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## TRENDS IN MODERN EDUCATION: THE IMPACT OF VARIOUS TYPES OF FACTORS ON STUDENT MOBILITY AND MIGRATION

TENDÊNCIAS NA EDUCAÇÃO MODERNA: O IMPACTO DE VÁRIOS TIPOS DE FATORES NA MOBILIDADE E MIGRAÇÃO DOS ESTUDANTES

TENDENCIAS EN LA EDUCACIÓN MODERNA: EL IMPACTO DE DIVERSOS TIPOS DE FACTORES EN LA MOVILIDAD Y LA MIGRACIÓN ESTUDIANTIL

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**ABSTRACT:** Educational migration is a form of social mobility closely tied to the pursuit of knowledge, skills, and international experience. This study examines the influence of various factors on student mobility and migration, focusing on decisions to study abroad and to select a host country. A critical review of the literature was combined with an expert survey of 37 specialists, whose evaluations helped rank and weigh the significance of push and pull factors. The results show that while economic criteria such as tuition and housing costs remain important, they are secondary to the perceived quality of education, internationally recognized qualifications, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The study concludes that models emphasizing only economic aspects are insufficient, as educational migration is increasingly shaped by the long-term develop-



ment of human capital and intercultural exchange, benefiting both sending and host countries.

**KEYWORDS:** Educational migration. Student mobility. Studying abroad. Host country. Sending country.

**RESUMO:** *A migração educativa é uma forma de mobilidade social intimamente ligada à procura de conhecimento, competências e experiência internacional. Este estudo examina a influência de vários fatores na mobilidade e migração dos estudantes, com foco nas decisões de estudar no estrangeiro e na seleção de um país de acolhimento. Uma revisão crítica da literatura foi combinada com um inquérito a 37 especialistas, cujas avaliações ajudaram a classificar e ponderar a importância dos fatores de atração e repulsão. Os resultados mostram que, embora critérios económicos como as propinas e os custos de habitação continuem a ser importantes, são secundários em relação à qualidade percebida da educação, às qualificações reconhecidas internacionalmente e às oportunidades de crescimento pessoal e profissional. O estudo conclui que os modelos que enfatizam apenas os aspectos económicos são insuficientes, dado que a migração educativa é cada vez mais moldada pelo desenvolvimento a longo prazo do capital humano e do intercâmbio intercultural, beneficiando tanto os países de origem como os de destino.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Migração educativa. Mobilidade estudantil. Estudar no estrangeiro. País de acolhimento. País de envio.*

**RESUMEN:** *La migración educativa es una forma de movilidad social estrechamente vinculada a la búsqueda de conocimientos, habilidades y experiencia internacional. Este estudio examina la influencia de diversos factores en la movilidad y migración estudiantil, centrándose en las decisiones de estudiar en el extranjero y elegir un país de acogida. Se combinó una revisión crítica de la literatura con una encuesta a 37 especialistas, cuyas evaluaciones ayudaron a clasificar y ponderar la importancia de los factores de expulsión y atracción. Los resultados muestran que, si bien criterios económicos como los costos de matrícula y alojamiento siguen siendo importantes, son secundarios a la calidad percibida de la educación, las cualificaciones reconocidas internacionalmente y las oportunidades de crecimiento personal y profesional. El estudio concluye que los modelos que enfatizan únicamente los aspectos económicos son insuficientes, ya que la migración educativa está cada vez más condicionada por el desarrollo a largo plazo del capital humano y el intercambio intercultural, lo que beneficia tanto a los países de origen como a los de acogida.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Migración educativa. Movilidad estudiantil. Estudios en el extranjero. País de acogida. País de origen*

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## INTRODUCTION

Access to education across different regions of the world has always been, and remains, uneven—more limited in less developed countries and more accessible in developed ones. However, there is a general trend toward increasing accessibility to education. Governments have also recognized the benefits of the internationalization of higher education, including the development of human capital necessary for economic growth, cultural exchange, and the establishment of international connections. Yet, attitudes toward this process are mixed.

On the one hand, for the sending country, the primary benefit lies in the knowledge and skills acquired by returning graduates, which can be used to enhance the potential of the domestic economy. As a result, financial support is often provided to students going abroad. On the other hand, the emigration of young people for permanent residence abroad often leads to the so-called “brain drain”—the loss of talented individuals to the country where they study. This can be mitigated through appropriate migration policies and by making the country of origin more attractive for permanent residence.

