

International Students in Norway

A Study of Migration Motivation

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Abstract

The number of international students coming to Norway increased considerably after 2001, when the changes to the immigration policy were made. The policy was aimed to provide international students a possibility to stay on work in Norway after graduation. However the policy did not have an effect on the staying rates of international students three years later. The number of resident permits granted to the students after graduation remained on the same level as before.

This study focuses on the ambitions and motivation of international students who come to study in Norway. The study distinguishes between the primarily motives for international students to come to Norway and their motives for staying in Norway after graduation.

A qualitative research design was applied. Data were collected using the interview guide approach. The study focused on international students who come to Norway to take a whole degree, either bachelor or master. Twelve students from the University of Oslo, the university with the highest international students' population in Norway, were interviewed.

In order to understand the motives of international students, it was important to get an insight into their educational and social backgrounds, and to unveil their perception of the studying in Norway. The results of this study indicated that Norwegian immigration policies have little impact on the students' motivation to come, and eventually to stay in Norway after graduation. Choosing Norway as their study destination they first of all consider the financial side of the issue to be very advantageous for them. The fact that education is free in Norway is central to their decision to come. As for their prospects after graduation, international students are aware of the benefits they can gain in Norway if they succeed to find a job here. At the same time, they consider abilities and language skills to play a significant role in the recruitment process here. Therefore their decision either to stay, or to leave Norway, is grounded basically upon their self-estimation of those skills and abilities.

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1. Introduction

International students are seen as an important link of economic and cultural collaboration between countries. “International exchange of students as a political instrument was also used in the case of European integration” (Beerkens, 2004:18). Internationalization of higher education is a strategic objective of any knowledge economy, since it fosters exchange of the experiences and ideas, and helps to establish connections between the countries.

Internationalization is a mechanism which helps to supply skilled human resources needed for international competitiveness of the nation (Kalvermark and Van der Wende, 1997, cited in Beerkens, 2004:18). At the same time international graduates can foster trade relations, collaboration between countries and mutual understanding.

One of the challenges of higher education system in Norway is to attract international students. It seems that there is a good reason for international students to come to study in Norway, since Norwegian higher education institutions do not charge tuition fees. Despite that fact, enrolments of international students in Norway are still low. According to the periodical “Universitas” (19.09.2007), in 2007 there were twice as many international students in Denmark and Sweden, as there were in Norway. Since 2006, when the amount of international students was 1.7 percent, the situation has barely changed.

Maasen & Uppstrøm (2004) explains the difficulties related to the recruitment of international students as a result of a “language issue”. English as the main language used for international teaching activity is still neglected in Norway to a degree that may have a negative effect on the students’ mobility. On the other hand, internationalization of higher education in Norway has no economic benefit for the universities (Maasen & Uppstrøm, 2004:7): “Unlike institutions in other countries (inside and outside Europe) Nordic higher education institutions, with the exception of Danish universities, cannot profit economically from attracting foreign students other than the national funding public model”. Having an adequate internationalization policy, Norway could have some indirect economic benefits through the recruitment of young people from outside Norway. “The expectation is that some of them [international students] will stay after finishing their studies, and as such contribute to the welfare in the Nordic countries...” (Maasen & Uppstrøm, 2004:20). As we shall see a later study produced the numbers that seem not to fulfil this expectation (Brekke, 2006). The

reason for that was considered to be an ambivalent attitude of Norwegian authorities towards international students coming to Norway.

As for the students, it is important to keep in mind that the initiative to participate in international programs is usually a difficult decision. It is often much at the stake when they decide to go to study abroad, it is an investment that students have to make. That is why it is important to understand their motives, fears and expectation upon making decision to come to Norway. The knowledge about international students' experiences, their ambitions and motivation can help to shape a favourable policy that will meet their needs and will boost their participation in higher education institutions in Norway.

My interest in this topic originated from my own experience as an international student in Norway. In addition, the international aspects of higher education have always interested me. There is a lot of literature on the topic of internationalization, though there is little said about international students' motivation to study abroad. My enrolment in the "Higher Education" program at the University of Oslo gave me an insight into the policies and theories of internationalization in higher education. My background as an international student made it easy for me to get in contact with other students that came to study in Norway. It also eased my understanding of their perspectives on their studies here and their professional prospects for the future.

The rationale of the study derives from the ambiguous role that international students play in the Norwegian society. The report on "International students and immigration to Norway", written in 2006 by the Norwegian sociologist Jan-Paul Brekke, was decisive for my choice of topic. The reference point of the report was a change in the Norwegian immigration policy towards international students that took place in 2001, this gave the group an opportunity to stay on in the country on work permits after graduation. The empirical data obtained during the study shed the light on the ambiguity of this policy towards international students. Students were reported to be lacking information on the possibilities to stay in Norway after graduation and consequently did not consider themselves to be welcome to stay here. Besides, many of them considered it to be difficult to get a job in Norway as a foreigner. The policy change, however, did not have an impact on the employment of international students. Even 5 years after the new policy was implemented the amounts of students who stay on after graduation remained low (Brekke, 2006). During the same period the enrollment of

international student in Norwegian higher education institutions, though, has risen considerably.

1.1. Research Questions

It is unclear whether the change in immigration regulations had an impact on the international students' motivation to come to Norway (Brekke, 2006). On the other hand, their motivation to stay on work in Norway after graduation deserves more analysis. Their preliminary motivation to come to Norway and their experiences in Norway can help to understand what factors make them choose Norway and what motivates them to stay here. Knowledge about students' motivation can contribute to developing policies on internationalization of higher education and promotion of knowledge economy.

The objectives of the study are to gain an insight into international students' motivation to come to study in Norway, and their professional ambitions upon graduation. Consequently research question were formulated as following:

- ***What are the motivating factors that make international students come to study in Norway?***

There are usually many issues to consider when one makes a decision to take a degree. The cost of the study, as well as the compatibility of the study programmes were mentioned as the main factors influencing the decisions of international students to come to Norway, according to Brekke (2006). At the same time the objective of my study was to disclose other possible motives that made students come to Norway in the first place. International students that come to Norway come from different social backgrounds and have different life experiences, therefore their primarily motivation to come to study in Norway has to be examined. It will also give an insight into their further professional aspirations.

- ***How does the study period in Norway influence their decision either to stay in Norway or to leave after graduation?***

The experience of the study period in Norway, as well as the perception of the higher education system and Norwegian society in general has to be examined. That will help to understand what makes international students to persist in their

studies and seek employment in Norway upon graduation. The self-estimation of their professional abilities and language skills can help to shed a light on future plans and ambitions. Difficulties and inconsistencies during the study period, on one hand, and educational advantages, on the other hand, appeared to shape the students' motivation and future choices.

1.2. Research on International Students and Immigration to Norway

The following section will give an insight into the research made on international students and immigration to Norway. There was not much research made on this topic in Norway, few initiatives were taken. The study of Maasen & Uppstrøm (2004) opened up for the discussion of international students and immigration to Norway. Bratsberg (2005, cited in Brekke, 2006) made an analysis of the return rates of the students. However, the report of Brekke (2006) became a valuable contribution to the research of the topic. His study presents an analysis of the main policies towards international students in Norway, as well students' trends on coming, staying and leaving. The main facts of his study were used explicitly in my research project.

But first the regulations regarding international students at the University of Oslo will be examined in order to understand the nature of the situation international students are in.

Regulations Regarding International Students at the University of Oslo

The University of Oslo is the biggest university in Norway with the largest international student community. There are 40 master programs at the University that are taught entirely in English. The bachelor degree programs are taught in Norwegian.

International students are defined by the University of Oslo as individuals who need a residence permit in order to study in Norway. In autumn 2008 there were registered 430 international students at the Bachelor level and 572 international students at the Masters level. They fall in two groups: students with scholarship (566) and self-financed students (436).

In order to be admitted to the university, diploma from a national secondary school is the basic requirement. For some of the countries the basic entrance requirement includes also one or two years of studies in academic subjects at university level. At the master's level, a

completed bachelor's degree is required. Some programs may have additional admission requirements.

The University of Oslo does not charge tuition fees. However living in Norway is not cheap and international students have to cover their living expenses. Besides, they have to have necessary financial means in order to prove their financial capability to stay in Norway.

Students that come from outside the European Union have to have special financial guarantee in order to obtain a study permit. They have to prove that they have the means of subsistence. The amount of NOK 85,000 per academic year (as for the study year 2008/2009) has to be ensured in order to be able to apply for a study permit. The international students from outside EEA are allowed to get a part-time job, which is limited to 20 hours per week. The financial support from the State Educational Loan Fund can be granted only on the basis of special assessment.

As far as students from the European Union are concerned, there are no special financial requirements for them in order to get a study permit to stay in the country. It means that they can come to the country to study without proving their financial capability. There are also no restrictions for them to get the financial support from the State Educational Loan Fund (Statens Lånekasse). Besides, they can also find a part-time job in order to secure financial means for their study.

International Students and Immigration to Norway

The issue of international students and immigration to Norway has not been explored in detail until recently. The report written by Brekke(2006), on the before mentioned initiative of the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) in 2001, shed light on some main issues regarding international students. Firstly the report discussed the main tendencies of arrivals and immigration of international students to Norway. Next, the main policies used for the regulation of the students coming to Norway were analyzed. Finally the report opened for a discussion on the motivation of these students to stay in Norway.

According to Brekke(2006), Norwegian governments have shifted their attitude towards international students over the past 10 years. They have become increasingly aware of international students' potential to contribute to the development of the Norwegian economy.

In 2001 changes were adopted, that made it easier for international students to remain in Norway after graduation. Previously, a strict control on the students return to the home country after ended period of study, i.e. quarantine provision, was altered. The change in 2001 meant, among other things, that international students were welcome to apply for work permit right after graduation if they wished to.

The rationale for the change of immigration regulations was explained as following:

The Ministry is considering removing the quarantine paragraph for international students. The background is the need for labor within several sectors. (...) It seems unreasonable to deny persons that have much needed competence, that speak Norwegian and have knowledge of Norwegian society, to work in Norway. (...) It has also been argued that the paragraph does not necessarily mean that the students actually go back to their home countries. They may choose to move to other countries where their competence is needed. On this background, it appears that the immigration law in Norway is no longer a suited instrument in the effort to secure a development effect of international students coming to Norway (KUF 2001:7.5, cited in Brekke,2006).

Whether those measures were taken in order to make an opportunity of studying in Norway more attractive, remains unclear. The amount of international students coming to Norway did change to some degree after new immigration rules were adopted, from 4000 students in 2001 to approximately 6000 students in 2005. The number of resident permits granted to international students after graduation remained at the level under 500 permits per year. “The cancellation of so-called quarantine provision did not have any effect on the staying rate three years later. Whether it contributed to the increase in arrivals is unclear” (Brekke, 2006: 87).

The report written by Brekke (2006) showed that, on average, 12 percent of the international students stayed on in the country on either work- or family related reason after the ended period of study. The actual interest in staying in Norway expressed by international students was much higher. 47 percent of them said they had plans to stay on in Norway after graduation. It is important to notice that the tendency is different for the students from EEA and non-EEA countries. As it is mentioned in the report (Brekke, 2006), the latter were known to be more prone to apply for residence renewal after graduation.

The study (Brekke, 2006) showed also that international students had an impression of not being welcome to stay in Norway to work, due to the confusing immigration regulations. The majority of them found the rules on how to get a residence permit here in Norway to be difficult to understand. Besides, there was no official encouragement for international students to stay in Norway after graduation. Moreover, international students called attention to the considerable lack of information on the issue. They could not get any clear answers even from the Directorate of Immigration, organization responsible for preceding applications for any kind of resident permit in Norway. When 40 percent of the respondents expressed that they were uncertain about whether Norwegian authorities wanted them to stay, only 8 percent felt they were encouraged to immigrate. Another issue that had a negative impact on their plans to stay in Norway was the impression that it will be difficult to find a job as a foreigner. The report leaves some of the questions open. One such area is international students' motivation to come and their ambitions to stay are thus to be uncovered in this study.

1.3. International Students and High-Skilled Immigration in Other Countries

The practice of securing qualified labor force through the recruitment of international students is common in developed countries (Kapur & McHale, 2005, Green, 2007, Hawthorne, 2002, Chellaraj, Maskus & Mattoo, 2005). Governments relax their immigration laws in order to give international students an opportunity to stay on work after graduation. There are obvious advantages of that kind of recruitment that allow the countries among other things to fill shortages of skilled labor force. The countries with most vibrating economies in the world employ new immigration rules in order to secure the number of qualified labor force.

From an economic point of view, "implementation of effective migration policies can ensure global productivity" (Kaushal and Fix, 2006). It means that there are developed countries that might be short of high-skilled labor force, while some other countries have problems with providing jobs for their professionals. Those professionals search for job opportunities in more developed countries and, by doing so, balance demand and supply of labor force in the country of origin and the host country. Besides filling the shortages of labor force in the countries of destination, they bring their experience and innovative capacities to those countries. As it is the case in the United States, according to Chellaraj, Maskus & Mattoo

(2005), “both enrolment of foreign graduate students and immigration of skilled workers have a strong and positive long-lasting impact on the development of the ideas”.

In order to generate some common ideas about high-skilled immigration it is useful to take a look on the experience of the United States of America in this area. Relevant changes in the regulation of immigration in the US were made in 1990 (Kaushal and Fix, 2006). Those new policies of managing immigration were set up in order to facilitate US economy. Two major ways of bringing qualified labor force to the country were considered:

- to attract high-skilled migrants;
- to attract foreign-born graduates of American universities.

According to Kaushal and Fix (2006), in the United States there is a clear tendency in the Immigration Policy that attracts high-skilled workers to the country. Since 1990 when the main changes in the Immigration Law were introduced, the number of more educated and skilled immigrants has risen considerably. The attacks of September 11, 2001 had a negative impact on the immigration policy for foreign graduate students (Chellaraj, Maskus & Mattoo, 2005). However, the US Senate started to discuss the issue of high-skilled immigration again and that resulted in the proposal to raise the employment-based green cards in 2006. It was considered to be relevant to raise a number of that kind of green cards from 140,000 to 450,000 over the course of the next ten years (Kaushal and Fix, 2006).

On the other hand, international students coming from developing countries express their willingness to stay on work in US after graduation (Aslanbeigui & Montecinos, 1998, cited in Chellaraj, Maskus & Mattoo, 2005). Some of them (45 percent) have plans to stay for some time, while others are planning to stay permanently.

Chellaraj, Maskus & Mattoo (2005) emphasized the benefits of “open-door immigration policy” for the rates of economic growth of the country. Besides attracting highly skilled workers, US Immigration Policy is changing so that international students coming to the US get a possibility to stay on work after graduation and contribute with their various backgrounds. In 1999 a quarter of H-1B (temporary visas issued to high-skilled foreign workers) were given to foreign-born students previously enrolled in American universities. The tendency is underpinned by the 2002-statistics of the PhD enrolments in the US: 59 percent of science and engineering post-doctoral scholars in the country were temporary

residents (Kaushal and Fix, 2006). Moreover, “according to data collected by the National Academy of Sciences, since 1990 more than half US Nobel laureates in the sciences were foreign born and about 37 percent received their education abroad”(Kaushal and Fix, 2006: 14).

Similar practices are adopted in the Australia’s Immigration Policies. Considering a strong interest to international students, Australia’s skilled migration program was changed in 1999, as mentioned in the Media Release of the University of Melbourne (2002). The restrictions on immigration for Australia-educated overseas-born students were lifted. Since September, the 1st, 2007 the changes to Skilled Migration Requirements were made in order to ease the procedure of staying on work in the country for the student with higher levels of English and relevant work experience. The changes aimed to ensure that international students who decided to stay on in Australia after completing their studies had a better chance of competing for jobs in their chosen vocations.

