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'Been there, done that': International student migration and human capital transfers from the UK to Slovakia

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Abstract

International student migration remains an under-researched field in migration studies, and this is especially true of return migration. This paper analyses students from Slovakia who have studied in the UK, both on degree courses and language/vocational courses, and have subsequently returned to their country of origin. It analyses their motivations, their acquisition of human capital in the UK, and the extent to which they have been able to realise individual welfare gains after returning to Slovakia. The students’ evaluations of their experiences are highly positive, with substantial numbers also reporting improvements in their jobs and incomes, even following relatively short stays abroad. The study emphasises the importance of the specific competences acquired by the students, rather than broad skill categories, or qualifications. It highlights the value attached to language competence, in particular, but also to learning, attitudinal and inter-personal competences, as well as networking. The paper concludes that there is a need to pay more attention to individual social biographies when understanding the relationship between migration and learning. At the same time, it also stresses structural parameters to individual agency, including the specific economic conditions in a transition economy, and the market value of competence in English as a world language.

Key words: Student migration, human capital, language, UK, Central Europe

INTRODUCTION

The debate about international migration and human capital has shifted from concerns with brain drain or brain waste, to brain circulation and brain exchange issues (Salt, 1988; 1997; Regets 2001). This is related to the increasing importance of skilled labour migration, and new forms of shorter-term mobility. However, knowledge of skilled labour migration is highly selective (King, 2002), tending to focus on intra-company mobility of professionals and managers, reflecting the influential pioneering work of Salt (1988), Salt and Findlay (1989) and others. In contrast, our understanding of several other groups of skilled migrants, including international students, remains rather thin.

The neglect of student migration in the literature on human capital is surprising. This is the only form of skilled labour migration where the principal manifest function is human capital acquisition. In comparison, mobile professionals and managers primarily engage in employment tasks, although these implicity involve knowledge acquisition and dissemination (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2002). Sporting and artistic performers may aim to learn new skills while abroad, but their manifest objective is to work and acquire income. Academics and scientists are closest to students in terms of their manifest objectives. However, they often migrate specifically to take up jobs, or to disseminate knowledge to students and academics at their host institutions, even if some take up fellowships abroad which are explicitly designed for human capital acquisition. Therefore, students are the only group who migrate primarily in order to enhance their human capital, and ostensibly for fixed time periods. This can be termed 'brain training' in contrast to the other forms of 'brain distribution'. Of course, the manifest and latent objectives of student migration may differ: the underlying aim may be to use their studies as a platform for 'permanent' labour migration (Li et al, 1996), or cultural enrichment and personal development (Teichler and Maiworm, 1997). But, whatever their precise objectives, student migration remains distinctive..

Most research on student migration has focussed on intra-national mobility. The first substantial paper in this field was probably Tuckman's (1970) study of the determinants of student migration within the USA. Such research has become increasingly sophisticated, as represented for example by Baryla and Dotterweich's (2001) analysis of inter-state student migration in the USA. In contrast, there has been relatively little research on international student migration, despite its increasing importance.

The scale of international student migration has been reasonably well documented, and the figure of 1.5 million tertiary students studying abroad in the mid 1990s (UNESCO, 1999) is widely quoted. International student migration has a distinctive spatiality. First, it is highly concentrated in North America and Europe, with the USA accounting for 29% of the total, followed by the UK (13%), Germany (10%) and France (9%) (see also Findlay 2002). Secondly, in common with other aspects of globalisation, the distribution of flows is macro-regional rather than truly global (Held, 2000). Almost two thirds of foreign students in the USA are from Asia, while almost one half of the students in Germany and the UK are from other European countries (Phillips and Stahl, 2001: 281). EU assisted student mobility schemes – Socrates, Tempus and Leonardo – reinforce this intra-European pattern of flows. Thirdly, there is a distinctive focus on English language countries, especially the USA, the UK and Australia (Tremblay, 2002). This is related to English constituting part of the 'ground floor' of the world hierarchy of languages (van Parijs, 2000). The dominant role of English as the international language of business, is also reinforced by the generally high reputations of universities in these countries, active programmes for staff and student exchanges, relatively generous scholarships, and effective marketing (Phillips and Stahl, 2001: 288). The UK is an important node, therefore, in both intra-European flows, and in student migration centred on countries with 'ground floor' languages.

While international student migration flows have been mapped with reasonable accuracy, we know less about their outcomes – the acquisition, and potential redistribution of human capital as a result of 'brain training'. Several studies have noted the phenomenon of students staying on in host countries, thereby contributing to brain drain. Johnson and Regets (1998), for example, found that almost two thirds of all foreign doctoral students in science and engineering in the USA did not intend to return to their countries of origin. In the UK, a Home Office/DTI (2002) study showed that almost one half of the foreign students in the UK intended to stay on. However, there are sharp national and spatial differences in staying-on versus returning-home practices.

The most significant gap in our knowledge of international student migration is probably in respect of the process of return. One of the few studies on this subject was Kim's (1998) statistical analysis of the effects of student knowledge transfers in 101 less developed countries, 1969-1985. There was a strong positive association between the number of students studying abroad in developed countries and income growth in their countries of origin. However, there was a negative association between the numbers of students studying abroad

in other less developed countries, and income growth. This confirms not only that the scale of these flows is important, but also that their outcomes are place contingent. However, Kim's research was based on secondary data, with assumed rates of return, and provided limited insights into how human capital transfers are constituted.

Given the paucity of secondary data, surveys of individual migrants are required to provide greater insights into international student experiences. There are some studies of graduate migration (for example, King and Shuttleworth, 1995), but this phenomenon is different to student migration. Li et al (1996) have studied the future migration and working intentions of students from Hong Kong, but not the circulation of enhanced human capital. There are also some general overviews of mobility within the Erasmus framework (e.g Maiworm and Teichler, 1996; Teichler and Maiworm, 1997), mostly reviewing motivations, potential future mobility and organisational features, but these do not analyse human capital transfers in any detail. Probably the most detailed study at the individual level is King and Ruiz-Gelices (forthcoming) survey of British university students who have studied abroad. Although mainly concerned with identity formation, they also comment on future employment goals and the propensity for further international migration.

In their conclusion, King and Ruiz-Gelices (forthcoming) emphasise the 'need to broaden the analysis to an international comparative dimension', and specifically pose the question of how the experiences of British students abroad compare to those of students to Britain. In part, this paper responds to that call, providing a study of the return of Slovak students from the UK, but it also aims to provide a more detailed understanding of human capital circulation. As with all migration studies, the impacts are place contingent, and the most salient features here are the importance of English as a 'ground floor' language (van Parijs, 2000), and specific skills shortages in transition economies. Another distinctive feature of the paper is the inclusion of students on relatively short language courses as well as those on university degree courses; this is particularly helpful in bringing out the importance of learning a 'ground floor' language. In the remainder of the paper, we first examine critically the notion of human capital, followed by a review of the context of student migration from Slovakia, and an outline of the survey methodology. In the latter half of the paper, we assess the nature of formal and informal human capital transfers, and the use made of social networks, as returned migrants seek to benefit from having 'been there, done that'.

INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS OF HUMAN CAPITAL: SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES

The central tenet of human capital theories is that output is a function of the stock of human capital (Lucas, 1988). This has led to relatively sophisticated modelling of the relationship between private and public welfare returns, and individual or collective stocks of human capital (Mankiw et al, 1992; Soto, 2002), In practice, however, there has been a tendency to equate human capital with formal education, reduced to measures such as the numbers of years of schooling, or the qualifications obtained. These can only hint at 'total human capital' (Li et al, 1996), and the diverse forms of knowledge that constitute human capital (Temple, 2000)..

