Emigration out of which 4,062,584 workers registered during the period from 2002 to 2013. During 2013, 622,714 emigrants workers were registered which departed abroad for employment. **Table-3** shows that Saudi Arabia and UAE have remained the top destinations for Pakistani workers and professionals.

The above table indicates that during the last five years from 2009 to 2013, around 1.25 million professionals and workers (that were registered with the Bureau of Emigration) migrated to Saudi Arabia for employment with 270,502 workers migrated alone in 2013. The other major employment providing countries are UAE, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar.

The above statistics are clear indicative of brain drain trend in Pakistan, which is also evidenced from the growing amount of remittances being received from the overseas Pakistanis. According to the State Bank of Pakistan's data the expatriates and overseas Pakistanis sent home a record US\$ 13.92 billion during FY 2012-13 as compared to US\$ 13.19 billion showing a growth of 5.56 percent or US\$ 73 million. The highest remittances of US\$ 4.12 billion during FY 2012-2013 were received from Saudi Arabia, which is the top most destination for professionals and workers from Pakistan. The other top destinations include UAE, USA, UK and GCC countries viz. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman; and EU countries.

According to the Migration and Remittances report 2014 of the World Bank, Pakistan is ranked at 7th position in terms of the largest recipient of officially recorded remittances in the world. After India, Pakistan is the second largest recipient of remittances in South Asian region.

According to recent statistics released by the UK government, Pakistan is at top position in applying for entrepreneurial visa. Around 1943 applications from the entrepreneur visa were received in the first three quarters of 2013, out of which UK accepted 912 foreign entrepreneurs

**Around 17 percent of CMAs qualified from ICMA Pakistan have migrated to different countries for seeking better job prospects. UAE is the top destination of CMAs, followed by Saudi Arabia and Canada at second and third top destinations.**

from January 2013 to October 2013. About 21 percent of Pakistani entrepreneurs applied for UK visa, followed by China (21%); USA (9%) and India (7%). **Table-3** shows rankings of countries with regard to application for UK Entrepreneur visa.

### Increasing migration trend of Pakistani Accountants

It is concluded from statistics released by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment that more accountants are now moving outside the country for seeking employment and this number is increasing gradually. In 2009, total 1,248 accountants emigrated which increased to 1,802 in 2011; 2,593 in 2012 and 3,473 in

**Table 4: Professionals registered for Overseas Employment**

No	Categories	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
1	Engineers	2,352	2,408	2,951	3,577	4,764	16,052
2	Doctors	589	819	1,453	1,218	1,131	5,210
3	Nurses	219	78	131	449	315	1,192
4	Teachers	458	537	615	956	868	3,434
5	Accountants	1,248	1,381	1,802	2,593	3,473	10,497

(Source: Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment - Pakistan)



**Table 5: CMAs working Overseas**

No	Country of Destination	Total Number of CMAs
1	U.A.E.	234
2	Saudi Arabia	191
3	Canada	109
4	United Kingdom	67
5	Australia	51
6.	U.S.A	28
7.	Oman	24
8.	Qatar	16
9.	Afghanistan	15
10.	Other countries	82
<b>Total</b>		<b>817</b>

(Source: Membership Department – ICMA Pakistan)

2013, respectively. Table-4 shows the number of professionals, including accountants registered with the Bureau for overseas employment. It is quite clear from the table that in the professional category, accountants are in second position after engineers who are migrating to overseas countries for employment.

The above increasing migration trend of accountants is not unique for Pakistan. Even in United Kingdom, professionals, especially qualified accountants are migrating overseas which is causing concern for the governments. According to recent OECD statistics, around 1.3 Britons with university level education are living abroad that will add to the skill shortage issue in United Kingdom. A recent research carried out by the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo), also indicates that the United Kingdom will be facing a shortfall of 10,200 qualified accountants by 2050 due to skills shortages, an ageing workforce and restrictive migration policy. The research reports a 7.5% increase in accounting and finance placement in the last quarter of FY 2013 as against last year during same period. In addition, there was a 15% year-on-year increase in UK finance and accounting vacancies advertised during July and August 2013.

