

Motivations to obtain a PhD abroad and return upon completion

Experiences from Hué, Vietnam

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HUE UNIVERSITY

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*Please note: Names of individuals quoted in this research have been changed
to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants*

Abstract

While developing countries increasingly seek to have their students study overseas, Western economies also see the advantage in attracting international students, as they hold several for institutions and countries. Individuals from diverse backgrounds prioritize motivations for international student mobility differently according to the economic situation, culture and education opportunities meaning that research on mobility cannot be separated from the sociocultural context in which it takes place. Not only does the country of origin differentiate the students' orientation, but also the decisions on whether to return home. This research has a special focus on Vietnam, where education has always played a central role in the culture and society. The goal is to provide an in-depth understanding of the motivations of the individual Vietnamese university lecturer to obtain a PhD abroad and return upon completion, as well as how these motivations are influenced. In addition, the personal and professional impacts on the lives of the individuals were examined. The research relies on an in-depth analysis of the stories of individuals and is qualitative in nature. The findings will be used to encourage and direct future research on the topic and to initiate the discussion of potential solutions to problems in relation to international student mobility. Information from this research can help institutional leaders to set priorities more effectively, design effective policy responses, and to create further guidelines and principles in future development projects involving international student mobility.

Keywords: *International student mobility, Push- & Pull factors, Higher education, Individual motivations, Vietnam, Brain circulation, Return Mobility, PhD, Scholarship.*

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List of Abbreviations

DAAD – German Academic Exchange Service

ISM – International Student Mobility

MEXT – Monbukagakusho Japanese Government Scholarship

MOET – Ministry of Education and Training

NZAID – New Zealand Aid Program

OZAID – Australia’s Aid Program

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

VIED – Vietnam International Education Development

1. Introduction

International student mobility is claimed to be positive for both the sending as the receiving country. While developing countries increasingly seek to have their students study overseas, western economies also see the advantage in attracting international students, as they hold several short- and long-term gains for institutions and countries. Students are often described as desirable migrants because of the skills they bring and then subsequently develop even more in the countries into which they move. As a result, the last decade has seen a fine-tuning of mobility policies to attract international students (King & Raghuram, 2013). In the global competition for talent, the skills of these highly educated international students are increasingly recognized as a key driver of innovation and economic prosperity. Increasingly, there is a recognition that, in addition to considering how and why students make the decision to leave for education, there is also a need to consider why they return as well as the consequences of this mobility process (Wu & Wilkes, 2017).

Students from diverse backgrounds prioritize motives differently according to the economic situation, culture and education opportunities. The motivations for international student mobility can be different per nation. Not only does the country of origin differentiate the students' orientation, but also the decisions on whether to return home (Lee & Kim, 2009; Lesjak et al., 2015).

This research has a special focus on Vietnam, where education has always played a central role in the culture and society. It is seen as the avenue of advancement and families routinely sacrifice much to ensure their offspring get the required education (Business in Asia, 2011; Nguyen, 2012). As Vietnam progressed, there became more of a need for a highly skilled and qualified workforce. Besides that there are limited places available, many students and families question the quality of education at Vietnamese universities. This, together with the growing youth population of Vietnam, has led to a pressure on the government to initiate education reforms to improve the quality of education (Nguyen, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2016). These reforms led to the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) sending faculty members abroad to gain doctoral training with the aim of building and expanding international relationships with organizations and institutions (Nguyen, 2009; Student world online, 2014).

As international students are valued as drivers of economic growth and socially integrated migrants, it is important to understand who these individuals are who are engaged in these education-related mobility trajectories. What are their motivations to do so? And what influences these motivations? Furthermore, how does being an international student impact the individual after return? Is this what they expected? It is these dynamics that are the object of investigation within this research and to these questions, this research hopes to provide enlightening and insightful answers. On this basis, the central question of this research will answer will be the following:

“What influences the motivations of individual Vietnamese university lecturers to obtain a PhD abroad and return upon completion?”

The primary goal of this research is to provide an in-depth understanding of the motivations of the individual Vietnamese university lecturer to obtain a PhD abroad and return upon completion. The first objective of this research is to explore the motivations of individuals working at Hué University to obtain their PhD abroad. The second objective is to explore the motivations of the individual to return to Hué, Vietnam after completing the PhD. The third objective is to explore the impact on the lives of the individuals after completing the PhD abroad.

The thesis consists out of nine chapters and is structured as follows. The succeeding chapter is a literature review that particularly presents the information about international student mobility. In this regard, attention is given to the increased student mobility and student return mobility, which is followed by the existing knowledge gap and relevance of this research. The theoretical framework presents the push- and pull-model by Lee, with general push- and pull factors to go abroad for education and return. The next chapter will provide the national and regional context in which this research takes place, including the culture and the higher education system existing in Vietnam. Additionally, there is a strong focus on existing government policies and both national and international scholarship possibilities. This is followed by the methodological chapter in which the research location, research design, the data sampling strategy with the limitations that were presented during the research process are further discussed. Subsequently are three empirical chapters that elaborate on the motivations of the individuals to go abroad, the motivations to return and the impacts on the individuals' life after return to Hué. The method of showing the results is with narratives of the individuals. The final chapters include the discussion and conclusions, and recommendations for policy changes and a follow-up research.

2. Literature review

This section, making full use of the literature that exists on international student mobility, starts with defining student mobility and the related trends and developments. This is followed by explanations on the increased student mobility and student mobility in Vietnam. This chapter concludes with the knowledge gap and relevance of this research.

2.1 Defining student mobility

The term mobility refers to border-crossing, and in this context border-crossing for the purpose of studying (Foster, 2016). International students are those who are not residents of their country of study or those who received their prior education in another country (OECD, 2013). Historically international academic mobility has been driven by the quest for better education for students, the desire to promote a certain set of cultural values and political norms and to generate a higher income after graduation (Guruz, 2011). Scientific research was one of the first global communication systems, especially at its most advanced levels. Of all levels of education is doctoral education the most internationalized, high-quality education and is now essentially global (Shen et al., 2016).

International student mobility, thereby defined as involving students who cross national borders for the purpose or in the context of their studies, has steadily grown from the second half of the 20th century, with an accelerated rise from the start of the 21st century (Foster, 2016). Meaning that worldwide, every year, more and more students are participating in some form of international education despite increasing domestic opportunities (Brooks & Waters, 2011). The number of students enrolled in tertiary education outside of their country of citizenship has increased more than threefold over the last decades, reflecting the expansion of tertiary education systems worldwide and the globalization of economies and societies (Guruz, 2011; OECD, 2013). As English-speaking destinations are the most attractive in absolute numbers, an increasing number of non-English-speaking countries have started to offer courses in English in order to overcome their linguistic disadvantage (OECD, 2013).

Mobility in the field of higher education is a worldwide fast growing phenomenon that influences resources and student management of institutions and nations around the globe. Most countries perceive international academic mobility and student exchange as a key factor in the exchange of knowledge, creation of intellectual capital and competitiveness in the globalized world (Novak et al., 2013). PhD education, being the highest level of education, involves international students to an increasing extent over the last few decades. This may be the result of deliberate policies to stimulate such mobility on the one hand and of growing imbalances in academic career opportunities on the other (Van der Wende, 2015). The geographical mobility of highly-skilled individuals is increasingly seen as standard and is being actively promoted by both actors and institutions (Leung, 2015b). It has to be recognized that in a globally competitive higher education sector, it is not just the motivations of the students and their parents that are important, but also the supply-side, those who seek to recruit talented young people from other countries into universities and other institutes of higher education (Findlay, 2011).

2.2 Explaining the increased international student mobility

Internationalization is a multi-dimensional process, whereby some countries and institutions are thriving and others quite simply are not (Brooks & Waters, 2011). However, because of limited access to higher education, which sustains social inequalities in the world, internationalization of higher education could contribute to a more equal and fair world. Higher education and research institutions providing a mass of skilled and educated people are necessary to ensure genuine and sustainable development (Valiulis & Valiulis, 2006).

Together with dramatic falls in the costs associated with transport and communications, modern forms of transport and communication have reduced the friction of distance between the origin and destination countries (Ennew & Greenaway, 2012). It has encouraged governments to foster academic relations and opportunities with university partners in other countries (Nguyen, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2016). Discourses around internationalization suggest that higher education institutions around the globe are following the same internationalizing path. The number of scholarships available from universities, foundations and corporations have grown throughout the last decade. Universities have prioritized student mobility and exchange programs as a means to help students develop the skills much needed by industry (Nguyen, 2012). The view from within higher education institutions, as well as the opinion of governments, would imply that internationalization is a highly positive process, whereby everybody wins (Brooks & Waters, 2011).

2.2.1 Benefits for the origin country

For origin societies, the departure of people raises concerns about brain drain on the one hand, but it also creates the hope that the money and knowledge gathered abroad can foster human and economic development (Castels et al., 2014). Opposed to the waves of fear of losing the best brains, a trend appeared which sees international student mobility (ISM) as brain circulation or brain exchange. Brain circulation is a somewhat extended definition of brain gain with an emphasis on human capital circulating across nations in the global market. It emphasizes the dynamic mobility of skilled individuals who return home while maintaining social and professional relationships in their host country. The international students can be seen as an export product and a resource. Migrants return to their home country with cutting-edge knowledge and are considered important transmitters of technology. This is seen as a relatively positive phenomenon as it points out the possible benefits of research cooperation, investment, and knowledge exchange and increases the origin country's productivity. Student mobility could prevent unemployment in the country of origin and decrease the brain waste through unqualified work outside the field of their studies (Lee & Kim, 2009; Qin, 2014; Rakovcová, 2017; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006).

2.2.2 Benefits for the host country

While developing countries increasingly seek to have their students study abroad, western economies also see the advantage in attracting international students, as they hold several short- and long-term gains for institutions and countries. For receiving societies, the settlement of migrant groups and the formation of ethnic minorities can fundamentally change societies which are due to the fact that the presence of international students can help build stronger international links and that the individuals might perform better in a multicultural economic environment (Castels et al., 2014). The education exporting countries (meaning the host countries) see the international students as important for the

quality and relevance of higher education, which is due to the fact that their presence across the country can help build stronger international and intercultural dimension to teaching and research.

Countries seek to attract foreign students to their universities to improve the quality and cultural composition of the student body and to provide students with a culturally diverse environment. Besides, attracting foreign students can help by gaining prestige and develop the institutions' international reputation and collaborative links (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Foster, 2016). It is believed that attracting international talents helps to ensure that a country plays a leading role in research and innovation and stimulates countries to develop initiatives to attract more international students to PhD programs (Van der Wende, 2015). It is believed that a proactive acceptance of foreign students leads to not only the reinforcement of the international human resource pool but also builds on human networks between countries, enhances mutual understanding and fosters greater amicable relationships, thereby contributing to global stability and world peace (Study Japan, 2017). It can also help economic benefits as these students help 'brand' the destination after returning home. The foreign students become the ambassadors for trade and political interests and can be seen as a good opportunity to foster international trade links. The other side is that international education can be seen as a form of foreign aid to developing countries (Cudmore, 2005; DAAD, 2014; Grant Thornton, 2016; Verbik, 2007).

2.2.3 Benefits for the universities

Internationalization, a key reality in the 21st century, is widely understood as being a university's response to the economic, social and cultural change known as globalization. The results of globalization include the integration of research, the use of English for scientific communication and the growing international labor market for scholars and scientists. The internationalization of higher education is a natural result of the blurring of national boundaries as well as the internationalization of the world's material and intellectual development and is demanded by the economic development of society (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Valiulis & Valiulis, 2006). Internationalization of any university is directed at internationalizing the educational experience for students so they might perform better in an international and multicultural economic environment (Nguyen et al., 2016). Internationalization has presented some opportunities for higher education providers, such as diversifying the courses, bringing in a global perspective in the curriculum and ensuring that their graduates are equipped with desirable and up to date global citizenship skills.

International students on a scholarship are typically from a high level, leading to both quality and diversity to the learning experience for students of the host nation. It is an opportunity to bring foreign perspectives to the local student body. A larger network is built through a gain in mutual understanding, closer working relationships, and opportunities for collaborative innovation.

2.2.4 Benefits for the students

The development of intercultural, cosmopolitan or social capital is often among the key factors that motivate students to engage in cross-border education (Tran & Pham, 2016). International experience can be seen as a means to develop employability skills and knowledge transfers. Studying and working abroad develops the ability of the individual to adapt to new cultural contexts, to expand their knowledge of other societies, cultures and business methods, and to leverage their labor market prospects (Nguyen, 2012; OECD, 2013). International student mobility is not only about gaining kinds

of formal knowledge that can be imparted through high-quality training at universities, but also about other socially and culturally constructed knowledge. Migrants obtain important transferable skills and knowledge that enhance mobility. Above all, international student migration was seen to be about symbolic capital, as it can be used as a distinguishing identity marker (Findlay et al, 2012; Zhou, 2015). International students can be viewed as a privileged mobility group at some respect because they are privileged to have an opportunity to travel and to have access to quality higher education (Rakovcova, 2017).

2.3 Student return mobility

Mobility does not stop at the passage overseas, but for most international students it includes the return trip as well. After finishing the degree abroad, international students face the decision whether to return to the country of origin or to continue education or career abroad (Rakovcova, 2017). Return migration is the movement of emigrants back to their homeland to resettle, which suggests that the return is the final stage of a migration process. However, return migration is nowadays more conceived as a stage within an ongoing migration cycle of spatial mobility. Return migration should be understood as a continuous process beyond simple reintegration, which is accompanied by complex feelings of belonging, participation, and identity formation (Ruben et al., 2009).

International students have learned through their experience abroad how to connect to their home countries while still feeling a sense of belonging. Besides using communication technology to connect with people from home, respondents proactively rely on a mixture of methods in their everyday life that allows them to maintain links to the home nation while at the same time exploring new cultures and people. This means that students rely on their social networks by allowing them to feel a sense of community in transience while being linked to the home country. The increasing use and connectivity provided by improvements in communication enable both permanent and transient migrants to remain connected to their national homelands (Gomes, 2014). However, return migration is not always a process of simply “going home”. Especially when the return is not fully voluntarily, returnees face severe obstacles. Return migration is considered involuntary when no plausible or legal alternatives are available and migrants could not obtain a permanent permission to stay and thus have to return to their country of origin (Ruben et al., 2009).

Changes in geographical and cultural settings can lead to dramatic identity changes. Returnees may also construct a transnational identity: a set of new hybrid cultural forms combined from different cultures (Ruben et al., 2009). The students who have studied abroad are marked by more than one national and cultural identity, a sense of being at home in more than one place. The decentered nature of the transnational identity does not mean that situated space no longer matters. Rather, for these students embrace both ‘here’ and ‘there’. All of the profound changes that these students undergo as a result of the transnational nature of their experiences are ultimately changes in identity and are proud of that. They are able to enact the meaning of this identity in the workplace through the skills that they have learned and their everyday comfort in using them, and in interpersonal and intercultural relationships. They can relate to a wider range of people, both individually and as part of a range of communities within which their identity feels secure (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). This is significant, as return migration brings newly obtained international qualifications and knowledge home, where their full value is often realized (Waters, 2012).

Returning home is not always easy. Individual characteristics, such as age, socioeconomic background, and marital status are considered to influence how migrants experience their return. Younger migrants might experience more difficulties returning because they have spent a relatively larger part of their life outside of their country of origin (Ruben et al., 2009). Some return migrants even experience reverse culture shocks which can have negative effects that may temporarily inhibit the returnees' ability to reintegrate. Reverse culture shock can be more profound than the initial culture shock because of inaccurate assumptions that were about their return. Because returnees don't expect any difficulties and underestimate the degree of change in both themselves as well as their home culture, the person returning is caught off-guard by unreal expectations (Nguyen, 2012).

2.4 Student mobility in Vietnam

Education always played a central role in Vietnam culture and society. It is seen as the avenue of advancement and families routinely sacrifice much to ensure their offspring get the required education. In Vietnam, the economy has had a remarkable performance in recent years. Future growth is highly dependent on a skilled workforce that is familiar with modern education and possesses better language skills (Business in Asia, 2011; Nguyen, 2012). This, and the growing youth population of Vietnam led to a pressure on the government to initiate education reforms to improve the quality of education. Especially higher education becomes an important symbol and potential driver of nations' capacities to compete. There is a push for people to attain the highest possible educational qualification. The Vietnamese government encourages students to study abroad because of a recognition of the benefits of gaining an international degree (Nguyen, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2016).

Besides that there are limited places available at Vietnamese universities, many students and families question the quality of education. The teaching staff is weak in terms of quality and quantity, and even the private institutions are widely criticized and both unauthorized and unrecognized by the government. There is a shortage of PhD holding faculty members at universities across Vietnam, so postgraduate education cannot be offered in many cases. This led to the Vietnamese government sending faculty members abroad to complete a PhD training. Meaning that both undergraduates and postgraduates are choosing to study abroad to obtain globally recognized. This is partly due to the fact MOET has encouraged Vietnamese higher education institutions to both build and expand international relationships with organizations and institutions (Nguyen, 2009; Student world online, 2014).

2.5 Knowledge gap

Despite their significance to the migrant population of many countries around the world, students remain the least studied group of the major categories of migrants (King & Raguram, 2013). In the last couple of years, some articles on international student mobility have been written, however, most of these articles discuss international student mobility to Europe or the U.S, as for example the article of Findlay (2011) and Findlay et al. (2012). Besides a focus on these regions, most articles focus on the motivations of students to study abroad in general and the push and pull factors of destinations, as for example in the articles of Ahmad & Buchanan (2016), Lesjak et al. (2015) and Thai (2013). In addition to a lack of specific research on student mobility from Vietnam, there are no clear answers in the literature on the pull and push factors for return mobility. Very little articles have been found on motivations for student return mobility in general (Gill, 2005; Kim et al., 2010; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006).

The article of Sanchez et al. (2006) states that motivations can be different per nation, making it interesting to research this in the case of central Vietnam. Students from diverse backgrounds prioritize motives differently according to the economic situation, culture, education opportunities, and length of the exchange programs offered (Lesjak et al., 2015). Especially on Vietnam there seems to be little information on international doctoral student mobility. Some research even suggests that the country of origin does not only differentiate the students' orientation on where to study but also differentiate the decisions on whether return home (Lee & Kim, 2009).

At the time of writing it is unclear who the Vietnamese individuals are who are looking to study abroad for their PhD and who get scholarships to do so. This is due to the fact that statistics are incomplete. Both statistics on individuals who receive government scholarships to study abroad and data on individuals who study abroad at their own expense are unreliable (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012). Therefore, the research aims to examine the influences on the motivations of individual Vietnamese university lecturers to obtain a PhD abroad and return upon completion to Huế, Vietnam.