One way to approach knowledge is through Polanyi's (1958) notion that it incorporates both codified and tacit elements, and Nanoka and Takeuchi's (1995) reformulation of this in terms of tacit and explicit elements. This is a point that we return to later when considering the future of student migration, but for the moment it is more useful to turn to the notion of competences. Evans' (2002: 88-89) so-called 'starfish' model identifies five clusters of abilities that have both 'structural' features (can be carried between environments) and 'context-referenced' (non transferable) features. These are summarised below:

- Content related and practical competences: being responsive to the need to carry out a variety of tasks, and to update skills.
- Competences related to attitudes and values: responsibility, reliability, and resilience.
- Learning competences: perceptiveness, and ability to learn by reflecting on experience.
- Social and interpersonal competences: communication, creativity and ability to encourage others.
- Methodological competences: being able to handle complex tasks through organisational abilities and networking.

These competencies extend far beyond the range of skills usually investigated in analyses of the relationships between migration and human capital, and are more germane for understanding the multi-faceted nature of student migrants' learning and knowledge

acquisition. There are different approaches to acquiring such competences, but Evans and Hoffmann (2000) argue that learning is situated in three ways: reflection on practical experience, in the culture of the workplace (or place of study, in this instance), and in the social world of the participants. The latter requires 'taking the social and biographical position of the learner fully into account' (Evans and Rainbird, 2002: 18). In this paper, we focus specifically on this broader understanding of competences – which looks beyond learning in the formal place of education - and will consider the extent to which students have been able to use these for economic purposes after their return to Slovakia. One type of competence is of particular note in this study, the learning of a second language.

The development of interpersonal competencies is an important aspect of learning by student migrants. One element of this is competence in a second language, and this may often be the primary migration motivation, especially in the case of destinations such as the UK which have 'ground floor' world languages. Dustmann (1999) uses the term 'language capital' to capture this component of human capital. He constructs a quantitative model to explain the acquisition of language fluency, based on Chiswick and Miller's (1995) identification of three main determinants: efficiency (human capital on arrival, and length of training), exposure (to host country language), and incentives (rate of return on language capital). Dustmann distinguishes between migration where the timing of return is exogenous (contract migration), and migration where the individual decides when to return. His findings suggest that migrants who decide to stay longer invest more in language capital because the returns on this are greater in the host than the destination country.

While an useful starting point, Dustmann's analysis has a number of limitations for our purpose. First, his empirical data were for southern European migrants to Germany in the age of mass migration. They are, therefore, mostly less skilled workers. In contrast, there may be a higher return to language capital for skilled workers, given the relatively greater importance of communication skills in skilled jobs. Secondly, German - although a significant international language - is not a ground floor language to the same extent as English. Thirdly, students may not fit this model, both because language acquisition may be the primary objective of their migration and because, in some cases (such as Slovaks studying in the UK), student visa requirements reduce flexibility in length of stay. Finally, the assumption that the real rate of return may be greater to language capital in the host country may not hold true in all circumstances. Where the countries of origin are transition economies, subject to rapid marketisation and internationalisation, shortages of 'ground floor' language capital may result

in a premium being paid for these, particularly when combined with selective professional and managerial skills.

The acquisition of competence in a second language clearly illustrates the nature of 'situated learning'. It involves both codified and tacit knowledge, and the key to fluency lies in how these are combined. As Dőrnyei. (2003: 4) argues:

> 'Language learning is a 'learnable school subject' in that discrete elements of the communicable code (grammar etc) can be taught explicitly but "it is also socially and culturally bound", which makes language learning a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide variety of elements of the second language culture'.

Some of the codified elements of language capital can be acquired, with relative ease, almost anywhere, via courses, textbooks or the internet, but the social and cultural context lends significant additional value to study abroad. Much of the tacit knowledge involved in using a foreign language is more easily, or perhaps only, acquired by living and studying abroad.

Learning abroad also brings added value in terms of the 'structural', or transferable, aspects of some of the other competencies identified by Evans (2002). There are two key arguments here. First, some of these competencies, such as flexibility and openness to new ideas, are more effectively learnt abroad; in other words, these forms of learning are place specific. Networking can also be extended during stays abroad, especially because sustained face-to-face contact may be essential in building trust and ease of co-operation (Paldam, 2000: 630). Secondly, successful migration generates self confidence emanating from a personal sense of achievement, especially where this is combined with greater social recognition.

Of course, the values of particular competences are highly place specific. Learning to speak English fluently may provide a competitive edge compared to other migrants in the UK labour market, but not compared to native English speakers, other than in a few specialised jobs requiring translator skills. In contrast, English language competence may be highly valued in the migrant's country of origin (or in a third country). The use made of learning is as situated as the process of learning. As Li et al (1996: 52-3) state, the return migration of students contributes not only to 'the advancement of knowledge and technology, but their overseas experience, links and sometimes improved linguistic abilities may also mean that they are better equipped to foster further contacts with the outside world, which would be beneficial to the development of their countries'. We will explore these ideas in context of the

total human capital of student migrants from Slovakia to the UK later in the paper, but first we review some key elements of the economic return to education in Slovakia.

SLOVAKIA: THE ECONOMIC RETURN TO EDUCATION IN A TRANSITION ECONOMY

There was limited investment in higher education during the years of state socialism: only 12% of the labour force in Slovakia were graduates, as late as 1989. In contrast, access to higher education widened during the 1990s transition to a liberal, market economy. Several new universities were established and, although of variable quality, partly satisfied the pent-up demand for higher education. The number of undergraduate students, for example, increased from 60,000 to 148,000 between 1989 and 2002 (Figure 1), while age-specific university enrolment rates increased from 13.0% to 20.7% in the same period. There was an even sharper increase in postgraduate student numbers, from some 600 to 8,000, 1990-2002.

The boom in higher education reflected labour market restructuring and selective skilled labour shortages throughout CEE (Klazar et al, 2001). In Slovakia, this was evident in the average unemployment rate amongst graduates being only 5%, compared to a national average of 18.2% (Figure 2). Furthermore, university graduates received 167.8% of the national average wage, compared to only 98.6% for those who had completed secondary education (Figure 3). It has been estimated that, in general, the returns to education are normally in the range of 5-15% per year of attendance (Cohen and Soto, 2001). As most higher education programs in Slovakia are of 5 years duration, the average return in Slovakia to workers with higher education was close to the upper border of this estimate (that is, 5 x 15 = 75 percent higher wages). It is therefore likely to be a significant factor in individual decisions to invest in higher education.

A comparison of labour markets in Slovakia and the EU is instructive. Slovakia has a relatively small stock of educated people: only 13.2 % of the working age population had university degrees, compared to 18.9% in the EU in 2002 (Table 1). Not surprisingly, therefore, the 2002 Report on Employment in Europe found that low-skilled workers in the candidate countries (including Slovakia) were disproportionably disadvantaged compared to the highly skilled, and this gap was significantly greater than in existing EU member states (European Commission, 2002a).

