

IRSTI 14.01.17

A.Sh. Sultanova<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Suleyman Demirel University, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan

## FACTORS MOTIVATING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO STUDY IN KAZAKHSTANI HE

**Abstract.** The aim of this study is to explore and understand the factors that may impact the decision -making process of international students that motivate them to study as well as the choice of country and university in which they want to get education. It represents a ‘push-pull’ model that drives students to search education abroad and impacting the decision process in selecting of a final study destination. Drawing on the findings from research papers undertaken in multi-countries current paper examines the factors influencing choice of host country. Based on these findings this study argues that economic and social factors within the home country ‘push’ students to seek education abroad. Nevertheless, the decision as to which country to choose depends on diversity of ‘pull’ factors.

Keywords: international student, mobility, Kazakhstan.

\*\*\*

**Аңдатпа.** Зерттеудің мақсаты - оларды оқуға ынталандыратын шетелдік студенттердің шешім қабылдау үдерісіне әсер етуі мүмкін факторларды зерттеу және түсіну, сондай-ақ білім алуы қалайтын ел мен университетті таңдау. Бұл оқушыларды шетелде оқуға шақыратын және зерттеудің соңғы нүктесін таңдаған кезде шешім қабылдау үдерісіне ықпал ететін «итергіш» үлгі. Өртүрлі елдерде жүргізілген зерттеулер нәтижелеріне сүйене отырып, бұл құжат қабылдаушы елдің таңдауына әсер ететін факторларды қарастырады. Осы зерттеулердің негізінде осы зерттеу шыққан елдегі экономикалық және әлеуметтік факторлардың студенттерді шетелде білім алуына «итермелейтінін» көрсетеді. Дегенмен, қай елдің таңдауы туралы шешім «тартылу» факторларының алуандығына байланысты.

**Кілт сөздер:** халықаралық студент, академиялық мобильділік, Қазақстан.

\*\*\*

**Аннотация.** Целью данного исследования является изучение и понимание факторов, которые могут повлиять на процесс принятия решений иностранными студентами, которые мотивируют их учиться, а также выбор страны и университета, в котором они хотят получить образование. Он представляет собой модель «push-pull», которая побуждает студентов искать образование за рубежом и влияет на процесс

принятия решений при выборе конечного пункта обучения. Опираясь на результаты исследований, проведенных в разных странах, в настоящем документе рассматриваются факторы, влияющие на выбор принимающей страны. Основываясь на этих выводах, в этом исследовании утверждается, что экономические и социальные факторы в стране происхождения «подталкивают» учащихся к поиску образования за рубежом. Тем не менее решение о том, какую страну выбрать, зависит от разнообразия факторов «притяжения».

**Ключевые слова:** международный студент, академическая мобильность, Казахстан.

### *Introduction*

Global demand for international higher education keeps rising and the stream of international students has been an important issue for over several years. International students bring significant profit to the national economies of countries that are actively developing education industry. Competition is increasing amongst recipient countries every year and there is a tendency that those countries are fighting for international students. In the world Asian students reveal 53 % of all international students. However, most of these students search opportunities to receive education in English speaking countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada [1], for the last 10 to 15 years, many Asian students have begun to stay and get education within Asia. Foreign students are an integral part of the modern Kazakhstani educational system.

This paper is aimed to answer following research questions:

- 1) What are the push factors that drive international students to choose the Kazakhstani HE?
- 2) What are the pull factors that drive international students to choose the Kazakhstani HE?

Very few research studies have explored the factors influencing flow of international students to the Kazakhstan region, excluding the existing data at the statistical level of increasing number of foreign students. This research paper might benefit administration, international relations department and educational staff as one of the most relevant audiences to better recruitment process of foreign students. Policy makers, ministry of education can use the gathered information as it draws attention to the lowering number of foreign students that choose Kazakhstan as their final educational destination. Knowing push and pull factors that influence foreign students' choice of study abroad can help policy makers in better managing its realization of various strategies related to the attraction of international students. Furthermore, this

study contributes to the existing gap in research related to the international students in Kazakhstan.

This study comprises four chapters; introduction, literature review, methods and ethics. First chapter is dedicated to the introduction part where it reveals the research problem and the significance of the current study to the existing body of knowledge and to the Kazakhstani society, lists research questions and introduces the outline of the study. The second chapter is about the literature review part where it critically reviews existing studies on international students' motivation, particularly exploring push and pull factors. The next chapter devoted to Methodology part which portrays research design, sampling, data collection tools, procedures as well as the data analysis. Furthermore this chapter explains the rationale of choosing particular methodological approach. The last chapter is about ethical issues, how to avoid unethical behavior as well as ensuring the participants about the confidentiality and anonymity of their names and university name will not be seen to anyone.