2.6 Relevance

In an increasingly globalized higher education system, with universities aiming to encourage both inwards and outwards student mobility, there is a need to examine the benefits of mobility (Foster, 2016). International student mobility will remain a topic on the international development agenda, as education is seen as the key to economic success (Raghuram, 2013). This is in line with one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), number 4 'Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning', which states that obtaining quality education is the foundation for improving people's lives and sustainable development (United Nations, 2017).

PhD holders represent a crucial human resource for research and innovation. Postdocs are the source of future productivity and have the potential to become key players, bridging knowledge between national and international scientific and scholarly networks (Auriol, 2010; Van der Weijden et al., 2016). Understanding the motivations of these individuals might be beneficial for universities and countries trying to attract foreign talent by adjusting their policies so the process for studying abroad becomes as smooth as possible (King & Raghuram, 2013).

Internationalization of higher education is not free from challenges such as an increased pressure to attract diverse student populations and expanding the academic portfolio versus addressing the social integration of national and international students (Foster, 2016). The findings will be used to encourage and direct future research on the topic and to initiate the discussion of potential solutions to problems in relation to international student mobility. After the flaws in the higher education system are discovered, governments and universities can be informed about the quality and success of their policies. Next to a deeper understanding of what motivates highly-skilled individuals, this research enhances knowledge on the impact the international education has had on the individual after return. Information from this research can help institutional leaders to set priorities more effectively, design effective policy responses, and to create further guidelines and principles in future development projects involving international student mobility. This study supplements the valuable research and could be input for improved strategies to get more Vietnamese students to obtain an international PhD and return to Vietnam with their newly obtained knowledge and skills.

3. Conceptual framework

This chapter introduces and explores the relevant key concepts that will be used in this research that together form the conceptual framework. The conceptual model will follow from the relevant concepts and the research questions will form the crux of the research.

3.1 Defining motivation

The Latin root of the word 'motivation' means 'to move', in this basic sense, the study of motivation is the study of action. Modern theories of motivation focus more specifically on the relation of beliefs, values, and goals (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Motivations can be extrinsic or intrinsic in nature. When an individual is intrinsically motivated, they engage in an activity because they are interested in, and enjoy the activity. The rewards for the work come from within or are direct outcomes of the activity. When an individual is extrinsically motivated, individuals engage in activities for instrumental or other reasons, such as receiving a reward from an outside source. These rewards are either completely separable from the work itself or indirect outcomes (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Pellens, 2012). Achievement motivation attempts to explain an individual's choice, persistence, efforts, and performance on a particular achievement task. The strength of this individual's achievement motivation is shaped by the value and expectancy that is placed on a task by the individual. Expectancies refer to beliefs about how one will do on different tasks or activities, and values have to do with incentives or reasons for doing the activity and refer to the perceived significance of a task or beliefs about why one should engage in the task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Zhou, 2015).

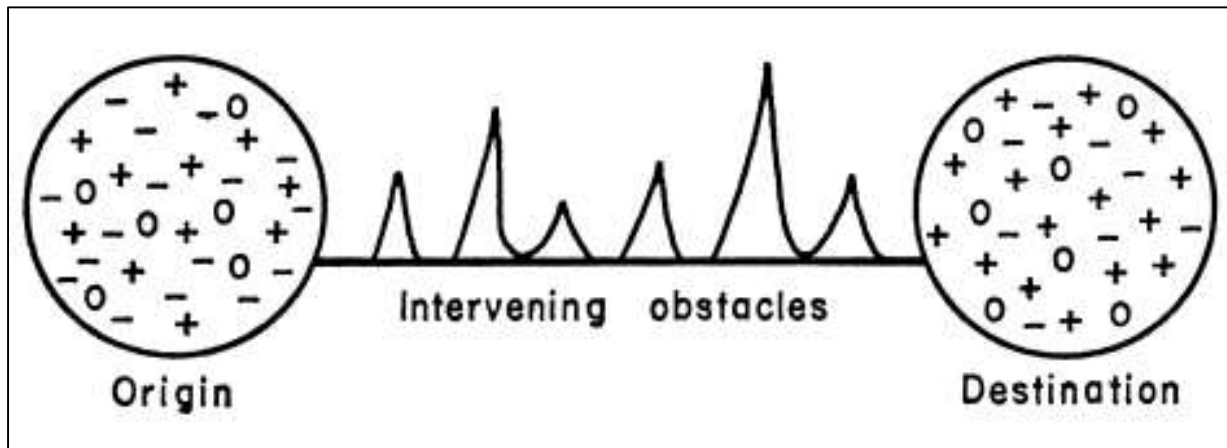
3.2 Mobility motivations: Push- & Pull model

A specific part of motivation is the motivation for mobility. No matter how short or how long and how easy or how difficult the act of migration is, every act involves an origin, a destination and an intervening set of obstacles. Among the set of intervening obstacles, the distance of the move is one that is always present. The factors that influence the decision to migrate and the process of migration may be summarized as follows:

1. Factors associated with the area of origin
2. Factors associated with the area of destination
3. Intervening obstacles
4. Personal factors (Lee, 1966).

The first three factors influencing migration are indicated schematically in Figure 3.1. In every area there are countless factors which act to hold people within the area or attract people to it, and there are others which tend to repel people. These factors are shown in as + and -. There are other indicators shown as O's to which people are indifferent (Lee, 1966).

Figure 3.1: Origin and destination factors and intervening obstacles in migration.



Source: Lee, 1966.

Some of these factors affect most people in much the same way, while others affect different people in different ways. Meaning that the set of +'s and -'s at both origin and destination is differently defined for everyone. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish classes of people who might react in a similar way to the same general sets of factors at origin and destination. There is always an element of ignorance about the area of destination because knowledge of the area of destination is seldom exact (Stanojoska, 2012).

Another important difference between factors associated with the area of origin or destination is related to stages of the life cycle. While migration may result from a comparison of factors at origin and destination, a simple calculus of +'s and -'s does not decide the act of migration. The balance in favor of the move must be enough to overcome the natural inertia which always exists (Stanojoska, 2012).

Finally, there are many personal factors which affect migration. Some of these personal factors are more or less constant throughout the life of the individual, while others are associated with stages in the life cycle (Lee, 1966). In the country of origin those factors are called push factors, and in the country of destination pull factors. The push factors are a result of the society's changes in the countries of origin. The pull factors are the positive opposites of the push factors. In both types of countries we speak for the same factors, but the social conditions in one country are favorable, and in the other one they are not (Stanojoska, 2012).

Research on mobility cannot be separated from the sociocultural context in which it takes place. Although most people make migration decisions by themselves, the involvement of other family members in the discussion on the possible move is even more important. It is a joint decision of household members, rather than one being made by an individual (Pham & Hill, 2008).

3.3 Student mobility: Push- & Pull factors

Push factors are the elements that operate in the home country of the student whereby they stimulate the individual to study abroad and pull factors are the elements of a host country that attract a student to study abroad. A combination of the push- and pull factors determines the decision of the student to study abroad and the choice of destination (Lesjak et al., 2015). Research has shown that advanced research development and intellectual stimulation in the host country, in combination with the lack thereof in the home country pull and push them to study abroad (Zhou, 2015). This means that the unfavorable conditions in the home country (the push factors) and inviting conditions at the host country (the pull factors) work together to stimulate motivations, although mobility decisions are often complex (Van der Wende, 2015). The factors interact to stimulate motivations to study abroad as well as to stay or return upon degree completion (Zhou, 2015).

The motivations of scientists are often assumed to be homogeneous, it is thought that scientists share a desire for independence or a preference for freedom in research, have a desire to publish their findings and get peer recognition, are intrinsically motivated, and are interested in basic research. Scientists can have many incentives to move, citing both salary and career progression, as the quality of their research environment, availability of funding, or the opportunity to work with “star scientists” as relevant factors in their international mobility decisions. However, recent research has found these individuals to be heterogeneous in their motivations. This heterogeneity can explain certain career decisions: scientists tend to self-select into careers where the incentives offered to them match their motivations (Pellens, 2012).

3.3.1 Push- & pull factors when leaving for a PhD abroad

This paragraph identifies the push and pull factors that influence the decision to study abroad. The decision process through which the international student moves when selecting a study destination involves three distinct stages. In the first stage, the student must decide to study internationally rather than locally which is influenced by push factors of the origin. Once the decision to study abroad has been made, the next decision is the selection of a host country which is influenced by the pull factors. In the final stage, the student selects an institution. As the factors can be different per nation, not all the factors might be relevant in the case of Vietnam and the PhD destination. The motivations of individual students can be categorized into four categories: academic, economic, social and cultural, and political as can be seen in Table 3.1 (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Table 3.1: Push- & Pull factors when leaving for PhD studies.

	Push factors	Pull factors
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing social networks - Developing soft skills - Distinguishing oneself - Lack of expert professors - Lack of facilities - Lack of funding - Lack of infrastructure - Professional development - Pursuit of qualifications - Quality of education & programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of innovation - Institutions' global ranking - Quality of education sector - Language - Range of courses - Resources - Services & facilities - Staff expertise
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to scholarships - Estimated economic returns - Lack of employment opportunities - Prospect for employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic cooperation - Full-scholarships - Higher salary - Lower costs of living
Social & Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop new outlooks - Increase confidence - Increase self-esteem - Obtain experience - Personal growth - To mature - Understanding other societies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of information - Awareness of host country - Historical links - Lifestyle - Personal recommendations - Physical climate - Safe environment - Social links
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commitment to society - Enhancement of power - Enhancement political status - Oppressive political system - Perceived higher elite status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education policies - Employment policies - Immigration policies

Source: Brooks & Waters, 2011; Lesjak et al. 2015; Li & Bray, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; OECD, 2013; Raghuram, 2013; Sherry et al., 2010; Thai, 2013; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006; Van der Wende, 2015; Zhou, 2015.

3.3.1.1 Push factors when leaving

Academic motivations include the pursuit of qualifications and professional development. The decision to leave the home country is hereby often led by the quality of education and of its programs in the origin country and the desire to work with leading edge researchers and state of the art equipment. Obtaining an international PhD is a way of distinguishing yourself from other graduates of a mass higher education system, by developing soft skills and social networks valued by employers. There might be difficulties in gaining entry to university education at home because a course might not be available or because of a lack of infrastructure, facilities, funding, and expert professors (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Lesjak et al. 2015; OECD, 2013; Sherry et al., 2010; Thai, 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Van der Wende, 2015).

Economic motives include access to scholarships, estimated economic returns from a study, and prospects for employment. Economic benefits upon graduation can be important motivations for international education. Student mobility can be a response to the increasingly congested nature of the graduate labour market and a lack of job opportunities. Thus, staying in the country of origin will limit chances (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006).

Social and cultural factors include a desire to obtain experience and understanding of other societies. Personal growth is generally a big motivation for students to study overseas. International students may develop new outlooks, increase their self-esteem and confidence, and mature as a result of meeting and experience new people and environments within diverse cultures. The escape from the familiar is an important reason for student mobility as it offers students opportunities to experience new places and the fun, excitement, and adventure that this may entail. The individual wants to know what the differences are between the host- and origin country in terms of culture and language to strengthen their minds, an opportunity they do not have in their country of origin (Thai, 2013; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006).

Political motives embrace such factors as a commitment to society, the enhancement of political status and power and an oppressive political system. A perceived higher elite status is an important consideration for pursuing advanced degrees overseas (Li & Bray, 2007; Zhou, 2015).

3.3.1.2 Pull factors when leaving

Academic motivations are related to the quality of the host country's education sector and of its programs. Scientists are attracted towards staff expertise, the range of courses, the degree of innovation and resources. Other pull factors are the quality of academic and non-academic services and facilities, the institution's global ranking and the commonality of language, whereby the students have a chance to improve for example their English (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2006; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; OECD, 2013; Thai, 2013; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006; Van der Wende, 2015; Zhou, 2015).

The economic factors are related to cost issues in terms of financial costs. Full-scholarships given by the host country are recognized by all participants as a powerful pull factor, especially if the individual obtains a higher salary studying abroad than working at home. Possible lower costs of living and the economic and educational cooperation between origin and host country influence the decision to study abroad (Thai, 2013).

Social and cultural factors include the overall level of knowledge and awareness of the host country, which is influenced by the overall availability of information about the potential destination. Historical or colonial links between host and home countries have played an important role in determining the direction of the international student flow. Furthermore, the level of personal recommendations that the study destination receives from friends and family, which related to whether a student has social links with people living in the destination country and whether family and friends have studied there previously. The environment of the host country, meaning its physical climate and lifestyle, are also influential as it is an opportunity to learn in a multicultural environment. A safe environment, being family friendly, convenience and the natural scenery are all pull motivations (Lesjak et al., 2015; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Raghuram, 2013).

Political motives are related to education policies and policies in areas such as employment and immigration. The movement of students across the world in pursuit of a higher education is strongly affected by these policies and have an impact on the decision on where to study (Brooks & Waters, 2011; OECD, 2013).

3.3.2 Push- and pull factors when returning after completing the PhD

The push- and pull factors that influence the decision to study abroad are after completion of the PhD are counterbalanced by a number of factors that push and pull migrants back to their country of origin. Return mobility intentions are influenced by diverse motivation factors. Both internal personal motivations and external structural motivations play a strong role in the decision-making process, whereby the external motivations are often regarded as diverse responsibilities by the respondents (Rakovcova, 2017). This paragraph identifies the push- and pull factors that influence the decision to return after completing the PhD, which are summarized in Table 3.2. The motivations are again categorized into four categories: academic, economic, social and cultural, and political (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). It is assumed that remigration is more affected by positive developments in the country of origin than by negative developments in the country of residence (Celik & Notten, 2014; Li & Bray, 2007; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006). As the factors can be different per nation, not all the factors might be relevant in the case of Vietnam and the PhD destination.

Table 3.2: Push- & Pull factors when returning after completing the PhD.

	Push factors	Pull factors
Academic		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional reward structures - Quality of research environment
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure to obtain income expected - Financial issues - High rates of unemployment - Increasing fees - Other costs - Unable to secure job position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acceptable economic conditions - Adequate funding of science - Advantages on labour market - Domestic economic growth - Economic support - Increased demand for skills - Inducements - Improved opportunities - Reasonable salary level - Resource allocation
Social & Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenging to adapt - Challenging to fit in - Discrimination - Feelings of isolation - Language difficulties - Social exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elite of overseas educated locals - Family ties - Natural gravitations - Retained national identity - Sense of belonging and safety - Social networks
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restrictive policies - Tightening of immigration policies - Uncertainties in visa approvals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved framework conditions - Policies of brain gain - Policies of return mobility

Source: Celik & Notten, 2014; Findlay, 2011; Lee & Kim, 2009; Li & Bray, 2007; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006; Wu & Wilkes, 2017.

3.3.2.1 Push factors when returning

The economic factors are related to costs in terms of financial issues and include increasing fees and other costs. Another reason to return would be that graduates were unable to secure desired job positions or a failure to obtain the expected income because of high rates of unemployment in the host country and are thereby forced to return (Lee & Kim, 2009; Li & Bray, 2007).

The social and cultural factors are related to discrimination and social exclusion. A portion of international students wants to return because they don't feel right in their host countries. Some students experience language difficulties and hence find it challenging to fit in and adapt to the environment. Despite seeing tremendous opportunities, international students prefer to return to their country of origin as they could not fit into the local culture. Not only do these discriminatory remarks make students feel unaccepted, it reinforces their feelings of isolation and thereby discouraging them from staying after graduation (Celik & Notten, 2014; Wu & Wilkes, 2017).

The political factors are related to restrictive policies on foreign students, uncertainties in visa approvals, and tightening of immigration policies due to the political and religious circumstances of host countries (Li & Bray, 2007).

3.3.2.2 Pull factors when returning

The academic return decisions are primarily shaped by factors such as the quality of the research environment and professional reward structures (Findlay, 2011; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006).

The economic factors are opportunities that the home country provides for making use of the migration experience and established networks. Advantages on the labour market, as well as domestic economic growth and an increased demand for skills are examples of economic factors. Acceptable economic conditions are an important factor for returning and a reasonable salary level should be guaranteed but is not a deciding factor. Several countries are providing economic support and inducements to individuals back home. Adequate funding of science and research is important but equally important is the way resources are allocated (Findlay, 2011; Li & Bray, 2007; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006).

The social and cultural factors are related to the importance of social ties and the retained national identity. Being close with families and friends from the country of origin is one of the reasons why students plan to return. Numerous scholars have stressed the importance of social networks, and especially family ties, for return mobility. The pull forces at home include a desire to stay with one's family. The migrants are social actors that are motivated by their linkages with home, and thus feel natural gravitations towards the home country. The original country is where they have a sense of belonging and safety. The symbolic potency of overseas education is fully realized once the student is returned home, giving the advantage relative to the locally educated youth and can create an elite of overseas educated locals that form a transnational capitalist class (Li & Bray, 2007; Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006; Wu & Wilkes, 2017).

The political factors are related to policies of brain gain. A strong increase in the demand for skilled labour has prompted countries to develop policies for return mobility by Improving framework conditions and opportunities (Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2006).

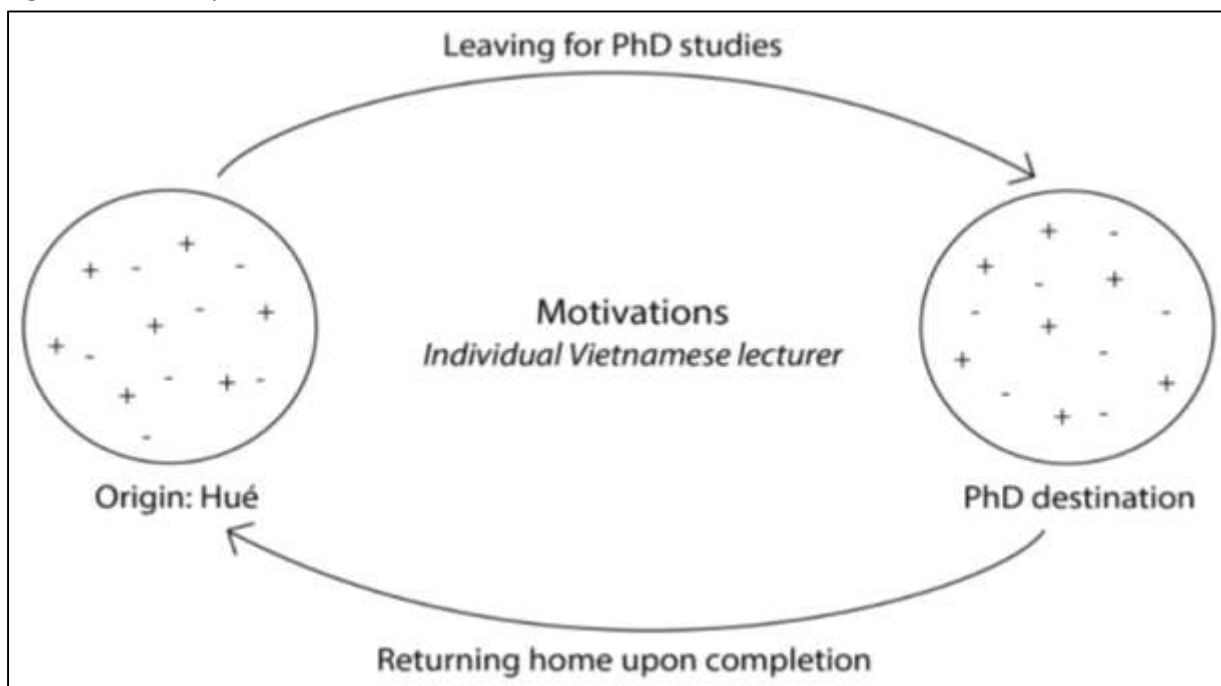
3.4 Conceptual model

In this section is the conceptual model presented. The conceptual model which is presented below is an attempt to illustrate the process and linkages that are of importance to the research questions and objective. The main research question is as follows:

“What influences the motivations of individual Vietnamese university lecturers to obtain a PhD abroad and return upon completion?”

