**Human Resource Opportunities for Pakistan**

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“Human resources are like natural resources; they are often buried deep. You have to go looking for them; they are not just lying around on the surface. You have to create the circumstances where they show themselves”.

Ken Robinson

Human resource is a great asset for the economy of any nation as it contributes to the overall productivity of a nation’s economy. It enables the nation to capitalize on available resources and opportunities, therefore, the presence of trained and well-equipped human resources is a blessing for any nation. Pakistan in this regard, is indeed fortunate to possess highly qualified, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled human resources. If this potential is utilized properly, it can bring huge benefits to the nation.

Major threats to Pakistan’s economic security are the declining standard of living, rising inflation, and the youth unemployment rate. The aim of successive governments has always been to promote higher education and increase literacy. However, the strategy to train human resources has always been a missing link. Resultantly, there are significantly more graduates than job openings causing social disparities.IMF World’s Economic Outlook Report 2019″ foresees a sharp increase in the unemployment rate in Pakistan.

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If human resource is not effectively managed, it becomes a liability for the country. The governments have two alternatives in this regard: either they can find foreign markets to pay for the skilled human resources, or they can create more jobs domestically. Both options should be applied simultaneously according to the situation of the respective country to chalk out a comprehensive plan of action to channel and utilize human resources. In the context of Pakistan, it is difficult to create new jobs/slots in the current economic situation; thus, outsourcing human resources along with internal consumption is key to resolving the challenge. Therefore, there is a need to look into new opportunities abroad and develop a practical plan for utilising human resources to boost the economy. A large number of Pakistanis are already supporting the economy of the country through foreign remittances, however, decreasing opportunities in the existing job markets are hinting towards diversification of job avenues.

The Scandinavian region could be a reliable potential job market owing to its robust economies and high standard of living. All five Nordic countries are among the 20 countries in the world with the highest GDP per capita, showing how economically successful the region is.

The Scandinavian nations of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland are renowned for employment opportunities and growing job market as well. The Graph shows the annual average earnings over the years in Scandinavia which shows why Scandinavia should be considered as a potential job market.

As per the graph, the annual average earnings of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland are €35,485.73, €39,273.77, €45,686.24, €33,155.47 and €49,514.31 respectively. Whereas, the annual average earning of the EU is €24 947 and the Middle East is €35,388.

Furthermore, increasing employment rates also indicate the presence of opportunities for foreign workforce. As far as the specific demand in Scandinavia is concerned, the specific job market and job opportunities vary by country and industry. The country-wise details are as follows:-

o Sweden: The fields in demand are doctors, nurses, midwifery, dentists, engineers, accountants, teachers, lawyers, IT experts, software and system developers, decorators, carpenters, chefs, drivers, electrician, welders, construction workers and firefighters,

\* Denmark: It needs civil engineers, architects, biochemists, accountants, dentists, doctors, electronics engineers, IT project managers, lawyers, music teachers, nurses, pharmacists, psychologists and hospitality and housekeeping experts.

\* Norway: Oil and gas and renewable energy experts, IT professionals – developers, programmers, project managers, civil engineering and mechanical engineering are thriving professions in Norway. Furthermore, Norway has an ageing population, which is creating a demand for more healthcare and social service workers. Therefore, it is a good market for the medical human resource.

\* Finland: IT and software professionals, HR managers, engineers, accountants, doctors, nurses, teachers, STEM professionals.

\* Iceland: The job opportunities are available in construction, healthcare, IT and tourism areas. The economic forecast of Iceland suggests that between “2022 and 2025, the number of jobs in Iceland will increase by 15,000, while the number of Icelandic workers will only increase by 3,000. Therefore 80% of the required workforce must be filled by expats”.

Therefore, the data shows the requirement for diverse human resources in various fields and Pakistan can offer human resources in all aforementioned fields.

As far as key stakeholders are concerned, the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MOFEPT) and the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) are key stakeholders along with MoFA. MOFEPT maintains the data of trained skilled workers, whereas, MOPHRD trains the HR and maintains the data of outgoing emigrants registered in all categories. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) working under the MOFEPT is tasked to oversee professional/vocational training. 4500 institutes under NAVTTC are training human resources in Pakistan.

According to Schedule II of the Rules of Business, 1973, the MOPHRD’s designated business is to establish and coordinate national policies for job promotion and manpower development for prospective international employees. Furthermore, the creation of short- and long-term programmes to enhance human capital and advance employment overseas also comes under the mandate of the ministry.

The National Industrial Relations Commission (NIRC), the Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment (BE&OE), and the Directorate of Workers Education (DWE) are the three attached departments that makeup Pakistan’s current HR Development and Allocation Infrastructure. There are also four autonomous bodies: the Overseas Pakistan Foundation (OPF), The Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC), the Employees’ Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), and the Workers Welfare Fund (WWF). These autonomous bodies and departments are working under the MOPHRD.

The Bureau of Emigrants and Overseas Employment (BE&OE) reports that Pakistan exported 832,339 workers in 2022 which is the second-largest number ever recorded, with 946,571 being the most in 2015. In addition, 12 Million skilled and unskilled individuals travelled to various countries across the world during the last 4 years, however, only 578 of them were registered for Scandinavia. Hence, 0.0048% of all immigrants opt to go to Scandinavia as their final destination. Engineers, computer programmers, managers, cooks, and general labourers made up the majority of the immigrants. Furthermore, the figures highlight that there is a need for immediate action and focused investigation to find out why Pakistan’s human resource export is low in these countries despite the availability of opportunities. Unfortunately, the lack of research culture in the HR sector is the main reason for depriving us to diversify our HR markets and exploring available opportunities.

Scandinavian countries are known for their inclusive and innovative HR practices. Opportunities for skilled labour are promoted through official channels, whereas, those for unskilled labour are investigated through private sectors, however, there are some challenges too. First and foremost, the job market is fiercely competitive as it offers good remittances and exposure. Secondly, visa regimes are tough for non-EU countries. Thirdly, people are not aware of the opportunities available in the Scandinavian region. Own diaspora is very small and people do not have access to job advertisements as they have in the case of Middle East and other European countries.

Above in view, following are the recommendations:-

\* Keeping in consideration the opportunities available, there is a need to deploy Commercial Welfare attaché in Scandinavia.

\* MOPHRD should collaborate with MoFA to negotiate visa regimes with Scandinavian Governments.

\* MOPHRD can compile detailed HR data at the national level. The data should include the following credentials:-

\* The HR is exported to other countries.

\* The excess trained HR available within fields.

\* The HR requirements in various countries along with the numbers.

\* There is a need for an official website related to Scandinavia that can be used to advertise opportunities in the region in addition to the guidance related to visa processing.

\* MOPHRD should pass guidelines to MOFEPT to train HR in accordance with the requirements abroad.

\* Public-private cooperation could be used to train professionals according to the demand in Scandinavia. HR export system may be outsourced to the private sector. In this regard, private companies and agents can be certified to find opportunities in Scandinavia and facilitate training according to the necessity there. MOPHRD may only facilitate and regulate the process.

o Short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals may be set and evaluated every year through a detailed report.

By adopting the above-mentioned recommendations we can diversify our job markets, therefore, generating more remittances for the country.

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