

IMPACT THE PURSUIT OF GLOBAL EDUCATION AMONG VIETNAMESE STUDENTS: FINDING AND DISCUSSION

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Abstrak

Mengejar pendidikan di luar negeri telah menjadi populer di kalangan siswa Vietnam untuk pertumbuhan pribadi, stabilitas keuangan, dan kemajuan karir. Namun, keputusan untuk belajar di luar negeri tidak murni didasarkan pada pilihan individu atau keluarga. Faktor eksternal seperti budaya, sosial, ekonomi, politik, hubungan luar negeri, dan faktor pendidikan di Vietnam juga memainkan peran penting. Melalui analisis studi dan literatur yang relevan, makalah ini memberikan wawasan berharga tentang dinamika yang berkontribusi terhadap tren peningkatan transisi siswa Vietnam menuju pendidikan internasional.

Kata Kunci: Pengejaran global, faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi, pendidikan internasional, belajar di luar negeri, mahasiswa Vietnam.

Abstract

Pursuing education abroad has become popular among Vietnamese students for personal growth, financial stability, and career advancement. However, the decision to study abroad is not purely based on individual or familial choices. External factors such as cultural, social, economic, political, foreign relations, and educational factors within Vietnam also play a significant role. Through an analysis of relevant studies and literature, this paper provides valuable insights into the dynamics contributing to the increasing trend of Vietnamese students transitioning towards international education.

Keywords: *Global pursuits, influencing factors, international education, study abroad, Vietnamese students.*

INTRODUCTION

The trend of studying among Vietnamese students has been increasing over time. Vietnam has become one of the most significant contributors to international student mobility, with about 200,000 students currently studying abroad in countries like Japan, Australia, the US, and Europe (Tran et al., 2021). The increase in Vietnamese students pursuing education abroad is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors. While personal goals and family considerations are essential, studying overseas depends on external factors such as cultural, social, political, foreign relations, economic, and educational aspects within Vietnam. This study provides valuable insights into the dynamics driving this trend.

The main drivers propelling Vietnamese students to study abroad are economic growth, the need for skilled professionals, and the increasing financial capability of families to pay for foreign tuition. In addition, graduate students are motivated by the opportunity for professional development, improving their English proficiency, and accessing superior education on a global scale. The migration of Vietnamese students overseas is an evolving process linked to societal and political transformations within Vietnam and its host countries. Changes in internationalisation policies implemented by host countries have also significantly impacted this educational exodus. Financial constraints are a significant obstacle for Vietnamese international students and often dictate their educational choices. As such, external sources of financial support are explored.

This study provides a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing the study abroad trends among Vietnamese students, contributing to a deeper

understanding of their global educational pursuits.

METHOD

Our research methodology entailed thorough scrutiny of a plethora of official documents and scholarly papers, leaving no stone unturned in our pursuit of a qualitative data analysis that is both comprehensive and insightful. The culmination of this rigorous endeavour is an analysis characterised by its exceptional level of detail and descriptiveness, providing a comprehensive and in-depth perspective on the subject matter under investigation. When it comes to academic research, a qualitative approach is often preferred for its focus on understanding and interpreting phenomena based on their qualities rather than quantities. This approach involves careful data analysis, such as text, images, or observations, to gain deeper insights into the underlying meanings and experiences.

Qualitative research in the social field involves a range of methodological approaches that aim to generate an in-depth understanding of the social world by learning about people's circumstances, experiences, perspectives, and histories (Thabata et al., 2021). It requires researchers to become intensely involved and often spend lengthy periods in the field (Umesh et al., 2013, pp. 89-98). The most significant value of qualitative research is its ability to address questions of relevance to public health knowledge and practice that are difficult to answer using quantitative methods (Shayne, 2010). Qualitative field research involves conducting independent fieldwork, including interviews and participant observation, to gather and analyse qualitative data (Mary et al., 2019). Researchers must keep field note journals, write seminar papers, and present their findings (C.J. et al., 2007). There are various qualitative field research designs

and approaches, each with strengths and weaknesses. The stages involved in qualitative field research include selecting field sites, developing research questions, conducting field research, and analysing the data.