#### *Methodology*

Quantitative approach lacks analyzing gathered data deeply; therefore using this method is not the most appropriate and effective one for the research topic. In contrast, qualitative research approach enables in-depth understanding of people's views and prospects. A qualitative method is about deep meaning making, inclined to be interrelated with interpretive epistemology, and consequently gives an in-depth understanding of context [2]. Moreover, qualitative research is first of all concentrated on investigating experiences, views and thoughts of the participants. For above mentioned reasons a qualitative method best fits the aim of the current research paper. Qualitative research gives the researcher opportunity to develop a detailed understanding of international students' motivation for studying in Kazakhstani Higher Education.

In order to receive detailed responses to the research questions this research paper selected a case-study design within a qualitative approach.

#### *Sample*

Convenience sampling strategy within purposeful sampling for choosing the site was used due to the accessibility and proximity [2]. Furthermore, purposeful sampling approach is used in researches, when participants are selected intentionally and should be able to provide better insight and clear understandings of the central phenomenon [3]. The participants of this study were six international students from different courses, particularly; I have selected two students from business school faculty, three more students from philology faculty and one from journalism. The participants are representatives from India, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Malaysia by sharing with their past experience about coming to study in Kazakhstan thus will enable to answer for both research questions, which are about push and pull factors that drive them to study abroad. The rationale for selecting students

from different faculties and different courses is that results of the findings will not be biased.

#### *Data collection tools*

In this research semi-structured focus group interview was conducted. An interview is more suitable instrument tool to gather data in social science [4]. Focus groups might be employed when researcher wants to collect common understanding from several people and to receive viewpoints from specific individuals [2]. Semi structured interviews allow researchers to get in-depth perspectives of the participants, since it comprises open-ended questions.

#### *Data collection procedures*

The interview was conducted when classes and mid-term exams were finished to ensure comfortable atmosphere for the participants. The interview took place in one of the secure and quiet classrooms at university at time convenient for both interviewee and interviewers. All the respondents were audio taped.

#### *Literature review*

Student's decisions making process on studying abroad is influenced by complex dynamics between home and host countries. In order to better understand this dynamic, prior literature has used the push-pull model that gives valuable data related to the flow of international students [6] and choice of foreign students on their study destinations [7].

In 1966 Lee first introduced push-pull model to explore factors that affects migration. From that moment, researchers in education have utilized its structure to understand the factors impacting international students' choice of educational destinations abroad. The 'pull factors' are the educational anticipations of a recipient country that have attractive social and economic factors which help them to enroll international students. Mentioned factors comprise recipient country's knowledge and awareness, friends' and close people's recommendations, cost issues, academic environment concerns, social relations and geographic proximity [7]. The 'push factors' are students' overall dissatisfaction with their home country's educational prospects which force them to leave their country and search for more other opportunities abroad. Dissatisfaction may comprise factors such as more attractive courses in host countries, difficulty to enter home university, lack of access to courses at home, student's willingness to better understand the West, and pursuit of migration [6,7].

Most of the time students from different countries exhibit different push and pull factors. For instance, students from Taiwan select United Kingdom as their final educational destination due to the international acceptability and recognition of UK higher education as a huge advantage to their long-term investment. In contrast, European Union students select UK higher education institutions not only because of language learning opportunity but also due to the opportunity to learn their cultural traditions [8]. Mazzarol and Soutar

(2002) [7] came to conclusion in their study about push and pull factors impacting international students that Chinese students consider 'better understanding of West' as the most important factor in choosing to study abroad, while Indonesian and Taiwanese students perceived abroad courses as better rather than local ones as most important factor in deciding to receive country overseas. Maringe and Carter (2007) [9] have studied the push and pull factors that influenced African students in choosing the UK higher educational institutions. According to the findings of the study push factors that students consider as crucial in their decision making process include unstable economic conditions, political issues and shortage of local capacity within the origin countries. Authors claim that African students select to study abroad willingly or unwillingly because of insufficient supply for higher education in African countries. From the other side, the ultimate pull factors that students consider when deciding on the UK for higher education are recognition, easy application processes, high quality teaching and learning environment and opportunity to have part-time work. Along with these findings the authors stated that the primary barriers and enabling factors are costs, visa restraint, fear of not being able to find a part-time work, not being able to meet course targets, negative sides of environmental influences.

#### Results and discussion

In focus group students were asked to reveal reasons why they decided to leave their home country to study in Kazakhstan. Most of the students answered because of the hard education system in their home country as well as the harsh competition that exist among students. Chinese students mentioned:

"In China we have very sharp competition; no matter student or workers. I prepared whole year, and totally they selected 70 students but over 600 students go to the exam, just in one faculty.

India's education system is really hard, but it is only theoretical. no practical skill, knowledge".