Highly developed countries, while incurring virtually no educational costs, acquire a large number of young foreign professionals with top-tier qualifications. Additionally, the host country benefits from tuition fees (where applicable) and from the stimulation of domestic consumption by international students.

Thus, educational migration flows can benefit both the sending country (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Krannich & Hunger, 2022) and the host country (Hong et al., 2020; Shachar, 2006), as well as the international community at large. This is supported by Levent (2016), who notes that the development of student mobility contributes to global social development through open intercultural dialogue.

Student mobility is increasingly seen as a means to build a career abroad and to enhance employability in an increasingly globalized labor market. For some individuals, it also represents the first step toward long-term migration to another country (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Ellis, 2019; Fejzić-Čengić, 2020).

Studying current trends in student mobility is of interest to universities, researchers, businesses, and governments alike. Student mobility ensures the flow and development of ideas, the exchange of experience, and the realization of shared cross-border interests. It also offers financial benefits and serves national interests.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

To minimize misunderstandings, we believe it is essential to define the framework of educational migration, as there is no clear consensus in research regarding the social processes involved in this area. For instance, educational migration should be understood as any form

of spatial mobility related to the process of education and cognitive activity, involving a change in location—including the crossing of administrative boundaries—which may imply either permanent or temporary relocation, as well as daily commuting, regardless of its duration (Bista et al., 2018; Seitkasimova, 2019).

Other researchers focus on the movement of human capital, the duration of stay, and the distance between the sending and host countries. They define educational migration as relocation for at least one year or the completion of a full educational cycle abroad, which may later lead to difficulties returning to the country of origin and the potential risk of brain drain (King & Findlay, 2012). Moreover, it is often assumed that migration involves long-distance movement, for example, between continents.

Student migration is also defined by some as the crossing of national borders, where educational migration is characterized as periodic, formal, and organized academic stays in foreign scientific institutions aimed at gaining knowledge, skills, and international experience (Kumar, 2011; Lulle et al., 2021). Malhotra and Devi (2016) add that educational migration is typically associated with young adults who have reached maturity and possess above-average potential. It is evident that scholars agree on at least one point: it involves movement from one territory to another beyond administrative (national) borders in search of knowledge, skills, and competencies.

Another issue faced in defining educational migration is the frequent substitution of this term with student mobility. Mobility is usually associated with shorter trips—both in duration and distance—with a high likelihood of return. International student mobility refers to border-crossing for the purpose of studying in a destination country. However, the classification of mobile students is more nuanced, as they are not always international students; some may have obtained citizenship of the host country before or during their studies (Teichler, 2017).

Researchers are increasingly attempting to reconcile both concepts—student migration and student mobility. Expanding on the concept of mobility, scholars distinguish between types of international educational movements, such as student/human mobility (students traveling abroad to acquire knowledge and skills) and program mobility (cross-border movement of educational programs or institutions/companies that provide education) (Shkoler & Rabenu, 2020). Additionally, there is a network component in the form of educational hubs—countries that attract international students, researchers, staff, programs, research and development companies for purposes of education, training, knowledge exchange, and innovation.

In line with the focus of this study, the term *student migration* will be used here, narrowly defined as the international relocation of individuals for the purpose of completing a full cycle of higher education. The concept of *student mobility* will be used to refer to studying abroad within the framework of student exchange programs. The adopted definitions focus on the educational impact of migration, regardless of the dominant motivation for leaving. This

means that the category of educational migrants should include individuals who are studying—even those simultaneously engaged in other activities, such as employment.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

Various research methods and techniques were employed in the preparation of this article. In the theoretical part, a critical analysis of scientific literature was carried out in order to conceptualize the notion of educational migration. The research tool was developed based on a qualitative study in the form of a literature review, as well as a quantitative study using the expert survey method. The expert survey was conducted between 2022 and 2025, which should be taken into account when interpreting the results, given the rapid changes in global migration flows, particularly in the post-COVID-19 period.

A limitation of the study is that the survey was conducted with experts rather than directly with student migrants. While expert perspectives provide structured insights, future research should incorporate the experiences of international students themselves to capture emotional and personal dimensions of migration.

Literature sources were searched using international databases through the Google Scholar tool. Additional searches were conducted using global search engines across various web resources. The collected material was subjected to qualitative analysis to identify the key factors influencing educational migration.

In line with the research objectives, an attempt was made to determine the significance of the factors affecting educational migration. For this purpose, the expert survey method was applied to a sample of 40 experts. The selection criterion for the expert pool was the presence of at least three publications on the topic in peer-reviewed journals. Through email correspondence, 37 respondents agreed to participate in the survey, and their evaluations were used to determine the rankings and weights of various educational migration factors.