Skill shortages were not endemic in all sectors of the economy. For example, one of the legacies of state socialism was a relatively large proportion of the workforce who had completed upper secondary education, especially in the technical professions. Not surprisingly, an EBRD (2002) survey revealed that most foreign investors had few difficulties in hiring skilled staff in transition economies. However, 37 % reported problems in recruiting local managers, because they lacked general flexibility and the ability to learn and adapt. These investors did, however, have strategies to cope with such shortages. A survey of major foreign investors by the National Bank of Slovakia (Hošková, 2001: 35) revealed a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of local employees. Although there were shortages of foreign language and some management skills, these were being rectified by the increasingly large numbers of Slovak professionals who trained on management and language courses abroad, either independently or through their companies. This is confirmed by our survey of student-returnees from the UK.

While there was a high rate of return to language competence, social skills and formal knowledge acquired abroad, the costs of such education were prohibitive. Many individuals overcame these barriers through participation in mobility programs sponsored by the EU (Tempus, Socrates, Leonardo) or by individual member states (e.g. British Council programs). Tellingly, no country in central Europe had a higher regional participation in the EU's Joint European Projects than the Slovak Republic (European Commission, 2002b). Under Tempus I, 41 of the 77 Joint European Projects included a partner from Slovakia, and more than 1,500 Slovaks used these to study abroad between 1990 and 1997.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

A total of 55 in-depth interviews were undertaken with Slovak students who had studied for at least 3 months in the UK. There were two main sub groups. First, 38 (69.1%) were university students who had undertaken part of their undergraduate or postgraduate studies in the UK, mostly within the framework of Erasmus and Tempus programmes. Secondly, 17 (30.9%) had been in the UK on language and – in a few instances - vocational training courses. This sample stands in marked contrast to most studies of student migration, especially in the USA, which have focussed on those spending several years abroad to obtain formal qualifications. King and Ruiz Gelices (forthcoming) specifically examined student

mobility within the Erasmus programme, but did not consider non-degree course students. The composition of our sample represents the reality of student mobility in CEE. The costs of studying abroad for an entire degree qualification were prohibitive, but various EU and national mobility schemes facilitated shorter courses or placements. The average length of study abroad in our sample was 6.3 months. Whereas language course students had mostly been in the UK for 3 months or less, those who took university degree courses had mostly been abroad for 4-9 months. The median was 6 months and the longest individual study period abroad was 24 months. Most of those interviewed (72.8%) had studied abroad between 1996 and 2002.

In the absence of reliable population frames for returned student migrants, the sample is necessarily purposive. Approximately one third of the students in our survey were identified via initial direct enquiries with university administrative bodies. Private agencies and the British Council, provided contacts with a second group who had been to the UK on English language or vocational courses. Snowball methods were used to increase the total number of interviews to 55. There were no significant differences in age or gender between the two sub groups.

Given the lack of a population frame, it is not possible to know the extent to which the sample is representative of returned Slovak students from the UK. However, a notable feature is that 67.3% of the sample came from Bratislava, a city where only 10% of the Slovak population live. However, approximately one half of the national student population are enrolled at universities in Bratislava, and most have a permanent or temporary residential base in the city. Therefore, their over-representation in our sample is less than appears at first sight. Non university-degree students in our sample originated even more disproportionately from Bratislava. There were two reasons for this. First, students on short term language and vocational training courses usually paid the full costs of these, and therefore social access to such courses is mediated by income and wealth. Some regional imbalance is therefore to be expected simply because there are very sharp economic differences between Bratislava and the remainder of the country, with GDP per capita differentials of the order of 6:1 (Williams and Baláž, 1999). Secondly, the British Council, and a disproportionate number of other agencies, are located in Bratislava. To sum up, there are reasons to expect that a majority of student migrants do originate from Bratislava. However, in the absence of a reliable population frame for student migrants, it is recognised that we do not know whether the sample is representative of student migrants. This is important because, given the more

favourable economic conditions for return migrants in the capital, any over-representation of Bratislava could imply that our findings would be unduly positive. Therefore, it is reassuring to note that there were no statistically significant differences (using chi square measures) in how students from Bratislava and the rest of the country evaluated the economic outcomes of having studied in the UK.

Gender imbalance could constitute another possible source of bias in the sample Again, the lack of reliable data on the population of student migrants makes it impossible to test for this. However, some reassurance can be found in the fact that 43.6% of our sample were women, compared to 48.9% of all university students being women. In summary, as our sample was purposive, and given the lack of a population frame for sampling, we make no claim that it is representative of student migration. However, the available comparators do not suggest any obvious major forms of over-representation.

The interviews were mostly undertaken face to face and lasted about 45-60 minutes. In a relatively small number of cases (8), where face to face interviews were refused, the interviewees were sent interview schedules by post. Face to face interviews were usually taped with the agreement of the respondents, but a minority (5) only allowed notes to be taken. The interviews were in Slovakian, and are translated for the purposes of this paper. The identities of the interviewees are protected through the use of pseudonyms, generalisation of their origins (unless from the larger cities), and removal of the names of the British universities they attended.

The interviews covered a broad range of topics including occupational and educational experiences before, during and after migration, as well as motivations, evaluations of the time spent abroad, and comments on future plans. They were mostly semi-structured, but included a number of closed questions where interviewees were asked to respond on a ranked scale. These latter questions provide a basis for quantitative comparisons, which are useful in view of the substantial number of interviews. However, we focus mainly on the qualitative analysis of their responses to exploratory open questions.

LEARNING ABROAD: HUMAN CAPITAL AND COMPETENCES

All the students were asked to rate their motives for studying in the UK, against a list of economic and educational goals, on a ranked scale (where 1 represents unimportant, 2 is

less important, 3 is medium importance, 4 is very important, and 5 is fundamentally important). Not surprisingly, as can be seen in Table 2, ‘to improve my English’ was by far the most valued motive, being ranked as of ‘fundamental importance’ by most respondents (average score, 4.7). This reflects the known high return to language capital. The place specific nature of some forms of knowledge is also reflected in the joint second highest ranking (3.5) being given to ‘acquiring foreign country experiences’. The acquisition of a ‘better education’, understood as formal training, was also considered important (3.5) as, to a lesser extent, was ‘to obtain new skills’ (3.2). Economic motives were latent, rather than manifest, in the interviewees’ responses for lower rankings were given to ‘greater availability of jobs after studies’ (3.1) and ‘higher income after studies’ (3.0).

The priority ascribed to English language competence is not, in itself, surprising. Moreover, these results accord with Teichler and Maiworm’s (1997: 42) findings that language learning, followed by social development, are the main objectives of participants in EU-sponsored ERASMUS mobility schemes. But it is noteworthy that there were no significant differences (based on chi square tests) between the motives of students on university courses and those on language and vocational courses. Enhanced language capital was as important for those taking undergraduate and postgraduate courses (of all types and levels), as for those who attended language schools. Participation in university courses was perceived as being more important for acquiring language skills than specific disciplinary or professional competences. This is related to the particular market value of English language skills in a transition economy.

To what extent were their aims fulfilled? Their responses can be considered in relation to Evans’ (2002) ‘starfish’ competencies, discussed earlier. When evaluating their British experiences, students were most positive about their improved English language abilities (average score 4.6), an interpersonal competence, which again reflects the high return to language capital (Table 2). To that extent, their goals were fulfilled. But they were also strongly positive about a number of other competences, several of which were ranked almost as highly as improved English language skills. First, in respect of attitudes and values: greater self-confidence was second highest ranked (4.2). Secondly, in respect of methodological competences: ability to deal with challenges (4.0). Thirdly, in respect of learning competences: the acquisition of new ideas (4.0), and learning new work approaches (4.0). In contrast, acquiring qualifications (2.8) and learning new skills (3.0) were considered far less valuable. Some of these competences will be explored in greater depth later in the paper.