As for the UK, the need for highly-skilled migrants was emphasized by the Immigration Minister, Lord Rooker (December 2001, cited in Kapur & McHale, 2005):

The [Highly Skilled Migrant] program represents a further step in developing our immigration system to maximize the benefits to the UK of highly skilled workers who have the qualifications and skills required by UK businesses to compete in the global marketplace... It will allow eminent scientists to base their research projects [in the UK], should encourage the movement of business and financial experts to the city of London and given those at the top of their chosen profession the choice of making the United Kingdom their home.

In UK the International Graduates Scheme, that was previously open just for science and engineering graduates, became available for all the international students from the 1st of May, 2007. That meant in practice that international students who graduate from UK universities got a possibility to stay on work for one year after graduation. The measures were taken in order to attract few international students to the country and in order to "allow UK employers to benefit from skilled people who have gained UK qualifications and have experience of living in the UK" (the higher education minister, Bill Rammell, cited in “Education Gaurdian”, 02.04.2007). After this one year of work students were supposed either to return home, or to apply for an appropriate Skilled Workers Scheme.

Situation in Norway though seems to be still ambivalent. There is no clear immigration policy towards international student willing to stay in Norway after graduation (Brekke, 2006). Motivation of those students either to stay or leave Norway upon graduation therefore deserves more analysis.

1.4. Structure of the Study

The study comprises of eight chapters. The first chapter presents the rationale for the study and research questions are formulated. Here the background information is given concerning the Norwegian context and the policies on international students in other developed countries are discussed.

In the second chapter theoretical framework is dealt with in order to develop the main categories of the study. Three different approaches to international students and immigration are used: the concept of “push” and “pull” factors in immigration, human capital theory and coal-setting theory.

Chapter three is the methodological chapter where the method and design of the study are dealt with. The ethical issues concerning the study and limitation are also addressed in this chapter.

In chapters four, five, six and seven the empirical data gained during interviews with the students is presented. In chapter four students’ motivation upon arrival is examined. This chapter is aimed to give an answer on the first research question: What are the motivating factors that make international students come to study in Norway? Chapter five gives an overview of the students’ experiences concerning the study period in Norway. In chapter five the students’ perception of Norway gained through social interactions and work experiences, is presented. And finally, chapter seven examines students’ plans and ambitions upon graduation from the university. Giving an insight into the informants’ experiences of Norway and future aspirations, chapters five, six and seven are aimed to explain how the study period in Norway influence students’ decision either to stay in Norway or to leave after graduation.

Chapter eight is a final chapter of the study where the results are discussed. Here the research questions, the empirical data and the theoretical framework are all brought back into play.

2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

An explorative style has been applied to the study in order to gain information about motives which students would themselves consider to be most important in the decision to come or stay in Norway. Some of the aspects of motivation of the international students and their immigration prospects in Norway have been explored previously by Brekke in his rapport from 2006. That was a quantitative study where some hypotheses were made in order to generate the data about international students in Norway. The report illuminated some common motives for international students to come to Norway and examined their opinion on residence and work in Norway after graduation. In my study I tried to add some depth to the understanding of the students' motivation to come, and either stay or leave Norway after graduation, through being responsive and keeping an open mind to the students' experiences. The theoretical framework of the study had to be constructed in order to develop the interview guide and analyse the data received from the interviews.

The framework of the study was composed in order to highlight the main categories and to define the delimitations of the study. The theory triangulation method (Hoque, 2006) was applied: three theories were used in order to facilitate the interpretation of data. In this chapter I will give a short introduction to these three perspectives, before giving them a more detailed presentation.

The theory of human capital, goal-setting theory and the concept of "push and pull factors" will help to shed some light on the issue of international students' motivation for migration. Besides, the model of socioeconomic life-cycle is applied in order to indicate the role of socioeconomic backgrounds of individuals in their career choices. These theories were chosen deliberately since they describe migration motivation from different perspectives, social, economic and psychological. These theories give a broad framework for understanding the complexity of students' choices to study in Norway and their career aspirations upon graduation from Norwegian universities.

In order to discuss motivation for migration a definition of the concept is needed. The word motivation is derived from the Latin word "movere", which means to move. The easiest way to explain motivation is to consider it to be a set of reasons that makes an individual behave in a certain way. Motivation for migration is consequently a set of reasons that makes an individual migrate.

The concept of “push and pull factors” presents a sociological approach to migration theory; and helps to understand the motives driving migration. The motivation for migration, as it is mentioned in the World Bank report on the Determinants of migration, is a combination of social, ethnic, and politically related push and pulls factors. The migration motives of individuals are divided respectively into “push” and “pull” factors. The “push” factors are those that make an individual to leave his/her home country because of the political, social or economical circumstances in that country, such as unemployment, human rights abuses or discrimination. The “pull” factors are those that make a possibility of migration attractive for an individual. The prospects of higher wages, political freedom or freedom from discrimination in the country of destination can be used as examples. According to Shabbir, Badar & Muhammad (2004), the differences in utility of living, educational or working facilities, non-availability of jobs can cause migration.

As for the international students’ migration motivation, the theory may help to understand:

- How students make their decision to go to study abroad?
- Does the situation back home influence their choices to go to study abroad?
- What makes Norway attractive to them?

The theory of human capital can help to understand students’ primary motivation to come to Norway from the economic perspective, since it focuses on the financial rates of return on higher education. The choice of a higher education institution, as well as the choice of a country and study program can make a great promotion for a future career. There are great dissimilarities between the prices for higher education in different countries where international students might choose to study. As it was discussed in previous chapter, economic benefits of Norwegian higher education are obvious since it is free of charge (Maasen & Uppstrøm, 2004). On the other hand, a prestige of a university and compatibility of its study programs is a decisive factor as well. Consequently, the following questions can be put to examine the students’ motivation to come to Norway:

- What factors are decisive for international students when they decide to come to Norway?
- How do the students assess quality and prestige of the study programs in Norway?

- Does the value of their education rise when they obtain a degree from Norway?

The goal-setting theory reflects on the general model of motivation (Dweck & Leggett, 2000). Motivational theory gives an explanation to human actions from the psychological perspective. Motivation is respectively defined as an internal drive that activates behaviour and gives it direction. It includes varying emotions such as: initiative, drive, intensity, persistence, that inhibits, neutralizes, or promotes goal-directed behaviours. Consequently, motivation theory is concerned with the processes that describe why and how human behaviour is activated and directed.

The goal-setting theory explains the human behaviour as a set of actions submitted to a goal. Individuals establish the goals in order to achieve a desired state of things. The goals are predetermined by the interests of individual, as well as by the outside events and conditions. Thus the goal attainment can be either facilitated or restricted by the activity settings. With respect to the international students, the goal-setting theory can help to explain:

- What makes students look for higher qualifications abroad / in Norway?
- How do they adopt/ overcome cultural and social differences?
- To what degree is their decision to stay in Norway upon graduation determined by the immigration requirements?

This theoretical framework is necessary in order to understand students' choices and motivation. The framework will be used when discussing the results of the study. The three theoretical approaches will now be given a broader presentation.

2.1. Motivation for Migration: “Push” and “Pull” Factors

Migration is a complex object of social study, though there is always an individual human action underlying. A long list of factors influences acts of migration. Different social circumstances should be taken into account, in order to describe and analyze this phenomenon.

Moving to a different country is an important life-changing decision that can include political, economical and religious motives. There are different scientific approaches that explain motivation for migration differently. From the sociologic point of view, migration can occur

as result of push and pull factors. Push factors are those which force a person to move. This can include drought, famine, lack of jobs, over population and civil war. Pull factors are those which encourage a person to move: a chance of a better job, better education, a better standard of living.

Motivations for Migration

	Push factors	Pull factors
Economic and demographic	Poverty Unemployment Low wages High fertility rates Lack of basic health and education	Prospects of higher wages Potential for improved standard of living Personal or professional development
Political	Conflict, insecurity, violence Poor governance Corruption Human rights abuses	Safety and security Political freedom
Social and cultural	Discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, religion and the like	Family reunification Ethnic (Diaspora migration) homeland Freedom from discrimination

Source: World Bank

When talking about motivation for migration it is important to keep in mind that migration and economic benefits are usually tightly related. According to Winter-Ebmer (1994), immigrants with optimistic economic motivation are more prone to get higher wages, than those who immigrate for non-economic reasons (family or political motives). The so called “achievement motivation” plays the major role in mastering the tasks. Readiness to assimilate in the host country might also facilitate economic success of immigrants, since it helps to overcome such obstacles as lack of knowledge or language. Thereby, motivational attitudes play a considerable role in the achievement of economic success.

Students’ migration is considered to be a temporary migration, which means they are admitted in the country of destination for a definite and limited period of time (Abella, 2006).

Temporary migrants have usually less rights and entitlements in the destination country than those who are permanent migrants. At the same time, temporary movements are believed to shape to some degree the permanent migration flows.

There are some specifics of temporary migration when considering incentives to move. As for the students, they are probably less disposed to be driven by the push factors, and more by the pull factors. They may have some specific traits, different from other groups of migrants. It is less probable that students would choose to go to study abroad because of the discrimination or unstable political situation at home, although there may be cases of this. They would rather go abroad because of better standards of living and education, better chances for personal and professional development, because of love or even adventure. Despite this, the theory of push and pull factors can be applied to the analysis of students' migration motivation as well.

2.2. Human Capital Theory

In human capital theory, education is considered to be an investment for the future benefits. The theory may help to explain the motivation of international students coming to Norway from an economic perspective. It also helps to determine the value of an internationally gained degree for the further career prospects of the students.

Individuals who acquire more education become more skilful and productive. From a financial perspective, such investment is profitable because it increases future income by more than its initial costs (Barr, 1998). Higher education is therefore considered to be a strategic investment for the future personal and social benefits. Besides higher earnings, citizens with higher level of education are believed to be more publicly active, more informed about their health and highly adaptive to the changes. They have higher social status, are more efficient in consumption and have greater access to the technological change. Higher levels of education buffer individuals from the risk of unemployment, something that is beneficial to the whole economy. The reason is that more educated workers are easier to retrain. Therefore employers always tend to prefer more educated job-applicants to the less-educated.

On the other hand, the more educated the person is, the more efficiently he/she works, and society gains its benefits. Therefore it is in the interest of a society to protect talent in order to secure prosperity of future generations. That's why it is important that people wishing to develop their talents are not restricted by financial factors (Teixeira, Jongbloed, Amaral & Dill, 2004). People with higher level of education are more prone to contribute to the development of new technologies and innovations. That is why the government assigns financial support to higher education institutions and establishes scholarships for students.

Public investments in labour force are usually made according to the estimated “rates of return” on these investments. When, for example, a person with higher education gets a better job, then he/ she will pay higher taxes; that will consequently be a greater contribution to the society. When we suggest that all kind of scholarships are actually established to draw talented students to higher education, then it is important to keep in mind that to some extent it happens because government follows pragmatic goal of getting financial and social benefits from this in the future.

Policy discussions concerning financial support of the students usually assume that the nation, along with the higher education institutions themselves, benefits from the enrolments of students with various racial and economic backgrounds (Clotfelter, 1999). In Norway international students get a chance to study at the expense of the Norwegian state. Moreover, many of these students get a scholarship from the state. This confirms that Norway is eager to attract talented students to the country. Regardless of the fact that Norwegian state spends a lot of money in order to attract international students, the students are not expected to stay on work in Norway after graduation and contribute to the society in this way. This is regarded to be confusing by international students, according to Brekke (2006). A limited period of stay on work after graduation would benefit both international students and the Norwegian state. Students would benefit from international work experience, whereas Norway would benefit from the investments in higher education by recruiting talented graduates.

The objective of the study is discover factors that determine students’ motivation to come to Norway and eventually stay / or leave after graduation. Therefore the cost of the study abroad has to be weight against the benefits that students get from it after graduation. Taking a degree in Norway, students make an investment for future benefits. Here, one has to keep in mind that every kind of investment has some risk, and investment in education is not an exception. According to Canton & Venniker (2001), investing in higher education should be made on the ground of:

- students own abilities,
- quality estimates of the educational services,
- future composition of the demand for labour.

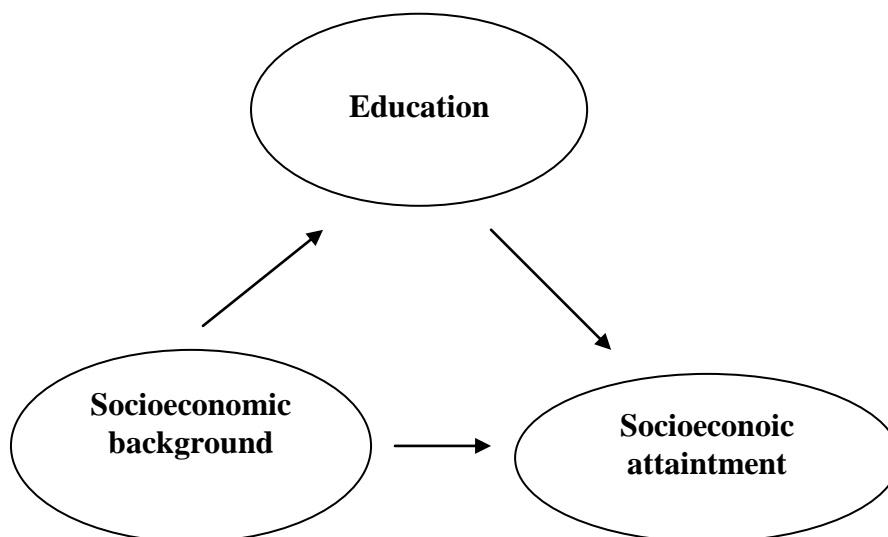
Since these three factors are difficult to estimate, education as an investment may bear some risk. Students have to estimate their own abilities, choose high-quality programs and be aware

of the possible changes on the future labour market in order to gain benefits from higher education in the future.

On the other hand, lack of financial recourses may prevent students from taking a degree, especially when we are talking about a degree in another country. Even if studying abroad is considered to be a valuable investment, the tuition fees and living expenses vary considerably from country to country. The socioeconomic backgrounds determines not only the education level of an individual, but also the future his/her future social and economic results (Bills, 2004). The model of the socioeconomic life cycle demonstrates that the socioeconomic attainment depends on two main variables: education and socioeconomic backgrounds of the students.

Figure 2.1

A model of the socioeconomic life cycle



In this respect it will be interesting to look at how international students' educational and social backgrounds determine their chances to study in Norway, and how they assess their prospective socioeconomic attainments after graduation.

Study abroad is considered to have a positive impact on the future socioeconomic attainment. On the other hand, the future socioeconomic attainment depends on the future job location.

Employment in Norway, or any other developed country upon graduation was considered to be a favourable solution for the students coming to study in Norway (Brekke, 2006). The question of the students' motivation to stay in Norway or leave for other developed countries will be addressed in Chapter 7.

2.3. Goal-Setting Theory

The goal theory will be used in further analysis to get an insight into the motives of the students and their adaptive behaviour. Students' perception of the regulations and rules around employment in Norway, their knowledge about Norway and Norwegian society before and after the period of study will be used to explain their further decisions either to stay or to leave Norway.

There are a number of goal theories that reflect the general model of motivation. But the basic concept that links them is that human action is directed by conscious goals and intentions (Dweck and Leggett, 2000). At the same time, goals depend usually on the events and conditions outside the person, as well as motives and values. The role of the models and cultural standards, incentives and rewards can all shape the goal-setting strategy of individual.

