

Paradoxical Attraction? Why an Increasing Number of International Students Choose Norway

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Abstract

Between 2000 and 2015, Norway has experienced a large increase in the number of international students compared with many other countries. At first glance, this may seem paradoxical considering that Norway is a country with few well-known universities, a high cost of living, and a geographical location on the northern fringe of Europe. This article sheds light on why more students find their way to Norway. Global trends of increased student mobility as well as EU policies influence the flow of students to Norway. Nevertheless, national higher education policies and institutional strategies have been crucial in this development. Courses in English and more active partnerships with higher education institutions abroad have been established to attract international students. Furthermore, tuition fees are not charged in state-owned universities and colleges, and this has become a comparative advantage in an era when institutions in other countries are introducing or increasing tuition fees for national as well as international students. Asking the international students themselves about their motivation for studying in Norway, we find that the rationale is pragmatic rather than related to perceived quality. Their choices still appear rational; they get free higher education in a safe country, and increase their career opportunities.

Background and Research Questions

The number of students undertaking higher education beyond national borders is increasing. According to Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD; 2017) figures, the number of international students rose from 2.1 million in year 2000 to 4.6 million in 2015. These figures do not include exchange students undertaking shorter sojourns abroad, meaning that the mobility figures are even higher. This growth is related to the fact that higher proportions of the youth cohorts in many countries undertake higher education, but is also related to increased cross-border mobility. Technological development has made information about opportunities abroad more accessible, and higher education has increasingly become a commodity in a global market.

Traditionally, the majority of international students comes from developing countries and go to Western countries (Altbach, 2004). More than 80% of all international students study in the G20 countries (OECD, 2014). English-speaking countries are particularly popular; the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia receive 40% of all international students. However, traditional destination countries for international students are facing increasing competition (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2013). The last couple of decades an increasing mobility between Western countries has also been observed. The EU exchange program, ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students), has been particularly important in this respect. Nevertheless, relatively few students from Western countries undertake a full degree abroad. In the EU countries, only about 3% of students follow a full degree course abroad; for the OECD area, this is just 1.6% (OECD, 2016).

Norway has a long history of international student mobility, but the student flows have traditionally been outgoing rather than incoming. In recent years, the number incoming students has changed dramatically. Between 2000 and 2015, the numbers of students with foreign citizenship has increased fourfold. In 2015, more than 25,000 foreign citizens studied in Norway, constituting almost 10% of the total student population (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education [SIU], 2016).

Increasing numbers of incoming students is in no way unique to Norway. However, the relative increase is stronger in Norway than in many other countries. For example, the number of international students in the United States virtually doubled between 2000 and 2015 (Open Doors, 2016). A higher inflow of international students to Norway is not an obvious development. Norway has relatively few well-known universities; only four institutions are found in the top university rankings, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai ranking). The cost of living is very high, and the Norwegian language is unfamiliar outside the Nordic region. Norway is physically located on the northern fringe of Europe, and neither the physical nor the social climate has a reputation for being particularly welcoming. So why then, do increasing numbers of international students find their way to Norway? In this article, this question is addressed by looking at the framework in which mobility is taking place and by mapping how students explain their decision to study in Norway. Two main questions are posed:

- To what extent have international trends, national policies, and strategies of higher education institutions influenced incoming student mobility?
- What are the rationales of international students for choosing Norway as a destination for studies?

The first question is answered by analyzing international trends and policies as well as responses to these developments in Norwegian government policy and that of Norwegian higher education institutions. The second question is answered by analyzing a survey of international students in Norway. Survey data will also be applied to investigate whether student motives for choosing Norway vary according to country of origin and duration of the sojourn.

Drivers and Rationales for International Student Mobility

Globalization in higher education may be defined as the current context of economic and academic trends, while internationalization may be seen as the responses and practices of academic systems and institutions to these trends (Altbach & Knight, 2007; van der Wende, 1997). The rationales for internationalization, seen from a government and an institutional perspective, are often divided into four categories: academic, economic, political, and social/cultural (see, for example, Blumenthal, Goodwin, Smith, & Teichler, 1996; Knight & de Wit, 1997; Qiang, 2003; van der Wende, 1997). These rationales are overlapping, but there are also rationales that do not easily fit in in this model. Knight (2004), for example, suggests that “branding” may be seen as a fifth rationale for internationalization. Student mobility is the most visible form of internationalization of higher education: Hence, the rationales for internationalization in general overlap the rationales for student mobility.