There were also strong differences between students who had been abroad on university courses and those who had been on (shorter) language and vocational courses (Table 3). Those who had been abroad as part of their university courses were more likely to evaluate their experiences more highly, and these differences are shown to be statistically significant, where the data permit contingency coefficients to be calculated. There are three possible reasons for such differences. First, due to the nature of the learning curves for particular competences, there may be a real return to individuals in staying longer than 3 months. Secondly, there may be higher returns on university courses than on language courses, either reflecting perceptions of these, or the different types of learning experiences they provide. Or, thirdly, there are higher returns to students because of the way they have specifically combined professional and academic studies abroad with enhanced language competence. Our interviews did not – and perhaps on their own could not – provide conclusive evidence as to which of these explanations is more potent. Interestingly, however, we can note that English language skills and self-confidence are the only two competences where a majority of both student groups were strongly positive in their evaluations. This does, at least, point to different learning curves for particular competences, and this is reinforced by the qualitative analysis presented later in this part of the paper.

Thus far only the aggregate rankings of motivations and evaluations have been considered, but Table 4 summarises the extent to which the motivations of individual students have been matched by outcomes in respect of particular competences. The aim of improving their English has clearly been fulfilled. Although it was not possible to compute a contingency coefficient (the expected counts were too low in some cells of the contingency table), learning English had been a very or fundamentally important motivation for all but two respondents, and only one considered that the actual outcome had not, at least, matched this. Their enhanced language capital was illustrated by self-assessments of their competence before and after studying abroad. Before migration, their skills were varied. Of the 55 students interviewed, 47.3 % (26) had a good command of English and 3.6% (2) considered they were fluent. The remaining 49% (27) spoke a few words or considered that they had only a basic understanding. After studying abroad, these shares were reversed, with: 34.5% and 61.8%, respectively, considering they had ‘good’ or ‘fluent’ English.

Most of the students who had highly ranked their experiences of living abroad as a motivation – another form of place specific knowledge – also seemed satisfied with the outcomes. There were strong and significant associations between this motivation and self-

assessments of their enhanced competences in a number of areas (Table 4). This group generally positively rated their improved ability to deal with challenges, to acquire new ideas, and to learn new work approaches. In contrast, there were no significant associations between, on the one hand, the motivation of obtaining a 'better education' and, on the other hand, the self assessments of the importance of having acquired new skills or qualifications'. This can be explained in terms of how 'better education' was understood not only in terms of formal knowledge, but also of developing language skills and a range of other competences. Before leaving these quantitative results, it has to be emphasised that all these indicators are based on self-assessments, which may be prone to exaggeration due to a reluctance to acknowledge shortcomings in the student experience. However, as the following qualitative analysis of the interviews indicates, the interviewees had strongly held beliefs as to the benefits of studying abroad.

Both university students and language course students strongly valued their enhanced English language competence and greater self confidence (Table 3). The economic value of these is considered in the next section of the paper. Here, we focus on other aspects of their learning experiences, and more particularly on the university students who had generally been more enthusiastic about these.

First, consider the relatively low value ascribed to the formal education they received abroad. Of course, this did not mean that students did not value acquiring professional knowledge. Some students, although a minority, commented positively on this. Individual students had been motivated to obtain formal knowledge and had valued working with advanced hardware and software, which was unavailable in Slovakia. Denisa (25, city of Martin northern Slovakia) was typical of such technology-oriented students:

> "I am studying Geodetic and Cartography Sciences in the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava. In 2000 I studied 6 months in university X. The most important skills I learned were new techniques, technologies and procedures in my field of study. I really valued working with specialised computer cartography programmes that were not available in Slovakia. "

Peter (22, from a small town in eastern Slovakia) had a similar experience. He had spent 4 months in the UK in 2002, working and studying in a design studio, under the auspices of the EU's Leonardo programme.

> " This was important for me, because it was my first opportunity to establish direct contacts with foreign professionals in my field. While the field of study was very similar in both countries, there were big differences in how studying was approached. In Slovakia, my teacher prescribed the final shape of the project, but gave me no support and technical help. I had to take care of everything myself …. In the

> UK, I was given everything and was able to start my work immediately. For example, I was able to work with 3D MAX [a specialist software for architects], to build a material model and make load tests with specialised equipment. I knew of these techniques in Slovakia, but had not been able to try them. They were expensive and our University didn't provide them."

As Table 3 demonstrated, most of the university students valued professional or technical skills less than the opportunities to study and work in a different cultural environment. Several students appreciated being exposed to new views on familiar subjects rather than the substantial content of the teaching itself. Tomáš (25, city of Žilina, northern Slovakia) for example, who had studied architecture in the UK for 12 months explained this:

> "some subjects are taught better in Bratislava than in the UK. Some subjects were taught superficially in the UK, while more detail was provided in Slovakia. You also could get a broader overview of the subject while studying in Bratislava. This, of course, does not mean, I learnt nothing in the UK….. I did learn new views on my subject."

Milan (27, Bratislava) was one of the few who was actually disappointed about the professional knowledge he had acquired in the UK, although acknowledging compensating benefits. He had graduated as a doctor in 1999 and had gone to the UK under the TEMPUS programme, because:

> "I wanted to improve my English, and was curious about how the health services operated in the UK. I planned to start my own business in Slovakia later on. I spent 8 months in a medical school. I cannot say that l learned anything special there, related to my profession. What I actually developed was self-confidence and fluent English. When I returned, I did start a medical equipment business ….. This was directly related to my stay in the UK and was the most positive point for me. "

The UK's academic environment is international and multicultural, especially compared to Slovakia. Not surprisingly, therefore, it was viewed as a source of varied insights and ideas. Some Slovak students were not accustomed to working in such an environment, and initially found it uncomfortable, but virtually all benefited eventually. Ivan (26, Bratislava) had spent four months at a northern British university, where he acquired technical expertise in working with animation programmes. He noted that:

> "The only problem I had was adjusting to such a multicultural environment. I was not used to it. …Now I am an architect in a British-owned architectural design firm ….. My most valuable experience was that I learned to accept different cultural environments, and I also became more self-confident – something I had previously lacked."

Science and engineering studies had been prioritised under state socialism, which was reflected in relatively high standards of teaching in these subjects. This partly explains why most students in these areas did not consider there were substantial differences between the

formal knowledge they obtained on courses in the UK and Slovakia – although they were often impressed by the quality of equipment and software in British universities. The situation was different in the social sciences and many branches of the humanities, where teaching and learning had been severely restricted by state ideology and regulation. Here the gap with British universities was often substantial. Miša (38, Bratislava), who had studied international affairs, illustrates this:

> "I was happy to have a chance to improve my English and professional knowledge in a country with a long tradition in this subject. My stay in X was divided into two parts, of 6 and 12 months….. The University itself may be somewhere in the middle in the British universities league, but the Department of Y was a top ranked place in the UK, and the world. The quality of lectures was high. The lecturers gave a lot of time to consulting students individually, and there were also great opportunities for independent study – a good library and access to the Internet in 1993! The main things I acquired in the UK were a deeper professional knowledge and critical views on my field of study. Before, I had seen many subjects in 'black and white' terms, and my opinions on some of these were superficial or simplistic."