Locke and Latham (1990) were trying to explain why some people perform better on the work tasks than others, when they recognized the role that goals play in motivation. Personal abilities, knowledge and strategies they use to complete a task are important, but that is the *idea* of the goal that causes the human action. They describe the "goal" as "the generic concept that encompasses the essential meaning of terms such as intention, task, deadline, purpose, aim, end, and objective" (Locke and Latham, 1990:2).

The goal-setting theory proves that different types of goals motivate us differently. According to Dweck and Leggett (2000), the adaptive behaviour of individuals differs according to their goals and beliefs about social reality. Each individual approaches situation with different concerns, and sees it in a different light according to their interests. It is from our long-term goals and short-term goals that plans are developed. The success of this planning is dependent on the level of reflection on the situation around us (Schutz, 1994). Being aware of the goal, helps to achieve the results. At the same time, beliefs about our ability to accomplish goals help us to become confident and eventually succeed with our plans. However, even if we have

a goal we are committed to, we may still avoid acting, if the situation and the activity settings do not facilitate goal attainment.

According to Molden and Dweck (2000, cited in Elliot et al., 2005), examining people's goals can help us to understand the means to achievement, the reasons for success or failure, as well as the personal importance of achieving a desired outcome. Consequently, goal theory can be used for the comprehensive analysis of students' motivation to go to study abroad and their future goal and aspirations. It will also help to understand how their beliefs about social reality and their goals influence their adaptive behaviour. In other words, we will try to find out how the perception of the Norwegian society and its rules and regulations affects their aspirations and decision either to stay or to leave Norway.

In this chapter we looked at three different theories which dwell upon the issue of motivation. The theories indicated the factors that may have an impact on the students' motivation for migration. The theoretical framework developed in this chapter will be used in the discussion of the main findings.

3. Research Methodology

Considering the objectives and focus of the study, a qualitative research design was applied. As it was mentioned earlier, motivation for migration is a complex object of social study and requires a complex analysis. One needs to examine the everyday context, the entirety of people's life, in order to understand migration and its cause- effect relations. In order to explain international students' motivation to come and eventually stay in Norway, it was necessary to collect the data which is personal and subjective. The personal experiences and perception of the study period were to be captured and mapped out in order to understand how students make their decisions. A qualitative inquiry was considered to be suitable for this purpose.

According to Patton(1990: 25), "what people say is a major source of qualitative data". An inductive strategy in a qualitative inquiry permits a researcher to study social objects in depth, with a minimum of premises. At the same time, qualitative research allows us to study behaviour within its dynamic, contextual and personal framework (Flick, 2006). The result of such a study is first of all a representation of the insider viewpoint, as well as representation of multiple perspectives. It allows a researcher to develop a theory or the concept on the basis of data collected from the fieldwork.

As for my study, the report of Brekke (2006) was used as a foundation for my research questions. It explained the Norwegian migration policy regulations toward international students and defined the main tendencies in the migration behavior of the students. My interest though was to find out the original incentives for international students to come to Norway and to perceive how their experiences in Norway influence there decision either to stay or to leave Norway upon graduation. The qualitative inquiry method allowed me to acquire the knowledge about their perception and their thoughts about Norway as a study and career destination, find out what are the main factors that influence their choice to come and stay in Norway.

Qualitative research method makes it possible to study a subject in depth, however it has some weaknesses. The generalization of results is usually questionable in the qualitative study. Designing a qualitative research, one has to keep in mind, that generalization of results has to be rather theoretical than numeric (Flick, 2008). Qualitative research design of my study was meant to discover the variety of the students' perceptions and to explore their

motivation to come and stay on / leave Norway after graduation. Therefore, the reader has to be aware of that the numeric generalizations made in the study are made about the group of students who participated in the study. The numbers mentioned in my study cannot directly represent the whole population of international students in Norway, whereas the main findings of the study may be transferable and therefore represent the whole international students' community in the country.

3.1. Method

The interview method was used for the study. It helped to collect detailed personal information about students' motivation from one-to-one conversation. The topic of the study determined the choice of the method: the students' perceptions, motives and decisions had to be explained by the students themselves. Interviews were used in order to expand the understanding of the topic.

According to Patton (1990:278), "the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind". Therefore the method can be used to learn about feelings, thoughts and personal experiences of the students.

The possible alternative of focus group was considered but individual interviews were preferred. The advantages of the personal interview is that people uncover easier and talk more willingly about their personal situations than if it would be in a group discussion. Interviews are also advantageous when we need to get an insight into personal backgrounds and causality of choices (Patton, 1990). Consequently, the method was considered to be suitable for the study purpose

In order to keep a focus of the study, the interview guide was developed. While interviews remained mainly conversational, the interview guide allowed anticipating loss of valuable information and making the data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. The interview guide (see Appendix A) was cautiously analysed after the first interviews were performed, and improved subsequently.

3.2. Data collection

The qualitative methods of research help to acquire in-depth information about the social phenomena. Therefore, typically it focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single

cases, selected on the purpose of the study, because “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth” (Patton, 1990:169). There are few international students who take a whole degree in Norway, and even less who stay in Norway after graduation. Accordingly, there are only a small number of individual experiences that can shed a light on the common tendencies in the behaviour of international students. In this case the sample was derived from the international student community at the University of Oslo, and comprised of 12 students:

Figure 3.1

Profile of Participants

Name	Gender	Civil Status	Place of Origin	Degree	Subject
Stefan	Male	Single	Western Europe	Bachelor/Master	Language, Political Science
Natasha	Female	Single	Eastern Europe	Master	Education
Lera	Female	Single	Eastern Europe	Master	Education
Jaycee	Female	Single	Eastern Europe	Bachelor	Media Science
Kaitlyn	Female	Single	Northern America	Master	Education
Alex	Male	Single	Caucasus	Master	Law
Jevon	Male	Married	Africa	Master	Education
Aden	Male	Married	Africa	Master	Education
Marisa	Female	Married	Africa	Master	Education
George	Male	Single	Oceania	Master	Natural Science
Malia	Female	Single	Asia	Master	Education
Tina	Female	Single	Asia	Master	Economics

In figure 3.1 the backgrounds of the participants are presented.

The plan was to interview international students that have taken a whole degree in Norway, either Bachelor or Master. The reason was the fact that the percentage of those who renewed a residence permit was higher among those who stayed here three and more semesters (Brekke, 2006). Those students would be more “rooted” in their new circumstances and would have more insight into their career prospects in the guest country.

The main technique used for finding information was a “snow-ball” technique. This method of sampling is described by Goodman (1961) as random sampling based on acquiring new respondents from the circle of acquaintances of the previous interviewees. This technique is frequently used for conducting qualitative studies, according to Atkinson and Flint (2001). After using my own network of international students, I was asking interviewees about their friends or student-fellows that might be willing to participate. In that way I found few respondents from the circle of friends and people I already interviewed.

One of the advantages of the “snow-ball” technique is that it develops trust between the researcher and respondents, because new respondents are introduced by the previous participants (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). The method is also considered to be economical and efficient as it allows reaching respondents relatively quickly. The main difficulty of the method is a limited validity of a sample due to the subjective rather than random choice of the respondents. This is important to take into consideration when interpreting the data.

The interviews were conducted in May-June 2008, right before the graduation of the international students. A busy schedule of the students made it a bit complicated to reach them, although they showed a great interest in participating. The interviews lasted for approximately 60 minutes each.

Notes and records of interviews were made. Participants were asked about permission to tape-record the interviews, so that I would not miss any valuable information for further analysis. The most relevant information gained from the records was transcribed. Some of the transcripts were verified by the interviews in order to amend interpretation.

When conducting the interviews I had to be aware of my status as a researcher. As an international student myself, I intended to perform an objective analysis of what my peers had to say about their perception of the study period in Norway, their plans for future and expected career prospects. According to Flick (2006), my subjectivity and the subjectivity of those being studied are an explicit part of the knowledge. The students’ personal experiences were to be reconstructed in order to learn about their attitudes and motivation. My role as a researcher was not to provide an image of the students’ motivation *per se*, but rather to make a presentation of the results. My knowledge on the topic comes from my own experience as an international student in Norway, and also from the literature reviewed. Therefore, a certain degree of subjectivity is embedded in the study.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

Conducting interviews, a main ethical issue was providing the anonymity of the study. I had to guarantee that the interviewees would not be recognisable. Accordingly, I could not mention a country or a study program, because it would make students exposed to recognition. The respondents were informed that their names will not be used in the study discourse. The names of the respondents had been changed with the fake names, but the reader can still keep a track of the personal experiences of each participant.

3.4. Delimitations of the Study

The major goal of this study is to explore international students' motivation and ambitions before arrival to Norway and upon graduation from Norwegian universities. Their insights and subjective view points have been used to shed some light on the original motivation to come to Norway and eventual consideration of career prospects in Norway. The variety of convictions and estimates about staying on work in Norway upon graduation will help us to understand what motivates international students to seek employment here, and how this decision is being made. On the other hand, there will be a possibility to provide an insight into the motivation of international students to leave Norway and the factors that influence this decision.

The course of the study was defined by the research questions; that poses some limitation on the study. Though we are talking about international students in the settings of contemporary immigration policy in Norway and global labour market trends, the only student's perspective and understanding of those settings will be the object of the study. Besides, external quality estimates of the study programs and study progress of international students will not be the matter of analysis due to the limited time-frames and limited access to this kind of information. At last, the inquiry of the study will not touch on the issue of "brain drain", though it might be logical when talking about migration of skilled labour force.

In this chapter the research design of the study was presented and discussed. The advantages and weaknesses of the method had to be considered in order assure that the results of the study will be interpreted correctly. The delimitations of the study helped to set the focus of the study. The results of the study will be presented in the following chapters.

4. Motivation upon Arrival

This chapter is targeted to explore the students' motivation to come to Norway. The first research question is therefore to be answered in this chapter. Students were asked about their educational and professional backgrounds in order to understand their situation back home. Having different levels of education and work experience, they were considered to have different types of aspirations when looking for a study abroad. Further it will be explored why they chose Norway, in order to understand their primary motivation to come to Norway. Finally, their choice of the study program will be analysed. That will help us to see why did they choose the programs and if it had anything to do with their future career prospects in Norway or elsewhere.

4.1. Educational and Professional Backgrounds of the Students

Educational backgrounds of international students which come to Norway usually varies from high school completion to a university degree upon arrival. Some of my informants had more than one degree. The reason was that educational systems in their home countries were not totally compatible with the education system in Norway. The informants therefore needed to have more extensive education in order to be able to compete for a place.

Some informants had a quite long work experience, while others have never undertaken any professional employment. Work experience back home was a characteristic of 10 students out of 12 interviewed. One student from Africa, whom I interviewed, was working as a government employee when he applied for a study program at the University of Oslo. A couple of students interviewed were involved in NGOs, getting some professional experience there. Professional occupations may served as a starting point for seeking international study experience:

They mentioned it [study prospects in Scandinavia] while I was working at the NGO... And at some point I realized that it would be nice to get some more knowledge, because I could avoid many mistakes which I made. (Lera, Eastern Europe)

Several interviewees mentioned that international study experience was a part of their career prospects back home:

I was working at the research department in the consulting company... even though I had a good background in engineering, but I lacked lots of knowledge in economics. I needed those things to help me to analyze investments...So I came to Norway to study economics here. (Tina, Asia)

The capacity of international students is usually high; some of them have more than one study offer. Jevon (Africa) was recently graduated, had two job offers, the study offer from the University of Oslo, and an offer from another university elsewhere:

The main issue was the issue of job after I finished my studies here [after he completed the study program in Norway he was promised to be employed at home university], and then I also had two job offers, just the same time I was admitted here I had two offers for two new jobs. And then the third issue was very conflicting as well: I had another scholarship to study elsewhere, not in Norway ...So I had a very serious conflict before coming here and deciding whether to come to Norway or to wait and take up the other scholarship.

He finally made a choice to come to Norway. His family was willing to make an effort, to let him go and get a degree, though the situation back home was complicated:

Of course it was mixed, they were very willing to release me, but also they had a challenge of coping with my absence, because back home there's very little income, and that means that I needed to... it meant a lot. When I'm here I have to send back [economic] assistance to them. But overall, they were like me, very eager that I come and study abroad. (Jevon, Africa)

The role of the family backgrounds and social status of students may have an impact on how students make their decisions to go to study abroad. The financial matters seem to be important when they decide to go to such a developed and “expensive” country like Norway. If an applicant has a family and children back home, it raises a whole set of special contradictions. A decision to go abroad at least for two years in order to take a degree had to be a deliberate one for Aden (Africa). Being a head of a family and a father of two kids, he explained the complexity of his decision to go to study abroad:

Of course, coming here, in Norway, was a big challenge. First of all when I got the admission I was, as I told you in the beginning, a government employee. After getting

an admission I had to inform my boss that I have got an admission. At first, they refused, and what they told me was: “You have two choices: you should resign from the work and go to study, or leave study and stay working”. Then it was a big challenge, because my wife is not working, she is a housewife, and I had to resign in order to come to study, or stay, not go to study, so that I could continue working.

International students interviewed came from different social backgrounds; some of them had families to support back home. This section of the chapter disclosed how important is decision to come to study in Norway is for international students. The fact that the most of the respondent leave either job or a family behind, or both of the things, shows how much it is at stake. The future career prospects were already mentioned by some of the informants.

In the following section students’ motivation to come to Norway will be presented.

4.2. Choice of the Country

Why Norway? Why international students come to Norway? Do they have any other alternatives? Why do they prefer Norwegian educational offer? Those questions were addressed in this section.

One of the reasons why students from all over the world come to Norway to study and to take a degree is a financial side of the matter. When some students pry out that Norwegian higher education is free, it might become a decisive factor why they decide to choose Norway.

Jaycee, from Central Europe, when asked why she chose Norway replied:

First I would say- the opportunity of higher education that is cheaper. I mean my family has a possibility to sustain me here, but only that much. It’s still expensive for my family to give me money to live here. So the cost was one of the reasons, and the other- I was looking for a new experience.

Availability of scholarships was considered to be very attractive, especially for the students from developing countries. Probably they wouldn’t afford to pay for a study themselves, and Norway turns out to be willing to support them. This fact determined their motivation to choose Norway as study destination:

I was curious to study Masters; I applied several institutions about getting in. Sometimes you get the admission but you don't have a scholarship. I can say that, what made me come to study here was contributed by two factors: that I had an admission, at the same time I had a scholarship from Norwegian government. (Aden, from Africa)

Interviews disclosed that students from Africa were most prone to seek scholarship, while for the students from Europe or Northern America that was not a crucial factor in their decision to come to Norway. The idea to go to study abroad came rarely alone to these students; they sought for an opportunity to get a scholarship. For Malia (Asia) a scholarship was an indispensable condition that would allow her to go to study abroad:

...while I worked I also looked for another opportunities to get scholarship to study abroad. The thing is you cannot self-finance to study abroad, because it's very expensive.

It is obvious that without scholarship Aden (Africa) wouldn't come to study in Norway. Even having a scholarship it was not easy to manage, he confessed. He was though optimistic because of the rumours that it would be possible to get some extra sustainment through a part-time job:

Some people told me that you may get some jobs, part-time jobs and you can survive, you can keep your family. So that was the information that made me decide to come. Otherwise, these two factors [admission and scholarship] were not sufficient for me to come.