A visual representation of the main concepts that are adopted in this research is portrayed below in Figure 3.2. As mentioned before, the perspective of the (former) PhD student is central in this research. The model represents the circular mobility of leaving for the PhD abroad and returning upon completion. In the original model by Lee, the model the intervening factors play an important part. The students must be academically prepared in order to pass language tests, gain admissions or scholarships, and obtain a visa for the host-country (Zhou, 2015). However, in this research, the intervening factors are regarded as given, the focus lays on the influences on, and the motivations for, international education.

Figure 3.2: Conceptual Model.



Source: Own work, 2017. Based on: Lee, 1966.

3.4.1 Explaining the research questions

Following on from the conceptual model outlined above, the research questions will form the crux of this research project. Put simply the questions aim to provide an in-depth understanding of the motivations of the individual Vietnamese university lecturer to obtain a PhD abroad and return upon completion. In addition, the impacts on the professional and personal life of the individual will be explored, as the expected impact on life after return influences the decision to return to Hué after completing the PhD. The following five sub-questions have been devised as an assistance in the research:

1. *What are the motivations of the individual Vietnamese university lecturer to obtain a PhD abroad?*
2. *What are the motivations of the individual Vietnamese university lecturer to return to Hué after completing the PhD?*

The aim of sub-questions 1 and 2 is to discover which individuals seek to obtain their PhD internationally, and what their motivations are to study abroad as well as to return to Hué upon completion of the PhD. The various push- and pull factors for going abroad and return will be examined.

3. *How does the individual Vietnamese university lecturers' environment influence the motivation to obtain a PhD abroad?*

Sub-question 3 examines who the different stakeholders are and they influence the individual Vietnamese university lecturers to obtain their PhD internationally. The reason for this, as stated before, the decision for mobility is not simply a matter of balancing push- and pull factors but is also dependent on the individual's environment.

4. *How do different institutions influence the motivation of the individual Vietnamese university lecturer to obtain a PhD abroad?*

Simply put, sub-question 4 examines the role of different institutions such as the university and the available scholarships on the decision-making process of the individual. These institutions create the rules and therefore boundaries in which the decisions take place.

5. *How does completing a PhD abroad impact the individual Vietnamese university lecturer return to Hué?*

The last sub-question, number 5 elaborates on how completing a PhD abroad has impacted the individual on both a personal as a professional level. It is important to know how obtaining the PhD impacts the individual because the findings can be used to encourage and direct future research on the topic and to initiate the discussion of potential solutions to any problems that are found.

4. Context

This chapter focuses on the national and regional context in which this research can be placed in terms of a background on the country of research (Vietnam), the culture with a specific focus on Confucianism and family roles, on the higher education system including the current policies and projects of the government and finally on international scholarship possibilities for university lecturers. The country of research is Vietnam, with a particular focus on the Hué University.

4.1 Geography & Background Vietnam

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is situated in South-eastern Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand, Gulf of Tonkin, and the South China Sea, as well as China (North), Laos (Northwest), and Cambodia (Southwest) which can be seen in Figure 4.1. The long S-shaped country Vietnam is a densely-populated developing country, and has a population of over 83 million persons and has 54 ethnic groups with the Vietnamese majority group accounting for almost 90%. Vietnamese is the common, official language for the ethnic group community. The major urban areas are Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Haiphong and Da Nang.

Figure 4.1: Geography of Vietnam.



Source: World-sounds, 2017.

Vietnam has a history of colonization, occupation, and dominance by foreign powers. Vietnam has been dominated or politically influenced by China, France, the United States, and other socialist countries over the course of much of its history. The long period of Chinese domination and influence has resulted in many Chinese characteristics being embedded within Vietnamese culture, thereby making the country a part of the Chinese cultural sphere (Makino & Tsang, 2011).

The past generation of Vietnam has experienced dramatic social, economic, and political changes. North and South Vietnam became the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1975, and the Vietnamese Communist Party ruled under its continuous leadership. By the mid-1980's, the Vietnamese economy was in chaos. The country was on the brink of bankruptcy as a result of inefficiencies within the centrally planned economy and conflicts.

Frustrations with state-directed economies led to the ruling Communist Party to declare a set of economic reforms known as the *Doi Moi* (renovation) policies. The renovation policy had the target of industrialization and modernization and economic growth was a significant outcome of the reforms and was extended by the 1992 Constitution. Vietnam since *Doi Moi* is one of the world's fastest growing economies (Dalton et al., 2002; McGregor, 2008; UNDP, 2011).

While *Doi Moi* should be celebrated as a success, it has been accompanied by new challenges and costs. Vietnam as a middle-income country faces the middle-income trap, which includes obstacles as a less-developed infrastructure, low levels of specialization and an unskilled labor force (UNDP, 2011). Furthermore, national economic growth has occurred together with rising inequalities in income, and both social and economic disparities between regions (Nguyen et al., 2013). In contrast to the overall poverty levels, progress in non-income indicators of development, such as education indicators, has been much lower (UNDP, 2011). Even though the Vietnamese people are intelligent, creative and have the ability to master scientific advance and new techniques, Vietnam remains as one of the poorest countries in the region, due to wars and natural disasters (Mackinnon & Hoa, 2014). Vietnam is working to create jobs to meet the challenge of the labor force which is growing by more than one million people every year. Even though the economic mechanism is pursuing a so-called open-door policy, aiming at free-market enterprises and integrating into the international economy, the communist leaders maintain control on political expression and have resisted outside calls to improve human rights (Thai, 2013; United Nations, 2013).

4.2 Culture Vietnam

Culture can be viewed as a rich complex of meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms, and values prevalent among people in a society. Cultural value emphases shape and justify individual and group beliefs, actions, and goals, meaning that each cultural group has its own set of cultural value emphases (Schwartz, 2009). Culture serves as an underlying mechanism fueling many behavioral responses (Huang et al., 2013b) and provides a meaning and information system to its members which are transmitted across generations. Individuals are members of multiple groups, with multiple social roles, norms, and expectations (Matsumoto & Nakagawa, 2008).

In autonomy cultures, people are viewed as autonomous, bounded entities who should express their own preferences, feelings, ideas, and abilities, and find meaning in their own uniqueness (Schwartz, 2009). Meaning that individualistic cultures tend to foster the development of independent entities. It fosters personal goals over group goals (Matsumoto & Nakagawa, 2008).

In contrast to autonomy cultures, people within embedded cultures are viewed as entities embedded in the collectivity. Fulfilling one's roles in these social relationships is essential to building harmony and stability within a society. It does not see the individual as a detached entity, but as a part of his or her relationships (Schwartz, 2009). Meaning in their life comes largely through social relationships, identifying with the group, participating in its shared way of life, and striving toward its shared goals rather than pursuing one's own goals (Davidov et al., 2014). Social norms and values shape economic ends and strategies and force people to behave in an institutionalized and culturally accepted way, even if they have a chance to behave opportunistically (Szántó, 1995). Collectivistic cultures tend to foster interdependent selves, fostering group goals and encouraging relatedness and communal relationships (Matsumoto & Nakagawa, 2008). A failure to meet the expectations or standards is a reflection on one's parents, siblings, and ancestors (Truong et al., 2017).

The Vietnamese culture shows many characteristics of an embedded culture and is strongly influenced by Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Buddhism is a philosophy, a way of life, where tolerance and acceptance are important. Taoism is a philosophical belief where the natural course of things is to achieve harmony and perfection. Confucianism emphasizes social hierarchy, ancestor worship, and respect. These religious beliefs have created the cornerstones of the Vietnamese society, which are respect and harmony with the purpose of avoiding discord and maintaining harmony (Pron et al., 2008). Confucianism is mainly influential in regard to the overall way of life, while Buddhism is the religion that is more commonly practiced (Mestechkina et al., 2014).

Confucianism is based on the teaching of Confucius (552-479 B.C.), who is a central figure of Confucianism. Confucianism emphasizes harmony, loyalty, cooperation, and seniority as core sources of behavioral guidance, and these dominant values result in several distinctive ethical norms and values such as collectivism. The Confucian assumption is that human beings are individuals who exist in relationship with each other (Huang et al., 2013b).

Family, village, and nation are closely interrelated in creating a basic structure for Vietnamese society, and family remains the central point of social life for many individuals in Vietnam. The importance of family is a historic aspect of Vietnamese society, as with many Confucian societies in East Asia (Hoang, 2011; Mestechkina et al., 2014). The family is the prototype of all social organizations and thus a person is not primarily an individual but a member of a family (Hitchcock & Wesner, 2009). Traditionally, in Vietnamese culture, the extended family plays an important role in the individuals' lives and there is a lot of multigenerational interaction. The community also plays a big role in peoples' lives, which is often considered as one large extended family. The community is part of the way how Vietnamese people conceptualize families (Hoang, 2011; Mestechkina et al., 2014).

Traditionally, the Vietnamese family structure has been organized by the Confucian model of family hierarchy. This organization is strongly based on gender, generation, and age. Under these Confucianist values, men are considered as the pillar of the household, whereby they are expected to be the main breadwinners in the household, as well as the major decision maker (Hoang & Yeoh, 2011; Thao & Agergaard, 2012). Because of the collapse of imperial rule in the twentieth century and the rapid development in Vietnam, young people are more likely to acknowledge and adopt Western values, particularly in urban areas. However, patriarchal family ideals and practices have not disappeared in Vietnam (Pham & Hill, 2008; Thao & Agergaard, 2012). Men continue to be seen as heads of household and main providers, while women are expected to make economic contributions to the household as well next to the women's reproductive responsibilities (Hoang & Yeoh, 2011). However, despite women's position and gender equality have considerably improved over the years, it appears that women's responsibilities for reproduction and for maintaining happy and harmonious families have retained their significance (Hoang, 2011; Hoang & Yeoh, 2011; Pham & Hill, 2008; Thao & Agergaard, 2012). The Vietnamese believe in the children's duty toward their parents, which is common in countries lacking a high-quality social system. The children have to provide the ageing parents with financial, material and also psychological and emotional support. When the parents are deceased, the responsibility falls upon the eldest male to provide for the family (Dalton et al., 2002; Mestechkina et al., 2014; Rakovcova, 2017; Truong et al., 2017).

The Vietnamese place a lot of value on the concept of a "good name". The inclusion of 'protecting your face' is noteworthy because the maintenance of one's dignity is a central tenet of Confucianism (Hitchcock & Wesner, 2009). It is better than any material possession and is considered the best thing anybody can leave behind once you are departed from this world, as you will be remembered by a good reputation. Somebody with a bad name is a disgrace to his family. There are three ways by which somebody can acquire a good name, by heroic deeds, moral virtues or by intellectual achievements. In view of the strong solidarity of the Vietnamese family, this good name is not only for the individual, but also for the parents and its children. Not only is a good name shared by the family, but also the social disgrace incurred by the individual (VTC travel, 2011). Meaning that both the pride and shame of each individual are shared by others. If a family member attains great achievements, this would be publicized to friends or neighbors, while conflicts inside the family are often handled without exposure (Mackinnon & Hoa, 2014).

In Vietnamese culture, age is an asset, not a liability. The ethics of Confucianism teach individuals to provide respect to patriarchs and elders and thus, the same level of respect is also provided to the authority of all kinds. The concept is that the individuals must follow the proper formality of social interaction such as respect for age, authority, and social norms (Huang et al., 2013a). The elderly family members are highly valued and respected, for their experience, knowledge, and wisdom. Because they rarely accept the initiatives, opinions or critiques of those below them in the social hierarchy, they play important roles in decision-making processes. Overall, these strong ideals of hierarchical gender relations have always coexisted with more pragmatic practices (Thao & Agergaard, 2012). They have been influenced by political and economic changes that have taken place in Vietnam over the past decades. As mentioned before, the reforms under *Doi Moi* resulted in a collapse of the state's welfare system, meaning that families became responsible for services that were formerly provided by the state (Thao & Agergaard, 2012).

In regard to student mobility, the Confucian tradition emphasizes the importance of education and the relative tolerance of other religions, attributes that might be seen as advantageous to migrant communities in particular (Hitchcock & Wesner, 2009). Because of religious beliefs, the Vietnamese have a great love for knowledge and learning, and a particular respect and admiration for learned people. Education has even more value than wealth and success. Education represents the essential stepping stones to the social ladder and good job opportunities. Traditionally, careers in education have an extremely important place in Vietnamese society. Teaching is thought of as an elevated career and they are highly valued (Huong & Fry, 2005; VCT travel, 2011). Prestige and the prospect of improved social status are among the strongest incentives to the pursuit of knowledge. People associated with knowledge and learning, like scholars and teachers, enjoy great respect and prestige within the society. This causes parents to put significant pressure on their children (Mestechkina et al., 2014; VCT travel, 2011).

4.3 Higher education system Vietnam

The higher education system is very important as it trains new employees which are needed in a modern business society and provides a system to transfer skills (Business in Asia, 2011). The development of science and technology, the rapid growth of the knowledge economy and the development of the market economy require employees to continuously improve their level of education and update their knowledge and information (World Education Forum, 2012). The higher education system has the responsibility to train and provide highly skilled man-power to the economy and service sectors. Furthermore, it is their task to continuously improve the quality of education and respond to shifts in demanded competencies. In this regard, training and providing qualified manpower that can apply advanced science and technology to the benefit of society has been considered a priority task for the higher education system.

However, the number of PhD holders at higher education institutions is still low and developing faculty has been a big challenge for higher education in Vietnam, both in terms of quality and quantity. Sending excellent Vietnamese students and teachers to advanced countries for higher education and post-graduate training is one of the strategies launched by MOET to train and enrich high-qualified manpower (Thai, 2013). There was also a plan to attract Vietnamese overseas professors and researchers to return to teach, but so far the reality on this has been very disappointing with the government still being very reluctant to make adequate use of this overseas resource (Business in Asia, 2011).

4.4 Government policies

Despite that the Vietnamese culture puts such a strong emphasis on education, education in Vietnam is still outdated in comparison with other countries in the region or the world, and do not meet the needs of development of the society (Mai & Yang, 2013). Text books are full of unnecessary theory says the former education minister Pham Minh Hac. Students have to rely on outdated text books and cheating is routine in exams, while underpaid teachers are renowned for withholding chunks of the syllabus to instead impart in private classes they can charge for, meaning that the school system is corrupt (Daily Mail, 2015). The quality of education is an essential factor in enhancing productivity, growth and social development. There is a huge need for educational reforms and for improvement in school facilities to ensure that the education system can keep up with the rapidly changing economy (Daily Mail, 2015; United Nations, 2013).

The government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has made the Education Law in 2005 (Ministry of Justice, 2005), with articles 89, 108 and 110 being useful for this research. Article 89 is about scholarships and social subsidies, and states that *“The state shall adopt policies on granting learning-promotion scholarships to pupils with excellent study achievements at specialized schools”* & *“Students at pedagogical institutions and learners following teacher-training courses shall be exempted from tuition and given priority in consideration for the grant of scholarships and/or social subsidies”*. This means that the state is actively promoting students to study at pedagogical institutions and to follow teacher-training courses. Article 108 is about the encouragement of cooperation on education with other countries. This article states that *“The State encourages and creates conditions for Vietnamese schools and other educational institutions to cooperate with foreign organizations, individuals, and overseas Vietnamese in teaching, learning and scientific research”, “The State encourages and creates conditions for Vietnamese citizens to participate in teaching, learning, research and academic exchange abroad, either with their own expenses or with funding from domestic or foreign organizations and individuals”* & *“The State shall set aside its budget to send persons meeting criteria in moral qualities and qualifications to study or conduct research overseas in the key areas and fields in service of the construction and defense of the Fatherland.”* This means that the government is actively promoting cooperation with foreign organizations and an academic exchange abroad. Article 110 is about the recognition of foreign certifications and states that *“Foreign diplomas awarded to Vietnamese shall be recognized according to regulations of the Minister of Education and Training and treaties which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has signed or acceded to.”* & *“The Minister of Education and Training shall sign agreements with other countries or international organizations on the equivalence or mutual recognition of diplomas.”* This means that the government is actively promoting individuals to study abroad, as foreign certifications are recognized and agreements with other countries are signed for the mutual recognition of diplomas (Ministry of Justice, 2005).

4.4.1 Project 322 & Project 911

The national education system is both a reflection of and affected by international economic changes. In 2000, the Vietnamese government attended to the science and technology skills shortage after the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam directed them to it. One result was the creation of Project 322. First MOET was made responsible for this, and later a new department was created for this purpose, Vietnam International Education Development (VIED) (DAAD, 2014; Nguyen, 2012).

After ten years of Project 322, it was accepted that it should be extended in order to build the capacity in science and technology. It was realized that especially the number of PhD holders was too low in Vietnam (DAAD, 2014). This caused Project 911 to be launched in 2010, with the objective of training PhD holding lecturers for universities and colleges for the 2010-2020 period. The initiative sets the target that Vietnam will have at least 20,000 more PhD degree holders by 2020. MOET has planned to send the lecturers to be trained in almost every advanced country in the world, and international training institutions that have a written cooperative commitment with the ministry. The students are trained by reputable universities around the world. The scholarships that are awarded have the goal of raising the level in the universities in Vietnam, in order to improve the quality of education. The students may choose from a broad range of disciplines, but a priority is given to the fields of engineering, technology, natural sciences, agriculture and other social and humane studies (University of Danang, 2013; VIED, 2017). The scholarships awardees will receive full scholarships according to the current regulations of the state, which include tuitions fees, insurances, living and travel expenses. The

students must fully and strictly comply with to provisions of obligations and the regulations of each scholarships program, and must complete the training. In the case of commitment violation, the students must compensate the training expenses (University of Danang, 2013; VIED, 2017). However, due to the limit of state budgets, the number of scholarships is not high enough to send all Vietnamese candidates with a high academic performance to study abroad (VIED, 2017).