Many scholars have pointed out that the national and institutional rationale for student mobility is increasingly economic; international students are considered a revenue source (see, for example, Robertson & Keeling, 2008; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Stensaker, Frølich, Gornizka, & Maassen, 2008). Higher education has become a commodity in a global educational market, and this is facilitated by development in communication technologies. De Wit (2013) is among those who have claimed that internationalization of higher education has gone from “aid” to “trade.” Rationale such as international solidarity and capacity building has been replaced by the logic of the market.

A global market for higher education implies not only a competition for money but also a competition for talent (Findlay, 2011; Florida, 2006). Institutions want to attract the best students to enhance

quality and excellence, which may be seen as an academic rationale, but also economic. Human capital is a more important resource than natural resources in knowledge economies, hence such economies have an interest in attracting global talents (Abella, 2006; Kuptsch, 2006). Skilled migration is a means to expanding the pool of resources, and international students may be seen as probationary immigrants.

Even if economic forces and competition for talent are dominant forces for mobility, internationalization and student mobility is also influenced by political processes—at least in some regions. In Europe, political initiatives aiming at facilitating recognition and harmonization such as the Lisbon Convention and the Bologna Process have been important in facilitating student mobility, and so has the establishment of student exchange programs such as ERASMUS (Teichler, 2012). These developments are partly rooted in social, cultural, and political rationale such as European integration, and illustrate that other than purely economic and academic motives still play a role.

Developments in mobility patterns also rest upon national and institutional *responses* to globalization. National and institutional policies and strategies regarding internationalization are usually based on a combination of several rationales and are often a result of an interplay between various international and national drivers and actors (Qiang, 2003). Hence, mobility patterns are influenced by how national and institutional strategies and reforms in higher education and internationalization are established and implemented.

According to the OECD (2016), the language of instruction, quality of programs, tuition fees, and immigration policy are underlying premises for choice of host country. In a study of determinants of mobility in Europe, Caruso and de Wit (2015) observe that student mobility patterns are related to factors such as expenditure per student, perceptions of safety, openness of the economy, and economic conditions of the host country. If such factors become more important, also those countries without long traditions for incoming mobility may become attractive destinations for international students.

Students' motivation for mobility is often separated into “push” and “pull” factors (see, for example, Altbach, 1998; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Push factors refer to (unfavorable) conditions in the home country, such as absence of educational opportunities or a challenging political situation, while pull factors refer to conditions that attract in the host country, such as quality of education, access to international networks, and opportunities for an international career or permanent migration.

In addition, there are underlying factors that make students more or less likely to study abroad. Several studies have shown that internationally mobile students are of higher social origin than their peers at home (Blanck & Börjesson, 2008; Brooks & Waters, 2011; Wiers-Jenssen, 2013). Based on perspectives of Bourdieu (1984), it can be argued that studies abroad represent an opportunity for middle-class youth to reproduce their social position and distinguish themselves from students who remain in their home country. Economic as well as cultural capital is an advantage regarding the decision to study abroad. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) uses the term *mobility capital* when referring to a preference for studying abroad runs in the family. This phenomenon has been empirically confirmed in a study among mobile students from the Nordic countries (Wiers-Jenssen, 2013).

Data: Survey to International Students in Norway

Data on students' perspectives are from a survey among international students in Norway. The online survey was conducted in April 2014 by the SIU. The target group was all foreign citizens enrolled in higher education in Norway in 2013, and who were still studying in Norway in 2014. They were contacted by email and up to three reminders were sent.

A total of 3,216 students responded, an overall response rate of 40%. The response rate varied by country of origin, highest among students from Poland (74%) and Canada (64%), and lowest among

students from Sweden (21%) and Denmark (24%). The low response rate among Swedish and Danish students may be explained by that they do not regard themselves as international students.

Except from calculating response rate for students from different countries, and checking that the representation of gender is more or less the same as in the population, no comparisons between the respondents and the population were made. This implies that we do not have sufficient information on how representative the data are, and we have to be cautious in our interpretation.

The questionnaire contains mainly questions asking students to assess various aspects of choice of host country and being an international student on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*not important*) to 5 (*very important*). To analyze the Likert-type scale questions, we use comparison of means, and calculate significant differences by using a *t* test. Significant differences are marked by asterisk.

There is also an open-ended question on the motives for choosing Norway, and though not analyzed in depth, this is used as a supplementary data source.

