“A decent life, a safe life”

A mixed methods study of the motivations and challenges of students from the BRICs at UiO and NTNU

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“A decent life, a safe life”

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IV
Abstract

This thesis has been written as part of the M.Phil. programme in Comparative and International Education at the University of Oslo. Its purpose is to explore the motivations that led students at the University of Oslo (UiO) and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) from Brazil, Russia, India and China to study in Norway, and what challenges they have faced here.

The study has been conducted through a quantitative questionnaire and semi-structured qualitative interviews. The frameworks used have been a push-pull framework for motivations, and a framework based on five different challenge areas for challenges. It concludes that students are for the most part pushed out of their country by intrinsic reasons, but are attracted to Norway due to extrinsic reasons, such as financial motivations, existing social ties, or relevant study programmes. Students face challenges in particular when it comes to language barriers and making friends with Norwegians.
Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to my supervisor, Teklu A. Bekele, whose guidance has been invaluable and who has been tremendously available during the past eighteen months. Moreover, I would like to thank my classmates, who have taught me a lot during those two years we had together, and whose regular presence I already miss.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my wonderful parents, whose roof I have shared and whose food I have consumed, who have graciously ignored all my messes during this intense period and supported me through all my various stages of work and/or panic. I promise I’ll get a job and move out now.
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1 Introduction

As the world becomes increasingly integrated, so too does higher education; with this comes the more and more important concept of internationalisation. In Norway, it is possible to see this through government policy, the expansion of exchange programmes such as Erasmus+ and bilateral agreements between institutions, and similar transnational efforts to enable and increase student and researcher mobility across borders such as university centres abroad and co-publication research projects.

Education cannot be separated from politics (Keating et al. 2013), and the internationalisation of higher education is a part of the political and economic globalisation. When it comes to economic concerns, the Norwegian government has shown growing interest in relations with Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), an increasingly important economic bloc first identified in 2001.

A visible and important part of the internationalisation of higher education is student mobility. While there is done research on the perceptions of international students in Norway, both through quantitative and qualitative means, it usually considers all international students as a group, or students from one specific country. Little research is done on Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRICs) specifically as a group in Norway. Research on student motivations and experiences is meant to be beneficial to the participants. The identification and/or confirmation of what factors are important to students can enable institutions to develop programmes with features that consider these factors, and help students deal with and overcome common issues that they face in their academic and daily lives.

1.1 Research questions

The goal of this thesis is to explore the motivations and challenges of BRICs students at the University of Oslo (UiO) and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. My two research questions are as follows:

1. What motivations do students from the BRICs at the University of Oslo and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology state as influencing their choice to study in Norway?
2. What challenges do these students perceive as facing through studying in Norway, both on and off campus?

The reason UiO and NTNU were chosen is because they are two of the largest universities in Norway, and together they cover most academic areas. For instance, UiO has a large selection of courses in the humanities and social sciences, while NTNU is known for their engineering programmes.

This thesis was originally to include South African students due to South Africa’s involvement in the BRICS. However, due to the small size of the South African student population in Oslo and Trondheim (a total population of 4) and the low response rate from those (a total number of 1), it would not be possible to make any generalisations or conclusions about the motivations and challenges faced by South African students in Norway. Thus, the focus of the thesis will be on the BRICs (lowercase s) rather than the BRICS countries (uppercase S), though South Africa will be mentioned throughout the thesis due to its involvement in the BRICS and consequent importance to internationalisation policy.

1.2 Concepts and definitions

1.2.1 The BRICs/BRICS

The “BRICs” term was coined by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill in 2001 and refers to the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China. These four countries were pointed out for their large potential and so-far successful growth (O’Neill 2001). In 2003, a paper by Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman was published through Goldman Sachs, which claimed that the BRIC economies could grow larger than the G6 countries by 2050 in terms of US dollars (Wilson and Purushothaman 2003). In 2010, South Africa was invited to join, and the BRICs became the BRICS.

The idea of BRICs/BRICS has not stood unchallenged. For instance, there has been directed attention to the fact that the Chinese economy is much larger than the other three, and thus could possibly be in its own class (Rothkopf 2009). Moreover, the choice of Brazil, Russia, India and China was regarded as somewhat random: “…it was clear that the selection of these countries was largely arbitrary and could have included other emerging countries such as
Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam” (Schwarzman et al. 2015:1). The inclusion of South Africa, too, was not without controversy. Today, there is debate on whether the BRICS as a unit can become a force coherent enough to shape international relations (Sønnesyn 2014).

Yet the idea of BRICS as the future powerhouse of the world economy has remained. In 2010, Goldman Sachs published a report predicting that China will become the largest individual equity market globally within twenty years, surpassing the United States, and that the BRICs’ (excluding South Africa, as this article was published in 2010) market capital will expand in a similar way. In 2013, China surpassed the US as the world’s largest trading nation (Monaghan 2014). While still poor, India has had a similarly strong economic growth and is now the fourth biggest military power in the world, and is together with China important due to the size of its population. The BNP of South Africa makes up 20% of the total African BNP (Pöyry 2011), and both Russia and Brazil possess large sources of natural resources. Altogether, the five countries represent about 43% of the world population, and 21% of the world GDP (Reuters 2013). Trade has increased between the five (particularly in regards to China), and India, Brazil and South Africa have coordinated themselves politically through the IBSA cooperation since 2003. The group holds an annual summit with the most recent one taking place in Panaji, India.

In addition to the sheer size of the four, now five, economies, the BRICS is also considered important because it represents “the only group of emerging economies which due to their size and economic importance makes for an actual counterpart to the OECD and/or the West in international fora.” (Pöyry 2011) While highly different, these countries are all rapidly developing, both economically and socially, and are very influential in their respective regions. The concept of the BRICS continues to inform Norwegian policy, not only in trade and fiscal matters, but also in higher education.

1.2.2 Globalisation and internationalisation

Globalisation, in its most simple and overarching definition, refers to the increasing integration of the world. Arnove (2013) defines it as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 1). Economic globalisation involves the
spread of neoliberal and capitalist patterns, the breaking down of borders in trade and increased migration of labour. Political globalisation involves the spread of Western-type political ideas like democracy. Cultural globalisation involves the homogenisation of various cultures (Krishnan 2006).

Globalisation and internationalisation is often used interchangeably, also within higher education. While there is general agreement that there is a difference, there is also much overlap and diffusion between the two concepts, and literature proposes various definitions on this difference. In their paper for the 2009 UNESCO Conference on Higher Education, Altbach et al. defined globalisation and internationalisation in higher education as the following:

*We define globalization as the reality shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communications technology, the emergence of an international knowledge network, the role of the English language, and other forces beyond the control of academic institutions. [...] Internationalization is defined as the variety of policies and programs that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization.* (p. iv)

In a similar vein, the Norwegian government white paper Report no. 14 (2008-2009) to the Storting, Internationalisation of education, put this as their working definitions:

*Globalisation is used as a collective term for a range of processes and forces that reduce the importance of distances and national borders. Globalisation is usually perceived as a broader term than internationalization in the sense that it includes interaction between many different cultures over larger geographical areas. Globalisation is a slow and complex process [...] Internationalisation of education and research is seen by many as a part of the national answer to the challenges and possibilities globalisation poses. (The Norwegian Ministry of Education 2009:6)*

This was in part based on the definition of internationalisation in the 2008 report “Handbok i internasjonalisering for norske universitet og høgskular” (Handbook in internationalisation for Norwegian universities and university colleges) by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU):
Internationalisation is the exchange of ideas, knowledge, goods and services between nations over established borders [...] Within higher education, internationalisation will be the process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension in goal, organisation and action. (SIU 2008:7)

Thus, the difference between globalisation and internationalisation in higher education can be explained as globalisation being the overarching process of intensified global interaction across borders, while internationalisation is the response strategy of the national governments and higher education institutions. Internationalisation is often equated with the recruitment of foreign students and the increase of outgoing exchange students. However, the term is not limited to that; it also encompasses other concepts of internationalisation abroad, such as the internationalisation of educational programmes (e.g. joint programmes), international research networks and collaborations, and international branch campuses. Moreover, there is the concept of internationalisation at home, e.g. facilitations for foreign students and researchers at the home institution, access to courses and literature in English, and the establishing of an international office.

1.2.3 Rationales for internationalisation and the knowledge economy

Knight and de Wit (1995) give four rationales for internationalisation; academic, political, economic and social/cultural. These rationales overlap, exist in different combinations, and may differ in both priority and interpretation between stakeholders’ groups. Table 1.1 presents a short overview of these rationales on national and institutional level.

Table 1.1: Rationales for internationalisation (Knight 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National level</th>
<th>Institutional level</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
<td>Institutional building; quality enhancement</td>
<td>Quality enhancement; research and knowledge production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>National building; strategic alliances</td>
<td>Strategic alliances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>Income generation/trade; human resources development</td>
<td>International profile and reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural understanding; increased language skills</td>
<td>Development of the individual</td>
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The BRICs make up an economic group, and the Norwegian government’s approaches to these countries are mostly driven by political and economic rationales. With globalisation there has been an ideology shift in higher education policy circles to neoliberalism, which has led to a wave of privatisation and market dynamics within higher education. Schugurensky (2013) argues that these changes are reflected in a new discourse that emphasises cost-efficency, standardised performance indicators and the idea that disciplines must prove their worth through their contribution to the economy; that “economic imperatives have come to outweigh all others” (Brooks and Waters 2011:22). Kamat (2011) argues that higher education is no longer oriented toward national development, but rather serves the purpose of a global knowledge economy, “however amorphous, ill defined and exclusive such an economy may be” (p. 282).

Internationalisation is often seen in a light of similar ideas; that is, internationalisation of higher education is a response to economic concerns, i.e. the changing needs of the labour market. Morrow and Torres (2013) argue that globalisation has led to the need for a new, modern kind of workforce; “workers with the capacity to learn quickly and to work in teams in reliable and creative ways” (p. 103). Internationalisation could be seen as a strategy to foster an internationally competent workforce and be able to compete on the global market.

The idea of internationalisation within higher education is often linked with the concept of the *knowledge economy*. Powell and Snellman (2004) define the knowledge economy as “production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technological and scientific advance as well as equally rapid obsolescence”, an economy based on intellectual rather than physical capabilities, and more on research and development than natural resources. In this economy-based view, the purpose of higher education is instrumental rather than intrinsic. Robeyns (2006) identifies two roles of instrumental economic importance: *instrumental personal economic importance* and *instrumental collective economic importance*; the first role referring to things such as employment and wages, the second to economic growth at nation-state level. When viewing the role of education through the lenses of instrumentalism, the accumulation of human
capital, that is, “the knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of individuals” (Becker 2006), is key.

According to Becker, any economy today is unable to grow without a considerable investment in education. Educational reforms and priorities are often focused on what the nation-state perceives to be important for socioeconomic development, which is why there is often a push for educating more health workers, teachers and engineers. Seen in the contexts of globalisation and internationalisation, higher education within a country should mainly serve to increase the country’s competitiveness internationally. Internationalisation is a part of this. In the words of Keating et al. (2013): “politics is always implicated in education, and education always serves political causes” (p. 281).

1.2.4 International students and foreign students

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics defines the term “international student” as a student who has crossed national borders for the purpose of studying (UNESCO 2006). They are therefore defined by both their citizenship and by their purpose. According to Teichler et al. (2011), the problem with mapping student mobility is that there often lacks differentiation between genuine mobility and foreign nationality. In the first case, a student has moved to Norway for the explicit purpose of studying at a higher education institution, as either a degree student or a credit student. In the latter case, a foreign student attending a Norwegian institution might have already lived and worked in Norway for years before enrolling, and has therefore not actually been mobile for the purpose of studying. This means that according to this definition, only the genuinely mobile student is an international student, and international students are a subset of foreign students.

Distinguishing between these two groups can be difficult, as statistical data collections on international student mobility tend to lump the two groups into one (Wächter 2014). However, being aware of this distinction can be important if the researcher wants to distinguish the flow of “pure” international student from other migration patterns.

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2006) propose the following three methods of defining an international/mobile student:

1. **Citizenship:** students who are not citizens of the host country
2. **Permanent residence**: students who are not permanent residents of the host country

3. **Prior education**: students who have “obtained the entry qualification to their current level of study in another country” (e.g. upper secondary education for university students, Bachelor’s degree level for Master’s students etc.)

The research population of this thesis are all students studying at a Norwegian university or university college, who hold non-Norwegian citizenships and who have moved to Norway. This includes foreign students, i.e. immigrants who are attending university after moving to Norway for reasons not related to education. I will thus use UNESCO’s first definition, *citizenship*. The reason for my decision to include foreign students is that they make up an important part of the non-Norwegian student mass at Norwegian universities. With today’s increasingly globalised society, both international students and traditional immigrants make up an important part of the student population, although immigrants may not be a part of the universities’ internationalisation strategy.

**1.2.5 Student mobilities**

Wächter (2014) differentiates between *degree (or diploma) mobility* and *credit (or temporary) mobility*. Degree mobility refers to students who study outside their country for a whole degree or similar qualification, in which case I will therefore regard this institution abroad as their “home institution”. Credit mobility refers to students who temporarily (one or two semesters) spend time at a foreign institution, usually as part of an exchange programme, and later return to their home institution to finish their degree.

When doing research on international students' perceptions, it can be valuable to differentiate between the types. As the research of this thesis is on both of degree mobility students and credit mobility students, there will be some comparative analysis, but the term “student mobility” will be treated as an umbrella term for both types unless otherwise specified.
2 Literature review

This chapter will provide a summary of the developments in Norwegian relations with BRICS in higher education, the strategies of UiO, NTNU and Norway in general, the education systems and recent developments in higher education in Brazil, Russia, China and India, and the existing literature on the motivations and experiences of international students in Norway.

2.1 Internationalisation of higher education in Norway in the 2000s

In May 2000, the officially appointed Mjøs committee submitted a paper called “Freedom with responsibility” to the Norwegian government. This report called for the Norwegian higher education system to adapt to the new trends of economic globalisation:

The expectations for the universities and university colleges to develop the knowledge society needs to maintain economic growth and competitiveness in a global economy, and to solve pressing society problems which partially are due to the development of knowledge and technology itself, are increasing. (The Norwegian Ministry of Education 2000: Appendix 14)

Partially based on this, in 2001 the Norwegian parliament approved the quality reform in higher education, which among other things started the implementation of the Bologna process three-cycle degree structure and the ECTS system in Norwegian universities and colleges. This process is called the Quality Reform. The published white paper on this reform (report to the Storting no. 27 “Do your duty – claim your right”, 2001) listed globalisation as a particularly important process that had to be addressed through the reform.

While there is an explicit interest in internationalisation based on economic globalisation, internationalisation is not only a measure for economic gains and strategic political alliances, but also increased academic quality (Luijten-Lub et al. 2005). Report to the Storting no. 14 “Internationalisation of education” shows clear interest in the academic rationales in addition the politico-economic rationales. Internationalisation is a means to “promote increased quality and relevancy in Norwegian education” (p. 5). The goal of the Bologna process is to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications (Hazelkorn and
Ryan 2013), which means that the Norwegian framework for quality in higher education is part of an overarching European framework.

Part of the globalisation strategy of the Norwegian government the last fifteen years have been the facilitation for Norwegian students to study abroad, and also attracting students from particular countries to come to Norway (Wiers-Jenssen 2013). This facilitation includes an increased number of exchange agreements, both bilateral and Erasmus+ agreements, state-funded scholarships and loans for travel and tuition fees, and also an increased awareness of the possibilities of going abroad among students. Standardisation of degree levels and credit systems made it easier to integrate courses taken abroad into a Norwegian degree.

### 2.1.1 The Norwegian BRICs strategy and developments

According to SIU (2016c), based on statistics from the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD), there were 25 691 incoming international students in Norway in 2015, a number that has increased steadily by at least 1000 more students yearly. Of these, 1042 students were Chinese citizens, 228 were Brazilian citizens, 350 were Indian citizens, and 1451 were Russian citizens.

The following numbers are from NSD’s Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DHB) as per August 2016:

Table 2.1: Incoming students from the BRICS 2007-2015 (NSD 2016)

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<td>694</td>
<td>1 029</td>
<td>1 044</td>
<td>1 080</td>
<td>1 064</td>
<td>1 042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. A.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (BRICS)</td>
<td>1 450</td>
<td>1 526</td>
<td>1 947</td>
<td>2 185</td>
<td>2 806</td>
<td>2 935</td>
<td>3 089</td>
<td>3 215</td>
<td>3 106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (int.)</td>
<td>12 997</td>
<td>13 989</td>
<td>15 424</td>
<td>16 458</td>
<td>18 403</td>
<td>19 915</td>
<td>21 897</td>
<td>23 792</td>
<td>25 691</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The largest share of student mobility is between Western countries. The share of Russian and Chinese students coming to Norway has increased dramatically, doubling since 2008. Both are part of the BRICS, and important, prioritised partners in trade and politics for Norway; China for mainly economic reasons and Russia for not only business, but also politically through the development of the Arctic areas.

The BRICS countries, along with Canada, Japan, and the USA, are regarded as prioritized partners in higher education (SIU 2016b). The Norwegian Ministry of Education published “Panorama” in October 2015, which is the 2016-2020 strategy for cooperation within higher education and research between Norway and the BRICS countries and Japan. This strategy emphasises higher education cooperation, mutual student exchange (through for instance UTFORSK, Erasmus+ and INTPART), connections to trade and industry, and interaction between multilateral and bilateral cooperation schemes. Quality, relevance, reciprocity and long-term perspectives are listed as the basic principles.

As per 2016, there are also current students from the BRICs who came to Norway through the Quota Scheme. The Quota Scheme was introduced in 1994, and was a scholarship programme for students in developing countries who wished to come to Norway to get a full degree at Master’s and PhD level. The goal of this programme was to contribute to capacity building in the recipient country (Damvad 2014), and had mechanisms in place to ensure a high return rate of students to their home country. The Quota Scheme is currently being phased out, and part of the funding is proposed to be relocated to programmes focusing on the BRICS countries (Tønnessen and Larsen 2016), a proposal that has been criticised for being too narrow.