4.5 International scholarship opportunities

This paragraph focusses on a few different international scholarships institutions and explains the beliefs of the different institutions. Throughout the world, there are numerous international to be given to students. The main scholarship institutions seem to be the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD); Monbukagakusho Japanese government scholarships (MEXT); New Zealand Aid Programme (NZaid) and Australia's Aid Programme (OZaid). In general, these institutions give out scholarships to international students from developing countries for numerous reasons.

Higher education and science have become increasingly important in the area of development cooperation, as the lack of well-trained professionals and widespread inaccessibility to global knowledge production are hindering many developing countries from overcoming poverty (DAAD, 2017). The scholarships demonstrate a commitment to providing education opportunities in order to improve living standards and stimulate economic growth in developing countries and contribute the development in the broader international community (Australia Awards, 2016). Especially when political relations are strained, these projects can create alternative opportunities beyond bilaterally negotiated agreements (DAAD, 2017). Through the programs, efforts concentrate on activities that contribute to poverty reduction through sustainable economic development; create safe, secure and inclusive societies; fulfill basic needs; and focus on sustainability (Devex, 2017).

The scholarships are meant for individuals who want to make a difference in their home country and most recipients must return to their home country upon completion of their study so they can contribute to the development of their country (DFAT, 2017; MFAT, 2017). Priority sectors of the program are areas where a skill shortage has been identified by the government, areas which are a priority for investment in order to improve social and economic development. The prestigious scholarships aim to equip individuals through academic training with skills and knowledge to assist in the social and economic development and thereby benefit their home country (Devex, 2017). Recipients return home with new ideas and knowledge, and the ability to make a significant contribution to their home countries as leaders in their field (Australia Awards, 2016). The awards aim to contribute to the long term development (DFAT, 2017).

5. Methodology

This chapter highlights the key research methods and techniques that were used to answer the aforementioned research questions. This is followed by a reflection of the limits, challenges, and risks associated with this research and how this infected the data analysis. In order to answer the research questions, interviews and collecting secondary data, such as a literature review and statistics will be used. There is no intention to generalize the answers, but to explore the narratives of the Vietnamese lecturers.

5.1 Research location

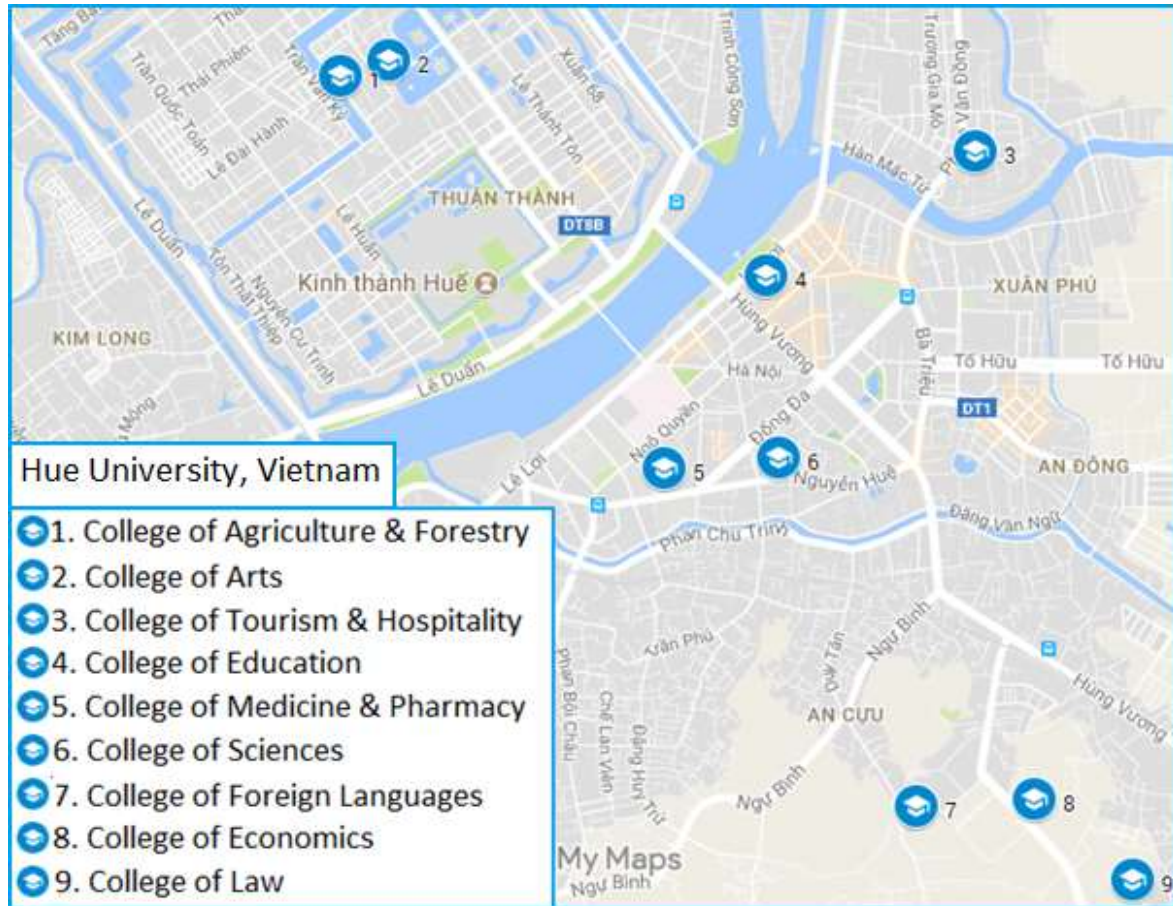
This research was conducted via field work over a 13 week period from the start of February until May 2013. This research was conducted in Hué, which is situated in the center of Vietnam (see Figure 4.1) and is located on the bank of the Song Huong- Perfume River. Hué is the capital of the Thua Thien Hué province in Central Vietnam. Hué is located about 700 km from northern Hanoi, about 1100 km from southern Ho Chi Minh City and located near the South China Sea. Hué was the national capital until 1945 while being the political, cultural and religious center of Vietnam under the control of the Nguyen Dynasty (Vietnam online, 2016). Within Vietnam there remain considerable cultural differences between the northern, central and southern regions of the country (Hitchcock & Wesner, 2009), and thus the findings of this study largely concern the central Vietnamese.

This research is carried out in collaboration with the faculty of Geosciences, Master International Development Studies, Utrecht University (UU) and Hué College of Economics, Hué University. In Vietnam the research was guided under the supervision of Dr. Nguyen Quang Phuc.

Since Hué University was founded in 1957, it has been recognized as having a tradition of fondness for learning, culture, and education inside a historical old capital city, the biggest workforce training center in Central Vietnam. The university has now become one of the top three strongest training and scientific technology centers in Vietnam, together with Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The mission of Hué University is to promote the development of Vietnam, especially the Central region. Therefore, Hué University determines to pursue several objectives, under which are to integrate Hué University into the global higher education and to ensure the university's position as a regional and worldwide center of cooperation and exchange. Hué University wishes to expand and develop international cooperation programs in training, scientific research, and student exchange (Hué University, 2011).

The organizational structure of Hué University is that the university is made up out of nine different Colleges which can be seen in Figure 5.1. Besides these colleges, there are multiple institutions, centers, departments and a campus (Hué University, 2011).

Figure 5.1: Map of locations Hué University, Vietnam.



Source: Own work, 2017.

5.2 Data collection

This research is qualitative in nature. As such, the primary research method used to answer the research questions were semi-structured interviews. Interviewing is one of the most appropriate methods to for obtaining a wide range of information, regarding insight, ideas, and thoughts of people. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a respondents' experiences. Semi-structured interviews are preferred because this ensures that important topics are covered while allowing for the interviewees to bring up their own ideas and thoughts. This means that a list of questions is made before hand, although supplementary questions can be asked when appropriate. The questions for the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix A for the first interview round and in Appendix B for the second interview round. The semi-structured interviews were necessary to gain a more in depth understanding of the different dynamics affecting the decision for international mobility, the enabling and constraining factors involved and how they feel they are being influenced by different stakeholders, as well as the impact on a personal and professional level. Due to the breadth of different areas covered, it was necessary to write a comprehensive list of possible interview questions to cover all aspects. However, no interviewee is the same and each interview took its own path. As a result, not all of the questions were asked all of the time. Sometimes new ones were asked to explore a certain topic highlighted by the interviewee and sometimes respondents were invited to talk about a certain subject and only given prompts to guide them in a certain direction. In this way, most of the interviews demonstrated elements of both semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

The aim was to stratify the sample broadly across gender and field of study. Respondents were selected for semi and unstructured interviews through the international offices from the different Colleges of Hué University. The international office of the host College provided letters of invitation for other colleges of Hué University. After receiving the invitation papers, the other offices were approached. All Colleges except one were willing to provide a list of the names and email-addresses of individuals who obtained their PhD abroad. The people who were contacted were chosen through lottery per College. Respondents from the College who decided not to cooperate were approached largely via opportunistic and snowball methods.

5.3 Interviews

The interviews were conducted until no new information came out of the interviews, the point of saturation, meaning that a total of 24 respondents have been interviewed. Due to the limited time that was available for conducting this research, the majority of the respondents could only be interviewed once. However, three interesting cases have been asked for a follow-up interview, which has been valuable to clarify issues and enrich their stories. This enabled an even more in-depth analysis of the research topics, meaning that a few case studies can be highlighted after analyzing the data. In total ten male and fourteen female respondents have participated in the research. Nineteen of which have obtained their PhD abroad. Another respondent, Huong is a 21-year-old female bachelor student who explained the education system and culture in Vietnam for background information and context of the research, and who will be left out in the background information on the respondents. Plus a lecturer who is about to go abroad for a PhD and two PhD students that study abroad but happened to be in Hué at the time, meaning that they only provided information on before or during the PhD students and not on the impact after the international mobility process. These students could provide more information on the current scholarships. The respondents work at the nine different colleges from Hué University.

The length of the interviews varied between 40 - 60 minutes. The respondents spoke sufficiently English to conduct the interview alone. All respondents were informed about the research purposes and ensured of confidentiality. In the interviews they were encouraged to express their views freely and include additional information they considered important. The majority of respondents seemed open to the interview and were willing to share information.

The data produced from in-depth interviews is extremely rich and plentiful. Field notes were made before, during and after the interview regarding details about the recruitment of the respondent, the location of the interview and some interesting themes that arose from the interviews. During the data-collection phase, some preliminary analysis was performed on individual interviews, mainly to examine if important themes or topics emerged that were not included in the interview guide. However, no major adjustments were made.

Another part of the research is based on literature review and secondary data analysis. The literature review consists out of academic peer-reviewed articles and books. In addition, secondary data is used as a complementary method for data collection. It is useful to collect information from other sources to map out the policies and programs involved in the field from the destination countries. Especially what the destination countries have done to stimulate the mobility of the Vietnamese PhD students and why do they do so.

5.4 Data analysis

Full-length sound recordings were made of the interviews with informed consent. However, the richness of the data is not automatically a positive feature of research and, in fact, provided a number of challenges for analysis. Most notably, there was the risk of trying to use all data collected, which would have potentially led to vague and irrelevant findings.

Regarding the process of coding, deductive codes were developed first, and inductive codes were added after thoroughly reading the data. Deductive codes originate from the researcher, for example by using topics from the interview guide or concepts from the research literature. Inductive codes come directly from the data and are developed from reading the data and noting the issues raised by participants. Inductive codes are valuable as they allow the data to speak for itself and reflect the issues of importance to participants themselves, which may be different from those anticipated by the researcher (Hennink et al., 2011). NVivo software for qualitative data analysis was used to facilitate this process and was helpful in revising the coding schemes and managing the data analysis. The coding process that was adopted was flexible, with the intention to allow the data to talk for itself, as the aim was to stay close to the perspectives and perceptions of respondents (sophisticated inductive approach).

Due to the biographical nature of the interviews, a narrative analysis is chosen as the most relevant option for data analysis. However, narrative analysis can take a wide variety of forms and the type chosen depends on the desired focus, may that be on language, content or structure of the narratives. Structural and thematic narrative analysis are the two most widely used methods, yet the former is inappropriate for this research for the following reasons. The structural narrative analysis is directly concerned with 'how' stories are told and deeply interrogate the choice of language. However, as the respondents have used English as a second language, it would be difficult or misguided to find such meaning in linguistics. Thematic narrative analysis, on the other hand, is more appropriate as it places more emphasis on 'what' is told by looking at the content of the narratives. A typology of narratives organized by theme is the representational strategy, with case studies providing illustration (Riessman, 2005).

A comparison is the second task in the analytic cycle and allows to further explore issues, identify patterns and begin to notice associations in the data. This is followed by the third task, being categorizing and conceptualizing. Categorization involves identifying codes with similar characteristics and grouping these together into meaningful categories. Moving from individual codes towards broader categories helps to gain a more conceptual understanding of the data. Categories represent higher order grouping of data from which conceptual framework can be built to explain and develop theory. Conceptualization involves considering the relationships between these categories, to view the data as a whole and develop a conceptual understanding of the issues. The theoretical extension does not involve the development of a new theory per se, but demonstrates the relevance of pre-existing theory or conceptual framework to a different context or social circumstance from that in which the theory was developed. It should go beyond description to develop a new explanation to better understand and explain the studied issues (Hennink et al., 2011).

5.5 Risks & Limitations

Previous sections already included some of the research limitations. However, several other limitations are important to mention, as they may have influenced the collected data, and conclusions of the study. The relative inexperience of the researcher is important to accentuate, as this enhanced the possibility of certain research errors, particularly interviewer bias. Furthermore, as said, cultural differences may have influenced interpretations and findings.

5.5.1 Data sample

It is important to emphasize that due to the small sample, and research set up, findings must be understood with the personal, and familial, contexts of respondents. The collected data is rather diverse, making it more difficult to find patterns. This is also amplified by the small research sample, and thus an even smaller number of respondents in each group such as gender, familial status (single or married, with or without children) and age group. Therefore, rather than an aim for representativeness or generalizability, this research has instead aimed to explore the lived experiences of individuals, without leaping to broad generalizations of the wider international student populations.

5.5.2 Language barrier

Possibly the most obvious challenge has been the language barrier between the researcher and the respondent. Even though the respondents have studied abroad, not all of them were fluent in English. Sometimes because it simply was a long time ago when they obtained their PhD and had no way of practicing after return. In some cases the respondents have yet to start their PhD, meaning that they did not have a lot of practice with English yet. This sometimes caused problems such as. Sometimes the respondents asked for clarification in the form of examples, which might have led to biased answers. Sometimes it seemed not to be possible to make the question clear, causing the respondents to talk about a completely different subject. This might also have happened because the respondent simply did not know how to answer the actual question, or not felt comfortable with it. However, in the end, all of the interviews were conducted without a translator.

5.5.3 Missing data

It is assumed that the respondents mentioned all the motivations which apply to them, however, it is possible that the respondents forgot about a motivation because the motivations were asked far after the situation occurred. In addition, motivations can change if the respondent thinks about it afterward. This is because of the form of research and how the interviews were structured. It is important to question to what extent is it reliable to talk about motivations to leave and return if it has taken place a long time ago. Besides, because respondents answered open questions, meaning that the possible answers were not handed to them to choose from and that the respondents were free to give multiple motivating answers, it is possible that they simply forgot motivations for both leaving and returning.

5.6 Respondent

The aim was to stratify the sample across gender and field of study, meaning respondents from all the different colleges from Hué University. The respondent must be of Vietnamese university lecturer who has obtained a PhD abroad or is currently working on this.

For this research, a total of 27 interviews have been conducted, but because three respondents have been interviewed twice, the research is based on 24 respondents in total. As shown in Table C.1 in Appendix C, The respondents are aged 27 to 55, with 39 as average. This does not mean the respondents had this age when they started their PhD studies. The respondents were on average 32 years old at the time of start of the PhD studies (the youngest was 26 and the oldest 39 years old). Two respondents did not give their date of birth. The respondents work at all the different colleges from Hué University, meaning that the sample covers Hué University as good as possible.

As shown in Table C.1, sixteen respondents were married before the start of the PhD studies and two respondents got married during the PhD studies. Twelve respondents had children before the start of the PhD studies and six respondents had children during the PhD studies. One respondent did not give information about this.

Table C.2, shows that all respondents have received a scholarship to complete PhD abroad, whereby five respondents have received a scholarship from the Vietnamese government under Project-322 or Project-911, and eighteen respondents have a received an international scholarship. From these international scholarships are MEXT scholarship, NZaid and OZaid the most common received international government scholarships and have three respondents received a scholarship from the universities abroad.

The main destinations the respondents went to for their PhD are Australia (4 respondents), Japan (4 respondents), France (3 respondents), Germany (3 respondents) and New Zealand (3 respondents). Besides the main destinations, the respondents have also studied for their PhD in South Korea (2 respondents), China, Italy, Norway, and Singapore. The respondents started their PhD between 1997 and 2017. Almost all respondents have been already internationally mobile in past for educational purposes. Such an experience gives them a broader perspective to compare life and research conditions in different countries and thoroughly weigh their future mobility decisions. Three respondents obtained their PhD at the same destinations as their Masters' degree. Other destinations where the respondents obtained their Masters' degree are mainly Thailand, the United States of America and Vietnam. Between the start of the Master and start of the PhD is on average five years (2 years minimum and 10 years maximum). Three respondents did not give the year of the start of the Master.

Eight of the respondents had family come along with them during their PhD. In some cases, it is just the partner who joined, and in other cases, the children joined as well. Two from the fifteen respondents who did not have their family come along still need to go abroad, meaning that they could bring their family eventually. Reasons why the family did not join vary from insufficient financial means, strict visa regulations, as well as that the partner has its own job to attend to. It is very unusual to switch job in Vietnamese culture, and it is not common for the family to come along in general.

6. Empirical chapter: Pre-mobility themes

All names mentioned in the following chapters are not real and have been changed for reasons of anonymity and confidentiality

The following chapters elaborate on the findings from empirical research. From the various interviews that were conducted in line with this research, a lot of data is derived. Even though the research sample is small, some interesting patterns emerged from the data which will offer suggestions for follow-up research. These patterns involve interrelated motivations and enabling or constraining factors that influence the international student mobility process.

The following sections focus on the findings from the interviews on a chronological basis. Meaning the chapter starts with pre-mobility themes. First the motivations to become a lecturer and obtain a PhD in general will be discussed. Followed by the motivations to obtain a PhD abroad and the motivations for specific destinations as well as how international scholarship opportunities influence these motivations. The chapter ends with a summarizing table that presents the push- and pull factors the respondents mentioned that influenced their decision to go abroad.

6.1 Motivating factors to become a lecturer at Hué University

This section elaborates on the motivations the individuals had to become a lecturer at Hué University. The two main motivations stated by respondents are that they were recruited by the university as well as that they feel that being a lecturer is a good job with a high social status.