In our analyses, comparisons are made between full degree students and students on exchange programs, and also between students from different regions of the world.

Developments Facilitating Mobility to Norway

As mentioned, there are several conditions that one could imagine to be discouraging regarding studying in Norway, such as few high ranked institutions, high cost of living, language issues, and climate. As most higher education institutions are public, and do not charge tuition fees, the economic motives for recruiting international students are less obvious than in many other countries (Maassen, Nokkala, & Uppstrøm, 2005). Higher education institutions do not cooperate with commercial agents to recruit students from abroad.

On the contrary, during the last couple of decades, we have seen developments that have made Norway a more attractive destination for international students. Globalization and increased mobility worldwide has definitely affected Norway, but here we focus on the national and institutional responses to these trends. In the following, the most relevant changes are outlined.

Changes in National and Institutional Policies for Internationalization

Internationalization of higher education during the past couple of decades has attained an increasingly central position on the agenda higher education policy in Norway—like in many other countries. Student mobility is one of the most visible consequences of the strong focus on internationalization. As a country with a small population (5.2 million per 2016), an international outlook has been necessary for the development of academic institutions. Nevertheless, internationalization has traditionally been more spontaneous and individual, a phenomenon sometimes labeled “old” or “traditional” internationalization (Trondal, Gornitzka, & Gulbrandsen, 2003). In contrast to this, so called “new” internationalization is more formalized and institutionalized. The latter form of internationalization implies more explicit goals and administrative support. It is an explicit goal to increase student mobility—outgoing as well as incoming (Norway White Paper No. 14, 2008-2009). Internationalization has become an integral part of higher education policy and also in the strategy of higher education institutions (Frølich, Waagene, & Stensaker, 2015). As most institutions are funded by the state, government policies exert a strong influence on institutional strategies and practices.

Norwegian policy for the internationalization of higher education is strongly influenced by the EU agenda for internationalization of higher education (Gornitzka & Langfeldt, 2008). Even though Norway is not a member of the EU, policy makers have been quite eager regarding the implementation of EU-initiated agreements and reforms in higher education. Norway joined the ERASMUS program and signed the Bologna declaration in their early stages. But there are more regions that are considered important regarding internationalization and mobility. The Nordic region has a long history

of cooperation (Elken, Hovdhaugen, & Wiers-Jenssen, 2015). Academic cooperation with Russia, North-West Russia in particular, has been given high priority since the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are also long traditions for academic cooperation with the USA. Furthermore, there has traditionally been significant cooperation with developing countries, and in this respect, there is an overlap between internationalization policy and foreign aid policy. However, “international solidarity” is less a present rationale in institutional strategies nowadays (SIU, 2013a), in line with international trends observed by de Wit (2013) and others.

Economic and academic arguments have become more prominent justifications for internationalization, and student mobility is considered a tool for quality enhancement, and “internationalization at home” (Maassen et al., 2005; Norway White Paper No. 14, 2008-2009). Internationalization also has a central place in the strategies of most higher education institutions (SIU, 2013), and is increasingly becoming an integrated part of their strategies (Frølich et al., 2015). National policies regarding mobility have developed from being something that “just happened” to becoming an end in itself. In recent years, national and institutional policies have rested on the assumption that internationalization enhances quality (Maassen et al., 2005; Norway White Paper No. 14, 2008-2009; SIU, 2013a). However, the presumed relation between internationalization and quality is scarcely documented.

The Quality Reform

A higher education reform in 2003, *The Quality Reform*, implemented a degree system in accordance with the Bologna Process and introduced European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This has made Norwegian higher education more compatible with systems in other countries, facilitating student mobility. The reform also implied a change in the funding structure of higher education institutions, introducing elements of performance-based funding. Allocation of economic resources from the government partly relies on the number of credit points awarded, and this has worked as an incentive to attract more students, nationally as well as from abroad. Establishing courses and study programs in English has been given high priority, a prerequisite for attracting more students from outside the Nordic region.

Absence of Tuition Fees in State-Owned Higher Education Institutions

Norway has become more attractive to international students as it has become one of the few countries in Europe where tuition fees are not charged in public higher education institutions. As most institutions are owned by the state, this implies that a wide specter of study programs are accessible for free. Neighboring countries in the Nordic region also mostly have publicly funded universities, but in recent years Denmark, Sweden, and Finland have introduced tuition fees for students from outside the European Educational Area (EEA). This has also been suggested in Norway, but so far has not obtained sufficient support in parliament. Hence, by *not* changing policy regarding tuition fees, while other countries have changed theirs, Norway has obtained a “comparative advantage” regarding attracting international students.