### 2.1.2 Internationalisation at UiO

In 2010, UiO adopted their ten-year internationalisation plan called *Strategy 2020*. The strategic objective for UiO in 2020 is the strengthening of “its international position as a leading research-intensive university through a close interaction across research, education, communication and innovation” (UiO 2010:1). Two of the five goals to achieve is “a university transcending borders” and “the university of my choice”, which involves “an active recruiting policy with an international focus ensuring equal opportunities for all” (ibid:4).
Per autumn 2016, UiO only has Master’s degree programmes taught entirely in English; international Bachelor’s applicants must document their Norwegian proficiency when applying, or attend a one-year intensive Norwegian course before the three-year programme (UiO 2016b). Exchange students can apply to UiO through various programmes, such as Erasmus+, Nordplus and Fulbright in addition to the bilateral agreements between UiO and other universities, and can choose between “more than 800 different courses taught in English” (UiO 2016a)

In a 2014 letter to the Ministry of Knowledge regarding the Quota Scheme, the BRICS countries are singled out as prioritised partner countries for UiO (Ottersen and Bjørneboe 2014), and the BRICS are among the prioritised partner countries listed at the Global UiO website (UiO 2016d). These websites mention both China and Russia in particular as longstanding internationalisation partners on a wide area of topics, through research collaborations, co-publications and student exchange. Brazilian research collaboration with UiO is mainly focused around issues of energy, climate and biodiversity, while co-operation with India is focused on topics within the fields of energy, equality, climate change and health. Abroad, UiO is a co-owner of both the Norwegian University Centre in St. Petersburg, the Nordic Centre in India, and the Nordic Centre at Fudan University in Shanghai. At home, UiO’s Department of Humanities offer Bachelor’s degrees with language majors in Russian, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi and Portuguese, and area studies with focus on Russia, China, India and Latin America.

There has been an increase in incoming students from the BRICS. The following numbers are from NSD as per August 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. A.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.3 Internationalisation at NTNU

In their Internationalisation Action Plan for 2014-2017, NTNU identifies their ambition as “to integrate internationalisation in all academic activity in all of NTNU’s academic communities: in all programmes of study, in all research activity and in innovation initiatives” (NTNU 2014:5). One of the three priorities is international mobility. NTNU’s 2020 strategy “Knowledge for a better world” notes that internationalisation is a necessity for the development of high quality.

NTNU has also experienced an increase both their cooperation with BRICS countries and in the number of students from the BRICS, as the following table shows with numbers from NSD shows:

Table 2.3: Students from the BRICS at NTNU 2010-2016 (autumn term) (NSD 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. A.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for their cooperation with the BRICS, NTNU’s report for 2015-2016 specifically mentions cooperation with Brazilian universities through Statoil’s operations in the country, cooperation with Chinese universities through the Join Research Centre model, and funding for global mobility scholarships for students going to Russia (NTNU 2016).
2.2 Higher education in the BRICs

This section will introduce the recent histories of the higher education systems in the BRICs, some important features and issues, and the developments within internationalisation.

2.2.1 Brazil

During the past decades, the Brazilian education system has gone through a massive expansion, fuelled by the economic growth of the country. As of 2013, 89% of all higher education institutions in Brazil are privately owned, and count for 75% of the student mass (SIU 2013a). Along with the growth of the Brazilian economy the past fifteen years, the number of students in higher education increased from about 1.5 million in 1990 to 7.2 million in 2013. Neves (2014) explains the expansion as the result of two factors; the raising aspirations of the students and their families through higher education, i.e. the chance for social mobility, and changes in the labour market.

In 1968, the University Reform Act led to the adoption of several features of American higher education, such as the credit system and the departmental structure, along with a larger focus on research. While federal universities follow the requirements of the 1968 university reform, including a limited offer of places, full-time faculty and an orientation towards research rather than teaching, private institutions are not placed under such restrictions, are often geared more towards teaching than research, and are less competitive (Neves 2014). As such, the public sector is generally of higher quality and remains “small, elite and selective” (Altbach et al. 2009:xì), while the rapid expansion has mostly relied on the increasingly unregulated private sector (Pinheiro et al. 2014).

Access to Brazilian universities suffers from large inequalities. Dos Santos and Guimarães-Iosif (2013) regards the inequalities in Brazilian education as the results of elitist policies that have favoured “the domestic and international market overriding the needs of the majority of the population” (p. 18).

Admission to universities is regulated by an entrance examination called the vestibular, which selects candidates on the basis of academic performance and is unique to each institution. Many courses are oversubscribed, leading to fierce competition, again leading to “the great irony of Brazilian higher education: given the highly competitive nature of the vestibular, it is...
very hard to enter a public university and receive a free higher education without having previously been to a private school and attended a private pre-vestibular course.” (McCowan 2007:585) Access to private institutions is limited due to high tuition fees, though there has been an expansion in courses with lower fees to make higher education more accessible to students from lower socio-economic strata.

As of 2014, net coverage is still below 15% of the age group of 18-24. Castro (2014) argues that this is because of three factors: poor quality of primary and secondary education, the budgetary constraints of public universities, and income concentration. However, since the “University for all” legislation of 2004, mechanisms to increase equity have been set in place, such as quota programmes (both based on ethnicity and socio-economic background), alternative entrance exams, and increased access to loans and scholarships.

When it comes to the internationalisation of Brazilian higher education, the scope has remained small so far, and data on their internationalisation efforts is scattered, and Castro argues that in short, “there is no strategy for the internationalization of higher education institutions in Brazil”. Brazil has also been consistently underrepresented in terms of students abroad (Rivas and Mullet 2016).

However, internationalisation is a priority. The 2007-2010 Action Plan for Science and Technology for National Development mentions the “Extension and consolidation of international cooperation” as a key priority (Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology 2007), and during President Lula’s second term, new federal universities were launched with explicit regionalisation and internationalisation mandates (Sá et al. 2014).

In order to increase internationalisation, the nationwide mobility scholarship programme Science Without Borders (Ciência sem Fronteiras), was founded in 2011, funded primarily by the Brazilian federal government. The programme is founded on the idea that the STEM fields “are a driver of economic growth and that in order for Brazil to realize its potential it must be a more active participant in the international network” (Rivas and Mullet 2016:30); the programme is explicitly motivated by economic factors, which falls in line with the strong presence of neoliberalism in Brazilian higher education strategy (dos Santos and Guimarães-Iosif 2013). It offers international mobility scholarships to universities all over the world (including UiO and NTNU in Norway), mainly to STEM students, on both undergraduate and graduate levels. Its aim was to offer 100,000 scholarships over four years.
2.2.2 Russia

The Russian Federation has gone through major and dramatic changes the past two decades in terms of politics, economics and social issues, which has influenced the educational system. The higher education system in Russia is built on the large, centralised system created during the Soviet era. However, it has been restructured and decentralised, partly because of changing political and economic imperatives and partly as a response to the systemic changes of higher education in the West, driven by mechanisms such as the Bologna process (Zajda 2016). Following the introduction of the market economy in the early 90s and the 1992 Educational Act under President Yeltsin, private universities charging tuition fees were allowed to form, state funding was cut, and the higher education system was thrown into a decentralisation process described as “chaotic”. New focus on academic internationalisation was part of this; the Ministry of Education wrote in 1992 that “[t]oday we are building a bridge from the dead-end branch of the path of human civilization to its global mainstream; academia is the major component in the construction of this bridge” (Dneprov 1992, in Kuraev 2014:210). After 2000 and the ascent of President Putin, Russian higher education policy has taken a new turn towards state-led modernisation and academic standards, with a new increase in funding of research and development (Froumin and Kouzminov 2014).

The majority of Russian higher education institutions are public, of which most are federal, and while federal funding has plummeted, enrolment has increased from 2.8 million students in 1990 to approximately 7 million in 2010, though this number has decreased slightly again (Froumin and Kouzminov 2014). Access to universities in Russia is by the competitive entrance exam konkurs, which requires a high school diploma to take part in. While everyone is guaranteed the right to have access to free higher education according to the Russian Constitution, universities have opened for the enrolment of fee-paying students after filling the quota of free places (Zajda 2016). There has been an expansion of private higher education institutions after it was legalised in 1992, however, they have with few exceptions failed to become central players and are often perceived as being a last resort for students who do not manage to secure a free place at a public university through the entrance examination and are unable to pay the higher tuition fees of public universities (Froumin and Kouzminov 2014).
Another recent development in Russian higher education is the selecting of “leading universities”, which are expected to excel in education, research and innovation, and receive federal funding to achieve this (Knyazev and Drantusova 2014). One of the measures is internationalisation. Russian internationalisation strategy has mostly focused on the recruitment of foreign students to Russia, particularly students from former Soviet countries (SIU 2014b). However, the internationalisation of these leading universities also have performance indicators such as the number of incoming international students, places on international top university rankings, international collaborations, and students and staff abroad.

Large-scale internationalisation is a relatively new concept in Russian higher education. The amount of international students in Russia took a huge hit after the post-Soviet collapse; it took a decade before the numbers began to increase again (Smolentseva 2004). Soviet policies were isolationist in nature, and academic internationalisation was seen as “a vehicle of global Sovietization” (Kuraev 2014:171). This resulted in negative attitudes towards foreign education and a reluctance to adopting non-Russian practices and models. The role of academic internationalisation started to change already with President Gorbachev’s perestroika policies during the 80s. However, Panibratov and Ermolaeva (2016) argue that there is still a strong conservative lobby in Russian higher education which resists the country’s integration into the global education system as “Russian education is the best in the world and does not require any changes” (p. 193).

2.2.3 India

Tertiary education in India before independence was elitist, and access was limited. In the recent decades, and particularly since the turn of the millennium, the Indian higher education system has exploded and diversified:

In 60 years (between 1951 and 2011), the number of universities increased from 30 to 634 (by 7.6 times), the number of colleges from 695 to 33,023 (by 14.4 times), the number of teachers in higher education from 23,549 to 816,966 (by 11.3 times), and the number of students from 397,000 to 16,975,000 (by 28.8 times) [...] India now has the third largest higher education system (behind China and the United States). (Jayaram 2014:195)
Private higher education institutions have also seen a sharp increase, and their share of the student population was about 59% in 2012, which is an increase from 32% in 2001. However, accreditation is voluntary, and the quality of the education varies greatly across the system. The enrolment rate is low compared to the other BRIC countries, at only 18%; access to higher education is uneven with “multidimensional inequalities in enrolment across population groups and geographies” (British Council India 2014:4) in a society characterised by a high degree of structural inequalities; and the low PhD enrolment leads to constraints on research and innovation. Jarayam (2014) argues that the trend in universities is “toward reducing everything to the lowest common denominator or levelling down quality, rather than raising it” (p. 203), due to the political constraints and rigidness of the higher education system. Moreover, funding has not kept up with the rapid increase of enrolment, leading to India having one of the lowest public expenditures on higher education per student in the world (Trilokekar and Embleton 2014). In 2007, Prime Minister Singh referred to the higher education system as being in “a state of disrepair” (Kapur 2010:309).

However, there has been some response to these challenges. According to The National Policy on Education-1986, “steps will be taken to facilitate inter-regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian of requisite merit regardless of his origins” (Indian Ministry of Resource Development 2015: 84). There is a concern with social justice and equality in the constitution, however, “these progressive ideas ran contrary to the pervasive and deep-rooted social hierarchy and severe discrimination deeply imbedded in India’s caste system” (Kapur 2010:318). Part of the government’s response to these challenges is the implementation of the “reservation” policy, where the central government has reserved altogether 22.5% of the seats in higher education institutions for students from disadvantaged groups (Joshi 2014). Additionally, several scholarships for female and disabled students have been announced.

The internationalisation of education in India is not a new issue; it came with the system inherited through a past as a British colony. Most education institutions in India are organised according to the British school system, and English is both the teaching language and academic publishing language. Compared to China and Russia, India has a long tradition of receiving and sending international students, though there is no current overall strategy for attracting foreign students to India; according to Yeravdekar and Tiwari (2014),
internationalisation has not been a priority for the Indian government until recently, and most Indian institutions recruit foreign students themselves.

Linked to India’s higher education development and internationalisation debate are the concerns about brain drain; the number of incoming versus outgoing students is disproportional, and a large percentage of Indian students who study abroad do not choose to return to India after graduation (Altbach 2002). Another concern is related to the establishing of independent international branch campuses by foreign universities; the decision to enable international providers to offer degree programmes in India has been controversial. Those in favour argue that this will improve the quality of Indian higher education, help fulfil the rising demand for higher education places, and simulate the growth of innovative universities with a good mix of foreign and Indian students. Those opposed argue that such a move would increase existing inequalities within Indian society, shift education from a public good concerned with quality to a private good concerned with profit, and encourage foreign diploma mills to set up office in India (Trilokekar and Embleton 2014).

### 2.2.4 China

With the reforms post-1979, Chinese economic policies have gone through great changes and have led Chinese society through a noticeable economic growth. With the careful dismantling of the centrally planned economy through reforms instead of diving straight into market liberalism, China has become regarded as an economic success story with their so-called capitalism with Chinese characteristics (Naughton 2007), which in turn has led to an increase in the individual household’s income.

Facing international competition and the public’s increasing expectations of the massification of higher education, China drastically expanded their university system in 1999 (Wang 2008). In the past, going abroad was actively discouraged and foreign language instruction was poor. However, after the opening up of the Chinese economy in the late 1970s, the Chinese relationship with the rest of the world experienced a shift, and by the early 2000s, the Chinese government had removed most of the bureaucratic obstacles that used to make it hard for Chinese citizens to get passports and go abroad (Fong 2011). In 1995, the Chinese government approved and encouraged the cooperation and joint operation of Chinese higher education institutions with foreign institutional partners, and attracting foreign students to
China became a priority in addition to exerting Chinese traditional cultural influence abroad after China became a member of the World Trade Organization (Huang 2003).

According to Wang (2008), the massive expansion of higher education has caused a few problems for Chinese society in their transition towards an open, export-oriented economy. This transition requires a fundamental change in values, mechanisms, management, teaching content and methods, teachers’ qualifications and training, and causes conflicts within the present values system in higher education. Wang, who sees the internationalisation of higher education largely driven by economic globalisation, argues that impact of globalisation in the Chinese education system can be seen in

the urgency of internationalization of higher education of China with its major objective of training graduates to be competitive on the labour market of both home and abroad. It is required by the accelerating globalization of economies and growing interdependence between all nations involved and the Chinese Open-Door Policy adopted in the late 1970s to start economic reforms and engage China in international trade and business (Wang 2008:507).

The interest in internationalising Chinese higher education can be seen in the push for foreign language learning in the core curriculum, with English as a core subject in high schools, and the opportunity for picking up Japanese as a third language (Fong 2011), and China might boast the highest number of English learners in the world (Yang 2009:147). It can also be seen in the growing number of bilateral agreements with foreign institutions.

While the economic boom has lifted the state out of poverty, inequality lingers and has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Additionally, inequalities in higher education are enforced further by the hukou system, or the residence permit system, which places every citizen in a specific location and within an urban or rural status. A citizen’s residence permit determines where this person has their rights to free primary education, health care and other welfare goods. At the end of the last year of high school, all Chinese students go through a series of exams called the gaokao, which differs from province to province and of which scores determines the individual student’s chance of getting into university. The reason this further enforce inequalities is because Chinese universities and university colleges operate with a quota system where most places at a university are reserved for students with a residence permit in that particular city. For instance, Peking University and Tsinghua
University, highly popular top-tier universities, are both located in Beijing and will thus demand a higher score from students out of town than from Beijing residents (Fu 2013). Students without a desirable institution in their own hometown who lack the test scores to go to another city to study may then, if they have the funding, choose to go abroad to avoid the restrictions of the *gaokao* system.

### 2.2.5 Summary

*It is clear* that internationalization and globalization affect all the BRICS countries in terms of: the institutional models they have adopted; the quality assurance mechanisms that have been introduced; and, the ways in which the national research systems have developed. (Schwartzman et al. 2014:7)

Brazil, Russia, India and China all have experienced significant political changes and economic growth the past decades, and have explicitly pointed at the internationalisation of higher education as a priority, though strategies and results vary. The four countries have different historical backgrounds, which in turn influence the current developments of their higher education systems; Russia and China have opened up from being relatively closed to international influence earlier in the 20th century, while India has inherited a system established during British colonial rule. Both Russia and India have struggled with brain drain, while the Brazilian diaspora remains comparatively small.

### 2.3 Previous studies on the motivations and challenges of international students

There is a large amount of research on the motivations and experiences of international students. This chapter will attempt to sum up some of the literature done on the subject, specifically on BRICs students in general and international students in Norway. More general literature done on motivations and challenges will also be presented in chapter 3.

**Mobility from the BRICs in general**

Many studies have been done on international students and their motivations, though they are often not specified as group by where they come from but rather where they go to (e.g. all
international students in Bergen). This section will first look at some of these types of studies relevant to this project, and then some studies done on student from the BRICs.

When it comes to exchange students specifically, a 2010 report to Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) cited a survey where credit mobility students reported greater confidence, better employment prospects, increased self-reliance and better language skills as imperative for going abroad. “Students go abroad to gain a different experience, enhance their CVs, beat their competitors for certain jobs, have an opportunity to travel. On the whole there isn’t much emphasis on the academic purpose of their time abroad.” (King et al. 2010:25).

Fernandes’ 2006 article on Chinese students in the UK suggested that the Chinese curriculum was outdated, “focusing on traditional teacher-centred learning, with an emphasis on passive learning, examinations, recalling facts and rote learning” (Fernandes 2006:137), which served as a motivating factor to pursue a Western-style education in the UK instead. This was in combination with a traditionally high focus on education by parents, further exacerbated by the one-child policy; this could have an encouraging effect on parents and grandparents to pour their resources into the education of one child and thus enable them to study abroad.

Molly Yang’s 2007 article “What attracts mainland Chinese students to Australian higher education” listed immigration to Australia as the most important factor attracting mainland Chinese students to Australia, combined with the high quality of education and low tuition fees. Yang suggested that Chinese students responded positively to the Australian skilled migration policy of the time, viewing an Australian education as the key to permanent residency after graduation. This study also found that 85% of the participants had not gained admission to their university of choice in China, making access to quality education a critical factor for studying abroad. Bodycott’s 2009 study on Chinese students going abroad and their parents showed that the parents rated the lack of access to higher education in China and improved immigration prospects as the most important push factor. Their children’s top rated motivations were the perceived higher quality of international education, as they were critical of the traditional higher education system in China, and partaking in the international experience. Both parents and students ranked improved employment highly as a motivation.