“When I was a student at university and graduated, than the best one was selected to be the teacher. For me I think that to be a teacher I have several chances, opportunities. For example to go abroad for studying. In Vietnam you know, the society, I mean the public, general people, they also recognize that teacher is a good job. But you know, if you are a teacher, at the beginning it is very difficult. The salary is just enough for only you. You don’t have spare money for the family or other people, so my older brother they had to go for work”

Hoang, a male lecturer from the College of Tourism & Hospitality, age 45.

When the respondents were asked about their motivations to become a lecturer at Hué University, a few different answers were given. The respondents mentioned that both their parents were also lecturers at Hué University, and that the teaching profession came to them quite naturally and that they were recruited by the university to become a lecturer. The data suggest this is a common motivation as ten respondents have mentioned this. Some of the respondents also mention how being a lecturer is considered to be a good job in Vietnam. Even though the salary is relatively low, being a teacher means increased social status that benefits the individual as well as their family.

In conclusion, the main motivations for the respondents to become a university lecturer is that they were recruited by the university because they were at the top of their class and because being a lecturer is considered to be a good job in Vietnam. The above responses are in line with the expected cultural influences in Vietnam. Because of religious beliefs, the Vietnamese have a great love for knowledge and learning, and a particular respect and admiration for learned people. Traditionally,

careers in education have an extremely important place in Vietnamese society. Teaching is thought of as an elevated career and they are highly valued (Mestechkina et al.). No connections have been found between the motivations to obtain a PhD and the characteristics of the respondent (e.g. gender or field of study) based on the results of this research.

6.2 Motivations to obtain a PhD

This section explains the motivating factors that influence the decision of the individual university lecturer to obtain a PhD in general. Table D.1 in Appendix D shows the answers of the different respondents in consideration to the motivating factors that influenced the motivation to obtain a PhD in general from which Table 6.1 is derived. The motivations to obtain a PhD can be put into three categories, being that the degree is required by the university, they feel a responsibility towards their students and have a passion for their field of study. The table shows the percentage based on 23 respondents.

Table 6.1: Motivations to obtain a PhD.

Motivating factors	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
The degree is required	23	100 %
Responsibility towards students	10	43.5 %
Passion for the field of study	7	30.4 %

Source: Own work, 2017.

The motivations for the respondents to obtain their PhD in general were mainly because Hué University forces them to get the degree if they are not near the retirement age. Every respondent mentioned this as a motivation. Even though Vietnam does demand that university lecturers have a PhD yet, all respondents mentioned this as a motivation to obtain their PhD. It is stated that the universities want to have an international status in the future. To enhance the reputation of the university and obtain this international status it is important that the lecturers have a high level of education.

“Firstly education is in the priority list in Vietnam. And university lectures are under some kind of pressure to have a PhD. So those who are able to find opportunities do that. Those who can do a PhD are very encouraged and assisted. So, when I applied because I am a university lecturer. It is kind of not obvious, Yes but merely that a university lecturer is going to be PhD, and that’s clear that’s understandable and everything that followed is encouraged in this is like very understandable and they didn’t question they didn’t ask why you take this. So as a university lecturer I can do a PhD.”

Phuong, a female lecturer from the College of Foreign Languages, age 40.

The second most important factor that influences the motivation to obtain a PhD is the obligation the respondents feel towards their students to study further. This motivation has been mentioned by more than 40% of the respondents. This obligation is not only towards their students to teach better, but also because the Vietnamese have a tradition to favor education. They feel that they need to go further in terms of qualifications and aim to have a PhD like everybody else.

“If you want to work at the university, you definitely have to get a PhD. I didn’t feel pressure, rather than passion to do PhD. And I felt I am young enough to do the PhD. It is the time. My family and my career is there, it is good enough, so I mean why not get a PhD when there are opportunities. My internal passions came first, but I also have external passion. Like I look around and those who have a PhD are more privileged. Like people have a kind of pressure, and sooner or later there is the requirement or something like that. But not really, the requirement was not there yet.”

Thu, a female lecturer from the College of Law, age 34.

Thirdly, the respondents talked about their passions for research and to become a specialist and how obtaining their PhD is a chance to climb to the upper positions. The respondents want to broaden their knowledge and think that they can do some good projects for their country with this knowledge. Eight out of 23 respondents talked about their passion for their field of study or research as a motivation to obtain their PhD. Not only a chance for promotions and a higher salary, but also a higher position on the social ladder.

“I am a lecturer. If like, if I just stop at doing teaching tasks, I think it is boring. So I want to do some research, and if I want to have like good quality papers, I have no choice. I have to continue with the PhD. I think it helped me to learn research methods and how do it. How to write paper and something. And I want to do research and I want to disclose what I did and what I had done to other people. I want people to know me, not like they know my face but just know my name and papers.”

Kim, a female lecturer from the College of Economics, age 37.

Based on the finding above, the main motivations to obtain a PhD in general are because of university rules, the responsibility for their students and because of the passion they have for their field of study. Because the Vietnamese government encourages people to attain the highest possible educational qualification, and public universities are owned by the government, it seems logical that the respondents feel a push to complete a PhD. However, the motivation to obtain a PhD is not solely based to obeying the rules. The findings from this research suggest that the respondents see themselves as part of something bigger. The motivations for completing a PhD, apart from university rules, are to improve students’ education and developing their field of study. The above responses add to the existing literature, which mostly see education as beneficial for the individual. The articles suggest that education represents the essential stepping stones to the social ladder and good job opportunities. Prestige and the prospect of improved social status are among the strongest incentives to the pursuit of knowledge. This causes parents to put significant pressure on their children (Mestechkina et al., 2014). These findings suggest that part of the motivation for higher education is the willingness to contribute. No connections have been found between the motivations to obtain a PhD and the characteristics of the respondent (e.g. gender or field of study) based on the results of this research.

6.3 Motivations for going abroad to obtain a PhD

This section explains the motivating factors that influence the decision of the individual university lecturer to obtain a PhD abroad instead of in Vietnam. Table D.2 in Appendix D shows the answers of the different respondents in consideration to the motivating factors that influenced the motivation to go abroad for their PhD from which Table 6.2 is derived. The motivations for going abroad can be put into seven categories. The table is sorted in order of significance, meaning that most of the

respondents mentioned the quality of the education sector in Vietnam, the influence of their social environment and improving their knowledge and skills as most important motivations. The table shows the percentage based on 23 respondents.

Table 6.2: Motivating factors for going abroad to obtain a PhD.

Motivating Factors	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Education sector	18	78.3 %
Social environment	15	65.2 %
Knowledge & Skills	13	56.5 %
University rules	9	39.1 %
See the world	8	34.8 %
Vietnam too expensive	8	34.8 %
Distractions in Vietnam	4	17.4 %

Source: Own work, 2017.

The main motivation for the respondents to seek education for their PhD abroad is because they believe the system of education in Vietnam is too outdated and not good enough in their opinion. Eighteen of the 23 respondents mentioned this as an influence on their motivations. Not only is the education limited because Vietnam is still a developing country and the education is described as 'old' by the respondents, the research environment in Vietnam is also not strong. The number of papers which are completed in Vietnam is low because there are not enough good publishers for the international journals. Respondents complained about the lack of resources for good quality research and how the education in a developing country like Vietnam is limited. The level of professionalism and the lack of advanced technology causes the lecturers to go abroad. Respondents mention that Hué University does not have the money to buy modern equipment and build modern facilities. Universities overseas, on the other side, often have access to a very good laboratory with new equipment, machines, and chemicals according to the respondents. They can support any experiment the respondents want and it is possible to access all kind of resources, e.g. an online database.

“When I came to Japan they had a very good lab. In the laboratory they have good equipment, machine and chemicals. They can support us to do any experiment we want... Very good to improve knowledge. In the foreign universities, they have a good library, documents, new books, material and updated knowledge. So they can improve the knowledge of the special subject, so when they return they can prepare the lecture in a good way. And also we can do new experiments, we learn many things... So in Vietnam, we don't have good conditions like that.”

Linh, a female lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 51.

Because not many people possess over a PhD in Vietnam, there are not many professors who are able to help PhD students with a clear direction to write their thesis. Also, because the level of English is below average, the PhD would be written in Vietnamese. In contrast, international universities have access to very good professors and the respondents agreed that international education provides more

chances to learn new things. As stated before, an important reason for the respondents to seek international education for their PhD is because the education sector in Vietnam is not good. The respondents talked about how the education in Vietnam needs to be improved. Not only do respondents mention the poor quality of education, they also mention wide spread corruption.

The current policies in Vietnam are good, however, there seems to be no clear action and perhaps it is too ambitious. When people are in a hurry and want to reach the target at any cost, mistakes are easily made. Inside Vietnam some changes in the authorities, like MOET needs to happen as well. The government should change the system of socialism or communism how it is called and advised by the respondents. The government wants to keep the power, and they justify their actions by saying that they do that to keep the country stable. The respondents mention how they find it difficult to do academic work freely and feel that they have to re-do work. Lecturers are forced to follow a lot of rules and regulations by MOET, and thus the government. The study curriculum is regulated by the government, meaning that it is difficult to change and not very flexible.

“Because we have a project for training 20,000 for PhD overseas. For the technology, for the development of this country. We don’t have enough equipment and program for training. So we send candidate abroad for that. Then they return for serving.”

Hai, a male lecturer from the College of Education, age 39.

The second most important motivating factor is the social environment of the respondent. Two-thirds of the respondents mentioned that the respondents’ social environment influenced the decision to study abroad as well. First of all the respondents mention the influence colleagues have on their decision, stimulating them to get a PhD abroad.

“Some colleagues encourage me to go to foreign countries to do the PhD, because I will learn a lot about useful things in the foreign countries. Not only in research but I can discover about the landscape, culture and about social aspects. They, my boss and my colleagues, always encourage me. For example my boss always gives occasions for me to improve English, and encouraged me to apply for the scholarship.”

Ngoc, a female lecturer from the College of Education, age 27.

The family also plays a huge roll because they want their children to get a scholarship. Usually, if you go abroad, you have to compete with other students as well to get the scholarship, meaning that only a select few students can go. Receiving a scholarship means that you are at least pretty good compared to others. To reach this level, the parents must support their children because they need help to become first or second in class. The people in Hué always support higher education, especially in developed countries. So when somebody in the family has the chance to study abroad, the family members are very proud.

“My family supported me. They encouraged me to follow my study. It depends, if you can study further and further, study. Otherwise you can find a job. You know in Vietnam, going abroad for studying is something like, not reputation, but something very important, something to be proud of. So most of the parents they encourage their children to go abroad for study.”

Huong, a female lecturer from the College of Medicine & Pharmacy, age 32.

The third most important motivating factor for the respondents is to improve their knowledge and skills while being abroad. In total 13 out of 23 respondents mentioned gaining knowledge and skills as a motivation to go. The skills the respondents would like to obtain are not only research skills like writing and reading, but they also mention skills in the form of networking. Interestingly enough, only two respondents mentioned improving their English as a motivation to go abroad. English is more used as a means to go abroad. It is mentioned that for the PhD it would be much better to go abroad.

“I like to go to abroad to learn new things and learn about professional knowledge of course. But also to learn about the methods of work and to enjoy the culture of the developed country.”

Khanh, a male lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 47.

The fourth most important motivating factor is that the university prefers the students to go abroad for their PhD. Not only are the individuals encouraged by their colleagues and the rector of the university to get their PhD as soon as possible and pushed to apply for any kind of scholarship, but nine respondents stated that they were told that a qualification from a foreign university is better. Unofficially the respondents enjoy an elevated status if they complete a PhD with a foreign university. It is better for the university because it will get more credits in terms of accreditation. The university needs high-quality lecturers to improve education for the students as well as an increased chance of receiving national and international research funds. Because the quality of international education is considered superior to the education in Vietnam, the university sends their people abroad so that they can return with new knowledge as science develops every. Interestingly enough, the respondents don't feel any influence from the government besides that to them the government means the university and the ministry of education and training. They are closely connected according to the respondents.

The fifth most important motivation for the respondents to go abroad is that they love to travel and want to be able to see the world, meaning that only 35% of the respondents highlighted enjoyment and experiences as motivations. Together with 35% of the respondents who also mentioned that Vietnam is too expensive to study for a PhD. The respondent can earn more abroad than in Huế, because even though they have to teach every day, the salary is low. Even studying abroad they get more income than working at Huế University.

“I decided that I have the chance to study there, and I have a chance to work there. So I can earn more than here. Here I have to teach every day and the salary is low. So If I have a job abroad, I have time to work and my scholarship. Even studying there, we get more income there than working here.”

Hoang, a male lecturer from the College of Tourism & Hospitality, age 45.

Not only do they receive more money because of the scholarship, they also don't have to pay for their education if they go abroad, which was mentioned by eight respondents in the interviews. If they do the PhD in Vietnam, they have to spend a lot of money. Not only because they would have to pay money for their learning, to go to international conferences and submit papers, but they also have to pay the school fee and gifts for the supervisor, which is very popular in Vietnamese society. If you want to do your PhD in Vietnam you need to have many relationships with the right people and you need to spend a lot of money for that relationship. By saying this, they are hinting at the corruption within the education system in Vietnam.

“You have to pay a lot of things. You have to pay the school fee and if I go to another province or another city to get PhD course I have to pay the accommodation, the food and sometimes the gifts or presents for the supervisor. In Vietnam there is not a good fundament in education”

Hieu, a male lecturer from the College of Education, age 31.

The least important motivation for the respondents is because they are distracted in. Four respondents mentioned that going abroad for a PhD makes more sense because you will have full focus on your study. It would be possible to really focus all the time and not be busy by dividing their time for administration, teaching and doing research at the same time. This is especially true for the woman because of the traditional gender roles in Vietnam, which causes the woman to spend a lot of time on family duties. If they go abroad for their studies they can commit their full time and effort into the PhD.

“When the PhD student go overseas they focus on study. They have 24 hours just thinking about the study. But here if you apply for PhD, you still have lectures and you still enjoy some activities in the university. So you have less time than overseas. Also because here we have to spend time with family, because you know in Vietnam you have about three times, lunch dinner breakfast together. So for the woman, making food for the family, it takes a lot of time. So I think for a woman it is better to go overseas. Just for the time when doing the PhD. When they get the degree, they return home, so then it is easy for them to do everything. But here you know, it is not easy. You can’t get very good results.”

Linh, a female lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 51.

To summarize, the problems with the education sector make up the most important motivation to go abroad for a PhD, followed by influences from the social environment and the desire to upgrade skills and knowledge. The motivations given by the respondents to leave Hué are partly because of unsatisfactory conditions in their home country, which is in line with the push-pull theory by Lee. These unfavorable conditions are that the education sector is not good enough in their opinion and that Vietnam is too distracting and expensive to complete a PhD. This is in line with the existing articles, which state that there are limited places available at Vietnamese universities and people question the quality of education in Vietnam, it seems logical the individuals seek international higher education (Huong & Fry, 2005; Mestechkina et al., 2014). The second most important influence on the respondents’ motivation is the social environment. In Vietnam, intellectual achievement is one of three ways how one can acquire a good name. Because of the Confucian influenced culture, the family plays an important role in the individuals’ lives, meaning that the good name is shared with the parents. In contrast to existing literature, this research suggests that the motivation to complete an international PhD is not solely based on individual benefits, but also on the benefits to the family’s reputation. The third motivation of the respondents is the desire to upgrade their skills and knowledge, this is hardly surprising given the existing literature on student mobility. However, interestingly enough, in the case of Vietnam upgrading skills and knowledge is not the main motivation for international education. It is possible that the frustration with the Vietnamese education system stems from the lack of opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Suggesting that people might stay if they feel they could update this in Vietnam.

While not statistically significant because of the small research sample, the data suggests that gender roles do play a role in the motivation for international education. Especially when it comes to woman, they mention that traditional family duties form a large distraction, which is in line with the literature as women are expected to respond to their reproductive responsibilities and maintain happy and harmonious families (Hoang & Yeoh, 2011). Interestingly enough, family duties do not form an obstacle to leave Hué, but in contrast act as a push-factor for international education.

6.4 Motivating factors for a specific PhD destination

This section explains the motivating factors that influence the decision of the individual university lecturer for the specific destination to obtain a PhD. Table D.3 in Appendix D shows the answers of the different respondents in consideration to the motivating factors that influenced the motivation for a specific destination to obtain the PhD from which Table XXX is derived. The motivations for the specific destination fall into five categories which are scholarship availability, a good environment of the host destination, a specific supervisor, connections with the host destination and the language of the destination, as can be seen in Table 6.3. The table shows the percentage based on 23 respondents.

Table 6.3: Motivating factors for a specific PhD destination.

Motivating Factors	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Scholarship availability	15	65.2 %
Good environment	12	52.2 %
Specific supervisor	8	34.8 %
Connections	7	30.4 %
Language country	6	26.1 %

Source: Own work, 2017.

The most important motivation for the specific destination is the availability of a scholarship. Because all of the respondents were financially sponsored by a scholarship when they went abroad, it seems logical that the available scholarships influence the destination where the respondents obtained their PhD. More than half of the respondents mentioned how they were being influenced by the availability of international scholarship in their choice for a PhD location. Currently, there is a program for Vietnamese people to apply for a PhD, but it has not always been like this. It used to be that the student only could get a scholarship from an international organization or foreign country, but now there are also opportunities to get funded by the Vietnamese government. The respondents often simply go to the country wherefore they have received the scholarship as first, as they often apply for more scholarships at the same time.

Some scholarships are easier to obtain than others, causing the students to choose for specific scholarships, and thus for specific countries. In some cases, the students want to get the most prestigious scholarship, because this looks better on their resume and it makes people around them proud. Scholarships from for example New Zealand, Australia and many European countries are more challenging and harder to obtain. More able applicants get that kind of scholarships. In other cases, the students go for a less prestigious scholarship, to be sure they get one at all.

“If I want to apply for Australia or another country, they always ask me to have for TOEFL-Test or IELTS-test with a high level, but in Japan, the scholarship they just discuss it and need a not so very high level of English. So it is easy for Vietnamese students to apply. They just care about the background. When we apply we should make a public paper, send the results of study and if they know we have a high level and we know English, that’s enough. So I think that there are two reasons for Vietnamese apply for the Japanese scholarships, because the number of scholarships is larger than in another country. The second one is that the level of English is not so high. So if you have good result in your study, always became first or second level in the class then it is good.”

Linh, a female lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 51.

Some respondents choose for example scholarships from Korea, Japan, and Italy because they didn’t require anything else than what they already had as they don’t ask for English certifications. The scholarships just check the English in the form of a conversation. The scholarships that the respondents received seem to be mostly for people who are already working in universities and not for just students. They have some advantages because they work at the university. For the applications they require the individuals to have excellent study results and experience, and because they are lecturers at Hué University they comply with these rules.