The comments of individual interviewees on their acquisition of skills and competencies are, to some extent, inevitably informed retrospectively by their employment experiences after returning to Slovakia. We consider these explicitly in the next section.

CAPITALISING FOREIGN EXPERIENCES: THE RETURN ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND COMPETENCES

Some of the experiences reported above – for example Milan's - have already indicated how individuals have capitalised on these in terms of employment advances after returning to Slovakia. In this section, we examine more explicitly the question of whether and how students have been able to capitalise on their experiences abroad. There is, however, a need to sound two notes of caution. First, as previously emphasised, self assessments are prone to self-justification and exaggeration. Secondly, the student cohort was heterogeneous. Some university students were still completing their courses in Slovakia when interviewed, so there had been little scope to improve their positions subsequently. In contrast, there were language course students who already had established employment positions, or had previously established their own businesses. This is an important consideration when comparing evaluations of the experiences abroad, with comments on whether these have actually led to individual economic and social gains.

Taking the interviews as a whole, there appears at first sight to be mixed evidence of social and economic advancement. Only 32.7% (18) considered their social status had improved, 56.4% (31) that their employment position had improved, and 38.2% (21) that they had higher incomes specifically because of their experiences of studying in the UK. As such, barely more than one half considered that they had achieved a significant social or economic gain on any one of these three indicators. This may seem surprising in view of the positive evaluations of their experiences abroad (Table 2). However, 24 were still completing their courses of study when interviewed, and – although some were in part time jobs - had not yet had an opportunity to test out fully the market value of their foreign experiences or enhanced English language competence. In the qualitative analysis that follows, we therefore focus mainly on those who had completed the education to work transfer.

First, however, we note that there was evidence of a statistical association between, on the one hand, improvements in social status, income and job position, and, on the other hand, whether students considered they had improved their English language abilities and their personal and social competences as a result of studying abroad (Table 5). However, there were no significant differences in improvements in jobs or social status in terms of the migrants' places of origin, their gender or age. There were also no differences between students on university degree courses, and those on language and vocational training courses, but this has to be interpreted cautiously as a number of respondents were continuing students at the time of the interviews. However, there is general evidence that formal qualifications and professional skills were far less important than enhanced social and personal competences, which in large measure were the outcome of successful migration experiences per se.

There were also strong associations between positive self-assessments of the importance of having acquired new ideas and learning new approaches to work, and reported improvements in social status. However, the acquisition of new ideas and new work approaches did not automatically lead to improvements in social status, and in part this is due to the heterogeneity of the interviewees, with some still continuing in education. Small numbers in one cell mean that contingency coefficients could not be calculated in either case, but the associations are clear. Higher status, in turn, was closely associated with increased income as a result of student migration (Table 5); this reflects the dominance of materialism in defining social status in Slovakia, as in most Central European transition economies.

Good or improved knowledge of English was repeatedly identified as being of considerable importance to the migrants, and a key factor in career advancement. We could not compute a contingency coefficient in this instance, but there is a strong association between motivation and outcomes. It can also be noted that all three interviewees who did not rank improving their English as being very or fundamentally important as a motivation, also reported it had not been an important outcome for them. While not strictly comparable, these results do resonate with King and Ruiz's (forthcoming) findings that 60% of returned Erasmus students to the UK used their second language in their current jobs. Teichler and Maiworm's (1997: 148) study of ERASMUS students, five years after their placements, also found that language competence was, by far, the most important aspect of their experiences when seeking employment.

Despite relatively short stays in the UK (6.3 months on average), their experiences have had important life course implications for many students. Of the 55 returnees interviewed, 47.3% (26) continued in education or started a higher degree after they returned. Some, of course, had taken short language courses prior to the planned start of these degrees. But in 7 cases (12.7%) the decision to pursue a further course of education was taken directly as a consequence of their UK visit. Furthermore, 18.2% (10) of returned students had started businesses, and 6 of these considered that this was directly related to their UK visit. Their businesses were diverse, including an educational agency, interpreting, media graphics and software engineering. Below we explore some of these employment experiences, and the importance of enhanced competences.

Daniel (28, Bratislava) had gone to the UK on an English language course (interpersonal competence) as preparation for establishing his own business, seeking greater language skills:

> "I graduated from University and found a job with a government agency. I didn't like this job. So I decided to become an entrepreneur and thought I would have to improve my English. There was an opportunity, provided by the British Council, to study English in Eastbourne. I studied there for several months ….. When I returned, I left my old job and set up my own business – as an expert in media graphics. My standing has improved because I am now independent."

Miša (38, Bratislava), a student of international affairs at the University of X, whom we met earlier, also linked his enhanced English language and self confidence (a competence related to attitudes) to his career change:

> "My stay in the UK did help me to become independent and more self-confident. I really improved my English and this helped me to change jobs. I left the public sector and became self-employed. Now, I

am an advisor for the EU's Pre-Accession Funds in Slovakia, and I work both for the Slovak government and private firms."

Zdeno (28, Martin) had also decided that attending a language course was a necessary pre-requisite for a successful business., and like Ivan he considered that his UK experience had also added to his other competences:

"I graduated from university and worked as a researcher in a research institution. My pay was low and I decided to go into business. I spoke good English, but felt I needed to improve it. So an agency arranged for a six month language course in the UK. I took a holiday from my employer, but I had already decided never to go back to science research. I now have an IT business. I earn more money and feel that I am more recognised. My stay in the UK helped to improve my self-confidence and my general understanding of life."

Peter (35, Bratislava) wanted to leave his position with a Slovak firm and to work for an international company. He realised that fluent English was essential for this, and arranged to take a language course in the UK. He was strongly positive about the ways in which studying in the UK had enhanced a number of his competences. Unlike most students we interviewed, he was relatively well-off and was able to pay for his trip himself:

" I worked as a technical engineer with a furniture factory. I spoke good English, but wanted to perfect it. A student agency arranged a six-month language course in the UK for me in 1998. This was a good decision. When I returned, I found a job with an international furniture firm. I have been promoted several times and am now the sales director…. I thank my UK stay for that. I not only learned English there, but also how the world operates".

Language was not the only critical competence acquired by entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs. Social networking was important to many, this being one of what Evans (2002) terms the 'methodological' competences. International migration is generally recognised as an important route for constructing social networks, for transnational networks have considerable economic potential (Portes et al, 2001; Vertovec, 2002). Individuals can use such networks as sources of information and knowledge, as the bases for constructing partnerships, or as ways of accessing markets or resources. As Meyer (2001: 101) argues, 'individuals' skills are dependent on the networks that mobilise and activate them'. There has been extensive research on transnational entrepreneurship, but virtually no research on how student migration can inform the latter, although Li et al (1996: 52-3) hint at the potential importance of 'contacts with the outside world'.

In this study, 40% (22) of the students maintained contacts with their friends and colleagues in the UK after returning to Slovakia, which they considered to be potentially important for their future job or business. In some cases, they have already transformed these

contacts into active business co-operation. Adriana (29, Bratislava), for example, had used her new social networks to establish a 'mobility agency', trading with the UK:

> "There was an opportunity to use an EU program for young professionals. It offered language and professional training in the UK. I had a lot of friends there and was really pleased to go. I worked with a company of solicitors for 7 months. When I returned, I set up my own business. I now run a job agency and a wedding agency. I send students and professionals to the UK and also negotiate contacts between UK and Slovak men and women who want to find life partners".