Migration, Economic, and Political Stability

Migration has also contributed to the enrollment of students with foreign citizenship. Increasing numbers of international students have initially arrived in Norway for other purposes than higher education. Refugees and asylum seekers are a part of this story, but the effect of labor migration is clearly stronger. The most striking example is the strong growth in the number of students from Sweden from 2008, partly a result of many young Swedes coming to Norway for employment reasons. Citizens from the EU and the EEA are entitled to seek employment in Norway. If they find work in 3 months, they are granted a working permit. Also, students from outside the EU and the EEA can apply for a residence permit for work purposes after they have finished their studies, although there is no guarantee that this will be granted.

The fact that Norway is peaceful and economically prosperous welfare state may also be seen as a comparative advantage in an era characterized by economic crisis and political instability in many countries around the world. Norway has topped the United Nations Human Development report's list of best countries to live in for many years. Expenditure on education is high, crime rates are low, and unemployment rates remained low even during the financial crisis. According to Caruso and de Wit (2015), such factors are decisive for students' choice of host country.

Mobile Students' Rationales for Choosing Norway

In this section, we will present results from a survey among international students. Before looking at how students explain their choice of Norway as a study destination, we will give a brief presentation of who the international students in our survey are.

Characteristics of International Students

Almost half of the students, 47%, undertake a full degree in Norway (degree students), while 53% take parts of their education in a Norwegian higher education institution (exchange students). The majority of exchange students come from Europe, while there are more students from Asian and African countries among degree students (Figures 1 and 2). Not all students with an international background are *incoming* students who came to Norway for the purpose of study. Some were already living in Norway when they applied for higher education, and this is particularly true for full degree students (one in five).

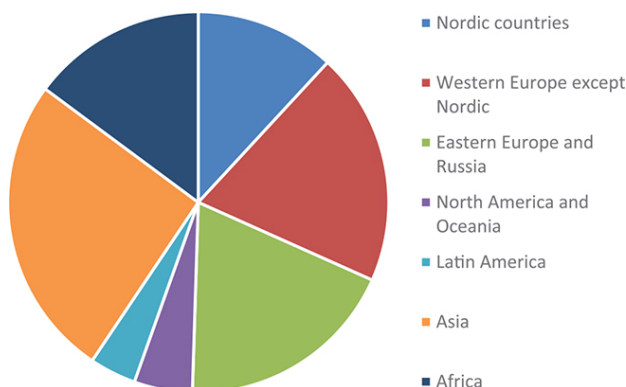


Figure 1. Country of origin of international full degree students in Norway.

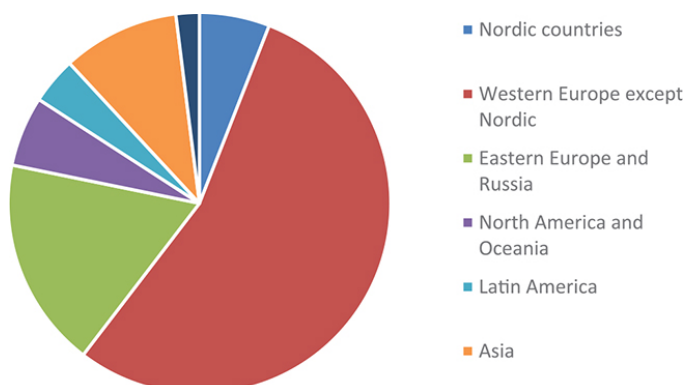


Figure 2. Country of origin of international exchange students in Norway.

Females constitute 55% of international students. This is slightly lower than among domestic students (60%). The proportion of females is highest among students from Eastern Europe and Russia (68%) and the Nordic countries (65%), and lowest among students from Asia (43%) and Africa (36%).

Two thirds of the students have one or both parents with higher education. The highest proportion is found among students from North America (80%), Latin America (76%), and Russia and Eastern Europe (76%). Regarding mobility capital, 41% of the students have previous experience with living abroad, and 31% have one or both parents have been living abroad. This is most common among students from the Nordic countries, but students from North America and Latin America also score above average.

Reasons for Studying in Norway

We now look at how students themselves explain their decision to study in Norway. Our data do not allow us to establish why they chose to study abroad in general, but why they chose to study in Norway. Hence, what we are looking at are “pull” factors—Why did they find Norway attractive?