After conducting thorough research, we have identified five major macro factors that significantly influence outbound student mobility from a previous study by the authors from Tokushima University, Japan. Additionally, we have made revisions to the reference for each factor. This information will be valuable to our audience and help them better understand the underlying drivers of student mobility.

The first group of factors of interest are related to education governance and policy, such as laws, strategic plans, national programs, enforcement of procedures, government funding, government scholarships, encouragement to study abroad by study abroad centres, and quality assurance of local tertiary education. The second group of factors of interest are the socio-economic factors, such as the two-child policy, small families, elderly population, economic growth, formation of high-income class, formation of returnee diaspora, an increase in foreign investment and international companies, and higher salary levels of foreign

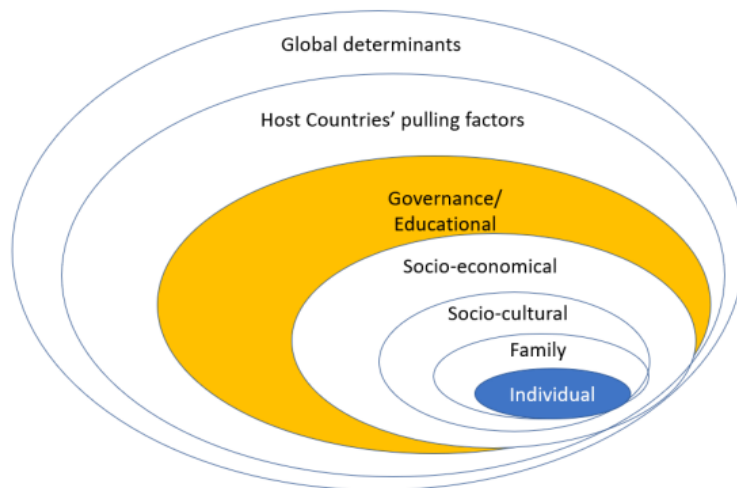


Figure 1. Layers of Push Factors for Study Abroad (Tran et al., 2021)

Our proposed conceptual frame-work for determinants of study-abroad outcomes is depicted in Figure 1. The factors that draw students out of the sending country, also known as pull factors, are listed as global factors. These factors include globalisation, trade, immigration, global human resources, and domination of English. On the other hand, the host country's pulling factors are specific to a particular host or a group of hosts, such as bilateral trade, economic partnership, or diaspora of immigrants in connection with the sending country. While both global and host country factors are important, this paper focuses on the aspects of the sending country.

companies. Additionally, socio-cultural factors related to common beliefs and behaviours of society, such as Confucianism, degree-driven mentality, xenophile mentality, and income-driven mentality, are also of interest.

However, this paper excludes the factors in the individual and immediate circle of people, such as study motivation, seeking new experiences, intentions for immigration, family income, number of siblings, and having relatives studying abroad.

FINDING

1. Factor of unmet demand for higher education

The global demand for higher education has been projected to grow significantly in the coming years, driven by population growth and increasing participation rates (Olsen, 2003). This growth in demand is expected to be exceptionally high in Asia, with China and India facing challenges in meeting the demand for university places (Bishop, 2016). There has been a significant demand for higher education in Turkey, and the open education system has played a crucial role in addressing this demand (Çekerol, 2012). Factors such as tuition costs, admissions standards, and travel and living expenses have been found to hurt college attendance (Margaret et al., 2005). Additionally, the inability to secure a place in a preferred course at a preferred institution has been a concern for post-school applicants (Bahram, 2018). These findings highlight the unmet demand for higher education in various regions.

Vietnam's higher education system has experienced rapid expansion in the past two decades, but there still needs to meet demands for access and equity (Jung et al., 2021). The country has implemented reforms and policies to promote internationalisation in higher education, including cross-border programs and partnerships with international universities (Phan et al., 2019; Thuy et al., 2016). However, challenges include poor coordination at the governmental level, talent retention, and financial constraints (Martin et al., 2020). The progress in implementing higher education reforms has been slow and sporadic, partly due to the sector's reliance on a slow-moving State bureaucracy (Vu et al., 2018). The education sector can benefit from increased

coordination and integration among public universities worldwide, significantly improving efficiency. Institutional autonomy should be a research approach to power their decision-making abilities. Additionally, policies must be implemented to aid disadvantaged groups in accessing higher education, addressing the current demand for teaching at a higher level. Implementing these measures can create a more inclusive and fair education system that benefits everyone.