Miriam (30, Bratislava) reported a similar experience, and now owned a travel agency which co-operated with British partners, many of whom she had first met during her student placement. Marta (23, from a small town in western Slovakia) went to the UK in 2001-2 to study within the Socrates exchange framework. She also worked (illegally) for three months for an architectural practice. She valued the networks she had developed in the UK and told us that : ' I am still in contact with my British university and employer, and think these may be important for jobs after I graduate'.

Sometimes the economic outcomes of studying abroad, and social networking, were unintentional. Michal (24, from a small city in central Slovakia) went to London as a student because he wanted to be with his girlfriend. However, he had developed informal networks during his stay, which he thought could be useful in future jobs:

"I was studying forestry in the city of X in Slovakia….. but I wanted to see my girlfriend, who worked as an au-pair in London. I decided to interrupt my studies in Slovakia and go to London…... There is a student agency in Bratislava which offers au-pair and study visits to the UK. It arranged a study visit for me with University Y. I studied General Ecology for two terms there….. My stay in the UK was useful in getting a broader understanding of my subject. I befriended a lecturer at the University…... He promised to find me a job in the UK, if I wanted it. ……. I keep in touch with him via the Internet."

Michal had been enterprising in organising his trip. He was not alone in this as several of the students came from relatively poor social backgrounds, and lacked the language skills and formal qualifications to participate in EU supported mobility programmes, and the money to go privately. They found ways around this. For example, Jana (26, from a village in northern Slovakia) had worked (illegally) as an au-pair to pay for her studies in London:

> "I studied and worked as an au-pair twice in the UK. Learning English was my main aim on the first trip. As for the second stay, I wanted to earn some money, study and also explore different parts of Britain. I studied forensic science in X for two semesters. At the same time, I worked as an au-pair which paid for my studies. When I returned to Slovakia I could not find a job in forensic science and switched to studying sociology. Since my finances are limited, I am having to work, and am studying at university through distance learning. My stay in the UK was fundamentally important for me. Although I don't work in forensic science now, I do use the English which I learnt. I work as an interpreter in a

> Czech firm. This is interesting and well paid. I think I got the job because I can communicate fluently in English, solve problems, and rely on myself to deal with problems. "

Jana clearly valued what we have termed her enhanced methodological and attitudinal competences. While there were some remarkable success stories such as these, especially amongst those switching to the private sector, there were also a smaller number of individuals who were less positive about their experiences. Those who reported little or no gain in income were mainly workers who had stayed in the public sector, which is generally characterised by poor salaries and constrained career ladders in Slovakia. Again, success or failure was more or less evaluated in material terms in Slovak society. Zuzana (30, Bratislava), for example, thought that she did not receive adequate recompense for her enhanced professional skills. Initially, she had studied French and English in a Slovak university, then went on a scholarship to Switzerland for two years, and eventually won a place on a TEMPUS programme for a six month stay in the UK.

> "The stay was very useful. I collected a lot of material for my Diploma and really improved my English. British lecturers gave a lot of time to consulting their students, which is rare in Slovakia. …. Now I am working in a Language Training Institute (in an academic institution), which is nice, but poorly paid. Nobody is interested in whether or not I have worked in the UK".

Veronika (32, Bratislava) had similar experience. She had spent two year in the UK under the auspices of the EU's PHARE programme. Although she did not consider that she had enhanced her professional skills, 'the most important thing I learnt was management skills'. Despite this, she was now in what she considered to be a low paid job as a researcher-manager in the public sector, and nobody recognised what she perceived as the value of he period of study in the UK.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, many (24) of the university students included in the survey had continued in education after their return, at least on a part time basis, and so had not been in a position to enhance fully their job position or income. However, even those who were continuing students commented positively on what they saw as their enhanced economic prospects. Typically, they commented that they were more independent, were more 'recognised', or that they could speak English more fluently. This reinforces the value of studying abroad, even though their enhanced competences had not yet been translated into enhanced social status, and indeed this would not automatically occur for all the returnees. However, there was overwhelmingly a belief that their experiences of studying in the UK would eventually be economically beneficial.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has sought to contribute to the limited research on student migration, and especially the human capital transfers effected by return migrants. It has also sought to broaden understanding of the phenomenon of international student migration, by considering shorter-term language and vocational training students, alongside those participating in degree courses. The results are of course necessarily contingent. We have drawn particular attention to economic and education changes in Slovakia during the 1990s, which were common to transition economies. On the one hand, there are exceptionally high returns to skilled workers, especially those with foreign languages, and particular competences. The high level of social recognition of such skills reinforces their market value in the labour market. And on the other hand, the critical status of English as a 'ground-floor' language (van Parijs, 2000) means that the UK is one of the most favoured destinations, even though it is also one of the higher cost locations, for student migrants in Europe. This apparent contradiction is resolved by a high degree of reliance on assisted student mobility schemes. However, social polarisation in Slovakia means increasing numbers of individuals can afford the costs of such foreign courses. This paper therefore focuses on one of the key student flows which contribute to how the Slovak economy is being Europeanised.

Within this general framework, the central argument of the paper has been the need to adopt a 'total human capital' approach to the study of brain circulation and brain training. There is a need to look at a range of competences, rather than narrower measures of qualifications and formal courses of studies. It is only possible to do so through primary data collection, and the difficulties of location returned students, especially those who have entered the labour market subsequently, means that we had to rely on purposive sampling. Caution is therefore necessary in drawing implications for all returned students, not least because of the relatively small numbers of interviews, and this issue was discussed in the methodology section of the paper. Nevertheless, the study does provide a number of useful insights into competences, knowledge and human capital.

The principal motivation of these students was language acquisition – even if attending university degree courses - and their self-assessments suggest they have been successful in enhancing this competence. In addition, living abroad has enhanced other competences, including self-confidence, openness to learning, and flexibility. These have led to significant returns for many individual migrants who have entered the labour market because such competences are highly, if selectively, valued in the workplace. Social network

construction was not usually a manifest objective of student migration, but in many cases has proven invaluable, especially to those setting up their own businesses. In general terms, the self-assessments of the students on relatively shorter language courses are less positive than those of students on relatively longer degree course placements, except with respect to enhanced English language competence. Both groups are also strongly positive about their enhanced self-confidence, even if there were significant differences in their responses. There are therefore some clear benefits associated with longer periods of study abroad on degree courses, although we could not determine whether this was due to length of stay or type of course (university degree versus language schools), However, the emphasis placed on enhanced language skills and self confidence suggest that, in some respects, the values of formal studies and qualifications are dwarfed by the personal and social development related to having 'been there, done that'.

These findings are broadly in accord with King and Ruiz-Gelices' (forthcoming) observation that British ERASMUS students value the linguistic and cultural aspects of their placements more than the academic ones. This paper has provided a more detailed analysis of broader human capital transfers, while also providing a contrasting international example, set in context of transition in CEE. King and Ruiz-Gelices also advocate the value of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) notion that individuals can enrich their biographies through social and geographical mobility into 'elective' do-it yourself biographies, which in turn can be translated into more successful and creative careers. This resonates with Evans and Rainbird's (2002: 18) comment about the need to take 'the social and biographical position of the learner fully into account' when trying to understand learning. While we concur with this, it is important not to discount structural considerations. Little more than one half of those interviewed considered they had enhanced their employment positions, and less than one half believed they how had a higher income because they had studied in the UK. This largely reflects the fact that many interviewees had not yet completed their studies. But there were also differences in the experiences of those who had entered the labour market. Most of the advantages were realised by those working in internationalised private sector companies. In contrast, some of those who worked in the public sector complained of lack of recognition of their enhanced competences. This points to the need for much more detailed, and contextual, studies of returned migrants in the workplace, and of the actual process of transfer of competences.