When it comes to the challenges faced by international students in general, Pedersen’s 1991 paper “Counseling International Students” looks at theories and issues in counseling international students in the US, and concludes that international students “experience a wide
variety of newly acquired roles that compete with their more familiar back-home values in a variety of situation” (Pedersen 1991:50). Coping with these roles is the primary challenge for international students, and the greater the cultural difference between the sending country and the host country, the more complicated this adjustment or coping will be.

Sherry et al.’s 2010 article “International students: a vulnerable student population” argues that problems may occur due to cultural adjustments, dealing with financial and emotional issues and academic differences, facing possible exploitation due to the vulnerability that comes with being in an unfamiliar unknown, and dealing with issues in their home country, both on a national and individual level (such as the death of a family member). Moreover, “international students are often very lonely in their new environment. Such loneliness includes not only the lack of familiar friends and social networks, but also the lack of familiar cultural and/or linguistic environments” (Sherry et al. 2010:34).

Wu et al.’s 2015 paper on challenges faced by international students in the US argues that universities need to be prepared to meet their international students not only academically, but also socially and culturally. Their participants were found to face communication issues with professors, classmates, and university staff, and consequently felt isolated.

International students in Norway

Among studies done on international students in Norway in general, we find SIU’s reputation surveys for international students. Some of the top motivations for studying in Norway in the 2013 report included a perceived high quality of education and the access to programmes and courses in English. There were some differences between the top motivations of degree students and exchange students; for the degree students, free tuition ranked highly, while for exchange students, nature and wildlife and the modern Norwegian society were proportionally higher (SIU 2013b).

The following year, SIU published a report about foreign students’ perception of Norway as a study destination. The respondents of this report were generally satisfied with their studies in Norway; however, they reported that they found the living costs, keeping up an active social life, dealing with the climate, and making friends with Norwegians challenging (SIU 2014a). SIU’s 2014 reputation survey also mentions that respondents from the developing world in
particular mention scholarships, free education and the welfare system as reasons for why Norway was their destination country of choice.

Teshnar’s 2009 qualitative study “International Students in Norway” focused on the motivations of incoming international students and what influences their decision to stay or leave after graduation, and involved in-depth interviews with twelve international students at the University of Oslo. Here, too, free tuition played a major role in the decision to come to Norway, and language issues pose a challenge. “The decision to leave the country after finishing the studies is mostly affected by the fact that students realise that poor knowledge of Norwegian is a great disadvantage that can prevent them from finding a relevant job in the country” (Teshnar 2009:88).

Likewise, Tsering’s 2007 qualitative study on the life challenges of students from developing countries in Norway considered language challenges of international students in Norway, both inside and outside of the classroom, one of the more major obstacles international students face in their daily lives. This study also touches upon the challenges of culture shock in the academic setting (i.e. different teaching methods).

Some studies are done on the motivations and experiences of students in Norway specifically from any of the BRICs. Yu’s 2013 thesis on transnational Chinese students in Norway noted the importance of the concept of filial devotion and parental influence on a student’s decision to study abroad, which combined with various forms of dissatisfaction with their lives in China led Chinese students to go abroad. Norway was regarded as an attractive country to study in due to the free tuition and lower admission competition. Yu’s study also explored how gender related issues influence female Chinese students to study abroad; for instance, five female respondents in this study reported that they went abroad to escape parental pressure to marry.

In late 2015, Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) did a study on Russian students in Norway, their motivations for studying in Norway, and challenges they had experienced during their stay. They concluded that Russian students in Norway were generally more satisfied with their studies in Norway than the Norwegian students (Wiers-Jenssen 2015). Their motivations varied, but free tuition, relevant study programmes, improved career opportunities and quality issues all scored highly.
Additionally, Phang’s 2013 Master’s thesis on the factors influencing international students’ decision to study abroad in Sweden mentions that the majority of their study’s participants had social ties in Sweden, more specifically Gothenburg University, and argues that the “information and recommendations that come from respondents’ family and friends are perceived as ‘trustworthy’ and thus have a strong influence on perceptions” (Phang 2013:35). The students agreed that free tuition was a major point for choosing to study in Sweden, and one participant mentioned that she chose Sweden because the living costs were lower than in Norway. However, while free tuition was a major factor, it is “more important that the programme is interesting than it is free. There are other ways to overcome this like scholarships” (ibid).

To sum up, existing research on the subject seems to indicate that relevant study programmes, the access to courses in English, and the possible improvement of career prospects were important to international students. While the lack of tuition fees was more important to degree students, Norwegian nature and lifestyle was more important to exchange students. The academic purpose of the stay was somewhat less important to exchange students. Research also indicates that international students in Norway experience challenges particularly associated with the Norwegian language, the high living costs and difficulties with having a social life that includes Norwegians.
3 Analytical frameworks

3.1 Motivation framework

An important framework often cited by scholars who study student motivation is Mazzarol and Soutar’s (2002) push-pull model (Oliveira and Soares 2015). This model was first conceptualised by McMahon (1992), who largely used economic factors and GDP to explore the outflow and motivations of students in developing nations. Mazzarol and Soutar later expanded upon this model, adding factors outside of the economic sphere based on four multi-country studies on international students in Australia. In this model, the push factors refer to political, economic and social forces within the source country that push the student to think of going overseas to study as an option. The pull factors are the factors within the host country that move the student to choose that particular country. The decision process to go abroad consists of three distinct stages: the first one is the student’s decision to go abroad in the first place, and involves the local push factors. The second stage involves national pull factors, making one country, in this case Norway, more attractive than other potential host countries. At the third stage, the student chooses an institution, employing a different set of more local pull factors (Mazzarol and Soutar 2002:83).

Their research has been used as a base for several instances for further research on the motivations of international students, and will serve as a base for this thesis too.

The following text and tables sum up the different push and pull factors that will be employed in this thesis. Those factors are taken from a variety of research on student motivations. Several of the factors come from Mazzarol and Soutar’s model, but there are also important factors identified other researchers added in order to make a comprehensive collection of possible motivational factors. I have additionally added the pull factor “Personal growth” in order to include those motivations that are based on what Ryan and Deci (2000) call ‘intrinsic’ factors only; the student’s own wish to go abroad to seek excitement, discover new cultures and make friends, rather than particular structural and economic reasons. In total, there are six push factors and seven pull factors.
3.1.1 Push factors

‘Push’ factors operate within the source country, and are what ‘pushes’ a student to leave their home country to study internationally instead (Mazzarol and Soutar 2002). For this framework, Mazzarol and Soutar’s three original factors are used, in addition to three other factors identified through later research, and which were found relevant to this particular topic.

The first push factor is economic wealth and involvement in the world economy. McMahon’s 1992 study shows a positive correlation between involvements in global trade with levels of overseas study. This entails a country’s openness to trade and otherwise economic relations with other countries, establishing international bonds and thus facilitating international studies. Additionally, a growing economy and more personal wealth make it possible for families to send a child abroad to study (Yang 2007).

The second push factor is the priority placed on education by the government; the educational policy context of a country and the government’s attitude to studying abroad. The government attitude to studying abroad may include removal of bureaucratic obstacles, set goals of the number of students going abroad (such as Brazil’s cooperation with Science Without Borders to send Brazilian students to higher education institutions in the United Kingdom), and similar positive attitudes to studying abroad through policy.

Linked to this is the availability of educational opportunities, or the lack thereof. Even if higher education exists in a country, it may not be seen as accessible or of low quality. For instance, Yang (2007) argues that the fierce competition of the national college entrance exams in China makes affluent parents consider sending their children overseas instead. High domestic tuition fees may also drive students to countries where tuition is low or non-existing for international students; Yu (2013) notes that there was an increased interest in Norway as a destination when Sweden introduced tuition fees for international students.

A fourth push factor is prior international experience, which is not related to the governmental or social context of a country but rather to the student and her family themselves. Research shows that “substantial proportions” (Wiers-Jenssen 2015:22) of Russian students in Norway have previous experience with living abroad, or have parents with this kind of experience. This is significant due to Murphy-Lejeune’s concept of mobility.
capital, a form of both human and social capital that enables individuals to “enhance their skills because of the richness of the international experience gained by living abroad” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, in Carlson, 2011: 7). One can gain mobility capital from different sources: family and personal history, a student’s previous experiences (including language competence), and a positive overcoming of culture shock in the past. The more experience you have with mobility, the more easily do you move, and a student whose parents have a large amount of mobility capital will most likely be inclined to be mobile themselves.

Bodycott (2011) also puts an emphasis on social values and family obligations, particularly in regards to Chinese students. He mentions that a Chinese child may comply with the views of the parents when it comes to choosing a study abroad destination rather than following personal wishes, due to the Confucian concept of filial piety.

The last push factor is studying abroad as a trend, which encompasses a variety of ideas. Emphasis on free trade and movement and a growing view of higher education as a commodity, wrought by neoliberalism, have led to students feeling compelled to distinguish themselves through international studies in the spirit of competition (Brooks & Waters 2011:31).

Another component is dissatisfaction with the student’s home country. Fong (2011) mentions the worldview of Chinese citizens born after the opening up of the Chinese economy, who have “never known a time when the lifestyles of the developed world were anything but desirable and ubiquitous” (p. 72), and blame China’s failure to become part of the developed world on “Chinese backwardness”, such as corruption, laziness, low quality, poverty and the need for guanxi (social connections) to get anywhere in life. This dissatisfaction could also be about other issues than culture, such as perceptions about safety, gender equality, environment etc. While wishing for China to enter the “developed world”, they regarded going abroad and participating in what they perceived as the developed, global society, they would themselves become citizens of that world and achieve upward social mobility for themselves and their families:

Chinese students in my study hoped that, by going abroad, they would transform themselves from citizens of the developing world into citizens of the developed world. Many of them hoped that, after living a few decades in a developed country, they would be able to eventually return to China – but as social, cultural, and perhaps legal citizens of the
To sum up, the push factor “studying abroad as a trend” involves a development where students seek to go abroad in order to distinguish themselves career-wise, escape a society or culture they are dissatisfied with, and experience something different. It is thus related to the pull factor “personal growth”, as it is in part spurred by intrinsic reasons rather than extrinsic reasons. This will be expanded upon in chapter 3.1.2.

### 3.1.2 Pull factors

Pull factors, on the other hand, are the factors in the destination country, in this case Norway, which make it an attractive destination country for the international student. For this framework, six pull factors have been identified. Four are from Mazzarol and Soutar’s framework, and additionally two other factors have been identified as relevant to this thesis; immigration prospects and the idea of personal growth/adventure.

The first pull factor is **knowledge and awareness of host country/host institution.** This involves specific knowledge of UiO or NTNU and their programs and reputations, and whether an education from either of these institutions will be recognised at home. It also entails more general knowledge about Oslo and Trondheim as cities, and Norway as a country. It can also involve knowledge of and attraction to Norwegian culture and society, or the knowledge that both institutions offer access to English-language programs, particularly on a postgraduate level.

To go with that is the second pull factor, **personal recommendations from friends and relatives** about not only studying abroad, but also studying in Norway specifically. Linked with this is the individual student’s **social links** to Norway, in form of friends or relatives already living in Norway or through contact with current or former international students.

Several researchers mention **cost issues** as an important pull factor. As a rule, Norwegian universities offer tuition-free higher education to all students, including foreign ones. Cost issues also include living costs, and related to this is the availability of scholarships. Mazzarol
and Soutar also include social costs in their cost issues, such as crime, safety, and racial discrimination.

A fifth pull factor is **immigration prospects**, that is, studying in Norway to make it possible to stay in Norway after graduation on a long-term or permanent basis, due to career-related reasons (e.g. perceptions about a better job market in Norway or an interest in Norwegian industries such as petroleum or fish), or other reasons (for instance social links such as already immigrated family or a Norwegian spouse).

A sixth pull factor is **environmental reasons**, an umbrella term for e.g. nature and surroundings, climate and weather, but also Norwegian lifestyle and society, perceptions on gender in Norway, and living safely; i.e. the environment that the student will surround herself with.

The final pull factor in this framework is **personal growth**, which includes the student’s perceptions about studying internationally as a way to discover a new culture, make friends, have a fun adventure; what Ryan and Deci (2000) describe as **intrinsic motivations**, that is, the motivation to do something because it is inherently enjoyable. While Mazzarol and Soutar’s framework largely describe **extrinsic motivations** (the motivations to achieve a specific outcome, such as a career), “personal growth” as an umbrella term for these intrinsic motivations are included here because they, too, are cited as an important factor for students going abroad. For instance, Waters and Brooks’ (2010) study on UK students abroad found an “ostensible absence of any explicit strategy” (p. 221), and described students that made a choice to go abroad without any particular career-based motivation. In fact, the accumulation of cultural capital through studying abroad seemed almost accidental in nature rather than a strategic choice, as students cited ‘excitement’ and ‘adventure’ as their core motivations. Basically, according to these surveys, UK students are more motivated by ‘want’ than by ‘need’.
### Table 3.1: Push factors (factors in the BRICS countries)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Possible sub-factors</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Economic wealth and involvement in the world economy** | - increasing trade/economic relations with other countries  
- families can afford sending a child abroad  
- neoliberal principles; higher education as a commodity | McMahon 1992; Mazzarol & Soutar 2002; Yang 2007; Brooks & Waters 2011                           |
| **The priority placed on education by the government** | - attitudes to higher education and the necessity thereof  
- attitudes to studying abroad specifically | Mazzarol & Soutar 2002                                                                            |
| **The availability of educational opportunities** | - high tuition fees  
- competitive admission process  
- low quality institutions | McMahon 1992; Mazzarol & Soutar 2002; Bodycott 2009                                               |
| **International experience**                 | - mobility capital of student  
- mobility capital of student’s parents | Murphy-Lejeune 2002 in Carlson 2011; Bodycott 2009                                               |
| **Social values and family obligations**     | - “filial piety”; going abroad due to parents’ decision  
- going abroad in order to support family later on | Yang 2007; Yu 2013                                                                             |
| **Studying abroad as a trend**               | - perceived improvement in career prospects at home through distinction  
- improving language skills and experiencing a different (Western) culture  
- “cosmopolitan identity”; being a world citizen  
- dissatisfaction with situation at home | Yang 2007; Bodycott 2009; Eder, Smith & Pitts 2010; Waters & Brooks 2010; Brooks & Waters 2011; Fong 2011; Yu 2013 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Possible sub-factors</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and awareness of host country/host</td>
<td>- specific knowledge of the institution and its programs</td>
<td>Mazzarol &amp; Soutar 2002; Bodycott 2009; Eder, Smith &amp; Pitts 2010; Yu 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>institution</td>
<td>- general knowledge of Norway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- awareness of Norwegian culture/society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- recognition of Norwegian education at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- commonality of language (access to English-language programs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal recommendations from friends and relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mazzarol &amp; Soutar 2002; Bodycott 2009; Eder, Smith &amp; Pitts 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost issues</td>
<td>- free tuition at Norwegian public universities</td>
<td>Mazzarol &amp; Soutar 2002; Bodycott 2009; Eder, Smith &amp; Pitts 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- scholarship availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- social costs (crime, discrimination, safety)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>- nature and surroundings</td>
<td>Mazzarol &amp; Soutar 2002; Chen 2007; Bodycott 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- gender equality</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- climate and weather</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social links</td>
<td>- friends and relatives in Norway</td>
<td>Mazzarol &amp; Soutar 2002; Bodycott 2009; Eder, Smith &amp; Pitts 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- contact with current or former students in Norway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration prospects</td>
<td>- Norwegian immigration policies</td>
<td>Yang 2007; Bodycott 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- career prospects in Norway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- seeing education as “key” to staying in Norway/Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal growth</td>
<td>- seeking excitement</td>
<td>Ryan &amp; Deci 2000; Wiers-Jenssen 2002; Eder, Smith &amp; Pitts 2010; Brooks &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- discovering a new culture</td>
<td>Waters 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- intrinsic rather than extrinsic/structural reasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Challenge framework

Studying abroad can come with various types of challenges that might cause significant stress and which will be handled differently between students and between institutions. Few quantitative studies have been done on international students’ perceptions of those challenges. Cultural differences and culture shock can result in added stress in both a student’s academic and non-academic life. Exploring these cultural differences and how they affect the international student’s life, without resorting to stereotypes, is significant when discussing the life challenges of international students.

For the purpose of this study, I have identified four main areas of challenges international students might meet; financial challenges, social challenges, cultural challenges, and academic challenges, through looking at earlier studies of the international student experience. These challenges are not necessarily confined to one ‘box’ – for instance, struggles with language can affect all four areas, and culture defines not only what cultural challenges a student might meet, but also how academia and social relations work within a particular country.

3.2.1 Cultural challenges

Culture, in its broadest sense, is what makes you a stranger when you are away from home. It includes all those beliefs and expectations about how people should speak and act which have become a kind of second nature to you as a result of social learning. When you are with members of a group who share your culture, you do not have to think about it, for you are all viewing the world in pretty much the same way and you all know, in general terms, what to expect of one another. (Bock 1970:ix)

Culture is a broad term, and its definition varies from discipline to discipline. Montgomery (2010) describes it as “not just observable behaviour but a system of symbols and beliefs that are underpinned by rules, meanings and beliefs that are not always obvious or observable” (p. 8). Spencer-Oatey (2008) defines it as a “fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.” (p. 3).
Schein (1984) draws up three levels of culture and their interactions. At the basic level, there are the basic assumptions that are taken for granted and normally invisible; those are assumptions about human nature, activities and relationships, relationships to environment etc. Based on these assumptions are the cultural values, which then manifest in visible behaviour patterns. An example of this could be an individualistic culture versus a collectivistic culture, which manifest in different behaviours based on the underlying assumptions about the roles of human relationships in a society, influencing perceptions about the making and upkeep of friendships, gender roles, family, love and so forth. For instance,

[with regard to general cultural differences, Indians, like many other Asians, tend to think and act with the view that the opinions of the group are more important than that of any individual, and the entire group participates in decision-making for the individual. This can result in a sense of invaded privacy for the U.S. student when Indian friends and/or host family members take an active interest in the student’s life and decision-making. From the Indian perspective, U.S. students’ expectations of independence and privacy can seem self-centered and selfish (Chow and Cho 2011:16).