The respondents mentioned that they had to look for a scholarship themselves and that the university does not help them with this search, they have to look for information themselves. However, in general, the respondents mentioned that the procedure was easy and help was not necessary, especially because the university encourages them to look for a scholarship to study abroad and provides reference letters that can help with the application process. These references are usually written by anyone who could be beneficial to the application, which results in references by for example the rector of Hué University or the head of the department.

“Actually they supported me. If you need the reference letter, they will write it for you. At that time I got the support from the vice-director and director, who wrote me some recommendations letter.”

Lan, a female lecturer from the College of Economics, age 34.

The procedure differences from scholarship to scholarship. Some scholarship institutions respond a lot faster than others, it was, for example, mentioned that it took a year to get feedback from the scholarship organizations and then another few months to prepare everything like visa and other documents. If the process would be quicker it would save time. While other respondents mentioned that the process was very smooth. It all seems to depend on the type of scholarship (e.g. scholarship from an international institution or from the Vietnamese government). Especially the respondents who obtained a scholarship from either Australia or New Zealand were particularly happy with how the whole procedure went and how the information was disclosed online.

“I got them at the same time, so I have a choice there. And you know like if you compare two scholarships, obviously like the scholarship from the New Zealand government is way higher than the Vietnamese government and also it covers all the allowance and things like that if I bring my wife with me as well. And also it’s a little bit higher compared to the Vietnamese government so it’s probably nearly double I guess.”

Duc, a male lecturer from the College of Economics, age 43.

The scholarship from the Vietnamese government is considered to be easily receivable, but because international scholarships are regarded as better and give a lot more money than the Vietnamese government, the respondents often choose to either not apply for the Vietnamese scholarship or not take it when the government grants them. The funding from the Vietnamese government is not high and the scholarship is not nice. Especially if the respondents want to bring their family along, the Vietnamese government scholarship is not enough. On top of this, the respondents mentioned that there are very strict requirements for the recipients of the Vietnamese government scholarships, that the procedure is too much work and that the system is corrupt. The applicants have to give extra money to be considered and people with more connections and power usually receive the scholarship. Respondents mention that people in Hanoi tend to get scholarship more easily. They state that corruption is common practice and that people who don't have the right to apply pay a lot of money to get a scholarship. If you don't have a lot of money you need to have the relations.

"It is related to the Vietnamese government and in this department of English we live in the central areas of Vietnam. And there is a kind of rumor, that for the way that you apply for the scholarship of the Vietnamese government, the selection stages are affected by different factors. So that is the reason why we prefer to apply for the scholarship directly from the foreign government, because in that way it is fair. A lot of people from the North got the scholarship, but not many from the South or from Central Vietnam."

Minh, a female lecturer from the College of Foreign Languages, age 40.

The second most important motivation which was mentioned by almost half of the respondents is that the destination country has a good environment where the living standards are much higher than in Vietnam. The environment can be good in terms of publishing papers, as well as a good environment because of the welfare, good insurances, and a safe environment. For example, about Australia respondents mention that it is a very peaceful country where people are very friendly. The respondents know about the good environment of the destinations because they, for example, looked online, but also because of stories from their social environment. The respondents follow their colleagues and hear many good things about certain universities. The respondents heard about big and free countries with good education and where it is not as crowded as in Vietnam. Sometimes there already is a big student community which causes the students to hear stories about the destination, which is, for example, the case in France.

"I don't know since when, but I really wanted to study in Europe. I was wondering on the internet and got some more information, reviews and comments from the other students who went abroad, and they recommended Germany. I looked more into what is Germany, what do they have and about the education system and policies there, and I really liked that."

Anh, a female lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 32.

The third most important motivation is the reputation of their supervisor. One-third of the respondents mentioned that their supervisor's reputation played a significant role in their decision-making process. The respondents know about these professors because they read about the scholars and know some famous authors or because the supervisors' research topic is very close to the students' research topic and they feel very interested.

“So I met some good professors, and one of the professors there was my supervisor, I really like him. He is very knowledgeable, he is caring and he is a combination of western and eastern culture. Because he is British, but he moved to Australia to work there for a long time. Because he did a lot of research in cultures and also my research. He is kind of a knowledgeable person. He knows what he should do. So I decided to choose him as my supervisor.”

Minh, a female lecturer from the College of Foreign Languages, age 40.

The fourth most important motivation is the connections and is mentioned by 30% of the respondents. Seven of the respondents mentioned that they had some connections with the destinations that enabled them to study there. For example that they already did some research with the professors or had connections through friends because they already went to that specific university. The respondents met their connections in conferences, through summer school or because of exchanges. One respondent also mentioned that he was recommended to the university because of his boss, who previously went there, established a good reputation for Vietnamese students, causing that the professors there preferred to have more students from Hué.

The least important motivation that was mentioned by six respondents, is that they choose for the specific destination because of the language (e.g. English and French) spoken in that country.

“Actually one of the things, I really like to speak English back then when I was in high school. You know, we had to study Russian. But later on the world changed and then I had to study English, but it was not very good back then. So that's why I really want to go to countries where they speak English.”

Duc, a male lecturer from the College of Economics, age 43.

The most important motivations for the respondents to go to a specific destination for their PhD are because of scholarship possibilities and a good environment in the host country. The motivations given by the respondents to choose for a specific destination are partly because of the attractiveness of a destination, which is in line with the push-pull theory by Lee. The more able students have more choices and tend to choose for the most prestigious scholarship. The respondents that have the luxury to choose between different scholarships, base their choice on factors like the presence of a specific supervisor, the language of the country and how it is a good environment, which they heard about from friends and family, their connections abroad or sources like the internet. However, the respondents that have lower qualifications, for example in language skills, face fewer options and choose to go to the country which has a scholarship available for them. In contrast to existing literature, not many respondents mentioned improving their English as a motivation to go to a specific destination. This is an interesting finding in this time of globalization and internationalization of universities. The improvements of their English skills can be seen as an extra, and not necessarily a goal on its own.

Table 6.4 presents a summary of the push- and pull factors mentioned by the respondents in this research for their choice of obtaining the PhD abroad and a specific destination to do so. The differences and similarities between the results of this research and the literature will be further discussed in Chapter 9 of the thesis, the discussion and conclusion.

Table 6.4: Push- & Pull factors when leaving Hué for PhD studies.

	Push factors	Pull factors
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education sector too outdated - Lack of advanced technology - Lack of equipment - Lack of good quality papers - Lack of knowledge - Lack of money - Lack of professors - Lack of resources - Lack of skills - Level of English - Level of professionalism - Limited education - To develop the university - Quality education sector - Weak research environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to materials - Access to online database - Good chemicals - Good equipment - Good laboratory - Good library - Improving skills - Language - Quality of education - Research - Specific supervisor - Specific university - Updated knowledge - Work effectively
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low salary - Paying for admitting papers - Paying for conferences - PhD holders are more privileged - Vietnam too expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Free education - Higher income - Scholarship possibilities
Social & Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chance to climb to upper positions - Distractions in Vietnam - Education is highly appreciated - Encouragement colleagues - Encouragement family - Love for travel - Loyalty to family - Obligation to study further - Customs of giving presents to professors - Responsibility towards students - To develop the region - To see the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connections - Discovering a new culture - Discovering new landscapes - Enjoy a developed country - Familiarity with the country - Friendly people - Golden opportunity - Higher living standards - Language - Organized environment - Safe and peaceful environment - Stories destination - Vietnamese student community
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corruption in education sector - Corruption in scholarship system - Policies by MOET - Project-911 - University rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scholarship procedures - Scholarship requirements

Source: Own work, 2017.

7. Empirical chapter: During mobility themes

The second empirical chapter discusses the themes during mobility. The following sections focus on the feelings while studying abroad as well as the motivations to return to Hué upon completing. The chapter ends with a summarizing table that presents the push- and pull factors the respondents mentioned that influenced their decision to return.

7.1 Feelings while being abroad

Studying abroad was very difficult in the beginning for some of the respondents. Half of the respondents that had been abroad mentioned that they had trouble adjusting to their new environment. Not only because the requirements were quite high, but also because of the new schedule, people and the language. The respondents mentioned that after a while, when they got used to it, it got better. This is partly because they were supported by a Vietnamese community they had set up themselves or because of support from their supervisor. Besides, they got used to working hard during the week and taking a break on the weekends. The respondents overcame the language barrier through practice.

It was mentioned by three respondents that they missed their family and felt lonely because they could not bring them along or because they were still pretty young when they went abroad. These respondents obviously did not have their family with them while they were abroad but all three were married and had children. Interestingly enough, a few respondents who mentioned that they did not have any difficulties getting used to the environment were also married, and did not have their family with them while being abroad. The explanation for this might be that the individuals learned through previous experience abroad how to relate to a wider range of people (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015).

“The first time I went there, I miss the family. Because that is the first time I go abroad, so I miss the family so much. But when I got to the lab to perform my experiments, I forgot. So day by day I get familiar with the people and the food. My professor at first, I think he was very strict. But really he is friendly after I finish all of the experiments.”

Nga, a female lecturer from the College of Medicine & Pharmacy, age 33.

Another reason the respondents had difficulties adjusting is the cultural differences of the PhD destination, whereby the surrounding people seem cold and harsh in the beginning. Sometimes they worked on subjects that they did not find interesting which was mentioned by three respondents. The last problem the respondents mentioned was the language barrier, which was mentioned by the respondents who went to Japan for their PhD. They needed to learn Japanese for everyday life and they didn't know any Japanese in the beginning, which was again mentioned by three respondents.

“You know, the first time in Europe things are different. Even before that I had two years in Bangkok, but you know Europe is quite different. Cold you know, and people just keep quiet there, not very friendly, don't talk a lot. Yes they are helpful, but only if we request it. But on the bus, they just sit and keep silent. After some time you feel that that is ok, but at the beginning you are stranger. You are someone from a different community, so you feel very lonely.”

Hoang, a male lecturer from the College of Tourism & Hospitality, age 45.

On the other side, it was also mentioned by respondents that the time abroad was a very happy time and how they loved the environment. For example Phuong, who brought her family abroad with her, mentioned that it was not difficult and she just missed her parents while she was away.

“Difficult in what way? Because I brought my husband and my son with me to New Zealand. So I didn’t have that kind of difficulty, living away from family. Sure that I miss my parents, but my small family was there with me, and my husband also studied, my son also studied, and I studied.”

Phuong, a female lecturer from the College of Foreign Languages, age 40.

Some of the respondents mentioned how they were supported while they were abroad, making it easier for them to get used to live in another country. Not only could the respondents count on their professor, who was usually very supportive and helpful, but also because they had a Vietnamese community abroad which was mentioned by six respondent. In some cases, the respondents already knew people who were living at the destination who helped them set up. In other cases, the respondents set up their own small community while they were abroad. Interestingly enough, it is not that all respondents who went to that specific destination mentioned this community they could fall back on and some of the respondents who did mention this community still had trouble adjusting to the new environment.

“We set up small community you know. Meeting at the weekend to feel more at home. There were some other people as well, you know overseas Vietnamese they live in Norway, quite a large number. We don’t know all, but we know some and then some other know some. We can visit them sometime. And of course we had some relationships with some colleagues and people living in the same dormitory, in the same house.”

Hoang, a male lecturer from the College of Tourism & Hospitality, age 45.

7.2 Motivations to return to Hué after completing the PhD abroad

This section explains the motivating factors that influence the decision of the individual university lecturer to return to Hué after completing the PhD abroad. Table D.4 in Appendix D shows the answers of the different respondents in consideration to the motivating factors that influenced the return mobility from which Table 7.1 is derived. The motivations to return to Hué after completing the PhD can be put into five categories being job opportunities back home, missing and obligations for taking care of their family, scholarship rules and regulations, the culture of the PhD destination and for their children. As four of the respondents have not returned to Hué after their PhD yet, they were excluded from the data. This means that the table shows the percentage based on nineteen respondents.

Table 7.1: Motivating factors to return to Hué after completing the PhD abroad.

Motivating factors	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Missing & Taking care of family	11	57.9 %
Scholarship rules	10	52.6 %
Commitment	6	31.6 %
Job opportunities	6	31.6 %
Culture destination	4	21.1 %
For children	3	15.8 %

Source: Own work, 2017.

The biggest motivating factor why the respondents want to return to Hué after the PhD is because of missing their family and obligations to take care of them. Almost 60% of the respondents mentioned their family as a reason to return.

“My family influenced this as well. My mom she stayed here, and my sister and my brother they don’t live with my mom. So I think that I come back to see what can I do. I cannot stay in Germany after finish my PhD and leave my family here, I cannot do that. Maybe a men can do that, but I am a woman and I have my child and my old mom here. So I decided to come back. Traditionally, the Hué people they live with communities quite close compared to the big cities in Vietnam. The family influence is very strong.”

Anh, a female lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 32.

The respondents like to live with family and even though they have better living standards abroad, they feel lonely without their family and have to take care of them in some cases. Not only do the respondents have to look after their own family, but also their extended family relationships strongly influence the mobility decision making of the respondents. The family is always an important issue, even for those who are single.

“My father in law was very weak and nobody looked after him, so that is why our family had to come back to Hué.”

Kim, a female lecturer from the College of Economics, age 37.

The second motivation to return is because the scholarship the respondents receive is a loan, which is mentioned by more than 50% of the respondents. Most of them need to return to Hué University for service or otherwise pay it back. The respondents sign a contract before they go abroad for studying, meaning that after the PhD they have to come back to their university. On top of this, they still receive 40% of their salary from Hué University while being abroad and would need to pay this back as well if they don’t return. Interestingly enough, all the respondents who got the scholarship from the Vietnamese government mentioned this rule. Even though it is written in the contract that they need to return in most cases for a certain time, most students do not take this seriously as the rules don’t seem to be too strict according to the respondents. They just send a letter to remind you that you have

to come home but it doesn't have any effect if you decide to stay abroad. They feel that the government can't get the money back, and because most of the students return anyways, it is not necessary for the government to sue or take other actions.

"Before we go out, the leader of our ministry of education said that, if you return back to Vietnam, you have to continue to work for government. But it is ok if you stayed in abroad. Because we think that if we stay, you continue to work, to make your research. And we are sure that after that you can help your country better then, you will have better conditions than before. The official requirement is that we come back, we have to sign a paper. But if we don't return back it is ok. Yes they said that we have to come back, we have to continue to work three times as the time we go abroad."

Khanh, a male lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 47.

The time the respondents have to return to Hué University is dependent on the type of scholarship they receive and from what institution, and is ranging somewhere between two and twelve years. Even though all, except one, respondents mentioned that the scholarship has the rule to return to Vietnam, not all see this as a motivation to go home. For instance, the respondents that had an Australian scholarship did not mention the rules of the scholarship as a motivation to return after completing the PhD, even though the official rules are that they would have to return for at least two years of service. The respondents who got the MEXT scholarship, the scholarship from the Japanese government, do not have to return to Vietnam for service, as it does not have such rules.

"The government also requires you to go home, but it is not very strict. Even now, especially now, some Vietnamese people they go there and they don't want to go home. Because the situation for them is now very good. So they decide to stay there, so they repay the loan. They just send you a letter to remind you that you have to come home."

Hoang, a male lecturer from the College of Tourism & Hospitality, age 45.

The third biggest motivating factor to return to Hué after completing the PhD for the respondents is that it is a safe choice to return because they already have a permanent job with the university and don't have to worry about finding a new job abroad. Good career prospect and future contract conditions seem to be one of the main factors influencing their migration decisions as this is mentioned a third of the respondents. Back in Vietnam they have a lot of chances to develop their career and they like the working environment with their boss and other colleagues.

"I can quit my job anytime I like, it is just like from the personal relations perspective. It is not a good thing to do. Because during the time I did my PhD in Korea, somebody had to work my job. So if I quit it means that I am ungrateful to the people and to the department that supported me."

Tu, a male lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 40.

Not only does it feel safe to return to their old job, they also state that they see it as a commitment to help the region, Hué and Central Vietnam, and Hué University. The respondents state that they see it as a commitment to the university and Vietnam in general. They feel that their own country, Vietnam, needs them more than the countries abroad and that they have to be thankful for the support of the university.

"I think this is also the main reason I came back to Vietnam, to help the region Hué, Central Vietnam".

Huy, a male lecturer from the College of Agriculture & Forestry, age 38.

The fifth most important motivation is how the culture of the destination caused them to return to Hué after completing the PhD. One fifth of the respondents mentioned this as an important motivation to return. The respondents stated that they weren't happy with how the foreign societies are very strict in time and attitude combined with language barrier problems. Another respondent mentioned that if you decide to stay abroad and work for the professor in their lab, you work for them so they get more publications and that it was difficult to find a proper job abroad because they ask for a very high degree or skills. If the respondent would stay, this would result in lower ranks at the university compared to other colleagues at the university with the same degree. The only possible job would be manual work. Interestingly enough, all the respondents who mentioned they wanted to return because of the culture of the destination worked on their PhD in an Asian country (e.g. Singapore, Japan and South Korea). Interestingly enough, three of the respondents that mentioned wanting a return because of the culture, did mention the good environment of the destination as a pull-factor to choose for that destination in the first place.

"Japanese people are all very strict in working and also in time. Vietnamese people you can say they are usually late. But Japanese people not. For working they are very hardworking and responsible. But I don't like it, sometimes they work so much. No time for relaxing I think. Working working working from early morning to early evening, 10 pm or 11 pm. I couldn't believe it."

Huong, a female lecturer from the College of Medicine & Pharmacy, age 32.

The final motivation to return is based on their children and mentioned by three respondents. The respondents with children have to take into consideration the overall well-being of the family. This is based on the fact that stability would be better for the children and Vietnam has a different school system, meaning that they have to move back before the children go to school. The respondents who mentioned this motivation all brought their significant other and children along with them abroad during the PhD. However not all the respondents have children, or brought them with them, and cannot base their decision on this. From the respondents who have already finished their PhD, fifteen had children before or during the time when they were working on their PhD. Migration decisions of PhD students with children tend to be strongly driven by their responsibility towards family.

"Because now my thinking is half for me and half for the children. I don't always think for me only, but I look for my family, my children. They have a lot of influence."

Phuong, a female lecturer from the College of Foreign Languages, age 40.

From the respondents who have yet to return the motivations are in three cases because of job opportunities in Hué and because of scholarship rules, meaning that they have to go back after completing the PhD. The respondents who did not mention a forced return got the Japanese scholarship MEXT, which is in line with the previous answers. Two respondents mentioned that they miss their family and should take of them and one respondent talked about how he does not like the environment of the PhD situation as well.

“The rules are like that the scholarship tells us that we need to come back. If you don’t come back you need to return the money that the government already paid for you. And when you know, when we study in another country, it is a lot of money, so it is hard to return. In Hué we already have a company and I think that I have a good position in the college.”

Trang, a female lecturer from the College of Arts, age 32.

Table 7.2 presents a summary of the push- and pull factors that the respondents mentioned in this research for their return to Hué. The differences and similarities between the results of this research and the literature will be further discussed in Chapter 9 of the thesis, the discussion and conclusion.