2. Factor of inadequacies of domestic higher education

The inadequacies of domestic higher education in Vietnam include a lack of empirical evidence on transformative education (Mai et al., 2022), incomplete and inconsistent regulations for private higher education institutions (PHEIs) (Van, 2023), a focus on supplementing unmet demands rather than meeting the thirst for foreign qualifications (Thuy et al., 2016), and a disparity between current practices and innovative requirements in multicultural education (Phan et al., 2019). Additionally, the Vietnamese higher education system faces challenges in effectively implementing the country's open-door policy and improving the quality of education (Lý et al., 2014).

The current state of higher education in Vietnam needs more empirical evidence on transformative education. Scholars have recognised the potential of transformative education to develop critical, responsible, and autonomous learners, but there needs to be more theory and practice in Vietnam (Hai, 2022). The study explores the understanding of transformative education and its impact on learners using qualitative methods such as Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews (Sang et al., 2020). The findings reveal that many universities in Vietnam focus heavily on theory, with limited experimental activities

(Pham et al., 2022). However, respondents believe trans-formative education aligns with the sustainable development of higher education in Vietnam (Thi et al., 2019). The study also suggests the long-term application of transformative education in Vietnam.

The regulations for private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Vietnam must be consistent, and ambiguous regulations hinder their efficient and stable operation (Van, 2023). These regulations have not provided adequate protection for investors and education service users nor created a safe environment for PHEIs (Lu et al., 2019). The lack of favourable policies and mechanisms also deters investment in private universities and affects healthy competition between public and private institutions (Nguyen D. T., 2016). The governance tensions and irrelevant government policies further impede the survival and development of private universities (Ly et al., 2015). Additionally, the quality of education in private universities remains a concern (George et al., 2013). The Vietnamese government's regulation of transnational higher education has encountered challenges, highlighting the necessity for improved governance in quality control. Overall, there is a requirement for advancing and completing the legal structure governing the financial activities of PHEIs in Vietnam.

Discover how Vietnam prioritises unmet needs over foreign qualifications (Junichi et al., 2021) to drive its workforce forward. The government is implementing policies to address technical vocational skill shortages and gaps and improve the quality of technical vocational education and training (Pham, 2011). However, there are doubts about the effectiveness of top-down government decrees in attracting more international students (Tran, 2018). In

the context of English curriculum change, teachers must attend enhancement programs without a clear rationale, which adds to their challenges in implementing the curriculum (Earl, 2014). The consequences of macro-economic reform in Vietnam have been explored, particularly for young women graduates seeking success (Nguyen et al., 2017). The Vietnamese labour market must grapple with challenges, including graduate work readiness and an unbalanced workforce. These challenges directly impact the productivity and competitiveness of industries operating in the country.

The gap between current practices and innovative needs in multicultural education in Vietnam is a disparity between current rules and creative requirements in multicultural education in Vietnam (Phan et al., 2019). The objectives and issues of multicultural education are only enunciated by some investigated universities (David et al., 2021). Not all administrators, lecturers, and students fully know the objectives, topics, and approaches to conducting multicultural education (Ha, 2015). Vietnamese educational policies require more input from universities in providing administrators and lecturers with global knowledge and skills regarding multicultural education (Phu et al., 2013). The lack of experts in the field, staff's cultural and language competence, and resources contribute to the inadequate attention given to multicultural education in higher education institutions in Vietnam (Duc et al., 2021). This conundrum calls for integrating multicultural education into curriculum development, implementation, evaluation and staff development to fulfil stakeholders' expectations and ensure students' future success.