When experiencing unfamiliar cultures, the traveller might experience culture shock. Kalervo Oberg (1960) defines culture shock as the anxiety one experiences from losing all the familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse, such as gestures, body language, and social customs.

In her book “International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior”, Nancy Adler (2008) describes how global managers, in their initial time abroad, find that “other people’s behaviour does not seem to make sense, and – even more disconcerting – that their own behaviour does not produce expected results” (p. 278-279). She goes on to describe it as a positive thing, as it means the expat is actually engaging with the new culture, but that the stress the change causes can take form in anger, anxiety, embarrassment, and a variety of physiological responses. To conclude, the further the cultural distance between the student’s home culture and the new culture, the worse the potential culture shock. This can have repercussions for the student’s academic and social life.

Another challenge falling under the cultural challenge umbrella might be a feeling of “otherness” and facing discrimination or prejudice. In 2006, Shideh Hanassab did a study on 640 international students at UCLA and their experiences of perceived discrimination. Participants in this study reported being ignored by educators, laughed at by staff due to
accents, feeling unwanted in class, being judged by stereotypes, and facing outright racism if they were non-white. According to Rahman and Rollock (2004), ethnic minority and immigrating students to the United States face unique stress because of their minority status. Cultural challenges may also include bureaucratic challenges, such as obtaining a visa, finding housing and similar issues that may work differently than in a person’s country of origin.

3.2.2 Academic challenges

According to Wan, Chapman and Biggs’ 1992 study of the academic stress of international students, the new classroom experience “can involve role expectations that are not clearly defined and that conflict with their previous academic experiences” (p. 607-608). Brown’s 2008 paper on study-related stress among new international Master’s students in the UK lists four types of academic cultural differences; learning resources, essay writing and references, critical thinking, and participating in discussion.

In the 2007 thesis “The Life Challenges of International Students”, Penpa Tsering interviewed students from developing countries about the life challenges they faced in Norway. He noted that the respondents faced challenges in adapting to the educational methods used in Norway; that the teachers encouraged students to be creative and demanded independent thinking and active participation in class (Tsering 2007:56-57). This, however, varied from program to program, depending on whether the courses were lecture-dominant or not. His thesis also explored a struggle between the often collectivistic cultures of the international students, and the individualistic culture of Norway, and how these differences worked in class.

Novera’s 2004 paper on Indonesian students in Australia mentions that the differences in the concept of ‘power distance’, i.e. how a specific culture deals with hierarchy and authority, was somewhat confusing to the Indonesian students during the beginning of their stay in Australia, as they found it awkward placing themselves in a less rigid teacher-student hierarchy, which in some instances led to avoidance and passivity. As SIU notes in their reputation report of 2014, “Norwegian academic culture is characterised by a relatively low level of hierarchy and quite informal relations between academic staff and students” (p. 32), and that students from different countries reported different reactions to this power structure.
Ryan (2005) discusses what she calls ‘academic shock’ among international students in the United Kingdom, where they have to adapt their approach to learning to better suit the expectations of their new teachers, a situation which can lead to confusion, followed by a period of adjustment. They may have to spend time adjusting to different teaching styles, content, assessment and feedback styles, according to the educational context the student is used to and how it differs from the Norwegian context.

### 3.2.3 Social challenges

This thesis will largely focus on interpersonal relationships between students, i.e. friendships and support between peers, both between different groups of international students, and between international students and domestic students. The reason for this is that the student experience involves a lot of interaction inside the student community, and peer support is regarded as important to well-being among the international students themselves (Montgomery and Dowell 2009).

In his 1960 paper on culture shock, Oberg defines several symptoms of culture shock. Among these are homesickness and “a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one’s own nationality” (Oberg 1960:142). Wu et al. (2015) discuss the issues of communication that international students in the United States face in social situations; due to the differences in communication patterns, the East Asian students often found social events with American students to be awkward, and conversation to be difficult to follow due to language issues. Cultural and language barriers can discourage international students from engaging socially with Norwegian students and make them prefer being with other international students instead, maybe particularly with students from the same or a similar cultural background that the individual student is from; what Adler (2008) calls the expatriate ghetto.

Related to this is the stereotypical perception about the “cold Norwegians” who are aloof, reserved, difficult to meet and difficult to make friends with. While being with other international students can be a source of comfort and familiarity to the student, avoiding social intercourse with Norwegians robs the student of a valuable source of Norwegian cultural understanding and language practice. Additionally, Montgomery (2010) suggests that “whilst international and home students do form relationships, these bonds are more
superficial and peripheral than the relationships across the international student group” (p. 79).

Culture shock can, if not dealt with, lead to isolation and a feeling of loneliness. In these situations, social support is important. A social network can help the student in overcoming culture shock and navigating the new culture (Wan et al. 1992:609).

3.2.4 Financial challenges

While there’s free tuition at both UiO and NTNU, barring a semester fee to the respective student welfare organisations, international students from outside the EU/EEA/EFTA countries must show their ability to fund their life in Norway by giving proof of a certain sum of money when applying for a student visa after arrival. This sum is NOK 103 950 for the school year 2016/2017 (UiO 2016c). The student must prove that they possess this sum at the time of the renewal of the visa every year, and the students must thus have this sum ready every autumn to be able to continue their stay in Norway.

Additionally, many students in Norway, both Norwegians and internationals, partly fund their studies through a part-time job (and full-time job during the holidays), as international students are allowed to work 20 hours a week on a student visa (UDI 2010). For many international students, this may prove an additional challenge by being barred from low-skill jobs requiring a certain level of Norwegian fluency, such as jobs within healthcare or retail.

3.2.5 The role of language

Related to all those four factors is the factor of language. Due to the high level of English proficiency among Norwegians and the large amount of English-language Master’s programs, many students can get by without speaking Norwegian at all in their academic daily life, and come to Norway without proficiency in the Norwegian language. However, knowing the everyday language of a country is helpful in daily life when communicating with local people and obtaining information (e.g. reading news, getting information about public transport, reading menus and so on).

Additionally, language barriers make up a significant source of academic stress, according to Wan et al. (1992). In the case of international students in Norway, this can refer to difficulties
with both Norwegian and English, if the program or course readings are primarily in (academic) English. The international students in Tsering’s interviews mentioned issues with following lectures in English due to the lecturer’s strong Norwegian accent, or when the lecturer would explain things in Norwegian even though the course was in English, thus having an impact on the student’s academic performance.

Table 3.3: Challenge framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge area</th>
<th>Challenge factors</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
<td>- difference in teaching styles</td>
<td>Wan et al. 1992; Novera 2004; Tsering 2007; SIU 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- power distance differences</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- differences in focus/role of education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- differences in assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural</strong></td>
<td>- culture differences, culture shock and related symptoms</td>
<td>Oberg 1960; Bock 1970; Hanassab 2006; Tsering 2007; Adler 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- perceived prejudice and/or discrimination</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- adjusting to new culture, food, language etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- bureaucratic issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>- social contact with Norwegians</td>
<td>Oberg 1960; Bock 1970; Adler 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- social contact with other internationals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- isolation, loneliness, homesickness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td>- student visa financial requirements</td>
<td>SIU 2014; UDI 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- access to part-time jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Language barriers as blocking access to:</td>
<td>Wan et al. 1992; Hanassab 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- social engagement with Norwegians</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- academic participation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- being fully part of Norwegian society, being an “outsider”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- jobs</td>
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</tbody>
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4 Methods

This chapter presents the research methods used for this project; the overall research strategy, sampling, data collection, analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical concerns.

4.1 Research strategy

The research strategy used for this project was a mixed methods strategy; first, a quantitative online questionnaire was administered, followed by qualitative semi-structured interviews informed by the primary findings from the questionnaire. The interviewees were volunteers who had taken the survey and consented to be contacted about a potential interview.

Mixed methods research is essentially research that combines both qualitative and quantitative research strategies, generally in order to be “mutually illuminating” (Bryman 2012:628). There are various approaches to mixed methods when it comes to the order and priority of the two different research traditions, and due to the pragmatic nature of the method, what to use depends entirely on the project. In this project, the quantitative survey came first, as the quantitative strand made up the major part and the qualitative strand is meant to be illustrative of the quantitative strand.

Then, both the research questions and the findings from a brief primary analysis made up the basis for the development of the interview guide for the qualitative interviews that followed. That way, mixed methods can be used for what Creswell (2011) calls development; the results from one method can inform the development of the other method. For instance, in an explanatory sequential design, the researcher first designs, implements and analyses the quantitative strand, and then determines which results will be used to design the qualitative strand. In this project, the quantitative strand was not fully analysed before initiating the qualitative strand due to time limitations. The design of the quantitative strand was thus developed from a partial analysis.

For this research project, the interviews can work as illustrations for the survey results, and give a more complete picture, by having interview participants elaborate upon the findings from the survey. Each of the two research strategies has their own strengths and weaknesses. Through quantitative research, one can reach conclusions than can be generalised; through
qualitative research, one can go more in-depth into specific cases and use those cases to elaborate upon the quantitative findings and create a narrative. In that way, one can make up for the common critiques that each of the research traditions face, such as the suggestion that the scope of qualitative research is restricted due to the problems of generalisation, or the idea that quantitative research methods are static and too tied up to the natural sciences to accurately reflect the social world (Bryman 2012). The rational for using mixed methods in this particular study is thus to use semi-structured interviews to gain contextual understanding of the general findings of the questionnaire, and to create a more complete picture. Figure 4.1 shows the process of the study.

![Mixed methods design](image)

**Figure 4.1: Mixed methods design**

### 4.2 Procedure and response rates

#### 4.2.1 Research population

As stated earlier, the population of this study is foreign students from the BRIC countries (originally BRICS countries) at the University of Oslo (UiO) and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). As this population was defined before the 2016 merger,
this study only includes NTNU students from Trondheim, not Ålesund and Gjøvik. The reason for choosing these two institutions is that they are two of Norway’s largest universities, each with a high international student population, and together they cover most academic areas.

The population was reached through contacting the respective international offices of UiO and NTNU. In table 4.1 are the total numbers of the population I received from UiO and NTNU in October 2015:

Table 4.1: Research population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NTNU</th>
<th>UiO</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the later removal of South Africa from the equation due to the low population size, the overall population was 608.

These numbers may not be exact. They were pulled from the administrative database Felles Studentsystem (The Common Student System, FS), but it could not be guaranteed that all those students were active per October 2015. Moreover, while it was specifically asked for Bachelor’s and Master’s student, it has later turned out that an unknown number of PhD students replied to the questionnaire. As “PhD” was not put as an educational level option in the questionnaire, they are mixed in the catch-all category of “Other” along with NORA students, single course students and so on.

An issue Bryman (2012) raises when it comes to online surveys, is that they are restricted to online populations; access to internet is not yet universal. However, all students at NTNU and UiO are given an email account they are expected to check regularly, and have access to
computers in the libraries and computer labs on campus. Thus, this should not cause a representation bias.

### 4.2.2 Quantitative study procedure

Early on, it was decided that simply sending the survey to the entire population at once would be more beneficial for this project than using a sampling method. I first considered stratified random sampling, as it seemed useful in order to receive representative results. Using stratified sampling has several advantages, as it ensures that “the resulting sample will be distributed in the same way as the population in terms of the stratifying criterion” (Bryman 2012), in this case nationalities, which is far more difficult when using simple random sampling.

However, the population size of this study is relatively small, and in general the response rate for questionnaires, both online and offline, is known to be notoriously low (Bryman 2012; Nulty 2008). Sending the survey to every single member of the population was a way to counteract this trend. Thus, the sampling method used in this study was total population sampling. Total population sampling is by definition a type of purposive sampling rather than probability sampling.

The total number of responses to the questionnaire and their respective percentages of the total population are presented in table 4.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NTNU</th>
<th>UiO</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>21 (61,7%)</td>
<td>23 (47,9%)</td>
<td>44 (53,6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>6 (33,3%)</td>
<td>43 (22%)</td>
<td>49 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>8 (47%)</td>
<td>10 (24,3%)</td>
<td>18 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>20 (28,1%)</td>
<td>49 (26,6%)</td>
<td>69 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (33,3%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>55 (39%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>126 (26,7%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>181 (29,5%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As table 4.2 shows, the response rate of each country is between 23% and 53.6%. Moreover, the response rate of students from NTNU is higher than UiO in all cases except for South Africa. The lowest response rate is from Russian students. After administering the questionnaire, three Russian students sent individual emails explaining that they had lived in Norway for close to a decade and did not regard themselves as international students anymore, and would therefore not participate. It could be that the lower Russian response rate is in part due to this, though this remains purely speculation.

The questionnaire was distributed in late October 2015. After the questionnaire closed in mid-December 2015, a brief primary analysis was conducted in order to inform the design of the qualitative interviews. This primary analysis consisted identifying the most common trends of each country, and particularly in finding similarities and differences. For instance, that a larger percentage of Russian students disagreed with the notion that their government encourages students to go abroad, or that a larger percentage of Indians had not been abroad before coming to Norway, while most Russians had experiences of travelling.

In order to boost the return rate, participants could sign up for a gift card lottery after responding, where they could win one of three 200 kroner universal gift cards. The respondents were assured that they did not need to volunteer for interviews in order to win. Those who entered the lottery were sorted randomly, and the winning numbers were drawn through a random number generator.

### 4.2.3 Qualitative study procedure

The subject of this project boils down to perceptions. The experiences that may lead to these perceptions happen over time, and can be difficult to describe through checkboxes in a survey, which is why the questionnaire was followed up by in-depth interviews with a group of volunteers.

At the end of the quantitative questionnaire, the respondent was asked if he/she would be willing to be contacted about an in-depth interview later. They were then given the link to a different questionnaire where they submitted their email address, in order to ensure that their email address could not be linked to their questionnaire response and therefore compromising their anonymity. A total of 66 people volunteered, 18 interviews were conducted, and altogether 13 interviews were transcribed and coded to be analysed.
Table 4.3: Number of transcribed and coded interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NTNU</th>
<th>UiO</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first part of the interview was similar to the survey, and involved questions about the student’s motivations for going abroad, coming to Norway, their arrival in Norway, and their experiences of their academic and social lives. The students were then asked for suggestions for improvement of the international student experience in Oslo/Trondheim, and their future plans. The second part of the interview was based on the primary findings from the surveys. The student was presented with the main motivations and challenges reported by students from their country, and asked about their views on these results.

The rationale for presenting these numbers was to gain context and make the respondent think outside their own experiences, as it is sometimes easier to talk about more sensitive topics, such as governance, cultural pressure, or social expectations, if it is discussed in general rather than personal terms. This was done after finishing the questions about the student’s own perceptions, in order to ensure that their ideas would not be coloured by the general trends of the questionnaire. Before beginning the interviews, a pilot interview was conducted with a volunteer Brazilian classmate, in order to test the interview questions and practice my interview technique.

The interviewees are presented in the following table. The names are pseudonyms, in order to preserve the respondents’ anonymity. This table also presents the participants’ nationalities, ages, genders, degree level and whether they are exchange students or full degree students, the year they arrived in Norway, their courses, and their institutions.
Table 4.4: Overview of interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Arrival</th>
<th>Course type</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jorge</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bachelor’s (exchange)</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>NTNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikhail</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>NTNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalia</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor’s (degree)</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irina</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darja</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavleen</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Urban planning</td>
<td>NTNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nito</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Health management</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>NTNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Geosciences</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yan</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Master’s (degree)</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xue</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Both (degree)</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>UiO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews themselves were held in classrooms at UiO, various coffee shops in Oslo, or over Skype, depending on what was more convenient to the participant. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes at the shortest and 2 hours at the longest. Each interview was recorded with the explicit consent of the participant.
4.3 Variables and analysis

The *independent* variables in this project are nationality, age, sex, institution, mobility type, and degree level. The *dependent* variables are motivations and perceptions about challenges, as seen in chapter 3. The variables of mobility capital, that is, earlier international experience, and planned duration of stay are independent or dependent depending on with what they are combined.

These variables are all on a nominal level, though some of the questions in each section of the survey were done through a Likert scale. The set-up of the Likert scale was thus: 1: Strongly disagree; 2: Disagree; 3: Neither agree nor disagree; 4: Agree; 5: Strongly agree.

For the analysis, descriptive statistics will be used; frequency distributions, percentages, and central tendency. For inferential statistics, Pearson’s chi-square test with a significance level of .005, which compares observed to expected frequencies, will be used in combination with Cramér’s $V$ to determine the strength of a relationship. The strength of the $V$, according to Cohen (1988), is 0.1 for low, 0.3 for medium, and 0.5 for high relationship strength.

This is a common combination of analytical tools used to measure relationships between variables on a nominal level. When comparing variables with a larger amount of indicators, making the number of expected responses to each combination fewer than 5, only the items with more responses will be analysed further. This is necessary as if the number of cells with an expected count of less than five rises above 20% in any combination, it affects the reliability of the test negatively.

4.4 Reliability and validity

Social science researchers must consider two important psychometric properties when doing a study: reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept (Bryman 2012). Validity refers to whether a measure of a concept really measures that concept. The concepts are heavily related, and are both vital to both quantitative and qualitative research, though there are differences in how they are defined in each tradition, and reliability is somewhat less of a concern within qualitative research.
4.4.1 Reliability and validity in quantitative research

When measuring a concept, the researcher should use multiple items rather than just one, in order to ensure that all participants are correctly classified, and catch more than one possible aspect of a concept (Bryman 2012). For internal reliability, one needs to make sure that those indicators are actually measuring the same thing. A common way to test this is to use Cronbach’s alpha (α) (de Vaus 2002). While what constitutes an ‘acceptable’ alpha level is debated and may vary between areas of study, though Hinton et al. (2004) suggest that scores between 0.5 and 0.7 are moderate.

In table 4.5, the alpha values of the Likert scale challenge items are listed. Note that as the language challenge usually overlaps with some other challenge (e.g. academic), the items concerning this group have been added to their overlapping group.

Table 4.5: Reliability for challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenge: academic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge: cultural</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge: social</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge: financial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.669</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the motivations part consisted of more items on a nominal level rather than scales, using Cronbach’s alpha to measure reliability was not feasible to do in the same way.