The Malaysian government is also facing similar situation with their best talents leaving abroad after getting education in the home country. The number of emigrants from Malaysia has tripled in the last two decades and the World Bank estimates that two out of every ten Malaysian with tertiary education migrates to other countries. To bring the talent back and ensure a skill pool, necessary to achieve its economic agenda of becoming a high income nation by 2020, the Malaysian government has established an agency by the name of 'TalentCorp Malaysia'. (<http://www.talentcorp.com.my>). Recently, an MoU has been signed between ICAEW and the Sunway-TES, one of Malaysia's leading international universities, to set up a Regional Centre for accountancy training. The Centre will aim to attract the best talent from the ASEAN countries and China to Malaysia. This would help Malaysia to become a

world centre for accounting and finance training and an educational hub for the ASEAN region.

## UAE is the top destination for Management Accountants

Around 17 percent of CMAs qualified from ICMA Pakistan have migrated to different countries for seeking better job prospects. **Table-5** shows the list of major countries and the number of CMAs working in these countries. UAE is the top destination of CMAs, followed by Saudi Arabia and Canada at second and third top destinations, respectively.

## Pakistan ranks 2nd in Global Index of Support for Immigration

The WIN-Gallup International conducted a global survey, covering 59 countries having more than 74% of world's population, with regard to seeking opinion as to whether immigration across borders is a good or bad thing. The results of this global poll have been released in shape of "Global Index of Support for Immigration 2012" which concludes that 34 percent support immigration whereas 38 percent are against immigration. (Note: the 'Immigration Index' represents the percentage of the population in a country which feels positively towards Immigration minus those who feel negatively about immigration).

**The Pakistani nation has been ranked second in the Global Index with + 41 net score, after Nigeria (top position with + 65 net score) which support immigration.** Quite surprisingly, the Indian nation with -20 net score is among those countries which oppose immigration.

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According to the experts, increase in brain drain from Pakistan has reached alarming proportion and the country has lost its capability to absorb thousands of doctors, engineers, accountants, IT experts and other professionals and technicians that enter the job market every year. Resultantly, most of them have either left the country or are aspiring to leave the country. The situation is reverse in India.

## Students Emigration – A Great loss of Talent for Pakistan

Mobility of students is also referred to as skilled migration. It is a fact that Pakistan is one of the leading sources of foreign students in USA, Europe, Australia and new emerging higher education destinations in Asia. United Kingdom and Australia are the top two destinations in OECD countries for Pakistani migrating students, despite the fact that visa rejection rates for Pakistanis are higher than students from

## Global Immigration Index for 2012

(Rank ordered from 'High' to 'Low')

Nations that Support Immigration (Net Score is Positive)			Nations that Oppose Immigration (Net Score is Negative)		
No.	Country	Net Score	No.	Country	Net Score
1.	Nigeria	65	1.	Denmark	-1
2.	Pakistan	41	2.	Fiji	-1
3.	Armenia	30	3.	Kenya	-2
4.	China	28	4.	Afghanistan	-3
5.	Ghana	26	5.	Colombia	-3
6.	Finland	23	6.	Netherlands	-5
7.	South Sudan	22	7.	Argentina	-8
8.	Vietnam	19	8.	France	-9
9.	South Korea	17	9.	Azerbaijan	-9
10.	Uzbekistan	16	10.	Romania	-10
11.	Germany	16	11.	Australia	-12
12.	Switzerland	14	12.	Moldova	-13
13.	Iceland	12	13.	Bulgaria	-15
14.	Canada	11	14.	Palestin	-17
15.	Saudi Arabia	10	15.	Spain	-19
16.	Cameroon	07	16.	USA	-20
17.	Austria	07	17.	India	-20
18.	Peru	05	18.	Poland	-21
19.	Japan	05	19.	Ireland	-23
20.	Brazil	02	20.	Ecuador	-24
			21.	Italy	-31
			22.	Russia	-31
			23.	Hong Kong	-31
			24.	Ukraine	-33
			25.	Tunisia	-37
			26.	South Africa	-38
			27.	Lebanon	-39
			28.	Iraq	-39
			29.	Lithuania	-39
			30.	Malaysia	-40
			31.	Egypt	-41
			32.	Macedonia	-41
			33.	Czech Republic	-43
			34.	Georgia	-43
			35.	Belgium	-44
			36.	Turkey	-46

the other countries. The number of Pakistan students in the USA was 5,222 in 2009-10 (23rd rank), which declined from 8,644 students in 2001-2 (13th rank).