Sometimes absence of tuition fees in Norway, although a minor factor, still has an impact on the decision to come here. When Tina (Asia) reflected on her decision to come to Norway, she was primarily driven by the motive to come to Europe. Even though she was not offered a scholarship in Norway, it was clear that it would be less expensive for her to come here where she would only be responsible for living expenses:

...I applied in a lot of countries, and also in Norway. I applied maybe 7 or 8 countries, in Europe: Sweden, Norway and in Denmark, and then in Asia I applied at Singapore and Hong Kong. And then, after 4-5 month I have got six of seven offers from all the universities. Many universities are very good and they offered me a scholarship to

study research designing. I decided to choose to go to Norway, because after consideration I think Norway has a very good connection to all of Europe, and also environments and protection of resources in this area [she studied environmental economy] is very determinate. At the same time the Economic department at the University of Oslo is very famous, as I know. ... I also was attracted by the nature at that moment, so I decided to come to Norway, Oslo. Because here education is for free, so I can afford it, even if I don't get a scholarship I just can find a job here, so my family doesn't need to support me.

In some cases students look for any opportunity to go abroad, they apply for several institutions and often get admission from few of them. There can be different factors that become decisive when they choose Norway. Considering that many of the students are looking for scholarships while looking for studies, availability of information is important. Marisa from Africa said information played a major role in her choice of the country:

The availability of the information: I was looking for the Master program, and it was easy for me to get information from Norway because I received it from my fellow students. So I think maybe it's the matter of access to information. If I could get maybe other information, if I could get some other information and go to some other countries, I would apply too. But it's the matter of communication and access to information.

An interesting pattern of social behaviour have been observed: three male students, out of twelve participants that were interviewed, came to Norway following their Norwegian beloved. It shows that the study purpose is not always the only incentive to go to Norway, at least not a primary one. At the same time it appears that those students would possibly not come to Norway, were it not for the educational and to some extend career prospects:

Originally it was because Marie, my fiancée, my girlfriend at that time, was Norwegian. But with that said, I also had been admitted at the Michigan University at that time, and I chose Norway instead. I wouldn't have chosen Norway but because education was free, because I was told that it was a lot of possibilities up here (I could believe all of this, I didn't know any of it). And I've been told that level of education was also very good, and how the things happened that classes and most of it happened in English. (Stefan, Western Europe)

Kaitlyn (Northern America) was also thinking of future prospects. She also had a strong wish to stay in Norway permanently, since her family originally came from Norway. Education for her was a means of achieving her goal:

... my goal was always to live in Norway. And education program was a good way to get into the country. It's difficult as a foreigner to come to the country to live, without either going to university, or having a job. So having a university was a first step, and getting a job is a second step.

Students make their decisions to go to study abroad mindfully, as we saw there are usually many factors to consider. But not everyone comes to Norway to study in the first place.

George (Oceania) came to Norway because of a Norwegian girlfriend that he met back home:

I came here because my last year at the University of (...) [his home university] I met a Norwegian girl... It wasn't just because of that: I didn't know what I wanted to do and it sounded like some challenge, and I came here to learn a new language and learn about a new culture.

He had a bachelor degree at that time and working experience from his home country, but he failed to find a relevant job in Norway. He was looking for an opportunity to stay longer in Norway and eventually the study program at the University of Oslo became a solution for him:

After a year of not being able to get a job, obviously I became quite frustrated and also my visa was running out, and I wanted to stay longer because of my girlfriend, because she had a job at that time in Norway, I went to the university and I asked "Is it possible for me to study in Norway? ...what I would like to do." And they told me that I could start tomorrow... Well, I had to wait about four month to get a visa, because I was too late to get a visa for that semester, so I had to wait for the next one. But it was very easy, and it just worked out. (George, Oceania)

Other factors that the students mentioned were the attractiveness of the Norwegian nature and possibility to travel. Malia (Asia) was excited about the Master program that would last in two years since she would get a possibility to travel in Europe while studying:

...I choose Norway because the Masters program here is two years, while in other countries it's only one year- intensive program, so it would be very hard and difficult. ... The most important factor is that it's two years. Because I'm very interested in travelling, so I thought that if I stay here to study for two years, I can have a chance to travel around as well. It was originated from my hobby in travelling.

As we saw, there were few factors mentioned by the students, considering the choice of the country. Students from developing countries pointed out the financial advantage of Norwegian higher education. In some of the cases that was the most important factor why students chose Norway. Students from the Western countries had different reasons and aspirations to come, sometimes the reasons had nothing to do with education. There were other factors than scholarships available that made them think of coming to Norway originally. Three of the students from developed countries mentioned their aspirations to possibly stay in Norway after graduation already when they considered applying for a study.

In the following section we will continue to examine the primary motivation to come to Norway. We will try to find out how important it was for the students that a study program would match their previous education and future professional aspirations.

4.3. Choice of a Study Program

According to Brekke (2006), consistency of the study program with previous education and future plans is high on the agenda for international students coming to Norway. In my study I tried to examine the students' choices in order to understand how important it is for them to get an admission for the program that fits their future plans. It helped to get a first glance on their future plans.

The choice of the study program is often determined by the former studies and future career prospects. Basically students described study programs they followed at that moment when I interviewed them as a deliberate choice. Jevon, from Africa, describes his decision to study in Norway as a step to his future career. His undergraduate studies and future career prospects were relevant to what he was studying at the University of Oslo.

I excelled during my Bachelors course, I got a first class degree, and then the Faculty of (...) [Education] decided to call me to come and apply for this course at Oslo

University. Because there's a staff linkage program between the Faculties [in his home country and in Norway], and normally they bring here their lecturers. So it was under that program that they called me to come, apply to come here, and I was chosen.

He continues his reflection on this decision, pointing out the benefits of making this effort for his future career:

I chose Norway mainly because the Master that I was coming to study here was consistent with what I have studied at Bachelors and diploma level. That was one consideration, but the biggest consideration was because the Faculty which helped me to come here [in Norway], has promised, gave me like a 50 per cent hope of being employed as a lecturer at the university when I get back. So I thought that when I come here I would have a higher chance of a better employment at the university. That was the decisive factor. (Jevon, Africa)

Being aware of the study program choice helped George (Oceania) to avoid disappointment. He examined the program content cautiously and got all the information necessary in order to make a decision. Considering that choosing a study program is a financial investment, it was important.

It was exactly what I expected it to be, really. I asked a lot of questions before I started so I had a good idea of what was involved... I went to the administration and I asked what courses they offered and then they gave me the list of all the professors and master projects they had available. And then I looked through them, got in contact with my professors, and I could speak to him and ask him more questions about it.

Kaitlyn (Northern America) was told by a friend about international aspect of the study program she was considering to take. She was excited to experience another cultures and describes it like a huge incentive to come in Norway:

He said that one of the big things was the fact that there're students from all over the world, and that really interested me, because I like to get to know another culture, another people. That to me was a huge motivator. It's a totally international program, and that was interesting.

To choose a program in order to get a scholarship can be an incentive by itself. Natasha (Eastern Europe) chose the program that had at least some connection to what she intended to study because she did not find a language program which could be relevant to her previous degree. She had to take a priority of the study program where scholarship was provided:

Because it was somehow connected with my work in (...) [her home country] and I thought I would get a scholarship. So my first aim was to come here and to get a scholarship. So if I wouldn't have chosen this program, then maybe I wouldn't be chosen to get a scholarship...I chose a program which I thought it would be easier to get in for me, because of my background, working background.

For some students the location of a university can have quite an impact on the choice of the program. The University of Oslo therefore has an advantage of being located in the capital. The location of the University was a determinative factor which made Stefan (Western Europe) to choose a study program in Oslo, a goal of being a diplomat brought him to the capital city of Norway:

I have to be in Oslo...I already studied abroad but I want to become a diplomat, so it was important to be where the things happen, and that would be in the capital- first thing. The second thing, the UiO [University of Oslo] is the one that gives courses in Arabic. There is one in Bergen but it wouldn't be in a capital. It was important for me to be in a capital to be where things happened.

The choice of the education program for the motivation to come to Norway is comparatively high for the student. Students seem to look for a program that would match their previous education and future plans, and if they find one in Norway, they make a decision to come. However, some of the informants had to adjust educational program content and location to other needs.

5. Perception of the Study in Norway

As it was described in the previous chapter, knowledge about the study programs and quality of education affected my informants' decisions to come to Norway. Study-related experiences can have an indirect impact on the students' motivation to stay in Norway upon graduation. Study programs serve as a first introduction into the higher education system in Norway and give an opportunity to experience the advantages. For some international students it is an opportunity to experience better studying facilities than in their home countries, they acquire new skills and learn to manage their life in the country. There is a possibility that a positive study experience has an impact on the future plans of international students concerning Norway.

On the other hand, difficulties and inconsistencies of a study program can possibly make a negative impression on the international students and discourage them from pursuing the study. Some of the students admitted that they considered dropping from the program, mainly in the beginning of the study period, because it did not match with their expectations.

Students who do not have a scholarship or have a family back home may have problems with allocating financial resources. That can have a negative impact on the quality of the study. Their motivation in these situations along with their aspirations and future plans will be examined in this chapter.

5.1. Difficulties and Inconsistencies

This section of the chapter will address the issue of difficulties and inconsistencies of the study process. Students were asked to reflect on this issue and describe the problems they experienced due to the inconsistencies.

The complete inconsistency with the expectations was mentioned by Natasha (Eastern Europe). She expected it to be more in line with her previous degree, but the program turned out to be of a different direction:

It was completely different from what I expected. I thought it would be more practical. Maybe I didn't have correct expectations about the program before coming here.

Being confused, she considered to change the program. But the study program and the scholarship she received were coherent, so if she did so, she would lose her scholarship:

Actually I wanted to change the program at the beginning. When I came here and realized what I'm going to study for the next two years, I wanted to change the program, and I even asked my Quota-program [a scholarship program for students from developing countries] advisor, if I could change the program, and she said "No". So I was not aloud to change the program, but I would have done it, if I could.
(Natasha, Eastern Europe)

That was also an issue for Tina (Asia) who was not satisfied with the program quality and found it difficult to adopt. She had no scholarship, and therefore she did not have that motivation to pursue. Eventually she changed her mind:

...before I really though to change this program, I really wanted to give up, when I was at the first year in this program. I found it terrible, I didn't want to continue, but my friends and my teachers encouraged me, and then I decided to actually give myself another chance...

Though she pursued the study, she had that negative experience still back in her mind. She would rather pay for her education if she was to study again, but she would not choose the University of Oslo again. She meant that the quality of the education is defined by the amount of study hours; and that there was not enough class-content-time to get a grasp of the subjects. The study hours were reduced and that caused the worsening of the study results:

In (...) [her home country] you know you learn the courses, you have more assistance, you have text book, or the notes, or the seminar questions... and the teachers, they are also trained very well to teach you very clearly. And if you don't understand it, they'll give you lots of examples for you to understand it. But here, as far as our economic faculty is concerned, we only have... before we had 10 seminars, and this year because of the lack of funding, we only have 6 seminars... I don't think the students who get the "D", "E", or "F", I don't think that's because they are stupid, or I don't think that's because they are lazy, or I don't think that there are other reasons. I think it is the education system that has some problems. ...I would never choose the University of Oslo again, if I could choose again. I don't think that's because it's for

free, this university. If in some other university I can learn something, and it can give me better opportunity, as I finish this education, I would like to pay up, even though it's expensive...(Tina, Asia)

The problem of direction of the study program was also familiar for Aden, from Africa. He came to Norway to get some practical experience in order to become a professional researcher, but the course content was more theoretical. He managed to adapt, though:

... When we started the program, I did not see the direction, I thought that it was a research program. I expected that maybe we could go to the field, we wouldn't stay in class ...Because my aim was to become a researcher, to be a university teacher. To me, at the beginning I thought that this program does not fit me. But eventually I saw its objectives and I adapted, I think so.

The lack of depth in the course of the program was mentioned by Jevon (Africa):

I expected to go in depth into certain specialized areas of (...) [his subject], but instead I found it more general than I wanted it to be.

Another issue of inconsistency, mentioned by the informants, was the lack of hours, especially when the language programs are considered. Stefan who expected to be able to speak the language after completion of the Bachelors degree, had to acknowledge that his language skills remained insufficient. He admitted though, that there is a potential in that course, but there is a lack of financing:

I expected it to be, I would be able to speak (...) [the language]. I'm sure at bachelor degree I can't speak (...) [the language]. I think it's too rigid for learning language. I think it's very good that they send us abroad the third semester, as they did. I think it has very good potential, some teachers are spectacular, as early eleventh teacher we have. I think if the department of the University would give more funds to the teachers so they could spend more time on us, because we have a ridiculous amount of hours a week on language. You can't learn the language when you have only 5 hours a week!

Students did not get a possibility to speak the language during the whole semester. He pointed it as the main weakness of the program and an obvious reason for a high rate of “drop-outs”:

This semester we haven't had any dialog-classes, so I'm not able to speak at all...And we told, we just would like to be able to speak more, we've got "Sorry, we don't get paid enough..." ... Out of 130 [students] we started, there are 20 of us left...

Natasha (Eastern Europe) was taking an extra language course during her study. She noticed the same trend of language course intensity:

...it's just 3 hours: you come to the class, you study something and then you forget about this course during next week. I think it's better to have courses at least twice a week. They are not very intense; I would rather study more intensive.

There were also some inconsistencies concerning grading system and study points that were mentioned by the students, the inconsistencies that may have an impact on the employment prospective of the students in their home countries. Jevon explains that the "Pass" and "Fail" system of assessment is not compatible with student assessment system in his country and puts a question of validity on his degree. That turns out to be an important issue that was not considered when he decided to go to study abroad:

... my main complain is about the grading system. There are subjects that are graded, A, B, C, D, E... but half of the subjects are graded on the "Pass" or "Fail" basis. It has a very negative impression back home in my country, because we attach a lot of value to the quality of our academic documents. These are important in my country in determining further studies, and then also in job placement. And if they see that half of your transcripts have "Passes", people will question the validity. Here it is explained why it is graded this and that, but I don't think people often have a chance to read the explanation. They simply look at the mark. ...So that makes the possibility of them misunderstanding you very high.

Being enrolled in Norwegian higher education system students have a possibility to choose the study courses themselves in order to get a certain amount of study points. The minimum of study points for each semester defines the amount of courses, respectively. George, from Oceania, sees that as a potential weakness. The easiest courses may compound the same amount of points that makes the study program inconsistent:

It's not very consistent, some courses are very easy and some are very difficult. The study points are rewarded sometimes unevenly: sometimes it's very easy to get your

study points, and other times you have to really work. ... It seems like in Norway you can get a degree by choosing all the easy courses which are available and still have the same degree in the end, which is somehow unusual, because in (...) [his home country] that is a little bit more fixed, the papers you have to take. And in Norway you can make a degree from any papers as long as you have the study points.

He continues to reflect on the time management issue, which is also considered to be a challenge for international students coming to Norway. The inconsistency of the teaching techniques between countries causes problems for international students:

In Norway there is a lot less class-content-time, like some papers have only two hours of lectures a week, whereas in (...) [his home country] I would have 6. So there is a lot more self-directed study ... And if you come from England or somewhere where you have a lot of classes, people sometimes get burned... (George, Oceania)

Kaitlyn (Northern America) uses the example of her home country to demonstrate the difference in the education process, concerning time-management and self-control. She means that it is necessary to motivate yourself in order to do well in Norway:

...this program was hard because you could go for weeks with no assignment, and now-and-then having assignment, and that was hard. And also you could go for weeks with no classes, and then having to start up again. So it wasn't as demanding as I expected it to be... It's very different from what I used to, more relaxed, you have to be more the self-motivator, I think, in order to be well. But it's on the student to learn, more than the teachers telling the student what to learn, so you have to read on your own, and you have to be very organized and very prepared.