When it comes to validity, the overarching concern of validity is whether a measure of a concept really measures what it is meant to measure. There are several different ways of gauging validity.

Content validity refers to “the extent to which the indicators measure the different aspects of the concept” (de Vaus 2002:54). A concept may have many different aspects to it, and content validity depends on how these aspects are defined through the literature review and analytical framework. There has been an attempt at ensuring content validity by ensuring that each concept was represented in the questionnaire by multiple indicators instead of just one; for instance, five different Likert scale items represented the concept of ‘academic challenges’.
As another example, in Chapter 3, the push factor “availability of educational opportunities” were broken into several aspects, such as perceived low quality institutions and competitive admission processes.

External validity refers to whether the conclusions of a study can be generalised to another setting (Trochim 2006). A way to increase the external validity of a study is to use a type of probability sampling rather than non-probability/purposive sampling. As mentioned earlier, total population sampling is a form of non-probability sampling. However, due to its very nature, this sampling type does not involve the larger chance of researcher bias often associated with non-probability sampling as it includes the entire population rather than a selection process based on convenience or the researcher’s judgment. However, only those interested in participating would do so; this might lead to issues with generalisation anyway.

An issue with questionnaires is that participants will have to interpret each question themselves and cannot directly ask for clarification if there is a term he or she does not understand. The participants were given the researcher’s email address in case they had any questions or concerns. However, if a questionnaire item seems unclear to a participant, it takes less effort to choose an interpretation than to send an email for clarification. To ensure that this happens as little as possible, each question was made as clear as possible, by making sure that only one concept was asked about in each item and by clarifying any terms that might be open to different interpretations. For instance, when a questions about cultural shock was asked, the term was defined as “frustration, stress, anxiety, uncertainty, anger, physical discomfort etc. due to cultural differences”. However, there will always be a possibility of different interpretations by participants.

4.4.2 Reliability and validity in qualitative research

Reliability and validity are subjects of debate when it comes to their relevancy and adaptability for qualitative research (Bryman 2012). On one hand, the differences in purpose of the two traditions could make it difficult to translate the quantitative understandings of reliability and validity into qualitative understandings, or as Golafshani (2003) states: “The difference in purposes of evaluating the quality of studies in quantitative and qualitative research is one of the reasons that the concept of reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research” (p. 601). Instead of replicating the two concepts directly, other criteria have been

Trustworthiness includes several criteria, two of which are credibility and confirmability (Bryman 2012; Guba and Lincoln 1994). Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the data when compared to the actual reality of the research participants. A method to achieve this is triangulation, i.e. the use of more than one source of data or method in social research. While triangulation was not the main purpose of using mixed methods in this study, the interview results were compared to the earlier questionnaire results. Confirmability is concerned with ensuring that “the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith” (Bryman 2012:392), i.e. that the researcher does not let personal biases colour their conduct and analysis. While full objectivity is close to impossible, the creation of the interview guide and the subsequent coding and analysis of the interviews were done while keeping the perspectives of the participants in mind.

### 4.5 Ethical considerations

All social research exists within a context, and ethical issues is a concern at all stages of a research project alongside with technical and practical concerns (de Vaun 2002). A set of steps were taken in order to ensure that this project remained ethically sound.

The participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study in the cover letter in the invitation email they received, and had to explicitly consent to participate in order to access the questionnaire. Anonymity and confidentiality was explicitly ensured for all participants, both before the survey and the interviews, and were told that they were free to withdraw at any time, for any reason.

The contact information of the population was obtained through official means at both universities, and data collection for this project has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Data Research. Before allowing me to contact the population, both universities received an official fieldwork form from the Master’s programme of which this thesis is a part. No personal data or contact information have been shared with any third party. The participants were also given the researcher’s email address, should they have any questions or concerns.
5 Results

This chapter will present the results and analysis of the questionnaire and the interviews. It is divided into three parts. The first part will give an overview of the demographic spread of the respondents. The second part will present the findings on motivations, i.e. the first research question, and the third part will present the findings on challenges, i.e. the second research question. All correlations listed are those who were found statistically significant or interesting percentage-wise, though all variables will be tested for correlations.

5.1 Demographic results

As seen in table 5.1 in chapter 4.2.3, 23% of the Russian population, 27% of the Chinese population, 31% of the Indian population and 53% of the Brazilian population responded. It is unknown why there is such a leap between the response rates of the Brazilian students and the students from other countries. Altogether, approximately 30% of the entire population responded to the questionnaire, with a somewhat higher response rate of NTNU students compared to UiO students.

The demographic data of the respondents are presented in the following table. This table presents the ages, sex, degree levels, mobility types and programme types divided between nationalities.

Table 5.1: Demographic data of questionnaire respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTNU</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UiO</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prior mobility

As mentioned in chapter 3.1.1, prior international experience leads to mobility capital, which in turn makes a student even more likely to be mobile. The vast majority of students from the BRIC countries had not visited Norway in the past, though there were differences between the countries.

Table 5.2 presents the questionnaire respondents’ prior mobility experience. The top half shows the respondents’ prior experiences with Norway, while the bottom half shows the respondents’ prior international experience in general.

Table 5.2: Prior international experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobility type</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never been to Norway</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been to Norway</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never been abroad</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been abroad</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From this table, it is possible to discern that while the majority (58%) has no prior experience with travelling to or living in Norway, 42% does have some experience with Norway already, and 68% have been abroad in the past, either through studying, working or travelling.

The result of a Pearson chi-square test of independence shows that $\chi^2(3, N = 180) = 14.86, p = .002$, meaning that there is evidence of a relationship between the variables of nationality and prior international experience, and with a Cramér’s $V$ of 0.287 it can be concluded that the degree of this relationship is moderately strong; i.e. that students from a particular nationality are more likely to have been abroad in the past.

**Planned duration of stay in Norway**

The last demographic variable to be looked at is the participants’ planned duration of stay in Norway.

Table 5.3: Planned duration of stay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 year</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinitely</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, the number of respondents answering “indefinitely” is somewhat higher than the number of respondents answering “permanently”. This is also reflected in the interviews, where several of the students showed an open attitude towards their future plans, which will be presented in chapter 5.2.2.

By collapsing the categories into four (“One year or less”, “One year+”, “Indefinitely” and “Permanently”), we can do correlation tests. When looking at the relationship between gender and planned duration of stay, we get $\chi^2(3, N = 180) = 17.85, p = .000$ and a Cramér’s $V$ score of 0.315, showing evidence of a moderately strong relationship between gender and planned duration of stay.
duration of stay. In fact, while only 26% of the male respondents planned to stay either indefinitely or permanently in Norway, 57% of the female respondents reported the same.

5.2 Results on motivations

The first part of both the questionnaire and the interviews explored the student’s motivations for going abroad, and for coming to Norway.

5.2.1 Push factors

The participants were asked to identify the most important reason in their home country for going abroad (i.e. a push factor). The results are presented in figure 5.1:

![Figure 5.1: Primary push factors](image)

Some of these items are the combination of several items. These are “Encouragement”, which is the combination of the participant feeling encouraged by their government to go abroad (15 out of 28) and the participant feeling encouraged by their institution to go abroad (13 out of 28), and “High costs” which is the combination of high tuition fees at home (4 out of 4) and high living costs at home (0 out of 4).
As seen from this figure, the most reported primary push factor was “Trend”, i.e. personal growth, meeting a new culture etc. 45% of the respondents chose this as their primary motivations for leaving their home country. The second most reported primary push factor was the possibility of improving career prospects back in their home country, with a response rate of 16.1%. The third most reported push factor, “encouragement”, refers to whether the student felt encouraged by their country’s government and/or their home institution to go abroad, and 15.5% reported this as their main push motivation.

There were found some response variations between primary push factor and the demographic variables. When it comes to nationality, a disproportionally high percentage of Brazilians reported that their primary motivation was encouragement from their government or home institution (34.1% vs. an average of 9.5% across the other three countries), while a disproportionally low percentage of Brazilians reported “trend” as their primary motivation (22.7% vs. 52%).

As for exchange students versus full degree students, it was found that while 50% of exchange students felt encouraged by their government or institution, only 4.4% of full degree students felt the same. A larger proportion of full degree students were primarily fuelled by “trend” (49.3% vs. 31.8% of exchange students). No exchange students were primarily motivated by a lack of study programmes, high costs, competitive admission process, family pressure, security reasons or “Other”, which means that all responses in figure 5.1 are by full degree students.

Participants were then asked to list up to three secondary push factors. The results are presented in figure 5.2:
Trend remains the largest category, as 43.8% reported it as one of their most important secondary motivations, immediately followed by improvement of career prospects at home, at 41.6%. Family pressure, whilst the least chosen primary motivation, is in shared fourth places as a secondary motivation with encouragement, both at 21.1%.

In table 5.4, the most common combinations of primary and secondary motivations are presented. N is the number of individuals who chose that particular primary motivation.

Table 5.4: Combinations of primary and secondary push motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary motivation</th>
<th>Common secondary motivations (% of N)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Trend (75%), career prospects at home (57.1%)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive admission process</td>
<td>Career prospects at home (50%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career prospects at home</td>
<td>Trend (79.3%)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend</td>
<td>Career prospects at home (48.1%), encouragement (20.9%), lack of study programmes (19.7%), security issues (17.2%)</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Push factor relationships

The variables were then tested for significant relationships. As there was such a gap between the items, the three most commonly chosen motivations (trend, encouragement, and career prospects at home) were picked out and run through a chi-square test. This is because doing chi-square tests with the least chosen items would result in chi-squares where over 20% of the cells have an expected number of less than 5, which would impact the reliability of the test, as mentioned in chapter 4.3. The relationships that were found to be significant through this test are presented in table 5.5:

Table 5.5: Significant relationships between primary push motivations and demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Chi-square test</th>
<th>Cramér's ( V )</th>
<th>Relationship strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (25 and below, and 26+)</td>
<td>( \chi^2(2, N = 138) = 22.30, p = .000 )</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility type</td>
<td>( \chi^2(2, N = 138) = 36.29, p = .000 )</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>( \chi^2(6, N = 138) = 22.68, p = .001 )</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>Low-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>( \chi^2(2, N = 138) = 18.58, p = .000 )</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likert scale questions

The following table presents the Likert scale questions on motivations, and the overall percentages of participants who agreed (A), were neutral (N) or disagreed (D) with each statement.

Table 5.6: Likert scale questions on push motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My government actively encourages people to go abroad</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I went to Norway because of limited access to HE at home</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I went to Norway because of social pressure to go abroad</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I went to Norway because my family thought I should</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of these items showed interesting variations within. For Item 1 (“My government actively encourages people to go abroad”), there were some discrepancies between the countries; 65.9% of Brazilian students were in agreement with the statement, Chinese and Indian students were mostly neutral (46.4% and 50% respectively), while 69.4% of Russian students disagreed. This item was discussed specifically with the Russian interview participants. The responses were mixed.

**Darja:** You’re kidding. Our government? [You’re] allowed to go abroad for half a year, but it’s not... the credits you get here don’t count. It’s nothing there. You have to pass all the exams after that, or before. [...] Putin said, well, it’s your choice if you want to live in a country with foreign, alien language and culture, it’s your choice. [...] It sounds like you’re a traitor.

However, the students from the other countries were also mixed in their responses.

**Wei:** If they want people to go abroad, they would set more scholarships, they would at least make it free to use Facebook [laughs]. From my experience, I don’t think China has that kind of thinking. Like, plan or attitude to promote students going abroad.

Item 1 also had a difference in agreement rate between exchange and full degree students, as 68.2% of exchange students agreed, while only 24.3% of full degree students did.

Item 3 (“I went abroad because my family thought I should”) had slightly more Russian participants agreeing (30.6% versus 13.6% to 22.2%).

**Interview responses**

The interview participants were first asked to discuss what prompted them to go abroad in the first place. Many of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the educational situation or their lives in general back home.

**Lavleen:** I was very much determined to do my Master’s from abroad [...] because you know in India, the education system is quite... rigid, it’s not flexible. And I wanted to really grow my ideas before I go out in the professional world. So I knew that I had to get some part of my education from outside.
**Darja:** The thing is that in Russia, education is pretty undeveloped... when I came here, I was like, oh my god, we live like fifty years back. [...] I would struggle against hierarchical [systems], I hate that. I always hated that in Russia. [...] That’s why I enjoy Norway a lot.

**Jorge:** When I decided that I wanted to move out of Brazil, I was tired of it, and I wanted to run away. [...] I wanted something different, I didn’t know what it was exactly and I decided to go on the exchange student programme.

**Lin:** I worked [in China] for four years as a geologist. But after quite boring work, and also I was bored with those network things, you know, in China... so I’m thinking that maybe I have to change my life a little bit. 

Except for the Indian students and one of the Chinese students, all of the interview participants had gone travelling abroad in the past. Moreover, the Chinese student, Yan, had attended high school in Shenzhen and university in Beijing when she herself was from Xinjiang province, and had thus experience with moving around in China. However, five of the participants made it clear that their international experience made them part of a privileged minority.

**Maria:** It’s not like, a very common thing that Brazilians have opportunities to experience different cultures. It’s not common at all. Like, if you do not come from the very rich and small part of the Brazilian population, you probably never had the opportunity to step your feet out of the country. You know, it’s a very small population... part of the population that actually has the experience, the opportunity for international experiences.

**Yan:** In Europe, it’s really normal for you to go abroad because it’s really near to each other, every country, but in China, this country’s so big, and also, travel abroad means you need to pay a lot of money. I talk too much about money, but it’s really...

**Darja:** You need to either receive a scholarship from that country or be part of a rich family. That’s why... you know that there’s only four percent of Russians that have been abroad ever? So we’re among the luckiest.

Additionally, both Nito and Irina expressed that the social expectations in their respective home countries would mean that they were too old to study, and the age diversity in Norwegian Master’s programmes was a relief. Xue, who moved to Norway in 2007, said it
was increasingly difficult to relate to her Chinese peers due to the different social expectations they face.

**Xue:** Personally I think it’s more and more difficult... during a conversation amongst friends, they are talking about having children, or they are pushed by their parents or others to have children, and now, on Sunday, it’s the Chinese new year, so a lot of my friends are complaining about this pressure [...] And you have to find an excuse of why you don’t want to have children now.

While all of the participants said going abroad was their own choice and not one made due to the family pressure, several found the support of their family very important. Yan was relieved that by not having to pay tuition fees, she felt less of a financial burden on her parents. While her mother was of the opinion that she should marry and settle down, her father encouraged her to broaden her horizons through international experience. Wei said that he had his parents’ blessing to go abroad, but that it would have been difficult without their support even though he had the finances. Both Nito and Irina’s mothers were initially against them going abroad. Darja described her parents as “very conservative”, and that since having her family’s support was important to her, she enlisted the help of her family’s friends to convince her parents going abroad was a good idea. Lin thought that due to the Chinese one-child policy, a student could receive support from their whole family to go abroad, as having a foreign educational background “sounds very nice” to the parents. Lavleen was supported by her family in her choice, but said she would had gone anyway, a sentiment shared by several other participants.

**Lavleen:** I would still do it anyway. [...] Because in the end it was my decision, and I was pretty sure to get all the fundings and everything, so when I had all the opportunities there was no way I was not going to take it.

**5.2.2 Pull factors**

The questionnaire respondents were first asked to pick their top motivation for coming to Norway specifically, that is, the most important pull factor. The following chart shows the top motivations for the BRICs overall:
The categories that allow to do so have been combined into one. The pull factors Norwegian nature, Norwegian safety, and Norwegian culture/society have been combined into “Attraction to Norwegian society”. The pull factors friends in Norway, family in Norway, and spouse in Norway have been combined into “Social ties to Norway”. This was done in order to enable cross tabulation.

As seen from this chart, 27.8% of the participants had a financially related primary motivation to study in Norway, either because of the lack of tuition fees for international students or because they were awarded a scholarship award, such as the Quota Scheme or Scientists Without Borders. 21% regarded relevant study programmes as their main motivation, 12.7% were attracted to Norwegian culture, society and nature, and 12.2% were motivated by having family, friends or spouses in Norway.

The questionnaire participants were then asked to name up to three motivating secondary pull factors.
Figure 5.4: Secondary motivations for studying in Norway

This figure, too, shows the individual responses, which is why it exceeds 180. Relevant study programmes and free tuition both remain important, though scholarship awards and social ties seem to figure far more often as a primary motivation than a secondary one. Some differences between exchange and full degree students were identified. 81.8% of exchange students listed attraction to Norwegian society as a secondary motivation, while 47.1% of full degree students did the same, and 52.9% of full degree students vs. 25% of exchange students listed free tuition.

For the more popular primary motivations, the most common combinations of primary and secondary motivations were as follows:

Table 5.7: Combinations of primary and secondary pull motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary motivation</th>
<th>Common secondary motivations (% of N)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant study programmes</td>
<td>Free tuition (57.8%), attraction to Norwegian society (55.2%)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction to Norwegian culture/society</td>
<td>Relevant study programmes (52.1%), free tuition (43.4%)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To expand upon the factors of recommendations and encouragement, participants were then asked whether there was anyone who encouraged them to go to Norway specifically. This item looks at what is essentially both a push and pull factor; recommendations of going to Norway, and going abroad in general. It was found that 53.3% were felt generally encouraged to go abroad, but regarded going to Norway specifically as their own choice entirely. 27.2% felt encouraged by their family to go to Norway, 10.5% by their advisor, and only 2.7% each by the government or the media. 12.7% reported that going to Norway was their own choice, and that they did not feel encouraged to go abroad either.

There were some variations within the variables. 34.4% and 44.4% of Russian and Indian students felt encouraged by their family, compared to Russian and Chinese students of which 22.7% and 20.2% felt the same. Female participants also reported feeling encouraged by their family to go to Norway more often than male participants, at 31.7% versus 20.5%. Full degree students (15.4%) claimed to not feel encouraged to go abroad at all more often than exchange students (4.5%), and the same was seen with Master’s students (13.4%) in comparison to Bachelor’s students (6%), and participants aged 26+ (20%) aged 25 or under (5.5%).