## RESULTS

The analysis of both theoretical-scientific and applied publications made it possible to identify the main socio-economic factors influencing educational migration and to categorize them into two types: those affecting the student's decision to pursue education abroad and those influencing the choice of host country (see Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1**

*Factors of educational migration influencing the student's decision to study abroad*

Factors	Rank	Weight
Lack of educational opportunities in the home country	1	0.30
Unfavorable socio-economic conditions in the home country	2	0.24

Factors	Rank	Weight
Intention to stay in the host country permanently	3	0.21
Desire for personal development and career advancement	4	0.15
Wish to experience another country and become familiar with a new culture	5	0.10

Note. Authors' own research and expert survey results. The concordance coefficient  $W = 0.71$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong level of agreement among expert opinions.

**Table 2**  
*Factors of educational migration influencing the choice of host country*

Factors	Rank	Weight
Quality of higher education and acquisition of an internationally recognized qualification	1	0.27
Overall cost of education	2	0.22
Recommendations from family, influence of friends	3	0.15
International, including educational, reputation of the host country	4	0.13
Knowledge of the host country, language proficiency	5	0.10
Geographical proximity and social connections	6	0.07
Cultural, historical, religious, and ethnic affinity	7	0.05

Note. Authors' own research and expert survey results. The concordance coefficient  $W = 0.67$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong level of agreement among expert opinions.

## DISCUSSION

As the data show, there are a significant number of socio-economic factors influencing educational migration—both in terms of a student's decision to pursue studies abroad and in choosing a host country. The key factor determining a student's decision to study abroad is the lack of educational opportunities in the home country. For instance, a study of international medical students in Ireland found that the main factors influencing educational migration were the availability of places in higher education institutions and the possibility of securing funding from public sources in the host country (Bourke, 2000).

Another study noted that the primary driver of student mobility appears to be the lack of educational opportunities in the country of origin (Van Bouwel & Veugelers, 2013). Chi Hong Nguyen, in discussing educational migration among Vietnamese students, found that while demand for education was growing, access to higher education was limited due to universities' and colleges' inability to provide enough places and funding. Furthermore, in line with the new economic theory of migration, parents of Vietnamese students viewed Western education as a profitable investment for future employment, social advancement of their children, and potential migration opportunities (Nguyen, 2013).

Empirical research also confirms that the outflow of students is primarily associated with excessive demand for higher education in developing countries, while the number of higher education institutions in sending countries remains insufficient (Bista et al., 2018). This

means that places at domestic universities may be limited or inaccessible for large segments of the population, forcing young people to seek alternative educational opportunities abroad.

Researchers suggest that the flow of students depends on the level of economic development, the degree of integration of the developing country into the global economy, the priority its government places on education, and the availability of educational opportunities within the country. On the other hand, some studies argue that student mobility is influenced by the relative size of the economy of the country of origin compared to the host country, the political interests of the host country in relation to the sending country, cultural ties, and support for foreign students through scholarships or other assistance (Shkoler & Rabenu, 2020). However, in recent years, student mobility has increased both in developed and developing countries.

Chinese students, for example, often choose to study in Australia due to factors such as unattractive educational offerings in their home country, difficulty accessing higher education, and an intention to remain permanently in the host country (Yang, 2007).

It is not only administrative or economic factors that affect student mobility and migration. As researchers have noted, changing social conditions in sending countries can both slow down and accelerate student flows abroad (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Since the early 2000s, there have been major shifts in how society perceives mobility, meaning that more people than ever before can now envision themselves—or their children—living and working in places other than where they were born.

This model highlights that the reasons for migration may lie beyond purely economic or political spheres. The factors influencing a student's decision to study abroad are shaped within the country of origin (Teichler, 2017).

Researchers who surveyed international students studying in Cyprus concluded that key motivating factors for educational migration include the desire to immerse themselves in student life in another country and experience a new culture, future employment opportunities abroad, and personal development (Safakli & Ihemeje, 2015). Tekle Shanka and co-authors, in their study of international students at Australian universities, found that proximity of the study location to students' home countries plays a significant role, suggesting a connection with geographic migration theories. Additionally, educational migrants considered safety and the quality and variety of educational offerings (Shanka et al., 2006). Murat Ozoglu and colleagues pointed to factors attracting international students to Turkish universities, such as cultural, historical, religious, and ethnic affinity, which also relates to cultural, traditional, and religious security.