The Eastern-European study-management tradition is not consistent with the Norwegian one neither. Natasha admitted that professors would have more control on the students' preparations in her home country, even on the Masters level; it was not a case in Norway. She had it difficult to adapt:

In (...) [her home country] you don't have so much time on your own, you don't have to read a lot on your own, but you have more hours in the university, studying hours (from 8a.m. to 4 p.m. each day), and here you just have a couple of hours twice or three times a week and then you are free. And that's why it's much more difficult for

me to study here, because I have to make myself study and I can't do it. And in (...) [her home country] it was much easier for me because I had to prepare my lessons each day, and teachers controlled our preparations, but here nobody controls.

As we saw in this chapter, the study programs' contents were not always in accord with the expectations of international students. Some of the students expected the study programs to be more practical, but found them quite theoretical. The students did not get a possibility to practice the subject or go to the field as much as they expected. They also mentioned an insufficient amount of study hours assigned for the some study courses, especially in concern with languages. The expectation upon arrival had also an impact on the study perception.

Most of the students interviewed managed to adapt and pursued the study. The next section of the chapter can give some explanations about why students persist in their study in Norway.

5.2. Educational Advantages and Skills Acquired

Positive study experiences of the informants in Norway will be discussed in this section. The advantages of the educational system and skills acquired were suggested to have an influence on the students' motivation and future aspirations. Therefore informants were asked to reflect on their experiences of educational advantages and to comment on the skills they truly had acquired during the study period in Norway.

When comparing to his home country university, Aden (Africa) exposed the main shortcomings of the educational system back home, and considered the facilities available at the University of Oslo as a significant advantage:

The major difference is that, when I'm talking of this university, the university has equipment, the university has facilities. Back home, in my country, in the university which I studied, the facilities like computers, like rooms for studies, like classes are very-very poor. Sometimes we sit down to listen to the lectures, we don't have chairs, sometimes the classes are full, and some people listen to the lectures from the window...

Cultural interactions during the study period in Norway were also considered to be an advantage. Lera, from Eastern Europe, admitted that being in an international environment brings social skills of the students on a higher level. Studying back home can be much easier

for students to interact because of homogeneity of the culture. Here in Norway being in an international environment, students have to learn about other's viewpoints. The ability to see her own culture from another point of view was a result of her study experience in Norway:

In Norway the situation is that you have to be with a lot of different cultures, a lot of different students, you have to kind of view your own culture in a bit different way than back home, because you have to explain what your own culture is and socialize from that prospective. When back home you are on a same level... in our University we don't have any international students, so you are, kind of, in your own culture. And of course it's much easier to develop social skills when you are in your own culture. But here the social skills are, I would say, on a bit higher level, because you have to do both with Norwegian students and Norwegian culture which you live in, plus you have to do with all the international students.

Aden (Africa) also sees the cultural interactions to be an advantage of this study experience. Having learned about the patterns of behaviour and the culture of other international students during the classes made it easier for him to communicate with them:

I think, I've met a lot of various students from different countries, and of course the discussions, talking... you learn how they behave, and how is their culture. It has increased my interaction with them.

Being a student at the University of Oslo can also give a possibility of free access to on-line publications. Jaycee considered this possibility to use publications on-line to be an advantage:

... I'm very grateful because the University of Oslo paid a lot of money for certain publications on-line that are available only here, only with the Internet provided by the University. ... you take it for granted although, you don't realize that people that live outside [the student village] and have different access to Internet, they don't have the access...

She also emphasized the benefit of having almost unlimited access to the literature. The library system was considered an absolute advantage, when working with home assignments:

You have all the necessary means to do a good paper, like a home exam. You have a huge amount of books that you can use as resources. And I love the fact that the library

is on Campus, you can stay there as much as you want. ... We have so many things that are right there, you only have to take them. So I love that! (Jaycee, Eastern Europe)

Another advantage of being an international student at the University of Oslo is that the students are given a lot of opportunities for research and professors are there to help them, according to Jevon (Africa). He was talking about the preconditions of the healthy student:

I like the way the professors relate to the students, because that is the basis of healthy student, it's a very good working relation. And they also prepare well for their jobs, most of them deliver very well, and the opportunities, the facilities are there to support the students who are really committed to researching and finding out more.

Talking about academic support and supervision, Stefan (Western Europe) was recalling his memories from international study experience in France, he has been studying there as an exchange student from Norway. Comparing those two systems, he considers Norwegian system to be very supportive:

... Compared to any other university I've been to, in every case, those [academic support, supervision] in University of Oslo are better, particularly compared to the French system. In the French system they just throw you out there and say: "Memorize this". The Norwegian system, I really like it, pretty much. Concerning academic support, supervision, I think Fronter [the official website for students at the University of Oslo] works well, guidelines are told very clear, what is expected from students. I'm very pleased.

Stefan also got a chance to experience the social welfare model in person. That was another advantage of studying in Norway. Studying political science elsewhere he possibly would have read about it, but not experienced:

Probably, I could have read about, but I wouldn't be able to experience, for example, what that social welfare model actually means, in person ... (Stefan, Western Europe)

Malia (Asia) pointed up that it was much less stressful to study in Norway than it was in her home country, where she had to learn by heart and be constantly "in the mood of examination". She considered the study in Norway to be enjoying:

...I found this program very enjoying, very enjoyable, like they don't push, you are not always under pressure to study, you know. You study but at the same time you find it enjoying, not like in my country, where students come to the university, they study 5-6 different subjects in one semester, and all the time they are pressured to study. You have to study by heart, and after that you forget everything. So you don't find study enjoying at all! But here I find that studying is very enjoying.

The advantageous feature of the higher education system in Norway, according to Malia is that she is given a possibility to choose and learn the things that will benefit her in the future. That motivated her a lot during the study:

Here, maybe I have motivation, I don't know, but here I read a lot, but I read for the benefit of me, not for the benefit of learning. ...You gain knowledge by yourself, not to gain knowledge that because you want to get a good mark, or to pass an examination. So that's a point.

Skills acquired are a valuable benefit of any study, either home or abroad. Critical thinking is one of the skills international students reported to be taught during their stay in Norway. Aden (Africa) had to learn how about critical thinking when he had to read and analyze articles. When in his home country, he relied basically on the notes, but studying in Norway, he had to rely on his own ability to think critically. Now he can do critical thinking himself:

... of course the lecturer can give me a topic and tell me to read it, and I can read it, and analyze issues, and at the end of the day, attend the exams which I've been given. When I was at the undergraduate [in his home country], you have to rely on the notes, which I've been given by the teacher, otherwise I couldn't study on my own, I didn't concentrate on reading books, I was just reading notes.

Besides acquiring critical thinking skills, he learned how to work with a computer and Internet. These facilities were not available at his home university:

And of course, another important factor which I am getting here is the use of the computer. Because I started using the computer when I arrived here, I've never used the computer when I was attending undergraduate teaching. My first time just to type it is when I arrived here, and of course it was very difficult for me... although I'm not typing like these typists, but at least my speed has increased and I know how to browse

the Internet, I can find journals, I can find books, I can find a lot of web-sites where I can get materials. But before that I did not know. (Aden, Africa)

Jevon (Africa) learned how to use basic Office programs, and Power Point among other things; that made it much easier to make presentations. But he also learned a lot about academic writing itself. He acquired the necessary skills in order to make his writing more scientifically correct:

...And then writing itself, the art of writing a term paper, because term papers and home exams are things that helped me much in gaining how to write academically and scientifically. I think before that I was writing more on my own way and type, than what could be universally good, as an academic piece of work.

Being serious and committed is one of the preconditions in order to do well with studies in Norway, according to Jevon (Africa). Students have to manage their time in order to meet the dead-lines, that makes them more responsible and independent. Those skills were difficult to acquire while studying back home:

...back home it's rather rigid and crowded time-table which you have to follow. So there's a little room of independence back home, but here I think it's more space for trying to be yourself and managing your own activities. And that's become a challenge because if I was not serious and committed, then the system does not "force" me to be so...

Stefan (Western Europe) considers that students at the University of Oslo are treated more like grown-ups. He considers the time-management issue that can be a challenge for some students, to be a positive factor:

Here you left quite a lot more to yourself, you treated more as a grown-up, in many cases that helps to develop good study skills, manage your own time.

Being abroad, away from familiar culture, familiar teaching traditions can be difficult in the beginning, as we saw in the previous section of this chapter. After all, students adapt to the difficulties they meet with. Even the teaching techniques and the time-management issue that were considered to be difficult to adapt by many students (see the first section of the chapter), were further considered to be helpful in developing good study skills, learning how to manage

time. As far as the University of Oslo is concerned, the students have reported to gain academic skills, such as critical thinking and ability to write academically. In some cases technical skills they acquired in Norway, such as working with Microsoft Office programs, were new to the students.

In this section of the chapter we saw that Norwegian higher education system seems to have many advantages in order to attract international students. According to the students interviewed, there are better facilities and equipment, there is a good student-professor working relation, students get sufficient academic support, besides there is a possibility to interact with students from different cultures. Some of the students have never before experienced the facilities they very entitled while studying in Norway. What was interesting, some of them experienced the study like more enjoyable in comparison with what they experienced back home.

5.3. Management of the Financial Issues

The variety of sources of financial support will be discussed in this section in order to understand how international students manage their financial issues during the study period in Norway. As we saw in Chapter 4, the financial side of the international study experience is important when students make their decision to come to Norway. As it was discussed previously, that Norwegian higher education institutions do not charge fees, the education in Norway is free. The minor fee of about NOK 550 per semester, which is approximately USD 70, is required. Consequently, the major expenses that international students have to bear are the expenses of living in the country and the expenses of the study material. Nevertheless, some of the informants considered it to be expensive to study in Norway, even though they had a scholarship.

Further we will look on how students assess their financial resources and what makes them to look for part-time jobs. Besides, problems with allocating financial resources were considered to have an impact on the quality of the study. Therefore informants' perception of this issue will be used for further considerations.

The fact that the scholarship that some international students receive is not sufficient for meeting basic needs in Norway, is evident from the interview with Natasha (Eastern Europe). She considered Norway to be an expensive place to live and the scholarship- to be far from

meeting her living expanses:

No, it's not enough. Far from being enough! Actually I feel like a homeless person here... Somehow I always felt that I don't have enough money. This is the constant feeling of my living here: "I don't have enough money"... I think they [Norwegian government] know for sure that it's difficult and expensive to live here, and still they have these small scholarships. They know that 6.000 kr. is not enough to live here!

Aden (Africa) had to support the family back home. He also considered the scholarship to be too small. He was working nights in order to gain necessary resources and considered this situation to have a negative impact on his study performance. He would perform much better on his studies if he had no financial concerns:

I think if, for example, I wasn't working, I had enough fund, my family back home was comfortable, then I could have done wonders. And I think even my thesis could have been already finished long time ago. ...The scholarship to me is very small. My life could be study and relaxing, study and relaxing. But here you have to study, you have to go to work... And you can not study if the family is languishing, you have to make sure that they are breathing, you have to work. And working at night, I go at 2[a.m.], and come back at 4[a.m.]. Instead of sleeping and resting my brain for studies, I keep on working. And this affects studies...

Being responsible for the family back home makes the financial situation more complicated. Jevon (Africa) considered scholarship to be enough to stay in Norway, but he had to work in addition in order to support his family. Answering on the question why he had to work, he said:

Mainly to support my family back home. It was not really for meeting basic needs here. The scholarship was just enough for what I wanted here. But I told you that I had very poor salaries back home, so I had obligation of supporting my family, and the scholarship money was not enough to do that. So I had to work in order to be able to send back some money home.

Some of the students who received a scholarship were working part-time, but not all of them consider a part-time job to be a burden. They started working because they enjoyed doing

something different and meaningful during their free time. The part-time job for Malia (Asia) was rather a kind of hobby:

Yeah, I take a part-time job, not because I really need the money, or I need that money to support my study. I need part-time job, that's because I can not stay still, you know, I'm not a person who can stay all the day without doing anything. So I want to take a part-time job, that's to make me have a job, that I have something to do.

Alex (Caucasus) considered his part-time job as some kind of experience, where he could meet other people and feel himself a part of something. His study experience proved that he did not have to spend much time on the studies every day, so he could get some work experience instead:

Well, the question is if I don't work, would I really spend this time to study? But that's a question. If I knew the answer was positive, I would have perhaps a lot of time to study, than I can say that working disturbs my study. But I'm afraid to say that I don't think so I'm going to sit 10 hours at the library and study every day. I do it one month before exam but not every day. ... It's like interesting to do something different, because at work you find a different environment, and you are engaged in something, you are doing something and you are a part of something. I think to sit to study every day would be really difficult if you don't do something else.

Two of the student interviewed admitted that financial side of the study was not a major concern for them. Luckily enough, their parents stepped in and helped them financially, so that the financial situation did not worsen the quality of the study. Jaycee (Eastern Europe) was one of those:

I've been fortunate enough to have very good parents. And whenever I had an economic crisis, which hasn't really happened... So mom sent me couple of hundred Euros here and there. But I've never had any major crisis which made me think of my financial side, while I'm studying.

It helped to be goal-oriented for Lera (Eastern Europe). She had a plan to study in Norway and since she could not apply for a loan at the State Educational Loan Fund, she had to get necessary means elsewhere to make her dream come true. She had some work experience in Norway and learned the language before she started with her study:

The goal was studying, but at the beginning I had of course to learn the language, because I'm self-financed student, so I realized that I had to find a part-time job, and for finding a part-time job you of course I have to speak Norwegian. So I worked one and a half year as I lived in a family. I worked as an Au-Pair and studied Norwegian. And then after that I found a part-time job and was accepted as a student at the University at Oslo.

She was quite optimistic as for the amount of money she was earning as a teacher assistant, though considered that it was not always enough. She had to find solutions in order to persist:

I don't think I'll become rich of working as a teacher assistant and studying at the same time, but I get enough money. Sometimes, of course you can not buy all the books which are on your obligatory literature list, and you have to borrow the books from the library, or copy some chapters from the books. I think all the students are dealing with this. (Lera, Eastern Europe)

Though it was tough sometimes, she was aware of that beforehand. She did not have the same amount of time as other students who had a scholarship, but she had a goal to complete the study:

Of course I don't get the same amount of time of that students have which got the grants... But I personally think that if you really want to manage it, it doesn't matter. If you are really motivated and you want to, then: "Ok, this is my goal, it's going to be tough for 2 years, but I know that it's going to be only 2 years." (Lera, Eastern Europe)

As we saw, international students used different financial resources to support their studies, all from scholarship to part-time job salary. There were students that had a possibility to borrow from "the bank of mom and dad", some of the students (basically from the European Union) got support from the State Educational Loan Fund. Even though they were good and reasonable with money, they often had to look for part-time jobs in addition. Some of them worked in order to support their studies in Norway, while some worked because they had to support their families back home. Difficulties of the financial situation were considered to influence the quality of the study to some degree. Even though sometimes it was difficult, being goal-oriented helped them to manage financial issues.

6. Perception of Norway

Exploring students' perception of Norway can help to generate some common ideas about change in their motivation to stay over time. According to Brekke (2006), students that have been in Norway three and more semesters are more prone to stay here after graduation. Consequently, their perception of the Norwegian society, its rules and tradition, together with the experiences gained at work, can throw some light on their motivation to stay or leave Norway after graduation.

6.1. Social Interactions

Social interactions were considered to be important for international students in order to get some knowledge about the society they live in. Getting informed about the rules and regulations in Norway, allows them to become more involved in social activities and consequently, to get better understanding of Norwegian culture and society as a whole. The experiences of the informants will be presented in this section and used for the analysis of the motivation upon graduation.