Finally, the Vietnamese higher education system needs help in effectively implementing the country's open-door

policy and improving the quality of education. These challenges are identified at three levels: the national system, the institution level, and training programs (Nguyen et al., 2023). The challenges include narrow, fragmented, inconsistent, inefficient, and ad hoc internationalisation activities across different institutions (Nhung et al., 2019). Quality management in higher education is driven by massification, global cooperation, and internal and regional cooperation (Nguyen et al., 2019). Quality assurance practices in higher education require leadership and management, stakeholder engagement, internal processes, teamwork and collaboration, and a culture of continuous quality improvement (Hang, 2018). The potential benefits of internationalisation in Vietnamese higher education have yet to be fully realised (Ly et al., 2018). To address these challenges, solutions such as improving university accreditation, ranking, and rating systems, building a culture of assessment, and managing quality assurance as organisational change must be proposed.

3. Factor of social norms and mentality

The trend of Vietnamese students studying abroad is multifaceted, influenced by various social norms and mental factors. This phenomenon has gained significant attention in recent years, and understanding its motivations is crucial for policymakers and educators. These factors include the influence of external determinants such as cultural, social, political, foreign relations, economic, and educational factors in the country (Tran et al., 2021). Motivations to study abroad are driven by push and pull factors, including sociocultural, economic, and political factors (Nghia, 2019). The desire for professional development, English improvement, and better educational quality are important motivational

factors for Vietnamese graduate students to study abroad (Tran et al., 2018). The shift to a global market-driven economy and the need for better-prepared graduates have also influenced the decision to study overseas (Yao et al., 2018). The influence of parents and the reputation of the awarding university's education systems are also significant factors in the decision to pursue transnational education programs (Huyen et al., 2014).

One of the critical drivers for Vietnamese students to study abroad is the influence of external determinants. Firstly, studying abroad provides an opportunity for cultural immersion and personal growth, which can be exciting and enlightening (Nguyen N. N., 2023). Cultural factors play a substantial role in shaping the aspirations of Vietnamese students. Vietnam has a strong tradition of valuing education, and success is often equated with obtaining a degree from a prestigious foreign institution. This cultural norm can create immense pressure on students to pursue education overseas as a means to achieve social status and fulfil family expectations.

Secondly, Vietnam's political and economic landscape can push students toward studying abroad. The desire for political freedom and the prospect of better economic opportunities in foreign countries can be vital motivating factors. Vietnam's integration into the global economy has opened up opportunities for citizens to seek education and employment abroad, further fuelling the desire to study overseas. Economic factors also come into play, as Vietnamese students may view studying abroad as an investment in their future. Financial challenges in Vietnam, such as limited resources and economic conditions, push students to seek education abroad to access better opportunities and resources (Khanh Linh Duong, 2018). The belief that

a degree from a foreign institution will lead to better job prospects and higher earning potential is a powerful motivator. Moreover, the shift towards a global market-driven economy has increased the demand for graduates with international exposure and skills, further encouraging Vietnamese students to seek education abroad.

Additionally, studying abroad offers the benefits of instruction in English, the prestige of a foreign degree, and lower costs compared to looking internationally in other countries (Yao et al., 2018). Moreover, Vietnamese parents see studying abroad as a way to enhance their children's English language skills, employment prospects, and social status (Maslova, 2018). Proficiency in English, particularly for Vietnamese students, is a crucial driving force behind their decision to pursue studies abroad. English is recognised as a universal language, and mastering it can unlock a more comprehensive array of academic and professional prospects. A significant number of students believe that studying in an English-speaking country will not only improve their language abilities but also give them an advantage in the job market.

The influence of parents cannot be underestimated in this context. In Vietnamese culture, family plays a central role, and parental expectations often carry much weight. Many parents view sending their children abroad for education as a way to secure a better future for them, and they are willing to make significant sacrifices to make it happen - additionally, the reputation and education systems hold considerable sway over the decision-making process.

As a final point, the choice of Vietnamese students to pursue education abroad is influenced by a multifaceted interplay of cultural, economic, political,

and social factors. It is crucial to realise that personal aspirations are not the sole driving force behind this trend but are instead deeply ingrained in the broader societal context. Policymakers and educators must comprehend these motivations to guide and support students in navigating the opportunities and challenges of studying abroad. Furthermore, it is vital to balance promoting global education and addressing the societal expectations that may lead to pressure and mental health concerns.