Table 7.2: Push- & Pull factors when returning to Hué after completing the PhD.

	Push factors	Pull factors
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring knowledge back - Develop Hué University - Fun working environment - Improving education - Inspire students - New experiments - Support their department
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties finding a job - Jobs below their education level - Scholarship is a loan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chances to develop career - Collaboration projects - Existing job at Hué University - Good position in College
Social & Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Culture destination - Feeling of loneliness - Language barrier - Missing family - People are cold & harsh - Smaller ranks in universities - Time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the region - Live with family - Loyalty to family - Obligations to take care of family - Personal relations - Safe choice - Showing gratitude - Stability for children
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scholarship rules - Visa rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made a promise to return - Must return for service - Signed contract

Source: Own work, 2017.

In summary of the motivations to return, the respondents mention responsibilities on different scales: towards their country origin, the scholarship rules and especially strongly to their families. The motivations given by the respondents to return to Hué are partly because of unsatisfactory conditions in their host destination and partly because of attractive conditions back home, which is in line with the push-pull theory by Lee. In regard to the family, the most important motivation to return, the respondents are pushed back to Vietnam because of a feeling of loneliness without their family, while at the same time pulled back by the obligations to fulfill their family roles.

This is in line with the literature because Vietnam is a collectivist society, meaning that a person is not primarily an individual but a member of a family. Mobile academics thus should not be seen solely as absolutely independent free movers (Hitchcock & Wesner, 2009; Rakovcova, 2017). Taking care of their own family or their family in law was mentioned by multiple respondents as a motivation to return. The aspect of gender was not revealed as being a crucial factor determining the return intentions based on the results of this research. In contrast to the existing literature, the Vietnamese seem to base their decision to return not solely bases of personal benefits, but on their identity as a member of a family and their responsibilities.

8. Empirical chapter: Post-mobility themes

The third and final empirical chapter presents post-mobility themes. The following sections focus on the impact of obtaining a PhD on both professional and personal life after return as well as the feelings on coming back to Hué.

8.1 Impact after return

This section explains the impact on the life of the individual after return to Hué. Table D.5 in Appendix D shows the answers of the different respondents in consideration to the impact on their life after return from which Table 8.1 is derived. The impacts can be put into three categories being job opportunities, changes in personality, and obtained skills and knowledge. As four of the respondents have not returned to Hué after their PhD yet, the impacts on their life after return cannot be discussed. This means that table shows the percentage based on nineteen respondents.

Table 8.1: Impacts on the life of the individual after return to Hué.

Impacts after return on...	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Job opportunities	16	84.4 %
Changes personality & Ways of life	13	68.4 %
Skills & Knowledge	11	57.9 %

Source: Own work, 2017.

Around 85% of the respondents mentioned how their time abroad and return created job opportunities for them. This goes hand in hand with the connections that emerged from their time abroad as they have good relationships with foreign people. Most of the respondents kept in contact with their professors and continued to research and publish together, and get a lot of new research projects. Because the laboratory conditions in Vietnam are not good for international publication and it is hard to publish papers and good journals by themselves, they need to have some kind of cooperation with international laboratories. When the respondents need to read books or articles for their research it is impossible to have access to this without international connections. This is due to the fact that Vietnam lacks resources in terms of online libraries and online book services, making it impossible to access buy certain books in Vietnam.

“Even after I came back I still have some collaboration projects with my supervisor in Japan. Even though we are far away, we keep contact by email. We produced some papers and books together. They still invite me for some academic activity in Japan. So everything good. We can keep continue to work together, even now I am back in Vietnam. But of course there is some difficulty, because we have to read some books. But in Vietnam it is not easy to buy a book in amazon. So my supervisor there has to order the book and send it. It takes time, and sometime he listing me a dozen books to read. But I have no way to buy this book from Vietnam.”

Lan, a female lecturer from the College of Economics, age 34.

With more international connections come more job opportunities. Not only because it increases the possibility for more publications of international articles, but also because the government and other institutions provide grants for scientists. When they get funds, they can use their knowledge in experiments to do more research, improve themselves and make the working conditions better at the Hué University.

Lastly, it is possible for the respondents to get promoted after return. However, in Vietnam there is an order, meaning that promotions come with age. Although without the PhD it is not possible to become the head of a department. It is important that the respondents create the opportunity for themselves, as they have to prove their capacities. Even though there are still not many universities that can pay very high salaries, because of the way it works in Vietnam, meaning that the respondents might still receive same salary as someone who did their master or PhD in Vietnam. This is because officially they are not differentiated. The salary of the respondents gets higher with experience, but it isn't related to the degree they have. It is the work experience that accumulates the salary, not the level of education.

"I think everywhere in Vietnam, there is not any advantage of being trained overseas. Nothing. You are the same as someone who got the PhD in Vietnam, almost. I think the advantage that you have is not from the institute or from the country. But by yourself, like you have more chances to obtain a scholarship or you have more chances to be connected to foreign countries incentives because of your language skills. That is the only advantage we have for training overseas. But for special treatment from our department there is not."

Tu, a male lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 40.

Most respondents complain about how they don't see the recognition after return even though they work hard for research and get publications in journals, the university just pays a low salary. The university wants a lot of people to go abroad to get degrees, but when they come back, they just go back to teaching and they basically can't get a higher salary or promotion even though they appreciate what they have learned and can apply in Hué. A promotion is only possible when there is a position available and it depends on other things like relationships.

"Yes but another thing is, when they come back, they have a degree and have overseas experience. They know how from overseas. But the thing is, when we can use it relies on what they learn overseas. It is very important. Like I got a degree overseas, but when I came back, nobody recognized my contribution. The university here can't use my knowledge and that became brain waste. In Vietnam in general I think there still is brain waste. Working conditions and working environment, and even working style and management style. They can't utilize our experience. Like in my university, a lot of people went overseas to get degrees, but when they come back they just like go teaching. Because the promotion in here depends on other things like a relationship or something like that, rather than if you are working better than other people. I see some universities in the south of Vietnam, they changed a lot. Ho Chi Minh and some other places around Ho Chi Minh, they are doing better than the central and the north. In the north we are affected the central government, which is old and slowly changes. In the south they are far away from central government."

Kim, a female lecturer from the College of Economics, age 37.

The Vietnamese government wants to send people abroad to improve and because they want them to have excellent conditions to do more experiments. They can improve the knowledge and experiment skills, and write good papers to publish. The academics are the countries resources and if they go out for studying and come back to Vietnam, they can work there and help the country. When more people get international degrees, especially in developed countries with a higher quality in education, they bring knowledge back to the universities in Vietnam which is good for social development as well. If many people with a lot of knowledge work together they can think of some things that are better for Vietnam. At least they can give the strategy to improve in science or do some projects that could improve the Vietnamese living conditions. While being abroad, the Vietnamese work very hard and get good grades according to themselves, meaning that they improve the view of how people see the Vietnamese.

“We have made a lot of changes to the curriculum, even though we are forced to do 50% by the ministry of education, something like the political subjects we couldn’t change. But for the English department we did change a lot. We asked for some renovation in terms of facilities and because I was the dean for a long time, I could do some changes to the curriculum to involve what we studied abroad to our English department.”

Thao, a female lecturer from the College of Foreign Languages, age 54.

The second category of impacts on life after return is changes in personality and ways of life. Because the students come from a developing country and work in a small city like Hué, being abroad can have huge impacts on the behavior and thinking of the individuals, which was mentioned by almost 70% of the respondents. While being abroad and getting submerged in the foreign culture, in a developed country which is stable, peaceful and organized, their perspectives changed.

“My identity, my personality to be exact, is a lot influenced by the time that I spend in New Zealand. The way I look at things, look at a nation, is a lot influenced.”

Phuong, a female lecturer from the College of Foreign Languages, age 40

Even though their core culture, how they described it themselves, remains the same, they are clearly affected by the new environment. The respondent’s mention how they are is more westernized and open to different values and cultures. Examples of changed behavior were small things like reading new journal papers every day instead of stories, reducing waste and throwing it in the bin instead of on the street, stopping at red traffic lights and learning how to relax in weekend work hard during the week, and apologizing and being grateful when somebody does something.

“I think the general thing is culture. I think everything there is very, I mean it is developed country, it is very stable and peaceful and organized. Not like Vietnam traffic you see. It makes me change a lot. Changed my behavior and my life. I think my thinking, my thought has changed. Yes the way I think and my behavior for something, for example waste. After we use something, Vietnamese people throw it on the street. I cannot now. I throw it in the bin. And at the red light, I stop.”

Huy, a male lecturer from the College of Agriculture & Forestry, age 38.

Not all of the respondents mentioned a change in habits or thinking, which can be explained by the fact that not all the respondents went to western countries for their PhD, but also to countries which have a very similar culture to Vietnam. Respondents also mentioned that going abroad for their PhD was not the first time abroad, but that they already changed their perspective and became more open minded when they either did their bachelor or master abroad. They, however, do agree that their thinking, as well as, their behavior is very distinct from people who have never been abroad. Interestingly enough almost all respondents who brought their family along with them did not realize a change in habits and ways of life, which could be explained by that they were less open minded about new cultures and that they lingered in their own ways of life. Another interesting outcome is that not all respondents who went abroad for the first time mentioned a change in habits.

“Yes, I think yes. I can see it clearly with my friends for example. If they go to Japan, when they return home they are different. If they go to France or America, when they return they are all different. France is romantic, polite, they said that in France people work for life, not live for work. If somebody goes to Japan or Korea you have to work very very hard, and then when they return they continue to work very hard and strict.”

Khanh, a male lecturer from the College of Sciences, age 47.

The third and last category that was mentioned by the respondents on how obtaining their PhD abroad has an impact on their life after return is the skills and knowledge that they have obtained, which was mentioned by almost 60% of the respondents. Especially in their field of study they have gained more knowledge, as well as improving their research methods, techniques and skills. The number of international papers which are completed in Vietnam is still very low and with the necessary international experience the respondents gained more writing skills and have improved their English or other languages.

“I think writing skills, mostly research skills. I got older, I think I can research better, I read better, I write better, I know where to read and which to write. It is better for my career.”

Thu, a female lecturer from the College of Law, age 34.

Not only have the respondents obtained knowledge with regard to their field of study, but also a knowledge the foreign culture, their working style and the behavior and attitude of professional working staff, the political system and learning how to deal with different people. The newly obtained knowledge and skills are used to develop their departments academically and applied to lectures. They want to have clear, clean and honest academic education at the highest level.

“At first I feel a little bit, too slow life. I want a more like, speed up life, you know? Smooth and a little bit slow. But now I get used to it after 1.5 years. It is alright. I still, to be honest, want the working environment. Especially the academic environment in Japan. They work very hard, the facility is very good and they support you everything for your research. Conference, books, seminars and other colleagues worked together very good. I worked very effectively when I worked in Japan. But now in Vietnam, not so much.”

Lan, a female lecturer from the College of Economics, age 34.

For some respondents it has been difficult adjusting back to life in Hué. Not only because of the working conditions and academic environment but also because life in Vietnam is slow. They have to get familiar with everything again. For example living abroad with their own family was easier because they didn't have to deal with family issues beyond their own family and have more freedom in terms of parenting.

Most of the respondents mentioned that now that they are back in Hué, they want to stay there. They came back because they had a lot of things to do and have a good position in the colleges. However, the respondents did mention that they had to get used to the new environment again. Seven respondents mentioned that if they were honest they still wanted to go back. Not only because it was such a beautiful time for the family and the schools were excellent, but also because they still have good relationships with their professor, for more research programs or because their family is abroad. However, to most of the respondents it is not important anymore if they go abroad. If they would have wanted to live abroad, they should have done so already according to themselves. By now they are too old, already married and with children and have family responsibilities like taking care of their parents. However, some still worry for their children because there are so many problems within the Vietnamese society.

The most important impacts on the life of the individual respondent seem to be the job opportunities which follow out of the new connections and degree. However, impacts on life after return seem to be disappointing for some respondents. They have not noticed any differences in their job at Hué University because promotions come with age and not with degrees. On top of this, there seem to be no salary benefits because of higher education levels. Some, however, have more employment possibilities because they still have collaborative projects with their supervisor abroad, producing papers and books together. Being abroad did change the respondents on an academic level, as the majority states they can research better, read better and write better.

The impacts on the personal life of the respondents seem to be in line with the literature as studying and working abroad develops the ability of the individual to adapt to new cultural contexts and to expand their knowledge of other societies, cultures and business methods, in this case being the professional working attitude (Nguyen, 2012). The literature describes it is logical that the respondents might have trouble getting used to the new environment again as changes in geographical and cultural settings can lead to dramatic identity changes, which makes the return home not always easy (Ruben et al., 2009). Some respondents mention that their return was harder than their initial move abroad, which can be explained by the expectations of the individuals. Returnees don't expect any difficulties and underestimate the degree of change in both themselves as well as their home culture, the person returning is caught off-guard by unreal expectations (Nguyen, 2012). In line with this, the respondents seem to be disappointed with the impacts on their professional life, as most of them expected promotions but did not receive them. In Vietnam, promotions come with age, meaning the respondents first have to prove their capacities and then have to wait their turn. This is because in the Vietnamese culture, age is an asset and not a liability. Individuals have to provide respect to elders and thus, the same level of respect is also provided to an authority of all kinds (Huang et al., 2013a). A PhD is necessary in order to be considered for a promotion, such as becoming the head of a department. However, age remains the decisive factor, which sits uneasily with existing literature that newly gained skills and knowledge benefit the individual that studied abroad.

9. Discussion & Conclusion

The primary goal of this research has been to provide an in-depth understanding of the motivations of the individual Vietnamese university lecturer to obtain a PhD abroad and return upon completion, as well as how these motivations are influenced. In addition, the personal and professional impacts on the lives of the individuals were examined. This research is qualitative in nature, meaning that the primary research method used to answer the research questions were semi-structured interviews. The findings presented in chapters 7, 8 & 9 provided insights into perceptions and perspectives of individuals on circular international student mobility in the case study of Hué University. Since the research sample was rather small, and the research was qualitative in nature, it is difficult to generalize findings that have been observed. However, the research relies on an in-depth analysis of the stories of respondents and the findings did involve general trends and patterns. This chapter will zoom out to connect the insights gained so far in this thesis whereby a reflection on the content and quality of the outcomes will be made. In addition, a comparison will be made between the different scientific articles that were put forward in this research and the findings presented in the previous chapters. Finally, attention will be given to policy recommendations and recommendations for further future research.

All too often, the Western notions of individualism that are applied may not fully account for the values and choices of many from non-Western societies. While most research has solely applied economic principles in understanding academic mobility, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of understanding the cultural perspectives of international students in understanding student mobility. In this research about the Vietnamese, a strong value in Confucianism transcended individual mobility. Valuing family relationships, loyalty, and social harmony are evident as many respondents in this research made decisions on returning to Vietnam for the sake of their family members. While traditional Western culture might perceive such decisions as selfless, Confucianism does not readily separate the individual from their community. It values the greater good of the family over the specific desires of the individual. Most of the respondents did not indicate any struggle in choosing to return to Vietnam as abiding by the family was expected of them, and their decisions were based on the welfare of the family, primarily their parents, children, and spouses.

This research examines the motivations for circular mobility, meaning that returning after completing their PhD was a plan from the start. Therefore, this study extends the traditional push- and pull-model that tends to largely focus on the decision to study abroad and return in the Vietnamese context. This study not only examines the decision to leave and return after studying abroad, but also where the push- and pull factors originate. The traditional model assumes that push factors originate in the home countries and that pull factors originate the host countries. In this study, however, the push- and pull factors were located both at home and the study destination. In such ways, this study suggests an inverse of the common understanding that push factors solely reside in the home country and that pull factors are only within the host country.

The motivations of the individuals to both leave and return can be categorized into four themes, being academic, economic, social and cultural, and political. These themes will be used to further elaborate on the motivations and influences hereupon found in light of this research. By discussing both the push- and pull factors for leaving and returning to Vietnam, the first four sub-research questions have been answered.

As the push- and pull factors can vary per nation, it makes sense that the findings from this research have deviant factors compared to the ones found in the academic literature. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the factors for international education in the academic theme are mainly because of the unfavorable conditions in the education sector of Vietnam. Hereby meaning the lack of resources and facilities and the individuals want to develop their skills and knowledge. This is in line with the literature, as this states that the decision to leave the home country is often led by the quality of education. Interestingly enough though, upgrading skills and knowledge is not the main motivation in the case of Vietnam. The frustration with the Vietnamese education sector might stem from the lack of opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and skills, which suggests that people might stay if they feel they could update this in Vietnam. However, when the respondents return to Vietnam, the reputation of the education is not a problem anymore. The respondents see themselves as part of something bigger and want to improve students' education, develop their field of study, as well as Hué University and their department, making the education sector a pull-factor upon return. The above responses add to the existing literature, which mostly see education as beneficial for the individual. These findings suggest that part of the motivation for international higher education is the willingness to contribute.

In regard to the economic themed factors related to circular student mobility, the respondents mention push factors as completing a PhD in Vietnam is too expensive and pull factors as scholarship possibilities, free education and a higher income abroad. The individuals who have the luxury to choose from multiple scholarships and tend to go for the most prestigious ones, while the individuals with lower qualifications go to whichever country has a scholarship available for them. This mostly overlaps with what the literature suggests. However, factors such as the lack of employment opportunities, estimated economic returns and lower costs of living which are mentioned in the academic literature are not the case in Vietnam. When the individuals return, factors such as difficulties finding a job in the host country, as well as a permanent job with Hué University, are mentioned. This is partly in line with the literature, as this suggests that economic factors are related to financial costs and include increasing fees, as well as that graduates, were unable to secure the desired job.

In regard to the social and cultural themed factors, the respondents mention distractions in Vietnam, a high appreciation for international education and acting in relation to their social group, thus feeling obligated because of encouragements by family and colleagues. In Vietnam, intellectual achievement is one of three ways to acquire a good name. As the family plays an important role in the individuals' lives and the collectivist culture in Vietnam, the good name is shared with the parents. This is in contrast to existing literature which is solely based on individual benefits for international education, where personal growth is generally a big motivation for students to study abroad. In relation to the beneficial conditions in the host country, factors such as a peaceful and good environment, higher living standards and that the country is organized are mentioned, which they heard about from friends and family, their connections abroad or sources like the internet. The factors that the respondents

mentioned in this research are mostly based on a difference in culture, where they are eager to learn more about. This is in line with the academic literature, where the pull factors focus on personal recommendations, a safe environment, and awareness of the host country.