When going further, the only significant relationship found through a chi-square test was between age (25 and below versus 26+) and encouragement; $\chi^2(1, N = 180) = 9.11, p = .003$, and a Cramér’s $V$ of .225, making the relationship significant but not very strong.
Pull factor relationships

By removing the least common choices (recommendations, adventure, and other), it is possible to do an analysis of the relationships between the primary motivations and the demographic variables. As the participants’ primary pull motivations were more evenly spread than their primary push motivations, more motivations could be tested for relationships. The resulting relationships that were found significant are presented in the table below.

Table 5.8: Significant relationships between primary pull motivations and demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Chi-square test</th>
<th>Cramér’s $V$</th>
<th>Relationship strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (25 and below and 26+)</td>
<td>$\chi^2(6, N = 158) = 22.72, p = .001$</td>
<td>.379</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility type</td>
<td>$\chi^2(6, N = 158) = 27.36, p = .000$</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>$\chi^2(6, N = 158) = 18.63, p = .005$</td>
<td>.343</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that there is a correlation between a participant’s age, mobility type and sex, and what they regard as their most important pull factor.

Likert scale questions

Table 5.9: Likert scale questions on pull factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Going to Norway felt like a random decision</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I went to Norway because it’s safer for me here than back home</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I went to Norway because I have a Norwegian family background</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I went to Norway because I like the nature</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I went to Norway because I want to get a permanent residency and live my life here</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I went to Norway because I thought it would be a fun</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Item 2 (“I went to Norway because it’s safer for me here than back home”) also had some differences between the countries, from a mean of 5.8% agreement (Chinese students) to 47.7% agreement (Brazilian students). This item was discussed specifically with the Brazilian interview participants:

**Adriana:** I think six months before coming, I was robbed in Brazil. And it was a very hard process until you start to feel safe doing the same way back to work and home. But the moment I started to live in Norway, I didn’t even think about leaving my phone here.

**Jorge:** I didn’t go to Norway because it’s safe. I knew it would be, you know, but if you ask me what is the one thing that you most miss in Norway, it would be safety. It’s amazing how safe you guys are. [...] I was not afraid of living there, and that’s something I really miss.

**Maria:** I feel these days that I’m more comfortable walking around in the cities, outside, I’m more comfortable that I’m not going to be assaulted, that somebody’s not going to take me with a gun and steal my computer [...] I’m more safe here in Norway than I would... than I have ever been in Brazil.

However, while the Brazilian participants discussed safety in terms of physical safety and crime, participants from other countries also mentioned safety, albeit in other definitions.

**Natalia:** Everything is so organised here. Here it’s completely certain that I’ll get paid on the ninth, for instance. Completely certain that it’ll be correct. And that if I change my taxes at the Tax Administration, it will be like that. You get a sense of security.

Item 2 also had a higher agreement percentage among female participants (27.1% agreed, 46.7% disagreed) than male participants (17.8% agreed, 65.8% disagreed).

Exchange students had a somewhat higher agreement rate (75 %) in response to item 8 (“I went to Norway because I like the nature”) than degree students (52.2%).

Item 5 (“I went to Norway because I want to get a permanent residency and live my life here”) had a higher agreement percentage among Brazilian (36.4%) and Russian (49%) participants, and lower among Indian (22.2%) and Chinese (17.4%) participants.
There were some differences between exchange students and degree students on item 6 (“I went to Norway because I thought it would be a fun experience”). The agreement rate was high for both groups, however, of the exchange students 93.2% agreed, which is very high. The score was slightly lower for degree students; 75.7%. Moreover, 94.5% of NTNU students agreed with this statement, while only 73.6% of UiO students did.

5.2.3 Written responses

The participants who chose the “Other” options when asked about their primary and secondary motivations, for both push and pull, could then write what motivated them to go abroad. Additionally, at the end of the motivation section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to write down any other motivations they felt had not been covered. Some of these free-text answers are presented below.

Several of the participants expressed that they were dissatisfied with the situation at home. One Chinese Master’s student at NTNU wished to “get rid of the country’s governance”, and another wrote “I don’t like [the] secular environment in my country, I want my life without others’ [judgment]”, while a Chinese Master’s student at UiO wished to “get rid of parents’ restriction”. Three Russian students lamented the “unattractive career opportunities”, “difficult political situation” and “economic crisis” in Russia, while a Brazilian Master’s student at UiO noted that “daily life in Brazil can be a struggle. Life is easy to be lived in Oslo”.

Students wrote that they were pulled to Norway by the work opportunities in Norway, Bachelor’s courses taught in English, good research funding and relevant studies in the petroleum area. A Russian Master’s student noted that she wanted “a radical change in my career and more international experience. Plus, I had previous experience in Norway. Also, I was not [too] ‘old’ to be a student here”.

Other responses included:

- “Be far away from the big city I live in, and the great chaos on it” (Brazilian exchange student at NTNU)

- “I have taken Bachelor in Norwegian language and literature back home, and taking a Master in Norway was a natural decision” (Russian UiO student)
- “People in Norway are treated more equally than any other counties and I can feel to be respected when living in Norway.” (Chinese Master’s student at UiO)

- “I love Oslo; it is the most comfortable place to live in for me. A capital surrounded by nature. In addition, I learned Norwegian back at home, I would be stupid to miss this opportunity. I have also many friends here. And the education and career opportunities are more advanced in my sphere in Norway, than back home.” (Russian Master’s student at UiO)

- “the resident card which supports me to travel around Europe without any other requirements.” (Chinese Master’s student at UiO)

- “Came on work and immediately fell in love with the people and country” (Indian Master’s student at UiO)

- “Unemployment rates are lower than in many European countries” (Russian Master’s student at UiO)

- “You (Norway) have companies with extensive international experience in the construction of oil and gas platforms.” (Chinese exchange student at NTNU)

- “You have freedom in Norway and great possibilities to create a personality that you are dreaming to be. Society and government does not press you. There is no corruption here!” (Russian Bachelor’s student at UiO)

- “It was one of the universities my home university had a partnership, and I could attend classes in English” (Brazilian exchange student at NTNU)

- “I decided to come to Norway also because I really like the social value here. Equality, freedom and great chances of self-development are very attracted to me. The potential I want to bring these spirit back to China one day (when I am strong enough) and influence the Chinese social value system.” (Chinese Master’s student at UiO)

### 5.2.4 Interview responses

The interview participants were asked about what made them go to Norway specifically. The chosen university’s ranking or the study programmes figured prominently, though among the
female participants, social ties were also common. Both Maria and Adriana had Norwegian husbands.

Nito: I have family here. My aunt, my mother’s sister, she’s living here, and she told me about the universities here. She said it was a good opportunity if you get admission at the University of Oslo, because it’s a world-ranking university.

Natalia: First my cousin moved here. I was done with my Bachelor’s and didn’t want to continue studying or working with languages and literature, I wanted to try something else, and I had been in Norway in the past, travelled a little and liked it very much. So I moved.

Xue: I followed my mother who got a job here in Norway. So I came together with her. And the plan, the original plan, was that because her term was four years here, so the plan was that after four years, maybe I will be finishing my Bachelor’s, so we will go together back to China. But then I changed the plan a little bit, because I enjoy it here, the educational environment, and generally, I love to live in a small city.

Several of the participants cited financial motivations for coming to Norway. Jorge received a Scientists Without Borders scholarship, while Lavleen and Mikhail both were part of the Quota Scheme. While the students agreed that the lack of tuition fees was an important factor, it was somewhat balanced out by the high living costs and self-financing criteria. However, Mikhail argued that international students would go somewhere else if they had to pay tuition fees, which would have an impact on the international environment and profile of NTNU:

Mikhail: Norway’s a nice place to study and then, you know, have this good student environment, but I don’t believe that by imposing this kind of financial barriers it will get any better for anyone in universities, because the amount of internationals coming even from Europe will be reduced significantly […] Because education is good, but still, for example, if I’d need to pay the same amount to study as in UK, I’d go to UK.

Lin thought that one reason why free tuition is important to incoming Chinese students is that rich families send their children to countries such as USA and Australia, and those coming to Norway are from the middle class:

Lin: You can ask the people who do the questionnaire, I think most, maybe 90%, are from middle class families. Because the lower class families can’t support their kids through
studying abroad. So the rich people, you know, these oil field leaders, their kids are all in Australia, New Zealand, America and Canada.

Several of the participants had post-graduation residency as a goal. Both Xue and Wei had recently graduated and found jobs in Norway. Xue said that as she had moved to Norway in 2007, taken all of her higher education in Norway and had no Chinese network or knowledge of Chinese procedures in her field, going back to China was becoming increasingly difficult. However, most of the participant expressed a flexible approach to their future prospects.

Irina: I mean, if I wanted to immigrate and live in this country, I decided I had three ways: education, marriage and a job. So I couldn’t get a job, and marriage - I mean, I believe in love! So I decided to start from the beginning with education. [...] I mean, it was... year by year, but it’s inside you and you’re just not satisfied with your life. And finally, at one point, you decide that yes, it’s time.

Mikhail: I think I would like to [come back to Norway] as well. For pretty much simple reasons. The life standards are quite high, the lifestyle is quite chill, and, you know, hassle-free. Even talking about money [...] it covers, for sure, the needs and gives you possibilities to do whatever you want. Plus, the lifestyle, and the work style, when you work, like, eight to four, and people go home, it’s something you will never get in Russia.

Jorge: I would love to work in Norway, but I did not go there with this thought.

Maria: I would be open to possibilities. Anywhere. I mean, any nice place, any place I could have a decent life, a safe life, you know, any good country that could offer me good things.

Lavleen: When I stayed there, I was so impressed by the education that I decided that I wanted to do a PhD from Norway as well. [...] And then I was in a long-distance relationship with my fiancé at that time, and he kept hearing about my studies and my life here in Norway, and he got so impressed that he wanted to go to NTNU himself. So now, he’s in Norway.

Several of the participants mentioned attraction to Norwegian society and a certain Norwegian “personality type” that they felt at home with. Except for the Russians, most had little actual knowledge about Norway before coming, but liked what they knew.

Adriana: I would say the impressions was like the perfect society. Everything works. And you are actually living in the nature. […] I was tired of this urgency we have in Brazil.
**Darja:** I’m still in euphoria. I like Oslo, I feel it’s home more than in Russia. I don’t know, it’s kind of, it’s very comfortable. [...] [Norwegian culture] is almost similar to Russian, I can’t say any real differences. I mean, people are smiling more.

**Lavleen:** I just thought it was cold, it was a small European country... and I knew that it was very high on the Human Development Index. [...] So that was all I knew about it. Not much.

**Lin:** It’s so unclear where they are, but you know they’re just somewhere in the north, and very rich, and people are more like living really communist, but in a different way than communist China. Very [free], and rich country, just like this.

When asked whether they thought studying abroad had been valuable for them, all participants agreed for various reasons.

**Jorge:** It is too hard to find jobs and internships and everything in Brazil [...] every company wants someone that actually knows English, who has international experience, that can communicate, so there’s... they see exchange student programmes as something very valuable.

**Lavleen:** I think it has really helped me to grow as a person. [...] Usually, when I don’t go out and travel, I usually have some notions about people I haven’t met. But when I started travelling, and I’ve been abroad, my perspective changed so much. [...] Actually, I made really good friends with [a girl from] my neighbouring country Pakistan. People [in India] are so rigid about them, and they have these strict notions that they are not nice people, and we don’t go along with them. But actually, my best friend was from there. So I’m really thankful that I had that experience, otherwise I wouldn’t know how similar we are.

**Mikhail:** I would say that any experience of living abroad for significant time, especially without strict knowing you will leave the country, has a huge impact on the personal side, in all the aspects.

**Wei:** First, academically and professionally, I’ve gained a lot. Much more than I had when I was a Bachelor’s graduate. Second, I didn’t care about the bigger picture or the whole world. I don’t know that many foreigners in China, I didn’t know how it worked. But coming to Norway, I think I have very good connection with many international students.
5.3 Results on challenges

The participants were first asked about the challenges they faced during the different parts of the process of studying in Norway; moving, studying and living in Norway, to get a general overview of the participants’ experiences. The questions had the option for multiple responses, meaning that the participants could choose every item they felt was relevant to their experience.

5.3.1 Moving to Norway

The following figure shows what the participants reported as challenging in the process of moving to Norway.

![Challenges while moving to Norway](image)

While 39.4% of the participants reported no particular challenges when moving to Norway, the majority did face one of these difficulties at some point. The by far most reported challenge was feeling alone when arriving in Norway, faced by 35% of the participants.

Some demographic variations were found among the most chosen items. 43.1% of Brazilian participants, 38.8% of Indian participants, 34.7% of Chinese participants and 26.5% of Russian participants felt alone when arriving in Norway. In a similar vein, a larger proportion, 29.4%, of Brazilians reported facing difficulties with knowing where to go, while only 14.4%
of Chinese participants, 11.1% of Indian participants and 8.1% of Russian participants felt similarly.

In general, UiO students reported more challenges with the moving process than NTNU students did. Altogether 49% of NTNU students reported facing no challenges, while 34.9% of UiO students did the same. 16.6% of UiO students versus 9% of NTNU students faced issues with the application process; 11.1% of UiO students versus 5.4% of NTNU students found it difficult obtaining the correct information about studying in Norway; 11.1% of UiO students versus only 1 NTNU student found it difficult finding housing, and similarly, only one NTNU student versus 18.2% of UiO students reported challenges while applying for residency. However, the proportion of students who felt alone when arriving in Norway was about the same (34.1% of UiO students and 36.3% of NTNU students), and more NTNU students (21.8%) than UiO students (10.3%) found navigating difficult.

Written responses included:

- “The deposit to SiO was particularly challenging, as in Brazil the government charges high amounts of taxes for sending money abroad.” (Brazilian student at UiO)

- “About higher education in Norway in general: I attended the IB programme in high school, which proved to be troublesome to transfer credits from when applying to a Norwegian higher ed. institution” (Russian Master’s student at UiO)

- “The high prices of the student permit and the deposit prices of SiO.” (Brazilian exchange student at UiO)
A larger percentage of the participants faced difficulties during their student life than during the application and moving process; 75% of the participants reported at least one issue. The most reported challenge, language barriers in class (including both Norwegian and English), had a response rate of 38.3%. 53.6% of Chinese students reported facing such language barriers, compared to 20.4% of Brazilian students, 33.3% of Indian students and 34.6% of Russian students. Language barriers were also reported as an issue more often by UiO students (42%) than NTNU students (29%). NTNU students reported issues with knowing which courses to take (25.4%, versus 13.4% of UiO students) and issues with courses not overlapping well with courses back home (40%, versus 15% of UiO students).

Written replies included:

- “The advisors are not very helpful for international students. I feel I don’t have anyone to ask for getting real helpful advises.” (Chinese Master’s student at UiO)

- “Few language teachers who demand more of Brazilian students than Europeans one. Embarrassing us in the classes.” (Brazilian exchange student at UiO)
- “Norwegian students don’t share information about social activities with foreigners and do it hidden. NTNU count international students as “exchange” student and limit our educational participation (e.g. Athens program)” (Russian Master’s student at NTNU)

- “Exams structure (both exam questions and ideal answers) were very different from what I was used to have in my previous studies. This has strongly reflected in my grades.” (Brazilian Master’s student at UiO)

- “Some teachers use old style to teach e.g. hand writing on the black board and his handwriting is nearly impossible to read instead of using power point” (Chinese Master’s student at UiO)

- “many teachers have horrible Norwegian accent that significantly hampers understanding” (Russian student at UiO)

- “I believe the evaluation system is very conservative at UiO, and it took me a while to realize how it works. This affected my grades, and you can notice that Norwegian students don’t face this matter. Maybe the University should provide some written material or a lecture stating what is expected from the students and how the structure works.” (Brazilian Master’s student at UiO)
Figure 5.7: Challenges while living in Norway

Only 15.5% of the respondents reported that they faced no challenges during their non-study-related everyday life. The most reported challenge by far was difficulties in getting to know Norwegians, which had a response rate of 64.4%, with the majority of the participants from each nationality reporting this.

Some variations based on nationality were found. Indian (55.5%) and Chinese (46.3%) participants reported facing language barriers more often than Brazilian (29.5%) and Russian (24.4%) participants. More Russian participants reported experiencing prejudice than the other nationalities, with a response rate of 24.4% compared to between 11 and 14% of each of the other countries.

Written responses include:

- “Hard to find a job. I had always worked in an office to which I was now unqualified because of the language. But since I had never done anything else I was also unqualified for anything else...” (Brazilian Bachelor’s student at UiO)
- “Difficult to make friends with Norwegians. I think it is important to communicate with locals to know more about the country, but they keep to themselves. Though easy to find friends among other foreign students.” (Brazilian Master’s student at NTNU)

- “Norwegians can be real racists in disguise. Moreover, if you’re a smart white person this racism is harder to detect.” (Brazilian Bachelor’s student at NTNU)

- “As a disabled, I have to face thick snow for the first time and, apart from that, Norway is not as disabled-friendly as I thought it was” (Brazilian Master’s student at UiO)

- “I don’t drink alcohol, so I feel a bit excluded at parties some times.” (Russian Master’s student at UiO)

- “I have developed anxiety and feel that it makes even harder for me to socialize.” (Brazilian Bachelor’s student at UiO)

**Culture shock**

The participants were asked whether they experienced any culture shock when coming to Norway. Culture shock was defined as “frustration, stress, anxiety, uncertainty, anger, physical discomfort etc. due to cultural differences”. 37.8% reported that they had experienced a culture shock to some degree, while the rest did not. 18.3% reported that they had no issues with cultural differences at all, while only 2.8% reported that they though the cultural differences were too big to get past.

To look at relationships, the items were collapsed into a dichotomy of yes and no in order to get a high enough cell count. There was found a significant relationship between nationality and experiences of culture shock; \( \chi^2(3, N = 180) = 16.94, p = .001 \) and Cramér’s \( V \) of .307, i.e. that there is correlation between nationality and whether someone experiences a culture shock when coming to Norway. In fact, while 52.3% of Brazilian participants, 44.9% of Chinese participants and 38.9% of Indian participants reported feeling a culture shock to some degree, only 14.3% of Russian participants did. A whole 34.7% of Russian participants felt there were no issues with cultural differences at all, compared to 11.4% of Brazilian participants and 7.2% of Chinese participants.
5.3.4 Likert scale questions

Academic challenges

Table 5.10: Likert scale questions on academic challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It’s difficult getting used to the teaching style in Norway</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The relationship between student and professor is very different in Norway than in my home country</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel I can ask my teachers for help if I need to</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I have seriously considered leaving my institution in Norway this past school year</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I feel I participate fully in my classes</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I would recommend my university in Norway to other students from my country</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I understand what I need to do get a good grade in my classes</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in table 5.10 deal with the academic lives of the students. Some significant results were found. 29.5% of Brazilians found it difficult to adapt to the Norwegian teaching style, compared to an average of 15.6%. From this item, we can see that $\chi^2(6, N = 180) = 19.10, p = .004$, Cramér’s $V$ of .230, i.e. that there is a low-strength relationship between nationality and difficulties in adapting to the Norwegian teaching style.