Figure 3 shows that degree students and exchange students have somewhat different motives for studying in Norway. English-taught programmes are considered to be very important by both groups, but even more so among exchange students than full degree students. Peaceful and safe society is also considered highly important in both groups, so are career opportunities in both the home country and elsewhere. These results are in line with a previous survey among international students in Norway (Damvad, 2013). Among exchange students, career opportunities in the home country are strongly emphasized. The reputation of teaching staff and research is not among the most important reasons for studying in Norway. Only about half of the students rate this as important.

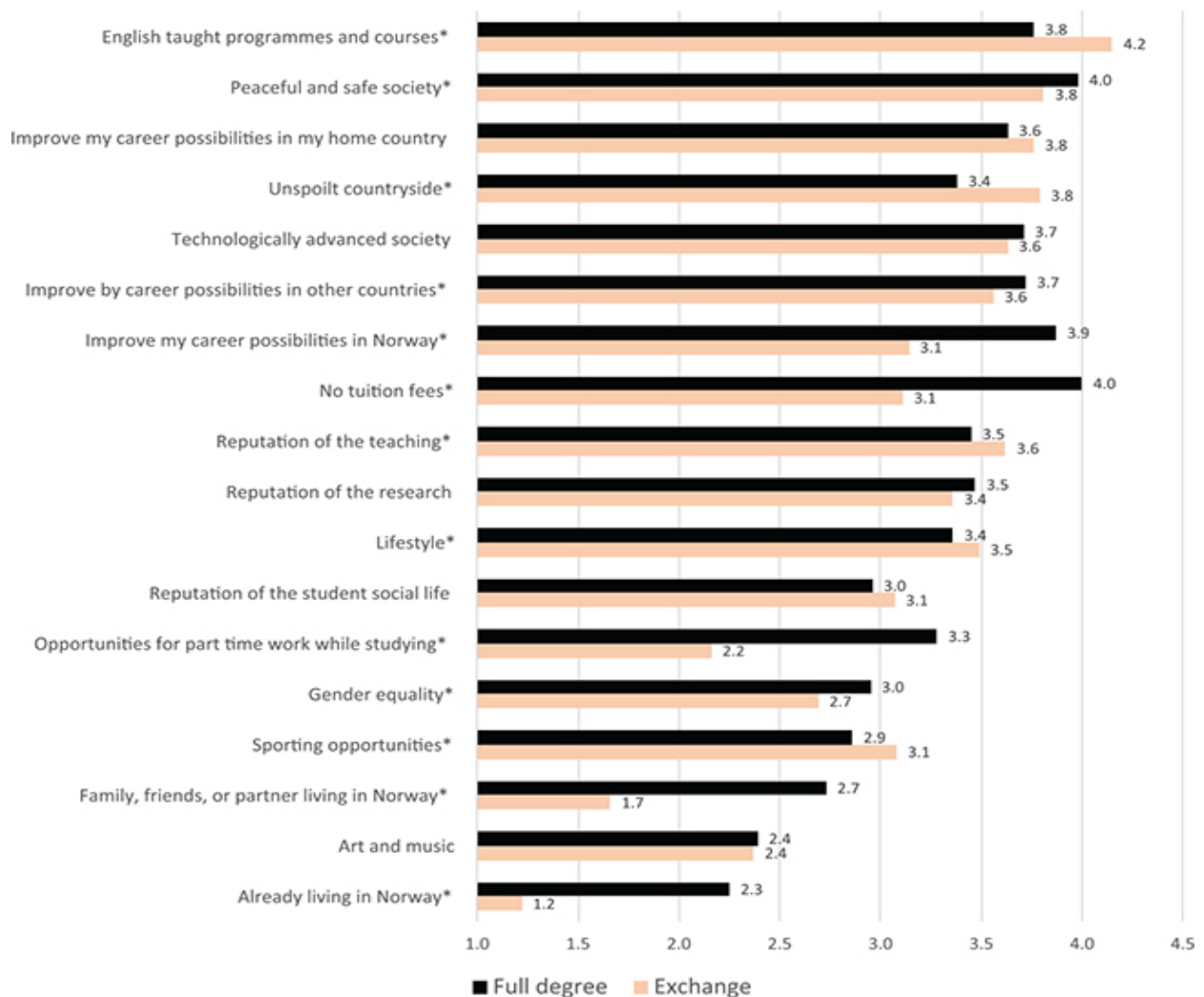


Figure 3. Students’ reasons for studying in Norway.

