Dynamics of Expatriation Process – A Case of Indian Expatriation to UAE

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Abstract

This paper studies the process of expatriation and focuses on an active role played by the overseas recruitment consultancies, and argues that the role of consultancies is not only limited to recruitment only but its more than that, starting from getting the license of recruitment till the candidates joins for the duty. It involves lots of rigorous activities and background work. This paper is divided into three parts. The first part, discusses about trend of expatriation from states of India to United Arab Emirates (UAE). The second part, focuses on framework of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) on process of licensing and responsible role of licenced recruitment agencies against candidates and the third part, discusses on process of recruitment and selection and critical analysis on that, based on the case and field study.

Keywords: UAE, expatriation, MOIA, overseas recruitment consultancies.

1. Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) which is a member state of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) comprises of total seven emirates, Al-ain, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras-al Khaimah, Sharjah and Abu-Dhabi the capital city. It is situated in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula. Since 3000BC the trading of pearl and fisheries exists in the region and it was well established, and a camel caravan route through the region from North
to south was an alternative way to India. According to the web site of UAE Embassy in New Delhi, at that time the port of Ras-Al-Khaimah was among the famous entrepots due to pearl and fisheries trade.

The UAE and other gulf states have emerged as a major trading entity for India and there exists a tremendous potential for cooperation in the areas like trade and investments, energy and manpower, amongst others. UAE is the largest investor in India accounting for around 79.0 percent ($321.1 million) of the total investment made by GCC countries. India and UAE have also undertaken several defence exercises and strategic dialogues since they agreed to form a Joint Defence Cooperation Committee in year 2003. As per Indian Council of World Affairs, UAE was the second largest destination for India’s exports after USA now UAE has emerged as India’s largest trading partner, even exceeding China and the USA.

2. Trend of Expatriation From India to UAE
Relation between India and UAE exists since time immemorial as is evident from the maritime trade relations. Venier (2011) identified three waves of migration to UAE in last 30 years, The first wave of migration was in 1973-1974 which was after oil price hike, second wave of migration was in the beginning of 1990’s after gulf war in Kuwait and the third wave of migration was identified as the end of twentieth century.

Migration from India to UAE is majorly in semiskilled segment and unskilled segment but migration from India to US and UK are mostly in skilled segment (Khadria et. al., 2008). It is very interesting that GCC countries comprises of only 0.4 per cent of the world population and it hosts around 15 million expatriates with Indian expatriates being close to 5 million. And, UAE itself hosts around 2 million Indian Expatriates. Expatriates in UAE are on temporary or contract basis, and they can neither buy their property nor can settle permanent there. Winckler (2010) in his article entitled ‘Labor Migration to the GCC States: Patterns, Scale, and Policies’ argues that in the post-WW II era, there have been four main international labor migration patterns – a) international migration as a basic tool for nation building, b) temporary labor migration to the “nation-state” developed countries, c) a total ban on labor migration, and, d) the unique GCC rentier labor migration pattern.

Juan Somavia, Ex-ILO Director General states that ‘Migrant workers are an asset to every country where they bring their labour…migrant workers provide valuable services with their labour and furnish an often invisible subsidy to the national economies that receive them. The UAE is the best example for that, as the growth and development of the economy is entirely dependent on the one of the most important factors of the production “labour”, the expatriates. Naithani and Jha (2010) finds that the expatriates from different foreign locations are extended a different social treatment and Asian expatriates do not enjoy the same social status as their counterparts from western world do. Suter (2005) revealed two fundamental issues. On one hand, it has shown why migrant workers come to the United Arab Emirates.
Contemporary theories on international migration have been presented to analyse the results of the field study undertaken during four weeks in the Emirate of Dubai.

Khadaria (2006) estimates 20-25 Million Indians all over the world, in all three segments of skill (skilled, semiskilled and unskilled) over last two centuries. Figure 1 depicts the state-wise figures of workers granted emigration clearance/ECNR during the years 2006-2011. The year 2008 shows highest number of expatriation from Kerala (see figure 1) as compared to other states of the country. Jharkhand shows relatively higher increase in expatriation as compared to Kerala in the year 2007.

**Figure 1:** State-wise figures of workers granted emigration clearance/ECNR during 2006-2011.
Also, out of the total expatriation from India to UAE, Kerala constitutes 50% of the total expatriate population (see table 1). Migrants from Kerela constitute huge population in UAE and other gulf countries.