When it came to class participation and degree level, 59.6% of Master’s students felt they participated fully in their classes, while only 26% of Bachelor’s students did ($\chi^2(4, N = 180) = 21.48, p = .000$, Cramér’s $V$ of .244; a low-strength correlation between degree level and whether they felt that they participated fully in class).
### Cultural challenges

**Table 5.11: Likert scale questions on cultural challenges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I felt I got a culture shock when coming to Norway</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel I have faced prejudice in Norway because of my ethnicity/nationality</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I’m often homesick</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I think it’s sometimes difficult communicating with Norwegian students due to cultural differences</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think my university is good at preparing for international students</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I’ve faced challenges with bureaucracy while studying in Norway</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in table 5.11 deal with cultural challenges as specified in the framework. 45% of Brazilian students agreed that they faced a cultural shock when coming to Norway, compared to approximately a quarter of Chinese and Indian students and 12.2% of Russian students.

More full degree students (23.5%) than exchange students (9.1%) felt they had faced prejudices due to their nationality or ethnicity, though this difference was not found statistically significant.

Brazilian students (38.6%) and Indian students (33.3%) reported more often that they were homesick than Chinese students (17.4%) and Russian students (6.1%). Moreover, 61.4% of Brazilian students report that they think communicating with Norwegians is difficult due to cultural reasons, compared to a total average of 45.6%. These communication difficulties were also found more often at NTNU (58.2%) than UiO (40%).

38.8% of Russian participant agreed that they had faced difficulties with bureaucracy, compared to a total average agreement rate of 23.9%. 28% of UiO students also reported bureaucracy issues, compared to 14.5% of NTNU students. It was also found that older students were less likely to agree with the statement that their university was good at preparing for international students; 46.7% of those 26+ agreed, while 68.9% of those 25 and
less agreed. \( \chi^2(2, N = 180) = 12.13, p = .002 \), Cramér’s \( V \) of .260 means a significant, though not strong, relationship between those two variables. Moreover, 70.9% of NTNU students agreed with this statement, while 52% of UiO students did.

**Social challenges**

Table 5.12: Likert scale questions on social challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I have a good support network in Norway</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have more than one Norwegian friend</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There’s a good social environment in my classes</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I prefer spending time with other international students to being with Norwegians</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I feel lonely</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I enjoy participating in my university’s social events</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in table 5.12 deal with social challenges. 68.2% of Brazilians and 61.2% of Russians reported having a good support network, while only 44.9% and 33.3% of Indian students did. More NTNU students agreed with having a good support network, at 67.3% versus 48% of UiO students. Over half of each nationality agreed with having a good social environment in their class, except for Chinese students, where only 34.8% agreed.

45.5% of NTNU students agreed that they preferred spending time with international students rather than Norwegian students, compared to 30.4% of UiO students. More NTNU students felt lonely, too, at 34.5% versus 24% of UiO students. However, more NTNU students agreed they enjoyed their university’s social events, at 61.8% versus 44% of UiO students.

**Financial challenges**

Table 5.13: Likert scale questions on social challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It’s difficult finding a part-time job, even if you need one</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

78
The items in table 5.13 deal with financial difficulties. More Russians agreed that they worried they would have to leave Norway due to financial difficulties; 48.8% of Russians agreed versus a total average agreement rate of 25%. It was found a significant relationship between mobility type and agreeing it’s difficult to find a part-time job ($\chi^2(2, N = 180) = 13.48, p = .001, \text{Cramér’s } V \text{ of .274}$). As 50% of exchange students reported they were neutral towards this statement, this could possibly be because full degree students are more likely to want a part-time job in the first place.

**Language challenges**

Table 5.14: Likert scale questions on motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I have difficulties finding time/resources to study Norwegian</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I think learning Norwegian will improve my stay in Norway</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You can have a good life in Norway without knowing Norwegian</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in table 5.14 deal with language issues. There was found a significant relationship between sex and difficulties finding time/resources studying Norwegian; 27.4% of men and 52.3% of women disagreed with this statement. The chi-square test reported $\chi^2(2, N = 180) = 11.52, p = .003, \text{Cramér’s } V \text{ of .253}$. There was also found a significant relationship between nationality and this statement; only 18.4% of Russians agreed, versus a total average agreement rate of 36.7%. The chi-square test for correlation between nationality and this statement showed that $\chi^2(6, N = 180) = 23.20, p = .001, \text{Cramér’s } V \text{ of .254}$, i.e. a low-strength relationship. More NTNU students (47.3%) than UiO students (32%) found finding the time to study Norwegian difficult.
Item 3 showed a couple of significant relationships. While 46.7% of students under 26 thought it is possible to have a good life in Norway without knowing Norwegian, only 25.6% of those 26+ thought the same. This relationship was found significant ($\chi^2(2, N = 180) = 12.84, p = .002$, Cramér’s $V$ of .267). There was also found a significant relationship between nationalities and this statement; while 59.1% of Brazilian students agreed this was possible, only 29% of Chinese students and no Indian students thought the same. The chi-square test showed that $\chi^2(6, N = 180) = 23.75, p = .001$, Cramér’s $V$ of .257. Moreover, 56.4% of NTNU students agreed to this statement, while only 27.2% of UiO students did; $\chi^2(2, N = 180) = 14.08, p = .001$, Cramér’s $V$ of .280. 68.2% of exchange students versus 25.7% of full degree students agreed to this statement, though this might not be a surprising difference as exchange students stay for a short time. The chi-square test showed that $\chi^2(2, N = 180) = 27.16, p = .000$ and a Cramér’s $V$ of .388; a moderate relationship between mobility type and item 3.

### 5.3.5 Interview responses

The participants were asked about their meeting with Norwegian culture, their academic and everyday lives, and their meeting with the Norwegian language. They were also asked more specifically about their views on the support for international students provided by UiO and NTNU, and by extension SiO and SiT, the student welfare organisations of each city.

For the academic part, most were happy with their relationship with their teachers. Many were surprised by the fact that attending lectures was not compulsory, and the Brazilian and Russian students in particular mentioned that the lesser amount of lectures meant that they had time to work part-time jobs. Maria mentioned that it took a while to get used to the Norwegian examination system, as she was used to a different format from her Brazilian law degree, and that it affected her grades. Lin expressed difficulties at first in meeting academic English, and misunderstandings because of it.

**Lin:** Because some professors, they are so, like, always use some… if you want to ask ‘what’s the difference?’, the word ‘difference’, everybody knows about it, if you use ‘what is the discrepancy?’, you use this weird word and I don’t understand. [...] I said, ‘what’s the meaning of this?’, and they said, “no, I can’t answer you like this” or something. I remember I asked twice, like this.
Lin also faced difficulties meeting with Norwegian academic citation standards, and failed a report because of it, as she never learned it during her undergrad studies in China. Mikhail requested a stricter, more forward approach to feedback from Norwegian professors:

**Mikhail:** Unfortunately, I believe that Norwegians are quite... I mean, it’s probably cultural side, especially with professors... all Norwegian professors are very kind with criticism. [...] You’ll hear “It’s a very nice approach, but it’s wrong” rather than someone telling you directly “This is absolute bullshit, and actually you need to do it again if you want to make it successfully”. I think it’s a quite big drawback, because from my experience of working with Norwegians in a group... you like to talk a lot about all the possible solutions in the world, but it’s very difficult to find the solution to the task you actually have. [...] I mean, you try to avoid emphasising why someone is a little bit better than the other one, you try to say everybody’s good, and just different... which is true, it’s absolutely fine, but if we talk professionally, and we are talking about engineering, there’s for sure a better solution and a worse solution.

Two of the Chinese interview participants explained that they were somewhat unused to participation and asking questions in class.

**Wei:** You can’t just ask randomly ask a question [in China], no. That would be disrespectful to the teacher.

One Brazilian UiO student, Adriana, stated that as a resident, or what was defined in chapter 2.1.4 as a foreign student, she felt that her status and the information she received was inconsistent. As a newcomer to Norway, she would like to go to events geared towards international students, but stated that she did not receive the same information per email as the more traditional international student.

**Adriana:** As a resident, I was not receiving, actually, that much information as an international student as other people who came only to study here. For example, it took a while before I knew about the meetings that were happening for international students.

She also mentioned that the content of the Norwegian and English UiO websites had different content, and that she sometimes had to change the language of the site to get all the information she wanted to obtain.
Adriana: I could go online on the [UiO] website, but if you go... it’s a bit different when you go on the Norwegian website to when you go to the English website. [...] Because I was trying to use the Norwegian website as part of my integration, but sometimes it was a bit hard, so I changed it to English, and then when I searched, it was like, oh, there are more things happening. And I felt that not everything I would like to join was there.

Mikhail said this about trying to apply for a short-term exchange programme during his Master’s at NTNU:

Mikhail: [When] I went to the office responsible for this and asked the admission procedure, I was told that it’s only for Norwegians. And I... why? Because you’re an international student. I’m like, yeah, no, I’m not international, I’m not on exchange, I’m a student who pays the same semester fee, I only have this university, so I don’t have a double degree or anything. It was quite surprising for me.

This separation from Norwegian students was also seen when Mikhail and his international classmates were not invited to the graduation ceremony within the department, and they therefore had to fix their own party. Mikhail first thought it was because the graduation ceremony was for students from the five-year integrated Master’s programme only, but found out that Norwegian and other Scandinavian students from the two-year Master’s programme who were invited.

Mikhail: We also had Norwegians from, I don’t know, the University of Stavanger, who were also two-year Master’s students in NTNU, so we were in the same position, but they were not internationals because they were Scandinavians. Even, like, Swedish people were not international there, they were Scandinavians, so they were like... normal, let’s say.

When it comes to language, several UiO students expressed a wish for more opportunities to learn Norwegian. Those who had received access to Norwegian courses at UiO or NTNU often had to drop out later in order to focus on their programme courses.

Nito: Give Norwegian classes to every course. If anybody has to live here, he or she has to know the language. Even though I was at the University of Oslo, I didn’t get admission. So it’s very hard to get admission at these Norwegian language courses here. And it’s very important to know the language. So I feel that they should incorporate these courses. [...] My
colleagues, most of them also tried to get admission [...] only two or three got admission, maybe they were lucky or something like that. So most of us tried with Google Translate.

**Lin:** I feel here, they have a problem; it’s that because it’s a free course, so everyone can choose it, and in the same class you have German students, like European students, and also Asian students. But the teachers can only follow the pace of the European students who speak very nice. So for the Asian students, I feel it’s very difficult to follow.

Socially, the participants all had international friends, both of their own nationality and other, but varied in how easy they found it to engage with their Norwegian peers. While everyone agreed that making friends with Norwegians could be a challenge, they had different strategies for overcoming this. Mikhail found friends through volunteering at Studentersamfunnet; Lavleen joined a mixed debate group; Maria signed up for a diving course as she knew Norwegians make friends through activities; and Jorge made friends with a Jehovah’s Witness who approached him.

Darja expressed that due to their status as international students, they were separated from Norwegian students by the university from the beginning. Both Irina and Wei requested more integration of Norwegian and international students in class.

**Wei:** More opportunities to get international students and locals together. Get to know each other, break the barriers. Maybe they can say that, okay, in this course, which is attended by both international and Norwegian students, you have to form a group which is composed of both. If you let us choose, we’ll definitely choose to stay with internationals.

**Irina:** I would like if they suggested some group works where we must, we just must interact with each other. And not only like, okay, I’m choosing my teams so it’s only Norwegians or only international students. So if they could use those group works and somehow mix us all, I would be so thankful for this.

While participants generally agreed that the lack of tuition fees or scholarship awards were motivating traits to come to Norway, keeping economically afloat still posed a challenge. Several of the participants had part-time jobs or were actively trying to find one; those who had found one had usually found it through their networks. Irina sent out two hundred CVs before she found a job through a friend. Lin waited tables for a month, but had to quit because
her employer refused to provide a written contract. Almost all participants who mentioned difficulties in finding jobs linked it with their lack of Norwegian proficiency.

The Russian participants had all faced prejudices due to their nationality. In her work at a restaurant, Irina said she faced negative perceptions about Russian immigrants exploiting Norwegian welfare goods and stereotypical images of Eastern European women.

**Irina:** I have also of course, met... it’s mostly men’s opinion... all Russians, you should wear high heels, kind of Russian prostitute, combine kitchen and... it’s stereotypes.
6 Discussion

6.1 Motivations

Students are motivated by a variety of factors both when choosing to do their studies abroad in the first place and when deciding on doing those studies in Norway specifically. By looking at the results in chapter 5 through the scope of the framework in chapter 3, it is possible to discern some concepts and trends.

Push factors and the choice to go abroad

When it comes to motivational factors on the government level, all four countries have experienced great economic growth and an increasing involvement in the world economy through trade during the past decades. As Yang (2007) argues, a growing economy leads to increased access to studying abroad. With this economic growth, the BRICs governments have to various degrees and through different strategies placed an increased priority on higher education and the internationalisation thereof. However, there may still be a lack of access to educational opportunities, for instance due to high competition of university entrance exams, or the perceived low quality of national higher education.

The survey results show discrepancies in how much the students from the different countries felt their government supported them; Brazilians were generally more positive than students from the other countries were. However, this could be because a disproportionally large amount of Brazilian participants in this survey is exchange students, and to them, government support of internationalisation could be particularly visible through their exchange programme, for instance Scientists Without Borders. Even accounting for this, Brazilian students either agree with or are neutral towards this statement, like Indian and Chinese students. Russian participants, however, largely disagree. This makes sense based on the recent developments in higher education in Russia, which are, as discussed in chapter 2.3, turbulent. Moreover, internationalisation is still a comparatively new concept in Russian educational politics, and has less of a uniform strategy than can be seen, for instance, in Brazil.
On a lower level, family pressure was almost non-existing as a primary push factor, but shares third place as a secondary push factor. Interview participants insisted that going abroad was their own decision, but many said that having their parents’ support was important to them. Some participants, such as Yan, Nito and Irina, had one parent (usually the father) who supported to them in their choice and one who did not. It could be that Bodycott’s idea about family obligations, or filial piety as it is often known as in a Chinese context, still exists to various degrees in these countries; that it is acceptable to make one’s own decision regarding an international education, but that parental views would count for more than they would in for instance a Norwegian context.

**Immigration, careers and mobility capital accumulation**

A significant amount of participants stated that they wanted to stay in Norway either permanently or indefinitely, usually due to existing social ties or potential careers. Several of the interview participants stated similar thoughts, though they viewed their future as open. Many of the interview participants stated that they regarded their time in Norway as a possible doorway to more mobility later on, and that while they would not mind staying in Norway, they were open to moving somewhere else in Europe if they were unsuccessful in finding a job in Norway.

The theory of mobility capital suggests that the more international mobility experience a person has grown up with, the more likely they are to go abroad later in life. Interview participants from all of BRIC stated that they were from countries where going abroad is a rare thing to do; the participants of this study is thus part of a very select group of people, or as Darja put it, “among the luckiest”. 68% of the survey participants already had international experience, and the last 32% had at the very least the educational background and the means to accumulate mobility capital by going to Norway. Through this experience, it is possible that studying in Norway further enables students to work and live in other countries, which might explain their open-mindedness towards where they might live in the future.

Improvement of career prospects at home was the second largest primary push motivation, and the second most reported secondary push motivation. Career prospects in Norway did not rank as high as a pull factor, though ‘relevant career’ often showed up in the free-text responses of students who studied something related to the petroleum business. When interview participants were asked about whether they thought studying abroad was a valuable
experience, several agreed that studying abroad had a positive impact on their career prospects back home. However, the most common responses to this question included perceptions about personal growth, which will be discussed below.

**Extrinsic versus intrinsic factors**

As stated in chapter 3, two factors were fully or in part based on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations. Those two are the push factor “study abroad as a trend”, which includes dissatisfaction with the situation at home, the idea of increased career prospects, and the wish to experience a different, in this case Western, culture, and the pull factor “personal growth”, which basically entails going abroad for the enjoyment of it.

While many identified a financially-related pull factor as their primary motivation, very few regards “High costs” (either high tuition fees or high living costs in their home country) as their primary push factor. On the other hand, “Trend” scored much higher as a push factor than a pull factor; while 45% reported wanting to experience the world as their primary push factor, only a total of 7.7% reported that excitement and adventure was their main reason for going to Norway specifically. Moreover, the open-ended responses showed push factors related to discontentment with their home country’s governance, educational funding and quality, and career opportunities. Those replies suggested a hope that the different political system and culture of Norway could provide them with a life more in line with what they wanted. Several of the interview participants showed a similar discontentment with their prospects back home, due to either career prospects or the cultural or political situation. While questionnaire participants usually did not list security as their primary motivation, interview participants still agreed that security, both physical (particularly for Brazilian participants) and political/bureaucratic, was a welcome bonus.

**Maria:** Right now, they’re all telling me, you’re much better off there than here [in Brazil]. Now things are really, really crap. This is not a place to be right now.

When asked whether they found studying abroad to be a valuable experience, interview participants replied positively, and often in terms of personal growth and international network building. This, combined with the amount of participants that listed “trend” as their primary motivation, it is possible to argue that the students in this project regard having an international education as something intrinsically valuable and not only in instrumental terms.
When it came to their decision to apply to Norwegian universities, however, practical concerns such as relevant study programmes and financing were more important. As mentioned in chapter 5.2.2, Lin thought Chinese students coming to Norway were largely from middle class families who sent their children to Norway because other countries were too expensive. In the same vein, when it comes to the prospect of Norwegian universities taking tuition fees from international students, Mikhail argued that if he had to pay the same fees in Norway as in the UK, he would rather go to the UK.