Pakistan has become the top growth market for Australia's struggling education industry which is now facing decline in overall foreign student population. Australia's earnings fell drastically from its top twelve foreign markets and major loss of 37% was from Indian students. However, 15% increase in Australia's earnings was witnessed in growth of Pakistani students. According to a recent data released by Australian government, the number of Pakistani students in Australia is continuing double-digit growth. During last five years, Australian international education revenue from Pakistan has more than tripled, which indicates the migration trend of Pakistani students.

The above statistics provides evidence to the fact that more Pakistani students are migrating overseas for higher education, than the Indian students who prefer to stay in

back to Pakistan and prefer to get a good job in the European companies and other settle there permanently after getting immigration nationality or citizenship of these countries. This also signifies loss of professional talent and brain drain.

**According to the experts, increase in brain drain from Pakistan has reached alarming proportion and the country has lost its capability to absorb thousands of doctors, engineers, accountants, IT experts and other professionals and technicians that enter the job market every year.**

India for higher education. It is also unfortunate that majority of the talented Pakistani students do not come

The above **Table-6** reflects the following facts / trends:

- Steady increase in students' migration - 14,294 students in 2004 to 24,800 students in 2009.
- Falling trend in students migration to USA 7,325 students in 2004 to 5,211 students in 2009.
- Growing students' migration to Australia 1,100 students in 2004 to 2,844 students in 2009.
- New students' destination in Sweden only 4 students in 2004 to 2,420 students in 2009.

**Table 6: International Students from Pakistan in OECD Countries**

No	Five main destinations	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	United Kingdom	4,378	6,547	7,940	9,307	9,303	9,609
2	United States	7,325	6,576	5,963	5,520	5,351	5,211
3	Australia	1,100	1,295	1,539	2,090	2,482	2,844
4	Sweden	4	3	20	62	1,303	2,420
5	Canada	889	-	1,161	996	1,342	1,439
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,294</b>	<b>15,126</b>	<b>17,484</b>	<b>19,115</b>	<b>22,517</b>	<b>24,800</b>

(Source: Connecting with Emigrants: A Global Profile of Diasporas - OECD 2012)

## How to achieve reverse brain drain? Some recommendations

### a) Providing lucrative package of Incentives to Pakistani emigrants

There is no shortage of talent in Pakistan but unfortunately due to wrong policies of the government and the macro-economic conditions in the country, they are migrating to other countries. The government should, therefore take immediate measures to arrest the increasing trend of migration of Pakistani professionals like accountants, doctors, engineers, economists, technicians, IT experts etc by providing them lucrative package of incentives so as to engage them in the national growth and economic development. No doubt, the country earns valuable foreign exchange in shape of remittances as a result of brain drain, but on the other hand, we are also losing huge amounts in shape of fee to foreign experts and consultants, due to lack of our own experts and consultants which migrate to other countries for better prospects. If proper infrastructure is provided to the Pakistani emigrants, the country could earn manifold than the money it is receiving in shape of foreign remittances.

### b) Establishing 'Diaspora Knowledge Network' of Pakistani emigrants

The government should encourage the overseas Pakistani professionals, through the Pakistani Missions abroad, to form 'Diaspora Knowledge Network (DKN)' as being done by emigrants from countries like India, China, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Turkey and Bangladesh. The Diaspora Knowledge Network has played a critical role in technological upgrading, industrial development and building of productive capacities in these countries through designing of diaspora strategy as an integral part of industrial policy along with a broader national development strategy. This means that the Pakistani government should design industrial policies and strategies in consideration to the skills and abilities of the Pakistani professional emigrants, who may then provide knowledge and technology for use in Pakistan and revive the stagnant economic growth.

### c) Following Taiwan model for return migration of Pakistani students

Pakistan can follow the 'Taiwan' model for encouraging its talented students abroad to return and use their talent for

the economic development of the country. Taiwan experienced a loss of more than 80 percent of its students who completed their graduate degree in USA. The Chinese government took a number of steps to increase return migration of its students. In this connection, it set up a cabinet-level government agency namely "National Youth Commission (NYC)" to recruit Taiwan's scholars abroad and carry out related programs. The official policy of Taiwan consists of two sections i.e. (1) improving and strengthening institutions of higher learning at home and (2) encouraging Taiwan's brain in the USA to remigrate and/ or contribute their talents and knowledge to Taiwan's national development.

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**The government should encourage the overseas Pakistani professionals, through the Pakistani Missions abroad, to form 'Diaspora Knowledge Network (DKN)' as being done by emigrants from countries like India, China, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Turkey and Bangladesh.**

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