As this study confirms, student migration is significant in the acquisition and circulation of human capital, but arguably this may be undermined by future developments in information and communication technologies. Phillips and Stahl (2001: 278) for example, report that the numbers of students involved in cross border provision of education by the internet and surface mail is already twice as large as the number of international student migrants. Most codified knowledge has became delocalised, and can be acquired through various forms of distance learning. While this is true, the key to knowledge *application* is the way in which tacit and explicit knowledge are combined. Moreover, the acquisition of tacit knowledge is far more place-specific than codified knowledge. For these reasons, student migration - as an essential component of internationalised brain training and brain circulation (Gaillard and Gaillard, 1997; Johnson and Regets, 1998) – is likely to remain important in the foreseeable future. Student migration therefore needs to be seen as part of the dense and interconnected flows of skilled migrants amongst the more developed economies, and as a structural feature of internationalised economies, rather than a transitory feature to be eliminated by economic and educational convergence.

One of the more critical questions related to the above is whether, as Salt (1997) contends, student migration provides the "seeds" for future international skilled labour migration. The research reported here provides only limited insights into this question, as we did not interview non-returnees, current students abroad, or a control group of non-movers (although we aim to report on the latter in a separate paper). However, we can speculate about the following. First, the failure of some returned students to capitalise (as yet) on their migration experiences suggests the potential for a 're-emigration of failure', to seek new opportunities or further human capital elsewhere. This could be interpreted as brain circulation being transformed ultimately into brain drain. And, secondly, the employment of many of the more successful returnees in the internationalised private sector suggests they constitute part of the 'migratory elite' of mobile, highly skilled workers that are essential to modern economies. Indeed, international student migration may provide a vital training ground for this elite. Such issues underline the fact that, despite a recent flurry of interest in international student migration, there is still a considerable research agenda to be addressed in this field.

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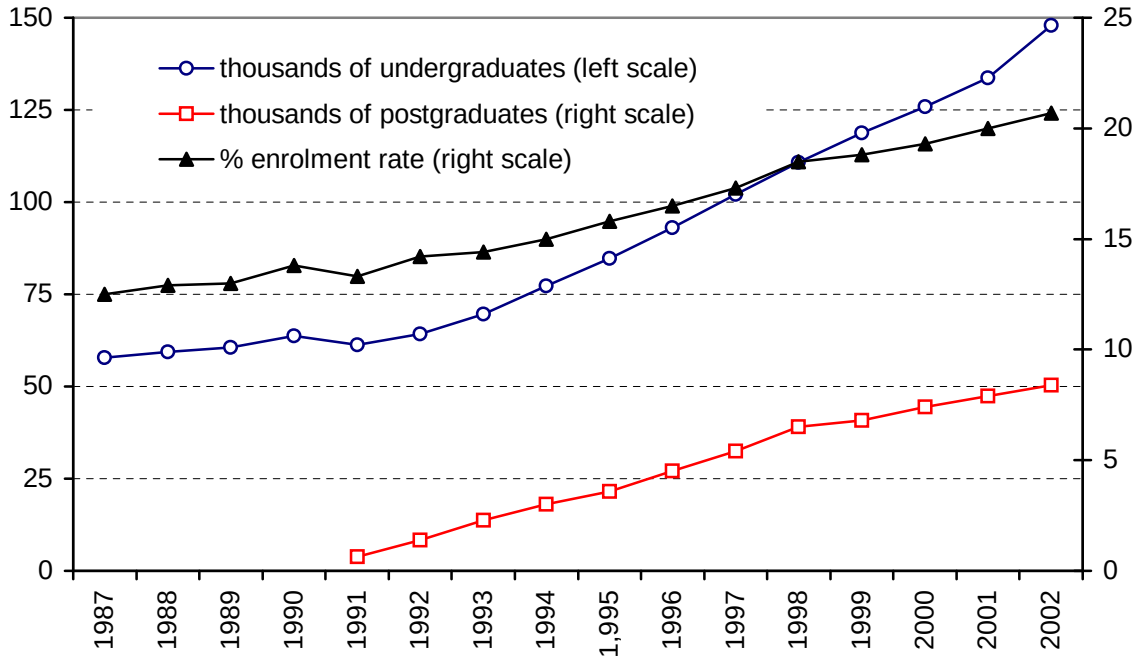

Figure 1: Tertiary education in Slovakia, 1987-2002

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (various issues), *Statistical Yearbooks*

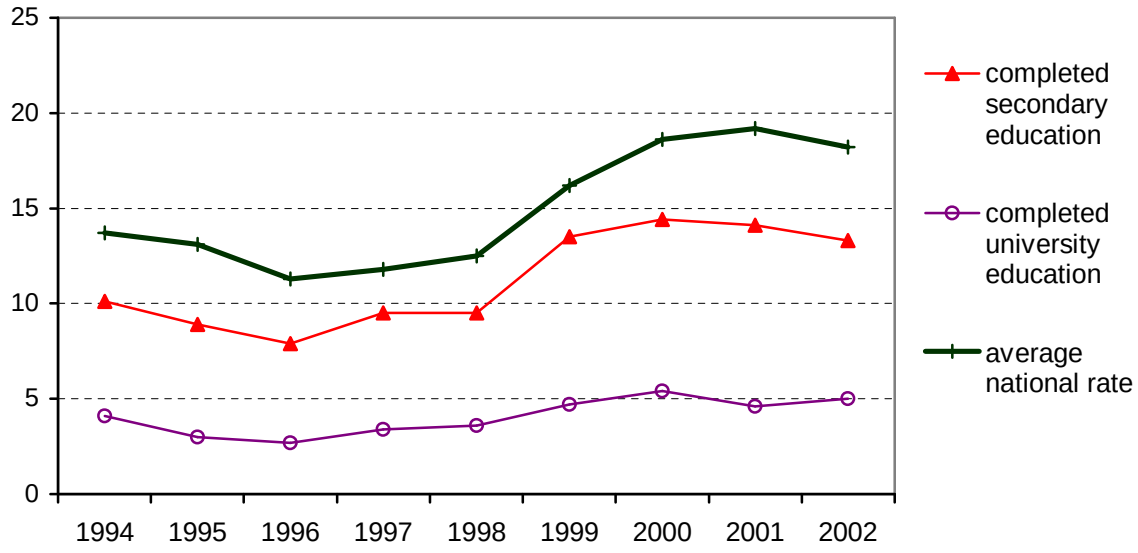

Figure 2: Unemployment rates (%) and education in Slovakia, 1994-2002
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (various issues) *Labour Force Survey*