Note. Scale 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Significant differences between full degree and exchange students ($p < .05$) are marked with asterisk.

Degree students report absence of tuition fees as the most important reason for studying in Norway. Other motives rated more important to degree students than exchange students include the possibility for part-time work, and for improving career opportunities in Norway. This indicates that degree students tend to have a more long-term perspective on their sojourn; some have permanent migration in mind. Exchange students are more motivated by nature, sports, and leisure activities compared with full degree students. This is in line with findings from previous studies in Norway (SIU, 2013b).

There are variations between students from different countries regarding motivation for studying abroad. Below, we outline how students from different regions diverge from other students. Detailed information is found in Tables A1 and A2 of the appendix.

Nordic countries

Many students from these countries were living in Norway when enrolling in higher education, and this is reflected in their rationale for studying in Norway. Family and friends in Norway is more important to degree students from this region than for any other students, and improving career prospects in Norway is also highly emphasized. Reputation of teaching and research is less important to this group than the average international student.

Western and Southern Europe

Programs in English are of very high importance for this group, exchange students in particular. They are also more motivated by unspoilt nature than most other students. Improving career opportunities is also highly important. When breaking down results on countries, we find that many students from Greece and Spain state that they want to improve career possibilities in Norway. Hence, it seems as though the economic crisis in Southern European has contributed to student migration flows.

Eastern Europe and Russia

Career opportunities in Norway are considered particularly important in this group, including the opportunity for part-time work while studying. Exchange students emphasize the reputation of teaching. The importance of the latter point is possibly due to that much exchange takes place between a few institutions, implying that students are more likely to have previous knowledge of the institution through peers who have already been on exchange.

North America and Oceania

Absence of tuition fees is the most important reason for these students to go studying in Norway, and programs in English are highly important for full degree as well as exchange students. [AQ8]Exchange students also highly value unspoilt nature and lifestyle. The reputation of research and teaching is considered less important for these students than for most other groups.

Latin America

Absence of tuition fees is decisive among degree students, while programs in English are most important to exchange students. Both groups underscore that Norway is a peaceful and safe society, and are also motivated by career opportunities in Norway and in other countries more so than in their home country.

Asia

Asian students are particularly motivated by the fact that Norway is a peaceful and safe, and a technologically advanced society. Degree students emphasize absence of tuition fees, while exchange students underscore programs in English. Asian students are more concerned with the

reputation of research and teaching than most other students. Gender equality is also more important to these students compared with other students, female students in particular.

Africa

A peaceful and safe society, English-taught programs, and the fact that Norway is a technologically advanced society are important factors for these students. Full degree students are also highly motivated by the absence of tuition fees.

To sum up, English-taught programs and absence of tuition fees, and that Norway is considered a safe and peaceful country, are the most important motives for choosing Norway as a study destination, independent of where the students come from. Improving career possibilities is also considered essential by many students. Some regard studying Norway as a way of enhancing career possibilities in their home country (African and Asian students in particular), while others see it as a stepping-stone for a career in Norway or in other countries. Asian students, and exchange students from Eastern Europe, put more weight on quality issues than others. But in general, it seems that students' rationales for studying in Norway are quite pragmatic. It is not mainly the quality that attracts but rather the existence of programs taught in English at a reasonable total cost. Students' reasons for studying in Norway seem related to what Norway and Norwegian higher education institutions offer, compared with the home country. For example, students from unstable regions tend to underscore that Norway is a peaceful and safe society, while students from countries with high tuition fees are particularly attracted by the absence of tuition fees. Different features of Norway and Norwegian higher education appeal to different groups of students, illustrating that international students are diverse.