It is certainly easier to learn the language and to get some understanding of the society one lives in through the interactions and communication with natives. That is why making friends and getting insight into the everyday lives of Norwegian citizens can be important. The fact that it is not easy to get to know Norwegians was mentioned several times during interviews. George (Oceania) considered Norwegian people to be very careful in making relationships. Compared to his home country, it takes much time to build a relationship in Norway:

It's a challenging place to develop your social skills. Norwegians are very difficult people to become good friends with. That takes a lot, you have to build up relationships over very long time, and you have to know people for a year before they will start inviting you out, and you can't push it, because they run away, if you are not careful about the way you approach Norwegians. Compared to, say (...) [his home country], where you can make friends with someone one day and they will invite you somewhere the next. In Norway it just does not happened, and if it does it's very rare. They are very careful people, I think, when they meet new people.

Aden (Africa) reflected on his experience and considers that the main reason why it was

difficult to interact with Norwegians was because he could not speak Norwegian. The fact that he could speak only English made it complicated to interact with Norwegians. He said that it was also important to be able to speak Norwegian in order to get necessary information from the public services:

It was very difficult to interact with Norwegians, because one of the factors which you had to bear in mind was that you should know Norwegian language, which is a big barrier, everything is written in Norwegian. You go to the Police, and find that everything is written in Norwegian, you have been sent the messages or the mails, the letters written in Norwegian ... So I think this is a big barrier of interaction, they like their language, they would like to promote their language, so you have to speak Norwegian. But with the tension of my course it was very difficult to learn the language...

Norwegians are willing to speak English, but that does not make it easier for international students to integrate into the society. They have to learn the language in order to get into the society, according to Kaitlyn (Northern America):

That's difficult as a foreigner, who doesn't speak the language fluently, to get into the society. ... Even though, I tried to speak Norwegian, that's difficult. So getting into the society without having fluency in language is hard, everyone speaks English here, and sometimes they are "too happy" to speak English when I want them to speak Norwegian.

Natasha (Eastern Europe) had also to admit that there were some difficulties when it comes to interactions with Norwegian people. She, on the other hand, considered it to be a result of different interests and different mentality. She considered interactions with Norwegians to be very difficult to pursue:

It's difficult! It's almost impossible, next to impossible ... The thing is that they are in their own country and they don't experience things which we [international students] are experiencing here. They are not so interested in knowing new people, getting around, going to see things in Oslo, going to the museums... They are more in their own life here, ordinary life: studying and working. Another problem is that their mentality is quite different. They are very difficult to understand, their behavior.

...They don't invite you somewhere, they just keep very distant.

As for the everyday life, it might be difficult even when it comes to the public transport. Marisa (Africa) could not understand when something was announced at the station, because the messages usually came in Norwegian:

Everything is in Norwegian. If I'm travelling and I go to the T-bane [public transport], I reach there, and there is an announcement, maybe, that there will not be T-bane today. They will announce, but I will still stand there, because I don't understand.

Malia (Asia) was talking on behalf of other international students in Norway and expressed her concerns about how isolated they can be, since they do not update to the society they live in:

Talking in general, I must say that for international student here it should be a little bit isolated, because the first thing is that you lack a language. And I'm not only talking for myself, I also talked with other students, and they say that they feel very isolated. Television, newspapers, Internet, that's something you want to know about Norw. society, what happened around you...So they can not update themselves about their own environment...because it's all is in Norwegian...

She also admitted that unfortunately she did not have any Norwegian friend after studying in Norway for 2 years:

So actually I don't have any Norwegian friend, I think. The only Norwegian I talk a lot with is my supervisor. (Malia, Asia)

In previous chapter we were talking about the development of social skills. Norway was considered to be a good place to develop the social skills, when it comes to the interactions with other international students. But when it comes to the Norwegians, it is considered to be challenging. Jaycee (Eastern Europe) considered Norwegian people to be less open and more passive in their interactions with foreigners:

...As far as international experience, I've had my share; I think I've met people from 80 per cent from the world here. As far as Norwegian side, you really have to push

into this side. ... As far as Norwegian society, they do have their “strange bits” ...what can I say? They are much less open when it comes to talking to you, just, like I said you have to make the first step, I mean, you have to press on, and you have to call them, they will never call you back the next day.

Alex (Caucasus) did not consider Norway a good place to interact, thus he considered other Norwegian features like honesty, punctuality and involvement to be worth to experience:

Well, before moving in here, I've been really social person. But I don't think that international students will agree with me if I say “Norwegians are very social people”. So from that context, I don't think Norway is the best model-country to come here to learn how to be social. But of course, after moving in Norway, I became more goal-oriented. ...I appreciate the honesty among the people, punctuality and involvement.

Knowing Norwegian appears to be necessary in many situations, when it comes to the police, bank or public transport, students have to have some basic knowledge of Norwegian to grasp the messages they receive. The news in the country is usually reported solely in Norwegian; that makes international students a bit isolated from the environment they live in, if they do not master the language. At the University of Oslo many extra facilities are available only in Norwegian. Among other things, the Career Centre courses which are aimed to prepare students for job-seeking activities, as well as a vast amount of courses on the Bachelor level which might be of interest for international students taking Masters. International students that come to Norway are usually offered a Norwegian language course in the beginning of their study. Unfortunately, the informants reported that intensity of the major courses often prevents them from attending a language course.

Language was considered to be important in order to be able to interact with natives. Seven out of twelve students interviewed reported themselves to be able to speak Norwegian. Nevertheless, almost all of the students considered it to be difficult to interact with Norwegians and to therefore difficult to integrate into the society.

6.2. Knowledge about Norwegian Society

Living in the Norwegian society, international students gain some knowledge about the Norwegian social welfare system in practice, as well as about benefits and disadvantages of it, they gain information about the society, the way of living here. Possessing this kind of information they usually can compare work conditions, child care conditions, social and family attitudes with the ones they have back home. This part of the chapter will dwell upon international students' experiences of Norwegian society. That will help us to understand if their attitudes to Norway and their final decision either to stay in Norway upon graduation or leave are subsequent upon these experiences.

Such benefits as free education up to the university level and reduced fees for health care are taken for granted in Norway, while in many other countries people have to bear the load of the spending themselves. Kaytlin (Northern America) was excited about the benefits she had gotten, even though she was a foreigner:

...the government takes care of its people very well, so the fact is that university is free. And that is a given that university will be free, I'm not used to that. And the fact that I'm a foreigner, and I receive health care benefits, is amazing to me! Because back home it's half of my..., you know, not everyone in my own country is given health care. And so to have free health care as a foreigner is fantastic, and the way of living is great.

She was aware that it was expensive to live in Norway. Once you have a work you have to pay taxes, which are all up to 36 per cent. But she likes it in Norway and considers the taxes to be a reasonable price for the advantages she receives here. There are few things she likes about Norway: free health care, free education, the living mode and the diversity in the society. She considered Norway a better place to live than back home:

It is expensive. ... But you pay for living in the society, so having the health care, having the education, all this through taxes. So I think that you get benefits from the expense. ...I don't know about any bad part about Norway. All this is biased, because I love it here so much. ...I like how it becomes more diverse country and more international, and I like that it is an out-door country, so you can do so much activities outside, and I enjoy that, going to the beach, or hiking. That's, I think, is great. And

what I really like that things slow down on Sundays, staff isn't open, and there are holidays where businesses are closed, and you can tell that family is important in Norway, and you don't have stores open 24h all the time, like in ...[her country]. So I like that. (Kaytlin, Northern America)

When it comes to the taxes, Aden (Africa) was not so excited about the tax-system in Norway. Though he considered Norway to be a place where he could earn sufficiently, he remained realistic about the expenses of living here:

If you are working, really working, you earn money. Although, all the money you get, is spend. The life is very expensive here. You get a lot of money, but one of the things, which I forgotten, is that the more you work, the more you pay taxes. So at last, you work hard and pay more...

Several students mentioned the safety as one of the factors why they consider Norway a good place to live. Jevon (Africa) thinks that safety and the social security system make Norway an attractive place to live, in spite of the bad weather that makes it tough:

I would say that is one of the best places, as far as work and living, especially living, is concerned. And when I say that, I'm considering the aspect of safety. It's very safe environment, you don't hear of crimes.... It has very good social security system, good policies, covering children, and health. However work becomes tough because of the weather. But I don't think that is something they have control of, I wouldn't count it against the people. But the environment is one of the best.

Safe environment makes Norway a favorable place for raising children. According to Lera (Eastern Europe), that is much more complicated to raise children in her home country:

It's a very good place for children in a way that you don't have to be afraid for them, in a way that nothing bad can happen. And of course you have to be more protective back home because of many different issues, like criminals, bad car-drivers, and you have to be very careful and watch your child all the time.

Lera was positive about safety, the system of social security and opportunities for children which people have in Norway. On the other hand, she expressed her concerns about the

inconsistency between her native and Norwegian mentalities that would have a negative impact on her decision to stay in Norway after graduation:

But then I think I would really like my children to live somewhere in Eastern Europe. Of course you get much more in a “social protection way” here, you have enough money, you have insurances, you are secure in all this ways. But then, I think, you loose so much in the mentality, and it’s not all about money in the end. I think it’s a nice place for the children to grow up, because they can play freely, and they have so much of nature around, and they really can explore the world...

In comparison with other countries Norway has considerable advantages in the social security system and better environmental characteristics. Nevertheless, the individualistic lifestyle is not always compatible with a lifestyle back home. Aden (Africa) was giving an example about his home country:

I can give you another example: in my country you can not die with hunger. If your neighbor has food, it’s your food. If I don’t have money, I can come to my neighbor and tell ”I don’t have money now, maybe after 5 days I can get the money”, I can keep eating to his place. But here it is an individual life, if you don’t have money you can die, nobody will assist you.

Marisa (Africa) had similar thoughts about the lifestyle in Norway. She explained that in Africa the “collective” life-style is more common:

... African society is much more collective, we help each other, you can not stay alone, we are more collective. We believe that a human being can not stay alone in order to survive, and we respect that...

High incomes and other advantages of living in Norway are attractive for some people, while others appreciate other values more. George (Oceania) considered that it is more important to be satisfied with job content, rather than worrying for the salary level. He deemed Norwegian culture to be materialistic:

I find Norwegian culture to be vary similar to the American culture, the consumerism, they want always buy more, have more, for example, and they never have enough, and they are never completely content . I come from the culture where your lifestyle is far

more important than what you have. And I would never want my children to be obsessed with earning, toys and be worried how much money they earn instead of how enjoyable their career is.

He was also preoccupied with the negative attitude to foreigners and considered Norwegian state to be unreasonably concerned with its citizens:

It's "nanny" style, they look after the people very well, and they tend to have a lot of unnecessary facets to the society, which are just a waste of resources. They consider themselves to be very open to the rest of the world, whereas they are actually quite naïve. Almost I think a racist society, towards other cultures. I think it's ingrained in them that foreigners are almost a "bad thing" to some degree. Like you watching news and stuff like that, and that's always the foreigner doing something bad. That's quite evident in a way Norwegians react to foreigners; they do tend to be very skeptical and judgmental. (George, Oceania)

Tina considered Norwegian people to be cold and boring when she met them first, but after a while she recognized that they were actually very pure-minded and warm-hearted. She considers Norwegian people to be less stressed in their everyday lives, but on the other hand she says that especially young Norwegians seems to be less ambitious:

...before I thought that Norwegians are very cold, and they are very boring and stubborn. But now as I know more and more Norwegians, and I get many Norwegians friends, I found it's different. I think Norwegians, they are very simple, and they are not complex people. They are also very pure-minded ...and they are very warmhearted, actually. Yes, and people are not so stressed, compared to (...) [her home country]. But also they are not so ambitious, when it comes to young people, especially my classmates. Not so many people know what their future plans for 2 or 3 years, they don't know, just take one day for one day.

There might be some inconsistencies with the native culture, but it is important to accept it as it is and try to adapt to that, according to Jaycee (Eastern Europe):

... Every society has its "ups" and "downs", this is the part which you have to take and have to complain about it, with your friend... and hopefully something will get sorted out.

Being loyal to the culture in Norway was high on the agenda for Alex (Caucasus). He accepts Norwegian culture as it is and associates himself with it. He made an example to explain this:

...When I see new international students come to Norway, Norwegian prices are so shocking for them, and I always say them “Never exchange the price into your currency and say that it’s very expensive!... Just think in Norwegian krone, don’t think with your local currency”. But I can say I do the same thing with the culture, since I live in Norway I never think “they and we”, or “they and I”. I’m a part of Norwegian society, and that’s why I accept it as it is, I never just compare it.

International students have often some work experience from back home and comparing to Norway they can see the advantageous. Some sort of safety is very attractive for them. Tina considered going home after graduation at the time when the interview was obtained, but she explained what could make a perspective of staying in Norway attractive to her:

...I think, the welfare to the employees, compared to China, I think it’s quite high. And if you’ve got a job it gives you a lot of safety. Even that they can not fire you, just by the warning, they can not do that. So these things, I think, are very good.

As we saw there were both positive and negative experiences of Norwegian society, discussed by international students in this section. Students considered Norwegian welfare system to be very attractive, even to them as foreigner. Free health care, free education, social security and good salaries were mentioned as most attractive components of the welfare system in Norway. Informants also considered Norway to be a very safe place to live and especially to have a family and to bring up kids. On the other hand, high taxes, individualistic style of living and negative attitude to foreigners, that some of the students experienced, made a negative impression of Norway.

6.3. Work Experiences in Norway and Knowledge about Norwegian Labor Market

Previously it has been discussed that international students have sometimes to supplement their studies with part-time jobs to be able to meet the financial burden of the study abroad. Almost all of the respondents had work experience during the study period in Norway, and some of them had been working here before the study period. They had to undertake varied

employments that usually did not require any special skills or a university degree. With some minor exceptions, there was no direct connection between their jobs and study programs or previous education. But the knowledge they have gained about labour market in Norway and experiences they had were considered an important part of their perception of Norway, and therefore could have an impact on their motivation after the ended period of study.

In this chapter we will look on the work experiences as a source of knowledge about Norwegian society. The work experience will be considered as a complex process, combining job-seeking activities and at-work experiences itself. International students have been asked about skills and abilities that in their point of view are most decisive for getting job in Norway. The language skills and job related networking were considered to be the most decisive factors for international students as means to get a job in Norway. Their perception of the labour market and assessment of their own abilities will help to get the insight on their future plans and career prospects.

Importance of the Norwegian language

Norwegian language was considered to be a paramount skill in order to be employed in Norway. Aden (Africa) experienced that it would be difficult to get a job even as a cleaner without knowing Norwegian. He expressed his understanding of this dilemma:

At some places they say that the language is not a problem. But in most cases the language is given a priority, than the skills. Because I don't think cleaning needs me to talk...So some of the things are irrelevant in fact, but I think so the aim is to make sure that everybody who comes in this country knows the language. The other fact which I think explains it is that the population is really small, so if they allow everybody to speak English, Norwegian language is going to die. I think that is their mission; that is my assumption.

He considered also that it is important to know the language to be able to display the abilities one has. He said, that speaking the language would make it easy to find a job:

Knowing the language is one factor which makes you get a job very easily. With your skills, because you have the skills, you have to explain to the employer that you have

the skills. That means that you have to display the skills by the language. If you don't know the language then you can not display the skills. (Aden, Africa)

Marisa (Africa) failed to find a part-time job during the study period, so she stopped trying. She considered the absence of the language skills to be a reason of her failure:

...language is a real problem. As for me, because I don't know the language, maybe that's why I failed to find a job. I don't know if there are other factors...

Malia (Asia) experienced also that the language skills would be beneficial for her. She considered that there are a lot of opportunities to find a job in Norway if you have sufficient language skills:

I know that people always think that here it is very easy to find a job, but without any Norwegian language it's very difficult. I know that outside there, there are a lot of chances for me to get a job. But always Norwegian language prevented me.