Judith Eder and co-authors, studying international students in the U.S., identified personal development, language proficiency, and career advancement opportunities as driving factors. Other influential factors included university-related aspects (educational level, offered courses, faculty, recommendations, dormitories), physical geography (climate, city, attractions, safety), and culture (reputation, the American way of life) (Eder et al., 2010).

Mei Li and Mark Bray noted that countries of origin may also present strong retaining factors, deterring some individuals from going abroad. These include linguistic and cultural safety, social and family ties, and lower cost of living. At the same time, students who consider or have experienced studying abroad have likely faced various forms of pressure in their home countries (Li & Bray, 2007).

Despite the wide variety of factors influencing student mobility and migration, one of the most important factors affecting the choice of host country remains the quality of higher education and the potential for personal fulfillment.

This is confirmed by research (Van Bouwel & Veugelers, 2013), which shows that differences in perceived quality between foreign and domestic diplomas are among the main reasons students from developing countries choose to emigrate. Similarly, a study (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003) indicates that the UK is perceived as an attractive study destination due to high educational standards and internationally recognized qualifications, ease of admission and immigration procedures, and job-seeking opportunities after graduation. For many respondents, it represented a life investment and a chance for a better job. They also noted the excellent teaching and learning environment, the opportunity to work part-time, and the international quality of British higher education (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

Research (Mpinganjira, 2009) further supports the importance of these factors. International students in South Africa were primarily interested in obtaining an internationally recognized qualification, expected high-quality education, and sought to improve their employment prospects while gaining new experiences. Liang-Huan Chen (2007), who studied East Asian students in Canada, reported they were attracted by the perceived high quality of Canadian education programs at competitive prices and by the diverse, multicultural, and tolerant environment.

Cheng-Fei Lee (2013), based on a study of international students in Taiwan, highlighted the importance of costs of living/accommodation, safety, and cultural aspects during and after studies. Felix Maringe and Steve Carter (2007) found that African students valued the qualification earned and identified a friendly and supportive academic environment, educational quality in the host country, and recognition of obtained qualifications as key determinants of educational migration.

Stephen Wilkins and colleagues studied educational migrants in the United Arab Emirates and identified factors such as differences in teaching quality, better regional job market prospects, and comfort related to culture and lifestyle. Another factor driving educational migration was the lack of access to public universities in the home country, along with general safety concerns (Wilkins et al., 2012).

Nikos P. Rachaniotis and co-authors, using quantitative methods to analyze student flows in European countries, found that the percentage of international students in a given

country positively correlates with the academic quality of its higher education system and negatively correlates with a high cost of living (Rachaniotis et al., 2012).

Social support in the form of grants and scholarships played a decisive role for Iranian students, becoming one of the most important motivating factors for studying abroad (Nafari et al., 2017). They also considered the overall cost of education and the economic and political situation in their home country, which could have encouraged them to leave.

In the case of educational migration from Taiwan to Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, Terry Gatfield and Ching-Huei Chen (2006) highlighted the significant influence of family recommendations, peer influence, institutional reputation, employment prospects, university quality and reputation, as well as tuition fees and living expenses.

Thus, in student educational mobility and migration, the influence of the family clearly plays a role in the decision to study abroad. This decision is primarily based on the opportunity to obtain high-quality education. The understanding of “quality education” was based on factors such as the university’s reputation, course availability, teaching quality, post-graduation employment opportunities, and good social conditions for international students at the university (Gatfield & Chen, 2006). People often view student migration as a necessary option due to the lack of educational quality in their country of residence that meets their expectations. It should also be noted that emotional aspects, such as homesickness, culture shock, or experiences of discrimination, were not within the scope of this study, although they are known to significantly influence migratory experiences (Özoglu et al., 2015). Including these factors in future analyses could provide a more comprehensive understanding of student mobility.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that while economic considerations remain important, student migration is increasingly driven by the search for high-quality education, opportunities for personal and professional growth, and long-term human capital development. This underscores the need for sending countries to strengthen their higher education systems in order to retain talent, while also creating attractive return pathways for graduates educated abroad.

For host countries, the results highlight the importance of not only offering internationally competitive academic programs but also providing supportive environments that facilitate cultural integration, language acquisition, and career development. Policies that balance economic benefits with social support for international students may enhance both educational quality and long-term integration outcomes.

Finally, future research should move beyond identifying push and pull factors and instead focus on measuring the long-term socio-economic impact of educational migration on both sending and host countries. In this way, educational migration can be framed not only as individual mobility but also as a strategic resource for sustainable global development.

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### *CRediT Author Statement*

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