Other's noted about of local labour market tendencies which seemed to favour those with Kazakhstani qualifications at the expense of those with local qualifications.

"There are many not so good universities in India, where you can get your diploma, but If you get your diploma from there, other further job opportunities are nearly not good for you.

Student who graduated internal universities in Afghanistan, for them it is very hard to find job. Companies want something new, something unique, but when you finish university in Afghanistan, there are less opportunities of job".

Education is a key priority for the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as recognized in the "Kazakhstan 2030" strategy, and this is reflected in a number of different program. The overall goal of education reforms in Kazakhstan is to adapt the educational system to a new socio-

economic environment, helping to achieve the target of placing the country among the 50 most competitive economies in the world.

Kazakhstan is actively engaged in international cooperation in the field of education. The Bolashak program, which was established in 2005 and is administered by the Centre for International Program of the Ministry of Education and Science, has provided grants to cover costs of studying abroad for around 3,000 students. Exchanges with foreign universities are extensive, considerably exceeding levels observed in Russia and Belarus (Table 18). In 28 The State Program of Development of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011 – 2020. 64 Chapter 4: Knowledge generation addition, there are more than 10,000 foreign nationals studying in Kazakhstan, and plans are in place to increase the attractiveness of higher education institutions for international students. In particular, the Nazarbayev University has been created as an international university.

#### *Pull factors*

Interviewees were asked why the Kazakhstan was attractive country to get the higher education. Most of the international students were attracted by Kazakhstan because of the following reasons; host country's reputation of quality as well as the recognition of these qualifications in the student's own country.

“There are more opportunities to learn from here, than in Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan, or some other nearby countries because of it is developing country and it's going get a really good speed”.

Cost issue comprising the cost of tuition, living expenditures, travel expenses and social costs. Good universities like American university in Afghanistan too much expensive for students.

“Specifically, Kazakhstan was first place I wanted to go out of India, I thought about many countries, for example UK, it is really expensive.” Another student from China responded:

“I also had dreams about America, UK, these kind of countries, but after I failed exam, I thought that I don't have too much coins to follow them”.

Next factor degree of recommendations that prospect student of host country receives from parents, relatives, friends and other people prior to make the final decision. Most of the students replied that they received recommendations from their professors, parents or even particular organizations. Also almost all of the Chinese students came to Kazakhstan because of ‘one road one belt initiative’ program.

“My father attracted me to come here, he suggested me to go to Kazakhstan. My father also introduce me the program : "One road, one way".

Another pull factor was social links, which was related whether international students have a family or relatives who live in Kazakhstan by some kind of reasons. One thing was common between foreign students. Almost all of interviewed students' came to Kazakhstan because of their parent

doing business in this country and they came to Kazakhstan with hope they will get their higher education diploma and probably follow their parents and do business here, in Kazakhstan.

“My father also doing business and may be will be opportunity for doing business between two countries”.

Also students mentioned about scholarships and discount that Kazakhstani universities provided for them. They argue that the amount of scholarship given to foreign students was the most appealing factor to come and study in Kazakhstan. For example, according to afghan student Al FarabiKazakh National university provided for Afghan students 160 scholarships.

### *Conclusion*

These findings from different multi-country studies may propose that governments and higher education institutions need to consider the importance of ‘push-pull’ factors that affect students’ choice of their final destination. The ability of recipient country to attract foreigner students depend on the pull - factors as was mentioned in this paper. Host country’s reputation as well as the cost issues are likely to be critical. Key influencers also play important role in attracting students like word-of-mouth and recommendations received from parents, friends. Government s need to heavily invest into education to maintain its quality and reputation as well as higher education institutions need to ensure that marketing and promotion are undertaken sophisticated.

### **Resources:**

1 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). *Education at a glance 2015: OECD indicators*.

<http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2015.htm>

2 Creswell, J.W. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Harlow: Pearson Education. 2014 – 345 p.

3 Creswell, J. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (4th Edition)*. Boston, MA 02116: Pearson Education. 2012-176 p.

4 Bryman, A. "Social research methods 3rd ed." (2008).

5 Bernard, H.R. *Research methods in cultural anthropology*. Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford: ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS. 1998- 344 p.

6 Altbach, P. G. "Higher education crosses borders: Can the United States remain the top destination for foreign students?." *Change: the magazine of higher learning* 36, no. 2 (2004): 18-25.

7 Mazzarol, T.,Soutar G.N. "“Push-pull” factors influencing international student destination choice." *International Journal of Educational Management* 16, no. 2 (2002): 82-90.

8 Davey, G. Chinese students' motivations for studying abroad. *International Journal of Private Education*, (2005): pp 16-21.

9 Maringe, F., & Carter, S. International students' motivations for studying in UK HE: Insights into the choice and decision making of African students. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21(2007): pp 459-475.