A possibility of getting a professional job is very little when the person does not have Norwegian language skills, according to Jevon (Africa):

... One thing I've discovered is that there are very limited opportunities for professional jobs. ... if I can guess that's because of the language. ...Possibly there are restrictions when it comes to professional jobs.

Alex was quite convinced that there would be a spot for him in the Norwegian labor market, in spite of his different appearance and imperfect language skills. He considered his education from Norway to be at an advantage:

I'm an immigrant, I have a different look, and I think I can not speak as perfect as Norwegians. My appearance is different... But the first part of the question was if there is a spot for me in Norwegian labor market. I think yes, because higher education, and two Master-degrees and international experience, I think I can be helpful in a lot of works with my language skills, and with my educations.

Stefan completed two bachelor degrees in Norway, the working language of those was Norwegian, but he still assumed that it would not be enough in order to prove his knowledge of the language. He acknowledged that he would like to become a diplomat in Norway and

therefore he was aware that he needed to become completely fluent in Norwegian, only then he would be able to get the job he wanted:

I've had jobs in Norway, in Norwegian, but I can't get the job I want, unless I can speak and write a lot better. Diplomat has to be able to speak and write better than the average person, so I have to be able to speak and write better than an average Norwegian. ...The only thing that I have that says I can speak Norwegian is the fact that both of my bachelor degrees have been in Norwegian.

But even good Norwegian language skills can not always guarantee that you will get a job, according to George (Oceania). He considered himself to speak good Norwegian and he was writing job applications in Norwegian as well. He was met with the mistrust by the employers who were responding in English:

I consider myself to speak very good Norwegian, and Norwegians don't believe that until they see it. If I wrote a job-application and I said that I could speak good Norwegian, they don't believe it. And they ring me up and talk to me in English, even though I've written an application in Norwegian. And then I'll answer in Norwegian, and then they get confused, because they thought I was going to speak bad Norwegian instantly.

Alex (Caucasus) was asked why, in his point of view, there are few international students that stay in Norway on work after graduation. He made a guess that it is due to the language incompetency. Though they have an opportunity to learn a language, the intensity of the major courses can be an obstacle to attend the language classes:

I think to find job in Norway is difficult for international students, because there is always a language problem. So during their stay in Norway, they are busy with their study, and of course a lot of them take Norwegian courses, but since they are busy with their study, I suspect that they don't put a lot of effort to study Norwegian. So when they finish one-year or two-year program they face the language barrier. And it's very difficult to find a job where the Norwegian is not required.

The language was a number one issue to consider when students reflected on their work experiences. Without the language there were not so many jobs to could acquire. In order to get a relevant job graduates would need a very good level of Norwegian.

Job-Related Networking

Another important issue mentioned by the students was job-related networking. Having friends who can tell you when there is a job available, or knowing someone who works with similar kind of job you are interested in, may help to get a job in Norway, according to the international students' experiences.

Malia (Asia) was told that she would have more chances if she knew people who could introduce her. That was her experience of searching for a part-time job:

From my own experience, and what other people share with me, from their own experience, always you can easily find a job if you know somebody, like to find a job through your own networking. Somebody knows somebody, so they introduce each other. ...It's easier to find a job if you have a networking of people.

George (Oceania) believes that Norwegian employers rely more on people they have a personal attachment to, rather than strangers. Knowing people is more advantageous than writing letters to the employers. He talks from his own experience of getting a part-time job:

...Unless they know you, they don't want to give you either time or place. The only way I got jobs in the end, was while going and knocking on doors, and saying "Hallo, my name is ..." And once they met you and had some personal attachment, then they will give you a job. But unless you write a letter, then they see you as another foreigner and they don't even consider you.

He believes also that it would not be a problem back home to get a job without personal attachment. Individual capabilities would be more decisive. But in Norway, he experienced, the language skills and education are as much important as the fact that you "know people". Answering on a question what in his point of view is important in order to get a job in Norway, he replied:

...to have a good education, to have a good grasp of the language, and you have to know people, you have to have connections. Because in Norway getting a job is not so much what you know, but who you know, it's very important. It's like these jobs I applied for in the past, because I didn't know the people, I had no chance. But now I've been offered a PhD position, which is a job, in Norway, because they know me.

(George, Oceania)

George also considered that it is less probable to get a job in Norway as a foreigner. He assumed that it is easier for Norwegians to employ their natives because then they know what they get, instead of employing a foreigner:

...Because for Norwegians it's easier to employ a Norwegian, because they find it easier to rely on them and understand them. ... So they employ a Norwegian, it is more "straight forward", they know what they are getting. Whereas with the foreigner they are not sure what they are getting, until they got them. (George, Oceania)

Kaitlyn (Northern America) has managed to get a job relevant to her education on the second year of the study. She acknowledged that it was lucky because she knew whom to ask about the job. Without knowing the employer in person she would not succeed in finding a job:

My career prospective is great, it's lucky ...and it was because I knew people. ... I don't think otherwise, because I applied for like 20 other jobs and never got an interview, or anything. So I think that knowing people have made it lucky for me.

She added that "knowing people" is beneficial and often crucial in the employment process:

...I've noticed for a lot of jobs that I applied for in the past they already knew whom they were going to hire, but they had to post a job as a legal thing. And if you don't know somebody, it's really difficult to get a job. But it seems to me that connections are important in Norway in order to make a career. (Kaitlyn, Northern America)

When Jaycee (Eastern Europe) answered the question about what was important, in her opinion, to be able to get a job in Norway, she also mentioned that to know people is even more important than having good grades. She also thinks that you have to be energetic and open-minded in order to get a job in Norway:

...to be open to new things, you have to have energy to work in a different environment, and will to learn new things. That's what they look for, energetic people, I'd say. ... I think it's more important to know people, definitely, than grades... the only grade that will be showed on your Diploma, will be the final paper grade. ... You have to know where to go and you have to know what questions to ask.

Knowing people was considered to be one of the factors that helped students to acquire a job in Norway. Networking was although unusual for some of the students, since it is not practiced much in their home countries. However, they saw the value of networking in Norway: a personal attachment was crucial from their experiences.

Knowledge about the Rules on Immigration to Norway

Further the students' experiences and knowledge on the Norwegian Immigration Policy towards international students are examined. According to Brekke(2006), Norwegian immigration rules are not very clear for the international students that are seeking employment in Norway. The aim of this interview was not to ask international students directly what they know or do not know about the immigration rules in Norway, but to discover their knowledge through their experiences.

It is easier to stay for the students who come from the European Union, since the immigration law is not so strict to them, according to Stefan. He had an aspiration to become a diplomat in Norway, but meanwhile he could undertake any kind of employment if he wished so:

As European citizen it's not much of a problem, not for me at least... The only thing is for the job I want, I have to be Norwegian and I'm not, and I'm waiting. As for any other job, I can apply for any job I wish.

Jaycee (Eastern Europe) considered finding a job in Norway after graduation, but she was confused because of the immigration rules:

You can't work if you don't have a work permit, you have to apply for a work permit but you can't work in a period while you are waiting for a work permit. But you also have to pay rent, you have to live... It's very confusing...

Jevon (Africa), who did not have plans to stay in Norway, confirmed that he is not familiar with immigration regulations:

... I don't know how easy it is if you ask to stay just to work, a work permit, I'm not sure about it.

There was just a slight sign of confusion noticed during interviews. However, those who had plans about staying in Norway were confident.

7. Future Ambitions of International Students and Motivation to Stay in Norway

After we considered some experiences of international students in Norway and their perception of the study period together with perception of Norway, it will be interesting to consider their ambitions and future plans. It will help us to get a better understanding of why they actually want to stay in Norway, or why they intend to leave. Some of them are willing to go to the English-speaking countries, some want to return home. We will try to find out what are the reasons of their choices and motivation behind.

7.1. International Study Experience and Career Prospective

In this part of the chapter we will try to find out if an international study experience from abroad is considered to be beneficial when it comes to the future prospects of the students. International experience itself turns out to be important nowadays because of the increasing globalization in all spheres of human activity. The value international students put into an international study degree may help to explain their future ambitions.

Jevon (Africa) was talking about the probability of employment back home after getting a degree in Norway. He believes that when he comes back home he will have an advantage to get a better job:

Yeah, the probability is then higher for me than for others. Back home there is respect for higher qualification, also respect for overseas qualification. So I think I have possibility of getting a better job.

The fact that George (Oceania) speaks Norwegian fluently and has a Master degree from Norway will likely have a positive affect on his future career prospects back home, he thinks. Though he is not sure before he has tried:

I think it would probably have a positive effect, I hope so. That's a hard question to answer before I get a job really. It probably might have a huge effect, but it might put me just ahead of people who only stayed in NZ, never learned another language...maybe a better chance of getting a better position, so it should have a positive effect.

Students were not so sure if a degree taken in Norway will help them to acquire financial benefits in the future. It was important for Jaycee (Eastern Europe) to be able to get a well-paid job, since the investments in education she and her parents made were high. She was certain about her professional potential, though she was worried if she would have enough resources in order to support her parents:

I'm not doubting the fact that I'll get a job, I doubt the fact that I'll get a well-paid job, and that's what I'm looking for. Because I invested a lot, my parents invested a lot in my education, so that I'll be able to give something back and say "yeah, I've gotten a job and it's well paid, and I can save up and help you guys when you are growing old.

When talking about economic benefits of the international study experience, students could not affirm that those are related to each other. Kaitlyn (Northern America) was aware of her benefits as a graduate from an international program, but she could not say if she could get some economic benefits because of her international experience:

There is a great advantage in studying internationally, it's a global market now, and so to have an international background is a huge plus... I think employers would like to have a person with a diverse background, and an international background. But I don't know if there are specific economic benefits of that.

Marisa (Africa) assumes that international students have greater chances to be employed, but the level of the salary would not be affected due to her international study experience, as far as her country is considered:

Maybe it will influence the chance of being selected, but will not influence the payment. ... If we are to pick the two, one graduate from my home country, and one student with a Master degree from Norway, the same Master, we would have the same salary. But maybe if it is the one who is supposed to be chosen, the chances of international student are higher than of those who have studied back home.

As for the career prospects in Norway, international students had a bit different considerations. Having Norwegian education and being able to bring a different approach into the working environment they should be valued by the Norwegian companies, according to Alex (Caucasus):

...they [international students] have Norwegian education, they have international background. I think Norwegian companies and Norway benefit from international students because they are a source of information and they bring different approach.

According to the students interviewed, having an international study experience may help them to increase the chances of employment as well as probability of getting a better position. However, a degree from Norway would probably not have any effect on the salary level, according to what they know about it from back home. An international study experience was considered to have a positive impact on their employment chances in Norway.

7.2. Prospects of Employment in Norway

Some of the students expressed their aspiration to stay on work in Norway after graduation. Out of 12 students that were interviewed, 6 planned on going home after graduation, the other 6 had aspiration to stay. That was coherent with data presented in Brekke (2006), 47 percent of the international students were planning to stay in Norway after their studies. Having some knowledge about the environment and being aware of their advantages international students may try to find a job here and get some work experience. The incentives for doing so will be explored further.

Kaitlyn (Northern America) considered staying on work in Norway after graduation. She would like to have some international work experience on her CV, and she also would like to stay in Norway for a longer period. The salary seemed to be very attractive to her:

I think the salary is attractive to me, that the pay is much better here than back in (...) [her country], even though the things are more expensive, you do get paid better. I think to have an international job on my CV is very important and beneficial...

Being able to have high living standards due to a good salary may have a seductive affect on international students that have necessary skills to get a job in Norway. Lera (Eastern Europe) has not decided if she would like to stay in Norway, but she was considering this possibility:

Why would I stay in Norway? I think it's because of the living standard, you have really high living standard when you earn. Even if everyone says that it's too expensive in Norway, but you earn enough money to live a normal life...

Natasha (Eastern Europe) wants a secure stable life which would be complicated if she goes back home. That is the reason why she wants to find a job in Norway:

I want a stable life, I want to be secure in my future, I want to know that I will have enough money to raise my children. But in my country, I'm not secure there. In ...[her country] you don't know what's going to happen to you next day...

Malia (Asia) was considering staying on in Norway for a short period of time for economical reasons, but only if she had a good job. The situation back home was challenging, and she believed that international working experience would be beneficial for her in the future:

Maybe because economically, like I say, if now I have a good chance to find a good job here, I will stay. Because as I said my country now has a very hard problem, I think with economy, and inflation, and things like that...So for sure I want to work maybe for 2 or 3 years here, earn some money and come back to my country. Of course having working experience, especially international working experience is very good too. It increases my chance to find a job in (...) [her home country], maybe to 100per cent, I don't know. Then the incentive is maybe economically.

Jaycee (Eastern Europe) believed that situation back home was not convenient for making a career. She was considering finding a job elsewhere, rather than going home:

...due to the fact that right now it's a society in a change, we have a lot of changes going on, so there are a lot of uncertainties and there are a lot of job uncertainties. You can get job today, but you can lose it next month because of a job cut or an economy crisis. We don't have an economy crisis, but we have to change to Euro, that will have a huge effect on our economy...So I think, no, I want to build something for myself, and I don't think (...) [her country] is the one to do that.

Informants who had plans or aspirations about staying in Norway after graduation would stay in Norway basically for economical reasons: better salaries, better living standards. But also international working experience was considered to be advantageous for their future.

Uncertainty back home was mentioned as a reason why they would like to stay in Norway after graduation, at least for some time.

7.3. Disincentives to Stay in Norway

Most of the international students leave Norway after graduation (Brekke, 2006). They either go back home or try to find a job in some other countries. Some of the international students interviewed in my study were positive about going to other countries, for instance English-speaking countries. The reasons for that will be explored further.

Malia (Asia) considers herself to be fluent in English, so it would be more convenient for her to go to an English-speaking country:

... let's give you an example, if I have a good chance, like one in Norway and one in other country like UK, where I can speak English, for sure I will choose the other country where English is the official language. For sure I want to do so...

George (Oceania), being a native English-speaker, would choose an English-speaking country because he considers such countries to be more open for foreigners. England, Australia or Canada would be options for him:

I would probably go to the English-speaking country to make my career, or alien country which recognizes that foreigners aren't a bad thing, but they are actually good for their economy. ... I would probably go for an English-speaking country, just because there's a lot less discrimination between English-speaking countries, and it's a lot easier to get a job. Like I could go to England and get a good job, or Australia or Canada.

Jaycee (Eastern Europe) was planning on going to an English-speaking country as well. She recognized a couple of advantages in moving to an English-speaking country: she considered the application procedure for a working permit to be less complicated than in Norway, and probability of professional promotion more evident for her. She considered herself to be more fluent in English than in Norwegian:

I'm not planning to stay here, I'm planning to go to an English-speaking country, because ...this is the main reason why I'm doing that: I am much more comfortable with my English skill, than on my Norwegian skill. I'm a very impatient person, and I want start building career now. Staying in Norway, I would have to work in (...) [bad] jobs, in really-really bad jobs for two more years, whereas in countries like UK and

Ireland I can start from the bottom but I can go up, I think. Even in Ireland or other European countries it's much easier for me to get a job without a shackle of worrying about Visa acquiring, about your work permit. Things are much easier now because we're in European Union. So I can just go to Ireland, start working and get a tax card, I have to prepare nothing else, just a tax card. Here it's much harder, it's like a little loop: you have to get a job and then you get a work permit, but!- you can't really get a job without a work permit. So that's like "We don't really want you here... You just go back."