Table 1: Expatriates from Indian States in the UAE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Population (in lakhs)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>Employed mainly in jobs in offices, schools, receptionist-secretaries, small business establishments, salesmen, van drivers, watchmen, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Employed in field jobs, construction and offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Employed in construction and other blue collar jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Mainly in construction sector, aluminium and steel works, business, carpentry, crane and heavy vehicle drivers, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Others (incl. Rajasthan, UP, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Gujaratis are mainly in business sector. Goans are mainly in hotel industry. Bottom of Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, UAE.*

3. MOIA Framework

The Emigration Act, 1983, provides a regulatory framework for Indian Emigrants for their protection and welfare. The Emigration Act, 1983 (Section 10) requires that those who wish to recruit Indian citizens for employment abroad shall register themselves with the registering authority i.e., the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE). As per MOIA, the fee prescribed for registration is Rs. 25,000/-.

Initially, the Registration Certificate (RC) is valid for a period of five years. The applicant is required to deposit Bank Guarantee of Rs.20 Lakhs also. Emigration Act, 1983 (Section 16) mentions that recruitment for overseas employment can be done either by a recruiting agent having Registration Certificate from the Registering authority or by an employer directly by obtaining a permit from the PGE.

The framework of recruitment by MOIA requires Recruiting agents to obtain a Demand Letter, a Power of Attorney and a Specimen Employment Contract (all in
original) from foreign employers in order to recruit workers and obtain emigration clearance for their departure. The employment contract lays down the basic terms and conditions of employment, including salary, accommodation, medical cover, transport, etc. As per MOIA, in case of the vulnerable categories of workers such as unskilled labour and women emigrants extra precautions are taken care of, so, the employment documents are required to be attested by the Indian Mission concerned.

Extra protection is extended to housemaids and other unskilled workers which constitute the most vulnerable category and to avoid that the ministry has taken some measures such as: The age limit of 30 years has been made mandatory in respect of all women emigrants emigrating on ECR passports to ECR countries irrespective of the nature/category of employment; the foreign employer has to make a security deposit of US$2,500 if he recruits the female worker directly etc.

Recruiting agents also have been assigned to protect the interests of the emigrant worker. They are advised to maintain certain basic facilities, initiatives like the ‘Open House’ meeting with Recruiting Agents, electronic filing of applications for registration and a POE conference were also taken up during the year. Three POE offices of Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai are declared ISO certified in year 2011.

Since 2007, the Ministry is running an awareness programme by campaigning on issues such as, problems faced by emigrant workers and legal emigration process, Problems related to Indian housemaids overseas, NRI marriages; and Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) Helpline awareness campaign through various media like Doordarshan, All India Radio, Lok Sabha TV, Private national as well as regional channels and National as well as Regional dailies.

4. Discussion and Conclusion
Process of expatriation involves rigorous stages which starts from requisition for recruitment, recruitment means generating a pool of talent by means of advertisement, short listing of applications and conducting preliminary round of interviews. Step of Recruitment ends once process of selection starts but the Recruitment Agency’s job is not merely limited to the recruitment only, but they have to go through rigorous process starting from the licensing procedure, as mentioned above in this paper under the subheading MOIA framework. Recruitment Agencies have to conduct interviews at multi-locations all across the country in the search of the best fit candidates, and in some cases here the role of sub agents appears and the illegal recruitments comes in the system. The subagents most of the time lure the innocent village people and facilitate the process of expatriation. Most of the licensed recruitment agencies generally bear all cost of travel related to recruitment including the travel cost of employer from UAE and other gulf countries to India, and with in India (revealed one of the consultant during field study). Dito (2008) puts forth two major concerns of the UAE and other GCC countries related to migration policies: first, balancing the demographic imbalance between nationals and non nationals, and the second which has become more urgent is the approach toward localization. The paper also argues
that there is a need to reform the scope of migrant workers management in the UAE and other gulf countries.

During a field study one of the consultant a Case 1, the responsible role of consultancy lies in helping him to come back to India by paying the contract breaking amount to the company as per the agreement and also to bear all cost of boarding. But, the question is to ascertain the situation which forced him to decide for the suicide? And why soon after reaching there he started to attempt suicide? These are the questions which indicate that there must be a conflict between real and desired situation which made him uncomfortable. The cross-cultural training for a week before sending from home country to host country and a good briefing about the real situation may had helped Abid (name changed) to overcome the situation.

Case 1

A case of Abid who went UAE to work as electrician with Diploma in Engineering faced adjustment issues and during his first month of stay in UAE, he attempted to suicide “twice” then the employer decided to deport him to Delhi, and he came back to India at his home at Okhla, he met with their all family members, did breakfast together with family and when his father and brother left home for their work and mother was busy in some household work, just after an hour of breakfast he committed suicide by hanging himself.

The UAE Company came to know about the sorrowful end of Abid and soon contacted to his family member and asked for medical report and within a week without any hassle gave the insured amount to the family.

Source: Author’s field study (during a discussion with the consultant in May 2013)

References

[3] B. Suter (2005), Labour Migration in the United Arab Emirates-Field Study on Regular and Irregular Migration in Dubai, Malmö University, Sweden.
