

Investigating the Impact of Health Care Recruitment from Developing Countries: The Philippines as Case Study

Synopsis

The Philippines continues to be one of the largest exporters of migrant labour, as well as the top supplier of migrant health and care workers in the world. This study draws from fieldwork investigating the impact of British health care recruitment and receiving country policy on the Philippines, which has long been considered among multilateral circles as a model sending country.

Background

In October of 2004, COMPAS embarked on a research project investigating the situation of migrant labour in the British care sector. Specific focus was placed on migrant workers from Philippines. Filipinos currently make up one of the largest and most visible group of internationally recruited nurses in the country, while the Philippines is currently one of the top exporters of health personnel in the world. Filipinos also figure prominently in private care homes and in the provision of elderly care in private households, though the actual number of those who do care work in these sectors is harder to record.

In order to assess the effect of nursing and care work recruitment from the sending country perspective, fieldwork was carried out in the Philippines between November and December 2004.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the fieldwork was (a) to establish links with experts, health officials, academics, government officials, and recruitment agencies involved in health care migration management, and (b) to collect relevant literature.

Likewise, interviews were conducted to help determine the following:

1. What were the means and motivations for migration among health and care workers?
2. How do institutions such as the Philippine state, recruitment agencies, employers, and the academe shape the flow of Filipino care workers to the UK in the context of this demand?
3. How does the state-to-state agreement between the UK and the Philippines work out in practice, particularly with regard to the UK “ethical recruitment” guidelines?

Methods

Links were established between COMPAS and Philippine-based organizations, individuals, and institutions concerned with and involved in Philippine labour export. They included, but were not limited to, the National Institute of Health (NIH), the University of the Philippines College of Nursing, the Scalabrini Migration Center, Bond Worldwide, Inc. (one of the top recruitment agencies in the country), and the St. Augustine School of Nursing (the largest health professional training school).

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Methods (continued)

A series of interviews were conducted with recruiters, academics and experts, and nursing and healthcare professionals involved in training and administration. Additional data and literature on immigration patterns were gathered from local research bodies.

Likewise, a select group of graduating nursing students from the University of the Philippines were interviewed in order to determine (a) their motivation (if any) to work in the UK, (b) the process they hoped to undertake in order to work abroad, and (c) their career expectations.

A key component of the fieldwork involved attending the World Conference of Overseas Filipino Workers, held at the Bayview Hotel from 16 – 18 December 2004. COMPAS composed one of the over 200 delegates from organizations around the world. The conference presented a wide range of updated studies on Philippine migration trends, the abstracts of which are available on file at COMPAS.

Initial findings

Although the Philippines has long specialized in labour export, the increased demand for nursing and care work in the developed world has resulted in a rapid and drastic restructuring in academic and private institutions focused on careers in health care, a shift in the nature of the labour market, and a rapid state response, which has included the drafting of a state-to-state agreement overseeing the recruitment of care workers to the UK.

The following observations were noted in the course of fieldwork in the Philippine capital Manila, drawn from the interviews and local literature:

- i) State level responses: State-to-state agreement between the Philippines and the UK; Philippine state encourages migration and facilitates remittance delivery.
- ii) A restructuring of the academe: Exponential increase in privately funded schools offering health-related diploma courses with curricula specifically tailored around foreign health systems; deans of established nursing schools are being aggressively courted by recruitment agencies and pirated by newly-formed nursing colleges.
- iii) A demand-driven, market-oriented culture of migration: Billboards advertising nursing and care work courses line every street corner and highway; Sunday classified ads in all major broadsheets are dominated by nursing and care work vacancies in the United States and UK.
- iv) A restructuring of skills within the local labour market: Unprecedented numbers of students are enrolled in nursing and health-related courses; groups of doctors have re-trained as nurses in order to gain easier entry into the U.S. labour market.

Work in Progress

Planned output: Second phase of Philippine fieldwork planned in late 2007, seminars, academic, non-academic publications 2007-2008.

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<http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/research/filipino%20study/home.shtml>

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