4. Factor of economic

Economic factors significantly influence Vietnamese students' decision to study abroad. The economic growth in Vietnam, particularly in high-technological sectors, has created a demand for skilled personnel, which cannot be met by the national educational system (Tran et al., 2021). Additionally, the ability of families to afford tuition abroad due to the growth of well-being has contributed to the increase in Vietnamese students studying overseas (Maria, 2018). Financial challenges, such as the cost of tuition, also influence the decision to study abroad, with students considering the availability of professions with good job opportunities and acceptable costs (Khanh Linh Duong, 2018; Tran et al., 2018). The desire for professional development, better educational quality, and English language improvement are among the main motivational factors for Vietnamese students to study abroad (Nam, 2015). Nevertheless, low-income families consider the economic perspective of studying abroad with emigration intention (Tran et al., 2021). From a financial perspective, studying abroad becomes more affordable while domestic education becomes more expensive, which may drive more students to study overseas. Overall, economic factors, including the economy's growth, tuition affordability, and job

opportunities, are essential push factors for Vietnamese students to pursue higher education abroad.

5. Factor of government policy and scholarships

The impact of government policies and scholarships on Vietnamese students' choice to study abroad is a topic of great significance, and it reflects the broader efforts of the Vietnamese government to enhance the quality of education and promote internationalisation.

An imperative factor contributing to the growing trend of Vietnamese students seeking higher education abroad is the perceived insufficiency in the capacity and quality of the domestic tertiary education system. The rapid socio-economic change in Vietnam has led to an increasing number of Vietnamese students pursuing overseas study, and this trend is primarily due to the lack of capacity and quality in the domestic tertiary system (Gribble, 2011). As a result, many students see studying abroad as an attractive option to access better education and expand their horizons.

The Vietnamese government has recognised the importance of internationalisation in higher education. It has set ambitious goals and strategies to bring its higher education to a level comparable to the world (Lan et al., 2018). Therefore, setting ambitious goals and strategies to elevate the quality of higher education to global standards is a commendable effort. These policies include initiatives to attract foreign universities and foster collaboration with international institutions, thereby providing Vietnamese students with more diverse and high-quality educational opportunities.

However, despite these policies, there is still a prevalent trend of Vietnamese institutions mimicking internationalisation without necessarily improving performance or quality (Thi et

al., 2020). As mentioned, some Vietnamese institutions may emulate internationalisation efforts without necessarily improving their performance or quality. This raises concerns about the effectiveness and impact of such policies. Merely adopting the appearance of internationalisation with substantial improvements may only partially meet Vietnamese students' educational needs and aspirations. Overall, government policies and scholarships play a crucial role in shaping the study abroad choices of Vietnamese students. However, challenges still need to be addressed to maximise the benefits of internationalisation (Nguyen M. L., 2012).

DISCUSSION

Various factors have influenced the study abroad trends of Vietnamese students. The students or their families do not solely determine the transition of studying abroad in Vietnam. However, they are strongly influenced by external factors such as cultural, social, political, foreign relations, economic, and educational aspects (Tran et al., 2021). The principal causes for the increase in the number of Vietnamese students studying abroad include the growth of the economy, the shortage of skilled personnel, and the inability of families to afford tuition abroad (Maria, 2018). Motivational factors for Vietnamese graduate students to study overseas include professional development, English improvement, and better educational quality (Tran et al., 2018). The movement of Vietnamese students studying abroad has evolved, influenced by social and political transformations in Vietnam and host countries and changes in internationalisation policies in host countries (Chi Hong Nguyen, 2013). Financial challenges are also significant for Vietnamese international students studying

abroad, with concerns about money affecting their study choices and leading them to seek external financial resources (Khanh Linh Duong, 2018).

Therefore, the choice of Vietnamese students to pursue higher education abroad is influenced by a wide range of factors, including both push and pull factors. Push factors often stem from limitations within the domestic education system, such as a perceived lack of high-quality programs or research opportunities and concerns over political stability and educational censorship. Economic factors also play a significant role, as families are willing to invest in overseas education to secure better opportunities for their children.

