



“Migration reduces disparities in wealth and development.” Discuss this statement. [15 marks]

Introduction

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another to live. It can occur on a variety of scales, domestic migration often involves the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas. International migration is the movement from one country to another. Migration often occurs as people search for a better standard of living and move to places that offer this. Through this process disparities should in theory be reduced but it is not always the case.

International for

International migration can play an important role in reducing disparities between countries. For example, there has been large scale migration from Mexico to the USA in search of jobs and higher paying jobs. The migrants send millions of dollars worth of remittance payments home to their families in Mexico, this represents a flow of capital between the countries and reduces the economic disparities between the countries. Remittance payments help families provide a better education for their children and generally raise their standard of living.

Another recent example has been the flow of skilled Polish construction workers into the UK. They provide cheaper labour for the UK and again vast sums of remittances have been sent back to families in Poland to raise the standard of living there.

International against

International migration does not always reduce disparities though. There is the risk that if an economy is doing badly, wages are low or there are few job prospects the most skilled or educated members of the labour force may be tempted to migrate overseas for better working conditions and wages. This is known as the brain drain. The recent economic crisis in Ireland has led to many of its educated young people moving to the UK or mainland Europe in search of better work prospects. This has the effect of increasing the disparities as the Irish economy is left with less skilled workforce and a depletion of its economically active population (increased tax burden on those that remain).

Many African countries have experienced trained doctors and engineers leaving to work in European countries where the pay and working conditions are much more attractive. This restricts the development in their own country and represents a loss on the investment in training these professionals.

Domestic migration can reduce disparities within countries. Urban areas often have higher standards of living than the rural areas in many developing countries since this is where the higher paying jobs are and the highest levels of investment in infrastructure.

Domestic for

Again remittances play an important role of workers in the cities are likely to support their families in the rural areas by sending some money back. In these cases it is likely to be their parents that they support. Through sending money back to the rural areas they boost spending in these areas which can stimulate the economy and create jobs.

Domestic against

In many cases though, rural to urban migration is creating larger disparities as the urban areas cannot keep pace with the level of inward migration. Lack of jobs and housing is leading to many residents living in poverty in slums/shanty towns and working in the informal sector (often dangerous and possibly illegal). The favelas in and around Rio de Janeiro such as Rocinha & Manguinhos are an example. Big divides in income, housing quality, service provision (waste disposal, electricity, internet, piped fresh water etc) exist in many developing cities between the rich and the poor and are getting worse.

Conclusion

Reach your own conclusion.....