Discussion and Implications

In the introduction, we stated that the inflow of students seems to be a paradox for a number of reasons. These include few well-known institutions, high cost of living, and peripheral geographical location. This article has shown that the development observed is not as contradictory as may first appear. A rapid expansion in the number of programs taught in English has made studies in Norway accessible also for students without knowledge of Scandinavian languages. The absence of tuition fees makes the total costs of studying in Norway competitive, even if the cost of living is high. This has become more important as more countries have introduced or increased tuition fees. Hence, two of the four underlying premises for choice of host country outlined by OECD (2016)—language of instruction and (absence of) tuition fees—are decisive for choosing Norway. Another premise mentioned by OECD is immigration. Future labor market prospects in Norway is an important motivation for many students, illustrating that higher education may be seen as a stepping-stone for permanent migration. The fourth underlying premise for choice of host country listed by OECD, quality of programs, plays a less significant role for the inflow of students to Norway. Relatively low proportions of students were highly motivated by the reputation of research and teaching at Norwegian higher education institutions. However, analysis of open questions from our survey shows that for some students, quality is decisive, particularly in fields where Norwegian institutions are known to have high expertise, such as aquaculture or petroleum geology (Wiers-Jenssen, 2014). Also, it is shown that international students who come to Norway are actually quite satisfied with the quality of education (SIU, 2014, 2016), indicating that regarding reputation of quality the challenge is that institutions are not known, rather than insufficient quality.

We also found that many students choose Norway due to features of the society and nature. Such features are more stable and, to a lesser extent, can explain the increase in the inflow of students.

However, it can be argued that other countries competing for international students have become less safe and peaceful—implying the relatively higher attraction of Norway as a peaceful and safe society. According to Caruso and de Wit (2015), perceptions of safety contribute to explaining choice of host country.

What we consider as the most powerful explanations for the influx of students to Norway—programs in English and absence of tuition fees—are consequences of political decisions. Increased mobility is in line with the policy aims of the government and the strategies of the higher education institutions. Most institutions are state owned, and even if institutions have been granted substantially more autonomy in recent years (Stensaker, 2014), national and institutional policies are still closely connected. Strategic aims determined by the government are implemented at the institutional level, in a higher education system that is less market-driven than in many other countries. The main, explicit, policy rationale for encouraging mobility is a strong belief that internationalization and quality are closely related, and that a high participation representation of international students will strengthen the quality of higher education and research (Norway White Paper No. 14, 2008-2009). This is again related to the economic rationale of global competitiveness but nevertheless illustrates that political decisions—not only markets and globalization—can exert strong influence on student flows. On the contrary, it can also be argued that students make their decisions on market-oriented principles: They choose a destination where they can access programs taught in English but where tuition fees are not charged. This would be in line with Caruso and de Wit's (2015: 270-271) view that "international students are increasingly becoming calculated rational consumers who explore the best options in their home country, their country of study as well as other countries." [AQ9]

As the link between student mobility and quality is scarcely documented, it may be questioned whether the policy of recruiting increasing numbers of international students may be somewhat naïve. Although it has been shown that international students in Norway are more satisfied with their study experience than students in many other countries (<http://www.studyportals.com/press-releases/norway-ireland-and-poland-have-the-happiest-international-students/>), it is also documented that international students in Norway have limited interaction with domestic students (Wiers-Jenssen, 2014; SIU, 2016). When interaction is scarce, it is hard to see how mobility really can serve as a tool for quality enhancement and internationalization at home, which are currently the main political goals for mobility. [AQ10]

It has been questioned whether higher education institutions are sufficiently prepared for catering for an increasing number of students, for example, regarding housing and integration, and whether Norway should continue to offer higher education free of charge. However, these discussions rarely take into account that international students contribute to the economy in several ways. Even if students do not pay tuition fees, they spend money on housing and other forms of consumption. Furthermore, more than half of the international students remain in Norway upon graduation (Damvad, 2013), and the potential is possibly higher as there are legal barriers preventing students from outside the EEA to remain in Norway. So even if hosting international students involves costs for the institutions, facilitating skilled migration through student mobility has positive effects on the national economy. However, highly skilled migration is not an explicit rationale in the national policy for international student mobility. Skilled migration may be in conflict with the aims of Norwegian policy on foreign affairs and development if it results in a brain drain from developing countries, while facilitating for migration of students from Western countries is less controversial.

Conclusion

The main reasons international students report for choosing Norway are English-taught programs, absence of tuition fees, improving career opportunities, and features of Norwegian society. Reputation and perceived quality of Norwegian higher education is less accentuated.

This article has shown that a small and geographically peripheral country that used to be under the radar for international students has managed to attract an increasing number of students from many parts of the world. An active national policy for internationalization and student mobility, and a quite rapid implementation of this policy at the institutional level, provides the main explanation for this development. The case of Norway illustrates that there is room for new players on the scene of international student mobility.

Appendix

Table A1. Full Degree Student's Reasons for Studying in Norway.