On the other hand, pull factors are also highly appealing. Many Vietnamese students are drawn to the prospect of a global education, often seen as offering a more comprehensive and internationally recognised experience. Exposure to diverse cultures and the opportunity to build a worldwide network are also major draws. Scholarships and financial aid from foreign universities are additional incentives, making it financially viable for some students to pursue international education.

1. Impact of social and political transformations

Social and political changes in Vietnam and its host countries have significantly impacted the mobility of Vietnamese students. As Vietnam's economy and society have opened up, more students seek international education opportunities. However, visa and immigration processes can be hindered by the political climate in both Vietnam and host countries, potentially limiting student mobility.

Recent global events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have further exposed the vulnerability of international students. Disruptions to students' travel

plans have led to delays, challenges, and financial burdens for many Vietnamese students studying abroad. These challenges highlight the importance of having robust support systems and adaptable policies to address unforeseen circumstances.

2. Benefits of studying abroad

For Vietnamese students, studying abroad can provide many advantages, particularly regarding professional growth and language proficiency. By immersing themselves in diverse cultural contexts, students can develop invaluable skills in adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and global thinking, all highly sought-after qualities in today's interconnected world. These experiences can also enhance problem-solving abilities and enable students to navigate complex, multicultural work environments easily.

Additionally, studying abroad can significantly improve English language proficiency, which is another significant benefit. Exposure to an English-speaking environment can accelerate language acquisition and fluency, a valuable asset in the global job market. Proficient communication skills in English can open up opportunities for international careers and facilitate participation in worldwide research and academic communities.

3. Addressing financial challenges

The financial limitations Vietnamese international students face in studying abroad can be a formidable obstacle. To overcome this challenge, universities and governments must work together on several fronts. First and foremost, they can improve the accessibility of scholarship, grant, and financial aid programs to ensure that talented students from different socioeconomic backgrounds can achieve higher education overseas. Moreover, financial literacy programs and counselling services should be readily accessible to assist students in effectively managing their

finances while studying abroad. These initiatives can give students the resources and knowledge necessary to make informed financial decisions and avoid common pitfalls. Additionally, universities and governments can collaborate on part-time work opportunities for students, allowing them to gain valuable work experience and earn an income. Through a comprehensive approach to addressing financial concerns, universities and governments can help Vietnamese international students realise their academic and professional aspirations abroad.

4. Promoting internationalisation policies

Vietnamese students must benefit from close partnerships between universities and host country governments to fully capitalise on internationalisation policies. Universities can establish fruitful collaborations and exchange programs that facilitate student mobility and encourage cultural exchange. Meanwhile, governments can streamline visa processes, provide financial incentives for universities to admit more international students and implement policies that foster cultural integration within their countries. Through this collaborative approach, Vietnamese students can enjoy a welcoming and supportive educational experience, while host countries can attract talented students and benefit from increased spending and cultural diversity. This mutually beneficial relationship also allows greater cultural understanding and economic growth.

CONCLUSION

Vietnam is emerging as a significant player in the global landscape of international student mobility. This review delves into the various factors that motivate Vietnamese students to study abroad in contemporary times. A thorough analysis

of relevant studies and literature reveals that the students or their families do not solely drive the decision to pursue higher education abroad but are primarily influenced by various external factors. This study sheds light on the fact that opting for overseas education is expected to endure as a prevailing trend, subject to numerous subjective and objective transformations in response to the Vietnamese ever-evolving societal dynamics.

The current situation is influenced by a variety of factors, which can be categorised into five main areas as suggested by the findings of this study: (1) unfulfilled demand for higher education; (2) inadequacies in domestic higher education; (3) social norms and attitudes; (4) economic considerations; and (5) government policies and scholarships. These findings highlight the growing necessity for studying abroad, driven by multiple factors. Over time, external attracting factors can impact outbound mobility, including the number of students, study destinations, career paths post-graduation, and societal impact. This can promote diversity, multiculturalism, internationalisation, and regional development.

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