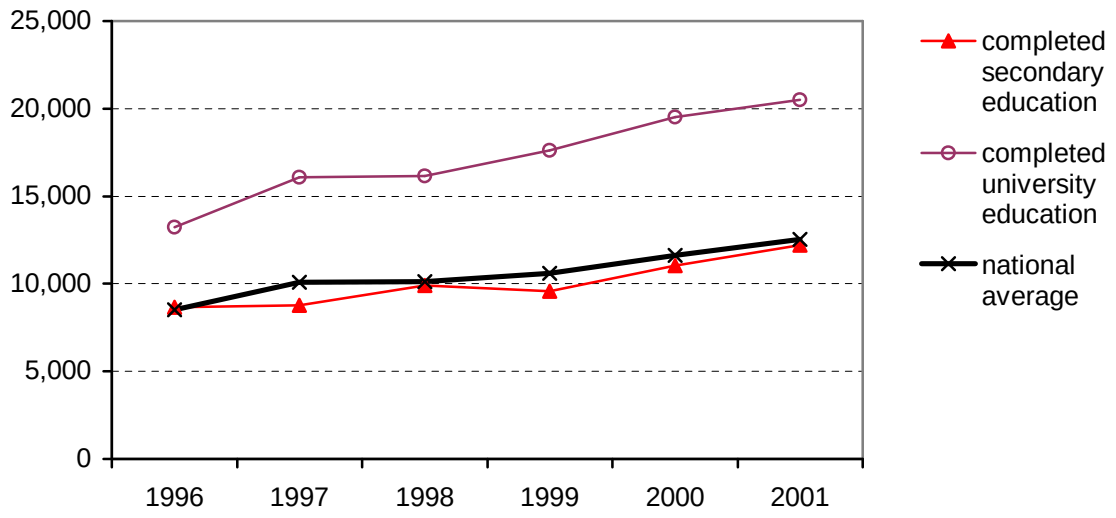

Figure 3: Average nominal monthly wage in Slovakia in relation to education, 1996-2001 (Slovak crowns)

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (various issues) *Labour Force Survey*

Table 1: Selected indicators for unemployment and education for the EU and Slovakia in 2002

	European Union	Slovakia
Average unemployment rate (%)	7.6	18.2
- workers with higher education	4.5	5.0
- workers with secondary education (c)	7.2	13.2
Enrolment rate in higher education (%)(a)	14.0-32.0	20.7
% of the population aged 15-64 with higher education (b)	18.9	13.2

Sources: European Commission (2002a); Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2002)

Notes:

a) The enrolment rate is for 1997/1998 for the EU and 2001 for Slovakia.

b) Population aged 15-64 with higher education: all population in this age group for the EU; working population only for Slovakia.

c) Workers with secondary education: in Slovakia this only includes workers with full secondary education.

Table 2:

Motivations for, and evaluation of main benefits of, studying in the UK (asbsolute numbers)

a) Motivations for studying in UK

Motivations	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Mean**
Better job opportunities	6	7	23	14	5	3.09
Higher salary	11	7	16	13	8	3.00
Acquire skills	12	5	11	14	13	3.20
Improve English language	1	0	1	10	43	4.71
Better career opportunities	8	6	13	18	10	3.29
Better educational opportunities	3	9	12	17	14	3.55
Experience of living in foreign country	7	6	10	16	16	3.51
Other	46	2	1	2	4	1.47

b) Evaluations of their experiences.

Experiences	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Mean**
Acquired qualifications	6	5	16	9	9	2.82
Learned new skills	10	8	12	11	14	3.20
Acquired new ideas	2	1	15	14	23	4.00
Better able to deal with challenges	1	3	16	9	26	4.02
Learned new approaches to work	2	2	11	17	23	4.04
Improved English language ability	1	0	2	14	38	4.60
Enhanced self confidence	2	0	11	14	28	4.20

Source: Authors‘ survey

Notes

1= unimportant’, 2 = less important, 3 = important, 4= very important, 5 = fundamentally important

Table 3

University versus short course students: evaluation of the potential benefits of their experiences (absolute numbers)

Experience	Evaluation	Students		Total
		Short course	University course	
Acquired qualifications	Lesser importance	15	22	37
(0.286 *)	Very or fundamentally important	2	16	18
Learned new skills	Lesser importance	12	18	30
(0.211)	Very or fundamentally important	5	20	25
Acquired new ideas	Lesser importance	10	8	18
(0.349*)	Very or fundamentally important	7	30	37
Better able to deal with challenges	Lesser importance	11	9	20
(0.367 *)	Very or fundamentally important	6	29	35
Learned new work approaches to work	Lesser importance	10	5	15
(0.420*)	Very or fundamentally important	7	33	40
Improved English language ability	Lesser importance	1	2	3
(0.013)	Very or fundamentally important	16	36	52
Enhanced self confidence	Lesser importance	6	7	13
(0.181)	Very or fundamentally important	11	31	42

Source: Authors' survey

Notes:

Short course = mostly non degree-level language courses, and a few students on short non-university vocational courses.

'Lesser importance' constitutes the combined assessments of 'unimportant', 'less important', and 'important'

Contingency coefficients (chi square): there were significant differences between those on shorter courses, and those on university courses, at the 0.05 level, in respect of learning new skills, acquiring new ideas, being better able to deal with challenges, learning new approaches to work, and enhanced self confidence. Significance values could not be calculated in respect of 'acquiring qualifications' and 'improved English language skills'.

Contingency coefficients (shown in parentheses) were calculated using chi square. * = Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4: Motives for going abroad and self-assessment of human capital acquired (absolute numbers)

Self-assessment	**Motive:** *To improve English*		
Experience abroad: *Improved English*	Lesser importance	Fundamentally and very important	Total
Lesser importance	2	1	3
Fundamentally and very important	0	52	52
Total	2	53	55
	Motive: *Foreign country experience*		
Experience abroad: *Acquired new ideas* (0.331*)	Lesser importance	Fundamentally and very important	Total
Lesser importance	12	6	18
Fundamentally and very important	11	26	37
Total	23	32	55
	Motive: *Foreign country experience*		
Experience abroad: *Ability to deal with challenges* (0.396*)	Lesser importance	Fundamentally and very important	Total
Lesser importance	14	6	20
Fundamentally and very important	9	26	35
Total	23	32	55
	Motive: *Foreign country experience*		
Experience abroad: *Acquired new work approaches* (0.295*)	Lesser importance	Fundamentally and very important	Total
Lesser importance	10	5	15
Fundamentally and very important	13	27	40
Total	23	32	55

Source: Authors' survey.

Notes:

'Lesser importance' constitutes the combined assessments of 'unimportant', 'less important', and 'important'

Contingency coefficients (shown in parentheses) were calculated using chi square. *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 5: Capitalising foreign experiences: self-assessments of competences abroad and changes since return in social status, jobs and income (absolute numbers)

			After return: "Improved social status?
Experience abroad: *Acquired new ideas*	yes	no	Total
Lesser importance	2	16	18
Very and fundamentally important	16	21	37
Total	18	37	55
Experience abroad: *Acquired new work approaches*	yes	no	Total
Lesser importance	1	14	15
Very and fundamentally important	17	23	40
Total	18	37	55
Income after return: *higher income now because of UK experience?* (0.379*)	yes	no	Total
Yes	12	9	21
No	6	28	34
Total	18	37	55
			After return: "Improved job position?"
Experience abroad: *Improved English language*	yes	no	Total
Lesser importance	0	3	3
Very and fundamentally important	31	21	52
Total	31	24	55
Income after return: *higher income now because of UK work experience?* (0.300*)	yes	no	Total
Yes	16	5	21
No	15	19	34
Total	31	24	55

Source: Authors' survey.

Notes:

'Lesser importance' constitutes the combined assessments of 'unimportant', 'less important', and 'important'

Contingency coefficients (shown in parentheses) were calculated using chi square. *Significant at the 0.05 level