When the students return to Vietnam, the importance of the family becomes clear once more. Most of the pull factors mentioned by the respondents are in relation to their family, how they miss their family, that they are loyal to them and have the responsibility to take care of them. The respondents are pushed back to Vietnam because of a feeling of loneliness without their family, while at the same time pulled back by the obligations to fulfill their family roles. The social and cultural factors are also related to discrimination and social exclusion. A portion of international students wants to return because they don't feel right in their host countries. Some students experience language difficulties and hence find it challenging to fit in and adapt. Despite seeing tremendous opportunities, international students prefer to return to their country of origin as they could not fit into the local culture. Not only do these discriminatory remarks make students feel unaccepted, it reinforces their feelings of isolation and thereby discouraging them from staying after graduation. This again is in contrast to the existing literature, as the Vietnamese base their decision to return not solely on personal benefits, but on their identity as a member of a family and their responsibilities. However, the literature does describe the importance of social ties and the retained national identity.

In relation to the political themed factors for circular student mobility, individuals mention a push because of corruption in both the education sector as the national scholarship system and they do not feel comfortable with this. In addition, the Vietnamese government encourages people to attain the highest possible educational qualification, and as public universities are owned by the government, the individuals feel a push to complete a PhD. These findings add to the existing literature, which suggests that factors are for example the commitment to society and to perceive a higher elite status, which is also the case for the Vietnamese. In contrast, the literature mentions factors as education, employment or immigration policies. These are all factors that could be considered as intervening factors and the respondents might not have been aware of this.

In regard to political themed factors to return after completing the PhD, motivations are rules and regulations of the scholarships granted and promises made to return. Because the money received is a loan, it would be ungrateful not to return for service. This is partly in line with the academic literature, as political factors are said to be related to restrictive policies on foreign students, uncertainties in visa approvals, and tightening of immigration policies. However, the literature suggests that political factors are also related to policies of brain gain and return mobility after a strong increase in the demand for skilled labour. This is not true in the context of Vietnam. The government does state that the individuals are required to return after completion of the PhD, but does not take actions when the rules are not obeyed. Suggesting that there is room for improvements in the policies concerning return mobility to Vietnam.

With reference to the fifth and last sub-question, which elaborates on the impacts on the lives of the individual after return, it is clear that the impacts are disappointing for some. Because promotions at the university come with age, there are no differences in their job. On top of this, there are no salary benefits because of higher education levels. Even though a PhD is necessary in order to be considered for a promotion, age remains the decisive factor, which sits uneasily with existing literature that newly

gained skills and knowledge benefit the individual that studied abroad. In a personal level, the individuals mention an upgrade in skills and knowledge, as well as the ability to adapt to new cultural contexts. Because of this, they have a changed personality and identity, making the return home not always easy. This is in line with the literature which states that changes in geographical and cultural settings can lead to dramatic identity changes. That the return is harder than the initial move abroad can be explained by the wrong expectations of the individuals, which need to be addressed beforehand.

To conclude and answer the main research question, the most important motivations for the individuals to engage in international higher education are that the PhD is required but the education sector in Vietnam is too outdated to complete the degree. The scholarship availability and environment are the main motivational factors that determine the destination the individuals choose to go to. Family obligations and scholarship rules are the main motivations for individuals to return upon completion. The motivations are influenced by the cultural context in which the circular student mobility takes place. However, student mobility is not a simple balance of positive and negative factors in both the origin and host destination. While mobility may result from a comparison of factors at origin and destination, the balance in favor of the move must be enough to overcome the natural inertia. The reason the push- and pull factors for international student mobility do not completely match the academic literature is because the motivations differ per nation. Most articles are written from a western perspective, meaning from an autonomy culture context. This is in contrast with a collectivist culture which is the case in Vietnam. From the findings, it is clear that the Vietnamese feel the urge to not only think about personal benefits, which are described in the literature, but also about benefits for the community. The community is their (extended) family, the department at the university or region in Vietnam. Because of the collectivist society, individuals act on behalf of the greater good. Mobile academics thus should not be seen solely as absolutely independent free movers.

9.1 Recommendations follow-up research

Considering the small research sample, and other limitations, further research would be beneficial to verify whether similar trends can be observed. Particularly, additional quantitative data would enhance insight on the influences on the motivations for international student mobility as well as the impact on life after return in the context of Vietnam. Involving more pre-mobility and during mobility-respondents in future research would be beneficial, as this allows for comparisons to be made between pre-, during- and post-mobility motivations. With pre-mobility respondents it would be possible to ask more about the influences on the motivations as well as the expectations, and with during-mobility respondents about their feelings while they are abroad as well as the influences on their motivations to return. In addition, it would be interesting to interview a couple respondents in all phases of the mobility process for a deeper understanding of their motivations and the influences hereupon.

There is an absence of data and research on return rates of Vietnamese students, making it difficult to assess their motivations for returning after completing their PhD. This thesis has made a first attempt to explore these motivations for return mobility in the context of Vietnam. However, as the departure of highly educated people raises concerns about brain drain, a deeper understanding of what factors influences international return mobility would be essential for designing policies that effectively stimulate 'brain gain' and 'brain circulation'. Turning a drain of researchers into a gain is central to diversifying economies and placing developing countries on the path to sustainable growth. The

Vietnamese Government is counting on graduates returning to Vietnam, where they can take up management positions, providing the skills and knowledge needed to drive Vietnam's economic and social development. However, the Vietnamese Government does not seem to show initiative or concern for non-returning students. There is a clear need for more policy-related, evaluative research covering the return mobility process. Much more could be known about the cost-effectiveness of return mobility policies and the current 911-project by the government.

9.2 Policy recommendations

The difficulties that returnees experience are a combination of psychological and social-cultural adjustments. Students need to manage their personal expectations on both trajectories of the international mobility, meaning leaving and returning to their home country. It is important that the individuals are well educated on the impacts of international higher education and that this is not over romanticized. Support for these individuals can come in the form of educational approaches via workshops and references to books to help with the adjustments. Dealing with the needs of returning students cannot be done without consideration of the internal developmental challenges of the individual.

The symbolic potency of overseas education is fully realized once the student is returned home. Meaning that in order to make full use of the newly obtained skills and knowledge, the individual must be lured back home by making the return to Vietnam attractive. This can happen in a few different manners. Because the motivations of the individuals are partly to benefit the society, they need to feel their efforts are appreciated and have a positive influence on the development of their university, department, and region. This can be done by changing the promotion system in the universities from age being the decisive factor to skills. In addition, the reputation of the education system needs to change. The education system as it is now is still too outdated and is lacking the means to exploit the new internationally obtained skills and knowledge to really have a positive influence on the development of the country, meaning resources and facilities need to be upgraded as well.

To conclude, Project 911 was brought alive by the Vietnamese government to have at least 20,000 more PhD degree holders by 2020. However, partly because of corruption in the scholarship system, the individuals do not want this scholarship if they have another opportunity. Not only is there a need to change the reputation of Project 911, it is important that the process becomes fair and individuals feel comfortable with applying for this scholarship.

All in all, considering the small research sample, further evaluative research is needed to verify the trends observed, however in the meantime findings can be used as a start to adjust policies and improve the effectiveness of the scholarship programs.

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Appendix A – Interview questions first interview round

Interview list – Research in Hué on obtaining PhD abroad

Full name of respondent:

College from Hué University:

Informed Consent

- The data from this interview will be used for my master's thesis at Utrecht University, The Netherlands. The research is conducted in collaboration with Hué University, College of Economics. The research will be carried out under the supervision of Dr. Nguyen Quang Phuc.
- Anonymity will be guaranteed.

General questions

- What is your gender?
- What is your field of study?
- Where do you originally come from (city)?
- What country and city did you go to for your PhD?
- When have you started your PhD abroad?
- Can you tell me a little bit about your family situation before you went abroad?
 - o Are you the youngest/oldest of your siblings?
 - o Did you have a spouse or children at that time?
 - o Did you live on your own or with your parents before you went abroad?
 - o Who of your family came with you to abroad? (if any) & why?

Intrinsic motivations

- What are the motivations to obtain your PhD in general?
- What are the motivations to go abroad for your PhD?
- What are the motivations to go to that country?

Other stakeholders

- How was your family involved in this process (of going abroad for PhD)?
- How were your friends involved in this process (of going abroad for PhD)?
- How was Hué University involved in this process (of going abroad for PhD)?
- How was the ministry of Education and Training involved (of going abroad for PhD)?
- Where were other stakeholders involved in this process (of going abroad for PhD)?
- How did you experience the involvement of different stakeholders?
- Does this process of going abroad go smoothly? Explain

Financing

- Did you get a scholarship to obtain your PhD abroad?
- What is the name of the scholarship program?
- Where and how did you get this scholarship?
- What does the scholarship cover?
- What type of students get this scholarship?

- How did the scholarship play a role in the location of the PhD?
- How did the scholarship play a role in the field of study or topic of the PhD?
- What is your experience with this scholarship? Is the scholarship sufficient?
- What are the contractual rules with this scholarship? How many years do you have to work at the University after return for example?
- If there was no scholarship involved in your case, how do you finance your PhD?

International experience

- How much have you travelled or seen from the world before obtaining your PhD abroad?
- If you also obtained your master's degree abroad:
 - o Was the location the same? If no, what was the country and city where your master's degree was obtained?
 - o Where there the same motivations to go abroad for your master as obtaining your PhD abroad? If no, explain
 - o Are the same stakeholders involved in this process? If no, explain

How the PhD changed your life after return

- Are you going to return to Hué after your PhD?
- What are your motivations for this?
- What type of skills and knowledge did you obtain while being abroad?
- What is the expected impact on life after return? (if return)
 - o On employment possibilities:
 - o On skills & knowledge:
 - o A changed personality:
 - o Other expected impacts?
- How did experiencing other cultures influence you?
- How do you think you can benefit Vietnam by obtaining your PhD abroad? How does it help a developing country?
- How can education in Vietnam be improved?

On an end note

- What would you say to other students who want to go abroad to obtain their PhD?
- Can I contact you if I have a follow-up question?
- Would you like me to send you my thesis after completion? This will approximately be in September 2017.

Thank you very much for participating in this research. If you have any questions or want to add to your answers, feel free to contact me at all times.

Appendix B – Interview questions second interview round

Interview list – Research in Hué city on obtaining PhD abroad

Full name of respondent:

College from Hué University:

General questions

- Year of birth
- Year start & ending PhD-course
- Precisely describe your household (partner, children with age, parents, brothers/sisters?) including developments during PhD time (marriage, childbirth)
- Job description (lecturer, professor, director etc.)

Influence culture

- Why did you want to become a university lecturer? How did you do this?
- Influence culture Vietnam on decision PhD abroad (embeddedness, traditional culture)
- Good/bad name influence on getting PhD abroad

Feelings about the international mobility experience

- Happy you went? Why?
 - o Difficult in the beginning?
 - o How long did it take to get used to the environment abroad?
 - o Who could you fall back on? Supervisor / Vietnamese community there?
- Happy you came back? Why?
 - o How long did it take to get used again?
 - o Family /community influence
 - o Extra activities (research, organizing seminars, exchanges etc.)
 - o Recognition / good name
 - o Personal impacts (language, skills & knowledge, personality/habits)

Improvement education

- What needs to happen to improve the education in Vietnam/Hué?
 - o Updating resources like books, labs etc.
 - o Corruption
 - o English lessons
 - o Curriculum
 - o Research
 - o Quality lecturers
 - o Freedom in teaching

Thank you very much for participating in this research. If you have any questions or want to add to your answers, feel free to contact me at all times.

Appendix C – Respondent characteristics

Table C.1: Respondent characteristics.

Respondent	Gender	Age	College Hué University	Marriage status	Children
Hoang	Male	45	Tourism & Hospitality	Married (During PhD)	Yes (During PhD)
Linh	Female	51	Sciences	Married	Yes
Trang	Female	32	Arts	Married	Yes
Thu	Female	34	Law	Married (During PhD)	Yes (During PhD)
Phuong	Female	40	Foreign Languages	Married	Yes
Anh	Female	32	Sciences	Married	Yes (During PhD)
Huy	Male	38	Agriculture & Forestry	Married	Yes (During PhD)
Duc	Male	43	Economics	Married	Yes (During PhD)
Lan	Female	34	Economics	Married	Yes (During PhD)
Thuy	Female	55	Tourism & Hospitality	Married	Yes
Hai	Male	39	Education	Single	No
Tu	Male	40	Sciences	Single	No
Viet	Male	-	Agriculture & Forestry	?	?
Nga	Female	33	Medicine & Pharmacy	Married	Yes
Minh	Female	40	Foreign Languages	Married	Yes
Hieu	Male	31	Education	Married	Yes
Ngoc	Female	27	Education	Single	No
Kim	Female	37	Economics	Married	Yes
Huong	Female	32	Medicine & Pharmacy	Single	No
Khanh	Male	47	Sciences	Married	Yes
Quang	Male	-	Medicine & Pharmacy	Married	Yes
Thao	Female	54	Foreign Languages	Married	Yes
Van	Male	51	Foreign Languages	Married	Yes

Source: Own work, 2017.

Table C.2: Respondents' Master and PhD Destinations & Scholarships.

Respondent	Master location	Master start	PhD location	PhD start	Scholarship	Family came along
Hoang	Bangkok, Thailand	2001	Oslo, Norway	2003	Quota scholarship	No
Linh	Hué, Vietnam	?	Nagasaki, Japan	2002	MEXT scholarship	Yes
Trang	Chiang Mai, Thailand	2010	Auckland, New Zealand	2017	911-Project	No
Thu	Hanoi, Vietnam	2007	Hamburg, Germany	2011	322-Project	Yes
Phuong	Brisbane, Australia	2002	Palmerston North, New Zealand	2010	NZaid	Yes
Anh	Hué, Vietnam	2009	Bonn, Germany	2011	Wisdom Project	No
Huy	Bangkok, Thailand	2003	Kyoto, Japan	2010	MEXT scholarship	No
Duc	Canberra, Australia	2004	Christchurch, New Zealand	2009	NZaid	Yes
Lan	Nagaoka, Japan	2010	Nagaoka, Japan	2012	MEXT scholarship	Yes
Thuy	Chiang Mai, Thailand	1993	Singapore, Singapore	1997	Government scholarship	No
Hai	Hué, Vietnam	2001	Bordeaux, France	2011	322-Project	No
Tu	Hué, Vietnam	2004	Chonbuk, South Korea	2009	University scholarship	No
Viet	Chonbuk, South Korea	?	Chonbuk, South Korea	2009	University scholarship	No
Nga	Hué, Vietnam	2009	Sassari, Italy	2014	University scholarship	No
Minh	Brisbane, Australia	2003	Brisbane, Australia	2009	OZaid	Yes
Hieu	Hué, Vietnam	2008	Wuhan, China	2015	Chinese government	No
Ngoc	Taipei, Taiwan	2013	Paris, France	2017	911-Project	No
Kim	Sydney, Australia	2007	Adelaide, Australia	2011	OZaid	Yes
Huong	Matsumoto, Japan	2010	Matsumoto, Japan	2012	MEXT scholarship	No
Khanh	Hanoi, Vietnam	1998	Paris, France	2008	322-Project	No
Quang	Hué, Vietnam	?	Freiburg, Germany	2007	DAAD	Yes
Thao	Boston, USA	1996	Melbourne, Australia	2001	OZaid	No
Van	California, USA	1998	Melbourne, Australia	2005	OZaid	No

Source: Own work, 2017.

Appendix D – Motivations & Impacts

Table D.1: Answers on motivations to obtain a PhD.

Respondent	The degree is required	Responsibility towards students	Passion for the field of study
Hoang	X		
Linh	X	X	X
Trang	X	X	
Thu	X		X
Phuong	X		
Anh	X	X	
Huy	X		X
Duc	X	X	
Lan	X		
Thuy	X	X	X
Hai	X		
Tu	X		
Viet	X	X	
Nga	X	X	
Minh	X		X
Hieu	X	X	
Ngoc	X	X	
Kim	X	X	
Huong	X		
Khanh	X		X
Quang	X		
Thao	X		X
Van	X		

Source: Own work, 2017.

Table D.2: Answers on motivating factors for going abroad to obtain a PhD.

Respondent	Education Sector	Social Environment	Knowledge & Skills	University Rules	See the World	Vietnam too Expensive	Distractions in Vietnam
Hoang	X	X	X	X		X	
Linh	X	X	X			X	X
Trang	X				X		
Thu		X	X				
Phuong		X	X		X		
Anh	X	X	X	X			
Huy	X	X		X			
Duc	X						X
Lan	X		X	X	X		
Thuy	X		X		X		
Hai	X	X				X	
Tu	X					X	X
Viet		X	X				
Nga	X	X			X	X	
Minh							
Hieu	X		X	X		X	
Ngoc		X		X		X	
Kim	X	X	X	X			X
Huong	X	X	X			X	
Khanh	X	X	X	X	X		
Quang	X				X		
Thao	X	X	X		X		
Van	X	X		X			

Source: Own work, 2017.

Table D.3: Answers on motivating factors for a specific PhD destination.

Respondent	Scholarship availability	Good environment	Specific supervisor	Connections	Language country
Hoang	X				
Linh	X				
Trang		X			
Thu	X	X	X		X
Phuong	X	X			X
Anh		X			
Huy				X	
Duc	X	X		X	X
Lan	X	X	X		
Thuy		X	X	X	
Hai		X			X
Tu	X	X		X	
Viet	X				
Nga	X	X	X		X
Minh	X		X		
Hieu	X				
Ngoc		X	X		
Kim		X	X		
Huong	X				
Khanh	X			X	
Quang			X	X	
Thao	X				
Van	X			X	X

Source: Own work, 2017.

Table D.4: Answers on motivating factors to return to Hué after completing the PhD abroad.

Respondent	Family	Scholarship & Visa Rules	Commitment	Job Opportunities	Culture Destination	For Children
Hoang		X		X		
Linh		X				X
Trang	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Thu		X	X			
Phuong		X				X
Anh	X	X				
Huy	X					
Duc		X				
Lan	X		X		X	X
Thuy				X	X	
Hai	X	X				
Tu			X	X	X	
Viet	X	X	X			
Nga	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Minh		X	X			
Hieu	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Ngoc	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Kim	X			X		
Huong	X			X	X	
Khanh	X	X				
Quang	X					
Thao	X		X			
Van	X			X		

Source: Own work, 2017.

Table D.5: Answers on Impacts on the life of the individual after return to Hué.

Respondent	Job opportunities & Connections	Changes personality & Ways of life	Skills & Knowledge
Hoang	X	X	X
Linh	X	X	X
Trang	-----	-----	-----
Thu			X
Phuong	X	X	
Anh	X		X
Huy	X	X	
Duc	X	X	
Lan	X		
Thuy			
Hai	X	X	X
Tu	X	X	X
Viet	X	X	
Nga	-----	-----	-----
Minh	X		
Hieu	-----	-----	-----
Ngoc	-----	-----	-----
Kim	X		
Huong	X	X	X
Khanh	X	X	X
Quang	X		X
Thao	X	X	X
Van		X	X

Source: Own work, 2017.