Lera (Eastern Europe) did not feel completely comfortable in Norway. She would prefer to make her life somewhere in the Eastern Europe, or Check Republic, where they have a similar mentality. Another option would be the United Kingdom, since there are good professional opportunities with her education:

... I would guess that it would be some place somewhere more East... I think Russia would be an option; Check Republic could be an option. I'm not really interested to go to work to other Scandinavian countries, Germany or Italy. Another option would be maybe UK, because this is really good if I look from the work prospective...

Alex (Caucasus) would not doubt to take a job in any other country if he had a relevant job offer:

I think there is always demand for educated and talented people. ... if I get some good offers, which are related to my career [prospects], so I think so geographical location for me is not that important.

Being with her family was more important for Marisa (Africa) than having a possibility to stay on work in Norway. She was planning on going home after graduation:

If I get a lot of money and I stay away from my family, then I'll destroy myself in the future. So I want to have my home, my family, living together happily, that is my first ambition.

Tina (Asia) acknowledged that the family was more important for her than job in Norway:

"...if you are in Norway, you are far away from your family, and no matter how good

a job here, it's just a job, and you don't have a very good life."

For Aden (Africa) a work experience in Norway is not on the cards without his family:

...with the family, then I could have stayed a longer period, but it is very difficult to stay away from the family and manage.

There were too many reasons for Jevon (Africa) why he would not like to stay in Norway. He was not comfortable about the weather and living without family. Not being able to get a relevant job would be a disadvantage for him too. On the other hand, he would not like to bring his children to Norway since he considered education back home to be more favorable for them:

Weather is the first one [disincentive], very tough weather. Second one is language difficulties, because of language I can not get a relevant job, a professional job. So it means that I have to do a job which is not of my qualification just for its money. And then my family also needs my attention. But if I can bring them with me, yeah, then I would stay. But still it is a problem because the education that I want my children to get is better in my home country than here. I want them to have basic education in (...) [his country], not in Norway. So it is a dilemma. ... Why? Here education is not in English, and it is Norwegian context. So for the foundation I think it's better that my children learn about (...) [his country], rather than about Norway and Europe.

Being disappointed and having bad experience with getting job in Norway, George (Oceania) decided to leave for his home country where he had gotten a job offer at the time being:

I've been offered a PhD position here, but I'm kind of tired of Norway and constantly having to prove myself. So I think I'm going to say "No" and take a job offer I have in (...) [his country], which I will enjoy far more.

He considered himself not to have equal chances with Norwegians. He reflected on his job-seeking experience in Norway and explained what was difficult about that:

The fact that if I was to get a job, I could imagine that it would be at the lower level and it would be difficult for me to go up the hierarchy. ... I think if I was to apply for a job, and a Norwegian would apply for the same job, the Norwegian would get it. So

there is this huge obstacle. Like if I was to apply for the same job, I'm not on the even footing with the Norwegians, I'm not considered equal...and they always use the excuse of language or so forth. I remember I applied for one job that I think I was just perfect for, I was educated enough and I had to have a very high level English because they worked with international clients, I didn't even get the reply, which seems ridiculous, because English is my first language. Surely I should be on the top to get a reply. (George, Oceania)

Natasha (Eastern Europe) would like to find a job in Norway and stay here, since her career prospects back home are not very prominent. On the other hand, she considered that it would be difficult to make a career since she is not a native:

...The only thing I would get there [in her home country] is teaching, and that's all. And the salary is very small for teachers in (...) [her country], so I wouldn't like that. But to stay here, on the other hand, I don't think it's a good opportunity for me to go up the career ladder, because I'm not a Norwegian....

To be goal-oriented helps to pull through some disadvantages. Stefan (Western Europe) made his decision to stay in Norway carefully, so it made it easier to follow the goal:

I've chosen to stay in Norway; I've made a deliberate choice. I said: "Ok, I can go back to (...) [his country] or I can work in Norway". ... So disincentives: cold –no, not really, not that cold, dark – but you can live!

Difficulties with applying for jobs in Norway, as well as difficulties with getting a relevant job and low probability to go up the career ladder as a foreigner were considered to be disincentives. Students also considered immigration rules in Norway to be more confusing than in other European countries. That was one of the reasons why they would rather go to other countries and try to find a job there after graduation. English-speaking countries then were considered to be most relevant for this purpose.

Differences in the mentality and family reasons would be disincentives for some of them to seek employment abroad. They would rather go home where they can be treated according to their abilities.

8. Discussion of the Results and Conclusion

The students' motivation to come to study to Norway, and their perception of the career prospects in Norway upon graduation were objectives of this study. As it was discussed in the beginning of the study, Norwegian authorities had an ambivalent attitude towards international students (Brekke, 2006). The cancellation of the quarantine provision in 2001 allowed international students to stay on work in Norway after the ended period of study. The enrolments' of international students in Norwegian higher education institutions have risen considerably since 2001. At the same time it was unclear why the numbers of international students staying after graduation did not change since the cancelation of the quarantine provision.

In this concluding chapter I will discuss international students' motivation before arrival and ambitions upon graduation. The previous chapters provided empirical data that will now be analysed using the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. The human capital theory will be used to explain the financial aspects of the international students' motivation to come to Norway, as well as future aspirations to get a job in the country. The goal-setting theory will be applied to give an interpretation for the motivation of the students planning to stay in Norway. And, finally, the concept of "push and pull factors" will expound the specifics of the students' migration motivation.

8.1. Students' Motivation to Come to Norway.

The study revealed the main factors of students' motivation to come to Norway. The main reasons to come to study to Norway, according to the international students interviewed, was absence of tuition fees, and in some cases availability of a scholarship. These were the most decisive reasons, especially for the students who would not afford studying abroad if these conditions were otherwise. The social backgrounds of the students put an obstacle on their financial ability to study abroad. Therefore students seek first and foremost financial means for their study abroad, and scholarship appears to be a solution for many of them.

From the perspective of human capital theory (see Chapter 2), the study in Norway is an investment that international students make. The availability of scholarships in Norway makes it possible for them to get an international degree which is expected to have a positive effect on students' future socioeconomic attainments. Additionally, possibility to get a part-time job

during the study period in Norway is often an important factor when they consider Norway as a study destination.

Of course, the study program content is usually high on the agenda for the students, with few exceptions when the possibility of getting a scholarship defines the choice of the study program. Students seek for the programs that are relevant to their previous education or job experience, considering the value of the degree taken in Norway to be high for their future career plans. Therefore, the professional development is one of the most important motives for students who come to study here.

Finally, other reasons, like uniting with a Norwegian beloved or a desire to reside in Norway permanently, had in some cases the main impact on the decision to come to Norway, the study option was thought of eventually. These students showed a high degree of persistence in their studies and willingness to get a job in Norway after graduation. Moreover, they seemed to be more goal-oriented and more willing to assimilate in Norway. As it was discussed in the Chapter 2, readiness to assimilate in the host society helps to get more knowledge about the society and plays a great role in the achievement of economic success. In this context, it is important to emphasize, that three out of twelve informants also had aspirations to stay in Norway after graduation already upon their arrival.

8.2. Students' Ambitions after Graduation.

Students' perceptions of the study period in Norway were assumed to define their future plans either to stay in Norway or to leave. The students' perceptions of the study itself, as well as the perception of Norway and the knowledge about rules and regulations in the country, were the subjects of analysis in this study. These would give an insight into how students overcome cultural and social differences, and what makes them want to stay in Norway after graduation.

As for the study perception, the international students described some inconsistencies of the Norwegian higher education system, comparing with those back in their home countries:

- the lack of depth in the study program, among other things, that causes narrow professional specialization;
- the lack of studying-hours at some study programs caused by the lack of financing, that has a negative impact on students' study progress;

- the incompatible grading system, that could possibly arouse scepticism among prospective employers in the students' home countries;
- the time-management problems that are a result of more self-directed mode of study at the Norwegian universities, and can cause problems with meeting the dead-lines.

Besides, some of the students interviewed considered the scholarship they receive in Norway to be too low to meet their needs. Therefore, they had to look for part-time jobs in order to pursue the study. Those experiences had a negative impact on the results of the study and students' future motivation. On the other hand, the informants mentioned several advantages that were referred to as an absolutely valuable experience for the students:

- mastering computer skills that for some of the students was a new experience;
- free access to library resources and Internet facilities;
- an opportunity to socialize with students from different cultures;
- sufficient academic support of the students that fosters good working relationship between students and professors;
- an opportunity to develop critical thinking and academic-writing skills.

According to the goal-setting theory, discussed earlier in the study, the inconsistency in the activity settings may delay students' progress since it has a negative impact on their motivation. The advantages of higher education, on other hand foster the progress and make international students more confident of their goals and aspirations.

The informants of this study considered their study experience from Norway to be intrinsically valuable and believed that it should have a positive effect on their future career prospects, for instance in the form of a better job vacancy. It is interesting to note, however, that they assumed that this kind of study experience would not have any considerable impact on their future earnings if they went home after finishing their studies.

At the same time, six out of twelve students confirmed their plans and aspirations to stay in Norway after graduation. Students were aware of the advantages they would get if they managed to get a job in Norway. Apparently it would have a greater benefit for their investment in higher education since the future wage prospects would be better in Norway than in their home countries.

Motivation to stay in Norway after the ended period of study was basically caused by the wage prospects and high living standards in Norway. Future benefits promised to be higher than the costs of the study. Social security and safety were reported by the international students to have a stimulating effect on their willingness to stay in the country after graduation. It is obvious therefore that migration motivation of international students comprises basically of the “pull” factors, the factors that are encouraging migration (see Chapter 2). In spite of the fact that the situation back home could be challenging in the terms of economical or political insecurity, the students did not report that it had a direct impact on their decision to come to study in Norway. They also maintained their professional and personal aspirations upon graduation. Therefore, the “push” factors that force a person to move were not pointed out by the students as significant in their decision to stay in the country.

It is worth to notice that students who were willing to stay in Norway were more aware of the advantages due to the fact that they had more knowledge, experiences and observations about the Norwegian society. These students either stayed in Norway before the study period or have got more extensive education in Norway, remaining here for at least 3-5 years. That was also a pattern of the students’ behaviour, mentioned earlier by Brekke (2006): those students who took seven and more study semesters in Norway, were more inclined to look for an opportunity to stay in the country after the ended period of study. Consequently, the motivation to stay was greater for the students who had an informed opinion about Norway, had more knowledge and more experiences in the country.

However, there were some obstacles, mentioned by the respondents, that could prevent them from staying in Norway and getting a job. The main obstacle considered by international student was the Norwegian language proficiency. Getting a relevant job in the country would require good language skills, according to the students. Approximately one-half of the informants considered themselves to speak good Norwegian. The estimation of their own skills seemed to be important for their decision to stay in Norway after the ended period of study.

The second challenge indicated by the students was networking. They experienced that “knowing people” could have a huge impact on their chances to acquire a job in Norway. But then of course the language was considered to be a main instrument that would allow them to

demonstrate their professional and personal skills to a potential employer. In other words, knowing the language was considered to be important in order to do networking.

One detail attracted my attention: none of the students regarded Norwegian immigration regulations to be an obstacle for employment in Norway. It was considered to be complicated by the students who were considering staying on in Norway after graduation, but still possible. According to the goal-setting theory (see Chapter 2), the activity settings, the conditions and events around the students, together with the students' motives and interests, determine their goals. In this context, the immigration regulations in Norway seemed to be less decisive for the students than their motives to stay in the country.

Those who did not plan to stay in Norway after graduation considered the lack of the language knowledge to be the main obstacle for getting a job and, what is more important, integrating into the society. Some of them conceived their English proficiency to be much better and were therefore planning to leave for English-speaking countries. Besides, they considered Norwegians to be more distant, individualistic and sceptical to foreigners that would make it difficult to find a job in Norway. In this respect, citizens of English-speaking countries were generally regarded as more liberal towards foreigners.

Furthermore, some students suffered from being away from home and would not seek an opportunity to stay in Norway without their families. They also found the mentality and primary education system back home to be more favourable for raising their children, so they would not like to bring their families to Norway. Basically these were the students who did not plan on staying in Norway after graduation, with clear motivation to go home after the ended period of study.

Considering the findings mentioned above, one can generalize the main points of the study. It becomes obvious that:

- ✓ International students are willing to come to study in Norway basically because of its advantageous financial side of the issue. The international study experience was considered to be valuable for the future career.
- ✓ Students learn a lot about the Norwegian society during the study period in Norway. They become aware of benefits and disadvantages they can get if they decide to stay in the country after graduation.

- ✓ Students' estimation of their own skills and abilities has a great impact on their decision to stay in Norway upon graduation, while inconsistencies in the Norwegian immigration policy have a minor impact on their decision.
- ✓ Those who decide to stay in Norway upon graduation usually make their decision early in the study period or before arrival. They are more consistent and more willing to assimilate in the society. Their knowledge about Norwegian society and their positive attitudes help them to adapt easier.
- ✓ The decision to leave the country after finishing the studies is mostly affected by the fact that students realise that poor knowledge of Norwegian is a great disadvantage that can prevent them from finding a relevant job in the country. Their ambitions to become better off financially and superior English skills makes them sometimes seek luck elsewhere. And again, the ambiguous immigration policy plays a minor role in their decision to leave.

Generally speaking, international students' self-estimation plays a great role in their future career plans. The knowledge about Norway which they acquire during and before the study period helps them to estimate their chances to stay in the country. The decision on whether to stay or to leave Norway after graduation is therefore a deliberate one.

As for the immigration policies towards international students, the Norwegian authorities seem to be reluctant to acknowledge the positive effect which international students have on the rates of economic growth of the country. The immigration policies towards the students are ambivalent. The students manage to adapt to these regulations, however their staying rates are still low, 8 years after the quarantine provision was cancelled. It is obvious that the knowledge about and openness towards international students could benefit Norway. The purpose of this study was thus to generate knowledge on students' motivation that can be used for further considerations in the development of immigration policies and policies on internationalization of higher education.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide on Students Motivation

Place of origin:

Age:

Sex:

Educational backgrounds / preliminary motivation upon arrival:

- Could you describe your situation back home?

- What kind of educational background do you have?

- What was your occupation back in your country?

How did it happen that Norway became your study destination?

- Do you have some international study experience from another country?

- What factors influenced your choice of the country?

- Have any of your relatives/ friends visited Norway on study purpose before?

Perception of the study period in Norway:

- What factors influenced your choice of the study program at the *University of Oslo*?

- Have you been looking for a particular program or have you just chosen one that might fit you?

- To what extent is the study program what you expected it to be?

What is your experience of Norwegian higher education?

- Did you acquire any skills during the study period?

- Did you experience any difficulties?

- How would you describe academic support/ supervision/ guidelines at the *University of Oslo*?

How do you manage your financial issues during the study period?

- Do you get any support/ scholarship?

- Do you have any problem with allocating the resources?

- How does your financial situation influence the quality of the study? Could you perform better?

What is your perception of the Norwegian society?

- Do you feel comfortable in this society?

- What do you know about Norwegian labour market?

Motivation to stay on work in Norway:

- Would you like to stay on work in Norway after your study period?

- Is Norwegian a valuable language for your further career?

- What is important in order to find a job in Norway?

How would you as international student assess your career prospective?

- How can you contribute with your international experience?
- How is international study experience and economic attainment related to each other in your country?
- Could you apply for job in any other country than Norway and your home country?

What are your plans after graduation?

- Would you like to stay on work in Norway after the graduation?
- Do you consider going for job to another country to be an option for you?
- What makes a perspective of employment in Norway attractive to you?

What would be the disincentives of staying on work in Norway?

- Are there any obstacles for getting job in Norway upon graduation?

- Do you have some negative job-seeking experience form Norway?