	All, N = 1,425	Nordic countries, N = 166	Western Europe, other than Nordic countries, N = 280	Eastern Europe and Russia, N = 268	North America and Oceania, N = 77	Latin America, N = 61	Asia, N = 363	Africa, N = 210
No tuition fees	4.0	3.2*	3.5*	4.1	4.5*	4.0	4.4	4.3*
Peaceful and safe society	4.0	3.4*	3.6*	4.0	3.6*	4.0	4.4*	4.5*
Improve career possibilities in Norway	3.9	3.9	3.7	4.3*	3.5*	4.2*	4.0	3.4*
English-taught programs and courses	3.8	2.0*	3.8	3.7	4.1*	3.9	4.2*	4.3*
Improve career possibilities in other countries	3.7	3.4*	3.8	3.8	3.4*	4.1	3.8	3.6
Technologically advances society	3.7	3.0*	3.4*	3.9	3.3*	3.7	4.1*	4.1*
Improve career possibilities in my home country	3.6	3.1*	3.5	3.4*	3.3*	3.5	3.8*	4.3*
Reputation of research	3.5	2.7*	3.2*	3.5	2.8*	3.7	3.8*	4.0*
Reputation of teaching	3.5	2.9*	3.3	3.4	2.9*	3.3	3.8*	3.9*
Unspoiled countryside	3.4	3.2	3.6*	3.4	3.6	3.1	3.6*	3.0*
Lifestyle	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.0*
Opportunities for part-time work while studying	3.3	3.0*	2.7*	3.6*	3.2	3.3	3.5*	3.6*
Reputation of the student social life	3.0	2.5*	2.8*	3.0	2.3*	2.6*	3.4	3.2
Gender equality	3.0	2.7*	2.8	2.6*	3.2*	3.3	3.4	3.0
Sporting opportunities	2.9	3.1*	3.0	3.0	2.6	2.6	2.9	2.5*
Family friends or partner living in Norway	2.7	3.5*	2.4*	2.7	3.2*	3.1	2.7	2.4*
Arts and music	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.6*	2.2
Already living in Norway	2.3	3.1*	2.0	2.4	2.2	2.6	2.1	1.8*

Note. Students from different regions. Average score on scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Scores significantly different from total means (all) are marked by asterisk.

Table A2. Exchange Student's Reasons for Studying in Norway.

	All, N = 1,634	Nordic countries, N = 100	Western Europe, other than Nordic countries, N = 900	Eastern Europe and Russia, N = 289	North America and Oceania, N = 94	Latin America, N = 57	Asia, N = 167	Africa, N = 27
No tuition fees	3.1	2.9	2.9	3.7*	2.7*	3.5*	3.5*	3.6
Peaceful and safe society	3.8	3.4	3.6*	3.9	3.9	4.4*	4.5*	3.9
Improve career possibilities in Norway	3.1	3.5*	2.9	3.7*	2.9	3.5*	3.3	3.0
English-taught programs and courses	4.2	2.7*	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.7*	4.3	3.9
Improve career possibilities in other countries	3.6	3.3*	3.5	3.9*	3.2*	4.1*	3.5	3.7
Technologically advanced society	3.6	3.2	3.5*	3.9*	3.3*	4.1*	4.0*	4.0
Improve career possibilities in my home country	3.8	3.8	3.7	4.1*	3.6	4.4*	3.6	4.2
Reputation of research	3.4	3.1*	3.3	3.7*	3.1	3.8*	3.4	3.7
Reputation of teaching	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.8*	3.2*	3.6	3.5	3.6
Unspoiled countryside	3.8	3.5*	3.9	3.7	4.2*	3.4*	3.8	3.3*
Lifestyle	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.9*	3.7	3.8*	3.2
Opportunities for part-time work while studying	2.2	2.1	1.8*	2.8*	2.2	2.7*	2.7*	2.7
Reputation of the student social life	3.1	2.7*	3.0	3.2	2.9	2.9	3.4*	2.7
Gender equality	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.5*	3.1*	3.0	3.1*	2.6
Sporting opportunities	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.7*	3.1	2.4*
Family friends or partner living in Norway	1.7	2.2*	1.4*	1.9*	1.9	1.8	2.0*	1.8
Arts and music	2.4	2.2	2.2*	2.6	2.7*	2.7	2.7*	2.4
Already living in Norway	1.3	1.5	1.2*	1.5*	1.2	1.4	1.6*	1.3

Note. Students from different regions. Average score on scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Scores significantly different from total means (all) are marked by asterisk.

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