Call for Papers – Highly skilled migration in the labour market: Brain waste or brain gain?

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Highly skilled migration is a major phenomenon in a globalized world with important implications for source and destination countries. In the past, most studies have focused on the so-called brain drain (i.e. human capital emigration from developing countries). Here we seek contributions on the phenomenon of brain waste: the underutilization of migrant education and skills in the host country. Such a labour market mismatch is often referred to as over-education, horizontal mismatch between employment and field of education, or simply skills mismatch. Consider the example of a migrant scientist who works as a taxi driver.

We are seeking innovative quantitative papers that examine the (different) reasons and consequences of educational or skills mismatch, either vertical or horizontal, including contributions to better measurement. Possible research questions are the propensity of immigrants to become self-employed as a result of mismatch, their propensity to (re-) migrate due to mismatch, or their likelihood to send remittances, or the eventual consequence of hosting mismatched immigrants for the host labour market. We particularly welcome papers that fully account for the gender dimension of brain waste.

Papers addressing counterfactuals will be specially welcome: the mismatch a migrant would have experienced – if any – if he or she stayed in the country of origin (the migrant scientist working as a taxi driver may not have found adequate employment in the country of origin).


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