All this could suggest that while most BRICs students at the UiO and NTNU might at first be motivated to go abroad by intrinsic reasons such as the idea of adventure, personal growth, meeting a new culture and escaping circumstances at home that they are discontented with, a large proportion choose their destination country from a set of more practical reasons such as relevant study programmes and financial concerns. A number of the interview participants stated that they started with the wish to go to the UK, Canada or the US, and decided on Norway for reasons that were often linked to financial concerns or social ties. While attraction to Norwegian society (e.g. security, nature, culture etc.) was a popular secondary pull motivation, the majority of interview participants stated that they knew very little about Norway before applying to study at Norwegian universities. Those who already did possess knowledge about Norwegian culture and society were students who came to Norway primarily due to existing social ties, e.g. a Norwegian spouse.

### 6.2 Challenges

#### Cultural and social challenges

Cultural and social challenges are presented together in this chapter, as they tend to overlap to some degree. This is because they are both related to issues when it comes to socialisation and communication.

The students, particularly full-degree students, noted that they wanted to integrate into Norwegian society as much as possible, even if they did not plan to stay permanently. While 37.8% of survey respondents reported having faced culture shock to some degree when coming to Norway, almost all were optimistic to some degree, reporting that it had passed or that they thought it would pass after some time. Culture shock was earlier defined as the
anxiety one experiences from losing all the familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse, such as gestures, body language, and social customs, and was defined in the survey as “frustration, stress, anxiety, uncertainty, anger, physical discomfort etc. due to cultural differences”.

There was found a significant relationship between nationality and the feeling of culture shock in the responses to this survey, in that far fewer Russian participants had experienced any issues with culture shock than participants from the other countries. This can be seen in light of Adler’s (2008) argument that the further the cultural distance between the student’s home culture and the new culture, the worse the potential culture shock and following consequences for the student’s academic and social life. Several of the interview participants pointed at cultural differences in socialisation; while Russian students largely regarded Russian and Norwegian social culture as very similar, Brazilian participants found what they described as the “cold”, introverted social nature of Norwegians difficult to overcome at times. This was also reflected in the survey, where a larger proportion of Brazilian participants reported that they found communicating with Norwegians difficult due to cultural reasons, regardless of whether they were full-degree or exchange students. Among the interview participants, those who had more association with Norwegians were those who actively put effort into making Norwegian friends from the beginning, through organised groups, courses, voluntary work and similar activities. As Maria expressed, this is how Norwegians meet new people, so it was worth a try. Those participants were usually the same who expressed the intention to stay away from what Adler (2008) coined as the ‘expatriate ghetto’; they tried to actively avoid more association with people from their own countries, to avoid complacency.

Almost half of the Brazilian questionnaire participants felt alone when coming to Norway, while only a quarter of the Russian participants felt the same. This might be because more Russians have social links to Norway already, through family or friends living in Norway. Likewise, Russian students were more likely to have visited Norway at some point already. Additionally, compared to UiO students, NTNU students were more likely not to find enough time to study Norwegian, face difficulties in communicating with Norwegians, prefer spending time with international students rather than Norwegian students, and be lonely.

Through association with Norwegian students, international students get access to a valuable source of Norwegian language practice and cultural understanding in addition to new friends.
Knight and de Wit (1995) identify mutual sociocultural understanding and personal development as two important rationales for internationalisation; the division of international students and Norwegian students into separate groups who have little to do with each other could very well go against this goal. If an institution’s goal is internationalisation, having active relationships with international students both inside and outside the classroom could be beneficial for the Norwegian students as well.

Academic and administrative challenges

Three quarters of the survey participants reported having faced some kind of challenge of academic nature. Participants were mostly happy with both the course quality and communication with their teachers at both institutions, though some, particularly NTNU students, had faced issues with knowing which courses to take and which courses would overlap with courses back home.

While people were generally happy with the quality of their courses, uncertainty surrounding assessments and grading emerged from the open-ended questions and interview responses. Brown’s 2008 paper on study-related stress among new international Master’s students in the UK suggest that academic stress is most intense at the beginning of the academic programme, and suggest that this “reinforces the need for academic orientation that addresses academic cultural differences in advance of the start of the course” (Brown 2008:19). Respondents have suggested through free-text replies and interviews that these challenges have impact on their grades.

Brown (2008) lists four types of academic cultural differences; learning resources, essay writing and references, critical thinking, and participating in discussion. Students who were not used to having to participate in class discussion, write longer essays, or use referencing standards they were not used to from earlier education, reported that their grades suffered while they adjusted.

Moreover, it is possible to see from the open-ended questions and interview responses that some full-degree students feel uncertain about their status, particularly those who had moved to Norway not only for studies and had therefore already obtained residency. One example is Adriana, who had applied to UiO as a Norwegian resident and did not feel she received the same information as other foreign students in her classes, even though she was equally new to Norway. One Russian Master's student claimed that “NTNU counts international students as
‘exchange’ students and limit our education participation”. This perception about full-degree students as a group being conflated with exchange students was further expanded upon by Mikhail through his story about being excluded from both an exchange programme and his programme’s graduation ceremony.

While those are anecdotes, it might show that the divide between the different groups of international students, and the divide between international and Norwegian students in the same class, is not always uniform and clear.

**Financial and work-related challenges**

While participants were generally not motivated by high living costs in their home countries, free tuition was an important pull factor for coming to Norway. However, full-degree interview participants agreed that living costs were high, and most needed a part-time job next to the studies to cover their expenses. In the questionnaire, almost half of the Russian participants had at some point worried that they would need to leave Norway due to financial reasons, and 61.1% of participants agreed that it was hard finding a part-time job.

Interview participants linked this to their low Norwegian proficiency, as employers usually look for student workers who speak a Scandinavian language, and there is fierce competition for the jobs where Norwegian proficiency is not required. Several interview participants, such as Lin and Maria, stated that while they were interested in staying in Norway due to their familial bonds to the country, the current job market made it likely that they would have to find work abroad. Additionally, several interview participants stated that they needed connections in order to find a job; handing in applications and resumes alone was insufficient. Building a Norwegian professional network demands not only language abilities, but also some understanding of Norwegian professional, cultural and social customs.

**Language-related challenges**

As mentioned, language-related challenges tend to overlap with all other challenge areas. For many respondents, balancing their programme courses with learning Norwegian was a challenge. Several of the interview participants stated that while they deemed learning Norwegian important and would like to take more Norwegian classes, the course load made
this impossible, and they had to drop out and were hoping for the chance to pick it up again later.

Moreover, several UiO Master’s programme students wanted to learn Norwegian from the beginning, but had less access to classes as UiO prioritises lower-cycle and exchange students. They expressed disappointment with this, as they were prepared to learn Norwegian from the beginning in order to function better in Norwegian society, and further down the line they would have less time to dedicate to Norwegian language studies, due to thesis writing, field work etc. Language-related challenges are closely related to the other four challenges, as language is an essential part of a society. Language barriers can be the cause of great academic stress (Wan et al. 1992), and a whole 38.3% of the respondents said they had faced language barriers in class, while 37.2% reported they had faced language barriers in their non-academic lives (with no significant difference between exchange students and full-degree students). Language barriers can refer to issues with both Norwegian and English, as many Master’s programmes are taught in English. While students do have to submit proof of English proficiency to access an English Master’s programme at both UiO and NTNU, such as an IELTS test score of 6.5 or more, academia and its disciplines come with their own terms and phrases that a student who have not studied in English before may not be familiar with.

Participants were divided on whether or not it is possible to live well in Norway without knowing Norwegian, and many linked their low Norwegian proficiency to issues with making Norwegian friends, working alongside their Norwegian classmates, and most of all finding work, either during or after their studies. For those whose goal is to stay in Norway and integrate, their slow start with the Norwegian language in particular has posed a headache, in part due to the problems in finding a job before their student residence permits run out.

Interestingly, there is a significant relationship between nationalities and the idea that it is possible to live a good life in Norway without knowing Norwegian; 59.1% of Brazilian participants agreed, while only 29% of Chinese participants agreed. This percentage was only somewhat lower when looking at full-degree Brazilian students only. Moreover, 53.6% of Chinese participants reported facing language barriers in their classes (taught either in English or Norwegian), compared to only 20.4% of Brazilians. It could be that people who are more confident in English might be more inclined to think of Norwegian as unnecessary for functioning in Norwegian society, though this remains speculation. However, even though Brazilian participants generally might be more inclined to view language barriers as less of an
obstacle, they did report more instances of culture shock and difficulties in socialising with Norwegian peers.

### 6.3 Implications and limitations

To conclude, findings of this study suggests that international students from the BRICs are largely driven by intrinsic reasons when deciding to go abroad; adventure and excitement, meeting new cultures, and obtaining an “international mindset”, in addition to the presence of a general discontentment with the state of affairs back home. When choosing Norway as their destination country, however, they are largely driven by practical, extrinsic concerns; free tuition, relevant study programmes taught in English, and already existing social ties to Norway. This is relevant knowledge for how universities of Norway market themselves abroad.

Students faced challenges with making Norwegian friends. This should be a concern to any Norwegian university or university college that wants an international campus that is integrated rather than segregated. Most interview participants conceded that it was far easier making friends with other international students than with Norwegians. Full-degree students on Master’s level also requested more opportunities to learn Norwegian.

Moreover, some interview participants also expressed confusion or uncertainty when it came to their ‘role’ at their university. One UiO students expressed regret that she did not receive the same information as the other international students, as she already had a Norwegian residence permit. One NTNU student mentioned that he did not receive the same opportunities as other full-degree Master’s students from Scandinavian countries, even though he a full-degree student himself. As ‘international students’ as a group is made up of more students than the ‘classic’ exchange student, educational institutions need to make sure that important information pertaining to all areas of student life is available in English to all who need it. As an example, UiO’s English websites about Erasmus+ exchange is for incoming students only; detailed information about opportunities for studying abroad and the availability of different exchange programmes are available in Norwegian only, per November 2016 (UiO 2016a).

Days before I submitted this thesis, SIU published their report “International students in Norway – Perceptions of Norway as a study destination” (SIU 2016a), with participants from
all over the world. Their report and this thesis reached many of the same conclusions; that the most important pull factor for international students is academic in nature, and that international students struggle with socialising with Norwegian students and the price levels in Norway.

This study has several limitations to it. Due to the size of the project, sheer number of variables, and page limitations, it is difficult to go in-depth in all the possible factors of an international student’s life. As the proportion of respondents from each country varied greatly, one should be careful in making too large generalisations about the students from each country, or use these findings to generalise international students from outside the BRICs or at other institutions than UiO/NTNU in this particular timeframe. Moreover, as the questionnaire included a mix of nominal and ordinal items, it turned out difficult to use statistical tools that are more advanced. I would recommend any student interested in doing a survey on motivations and perceptions to utilise higher-level type items as much as possible, for instance Likert scale items.
7 Conclusion

This study suggests that BRICs students are generally pushed by internal factors to go abroad in the first place; seeking adventure, meeting a new culture, getting international experience which is for various reasons perceived as important, and escaping negative circumstances back home related to culture and society. Moreover, studying abroad is generally seen as a wise career move. The choice of Norway and Oslo or Trondheim, on the other hand, is generally made due to practical concerns; relevant study programmes, free tuition and the access to scholarships all ranked highly, though interview participants conceded that the benefits of free tuition were to a degree cancelled by the high living costs and the financial proof needed to apply for a student visa.

Participants were mostly happy with their academic lives, but mentioned issues with academic standards such as unfamiliarity with citing standards and academic terms in English. During the interviews, full-degree students requested better access to learning Norwegian, and students from all groups requested more chances for integration with Norwegian students. Better integration with Norwegians could possibly enable international students from the BRICs to learn Norwegian more effectively, break down cultural barriers and build both social and professional networks more efficiently.
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Appendix A: Questionnaire cover letter

Hello!

My name is Christin Vangen, and I am a Master’s student at the University of Oslo conducting a study into the topic ‘Motivations and Experiences of Students from the BRICS Countries in Norway’.

The aim of this study is to map the motivations of students from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa at the University of Oslo (UiO) and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) to study in Norway, and also to look at any challenges you may have faced during your stay. Your experiences as an international student in Norway are valuable and will be a great help for exploring these topics.

This survey is anonymous, and your answers will be kept confidential and be used for academic purposes only. It will take about 10 minutes to fill out, and is open until the 18th of December 2015.

All respondents are eligible to win one of five 200 kr gift cards.

You can find the survey here: https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/brics-survey.html

For any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at chrivan@student.uv.uio.no.

Thank you very much for your time!

Best regards,

Christin Vangen
Appendix B: Questionnaire

I wish to participate in this study.
a. Yes

Motivations for studying in Norway

1. What would you say is the most important factor in Norway that motivated you to go to Norway to study? Please choose one:
   a. Relevant study programs
   b. Attraction to Norwegian culture/society
   c. Recommendations from friends/family
   d. Free tuition
   e. Scholarship award
   f. The Norwegian nature
   g. It’s a safe country
   h. I have relatives in Norway
   i. I have friends in Norway
   j. Career prospects in Norway
   k. Staying in Norway after graduation for non-career reasons
   l. I wished to experience a different culture
   m. Other

2\(^1\). You chose “Other”. Please specify:

3\(^2\). You chose “Staying in Norway after graduation for non-career reasons”. What is your primary motivation for this? Please choose one:
   a. Non-career related financial reasons

\(^1\) Shown when choosing «1m. Other»
\(^2\) Shown when choosing «1k. Staying in Norway after graduation for non-career reasons»
b. My spouse is Norwegian

c. My spouse is an international living in Norway

d. Security reasons

e. Health reasons

f. I enjoy Norwegian nature

g. I enjoy Norwegian society

h. Other

43. You chose “Other”. Please specify:

5. What other factors in Norway do you see as relevant for your choice to study in Norway? Please choose up to three reasons:

   a. Relevant study programs

   b. Attraction to Norwegian culture/society

   c. Recommendations from friends/family

   d. Free tuition

   e. Scholarship award

   f. The Norwegian nature

   g. It’s a safe country

   h. I have relatives in Norway

   i. I have friends in Norway

   j. Career prospects in Norway

   k. Staying in Norway after graduation for non-career reasons

   l. I wished to experience a different culture

   m. Other

3 Shown when choosing «3h. Other»
6. You chose “Other” as one of your reasons. Please specify:

7. You chose "Staying in Norway after graduation for non-career reasons" as one of your reasons. What is your primary motivation for this? Please choose one:
   a. Non-career related financial reasons
   b. My spouse is Norwegian
   c. My spouse is an international living in Norway
   d. Security reasons
   e. Health reasons
   f. I enjoy Norwegian nature
   g. I enjoy Norwegian society
   h. Other

8. You chose “Other”. Please specify:

9. Were there any motivations in your home country that motivated you to study abroad? Please choose the most important one:
   a. I was encouraged to get international experience by my government
   b. I was encouraged to get international experience by my school
   c. Lack of study programs at home
   d. High tuition fees at home
   e. High living costs at home
   f. Competitive university admission process; difficult to get admission to a quality institution
   g. My family thought I should go
   h. Improving my career prospects at home

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4 Shown when choosing «5m. Other»
5 Shown when choosing «5k. Staying in Norway after graduation for non-career reasons»
6 Shown when choosing «7h. Other»
i. I wanted to experience the world
j. Security reasons
k. Other

10. You chose “Other”. Please specify:

11. What other motivations in your home country motivated you to study abroad? Please choose up to three reasons:
   a. I was encouraged to get international experience by my government
   b. I was encouraged to get international experience by my school
   c. Lack of study programs at home
   d. High tuition fees at home
   e. High living costs at home
   f. Competitive university admission process; difficult to get admission to a quality institution
   g. My family thought I should go
   h. Improving my career prospects at home
   i. I wanted to experience the world
   j. Security reasons
   k. Other

12. You chose “Other” as one of your reasons. Please specify:

13. Had you ever been to Norway before your current stay?
   a. No, this is my first time going to Norway
   b. Yes, I have studied here before

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7 Shown when choosing «9k. Other»
8 Shown when choosing «11k. Other»
c. Yes, I have worked here before

d. Yes, I have lived here as a child

e. Yes, I have lived here before as an adult (18+)

f. Yes, I have travelled here before/been here on holiday

14. Excluding Norway, have you ever lived outside your home country before?

a. Yes, I have studied abroad in the past

b. Yes, I have worked abroad in the past

c. Yes, I have lived abroad as a child

d. Yes, I have lived abroad as an adult (18+)

e. No, but I have travelled/been on holiday abroad before

f. No, this is my first time abroad

15. Were you encouraged by anyone to go to Norway specifically? If so, who?

a. Yes, by my family

b. Yes, by my advisor

c. Yes, by the government

d. Yes, by the media

e. No, going to Norway was my decision alone, but I was generally encouraged to go abroad

f. No, going to Norway was my decision alone, and I was not encouraged to go abroad

16. Please rate the following statements as they apply to you:

[Strongly agree – Disagree – Neither disagree nor disagree – Agree – Strongly agree]

a. My government actively encourages students to study abroad

b. I went to Norway because of limited access to higher education at home

c. I went to Norway because of social pressure to go abroad
d. I went to Norway because my family thought I should

e. Going to Norway felt like a random decision

f. I went to Norway because it's safer for me here than back home

g. I went to Norway because I have a Norwegian family background

h. I went to Norway because I like the nature

i. I went to Norway because I want to get a permanent residency and live my life here

j. I went to Norway because I thought it would be a fun experience

17. Are there any other reasons you went to Norway that you feel have not been covered so far? (optional)

Challenges in Norway

18. Do you feel you met any challenges when moving to Norway?

a. The application paperwork was confusing

b. I had communication difficulties with UiO/NTNU

c. It was difficult getting the correct information about studying in Norway

d. Finding housing was difficult

e. I felt alone when coming here

f. I had difficulties finding out where to go

g. I faced challenges when applying for residency

h. Yes, for other reasons

i. No, I faced no challenges when moving to Norway

19°. You stated that you've faced other challenges when moving to Norway. Please specify:

° Shown when choosing «18h. Yes, for other reasons»
20. Do you feel you have met any challenges while studying in Norway?
   a. I didn’t know what courses to take
   b. Registering for courses/paying the semester fee
   c. I feel it's difficult communicating with my teachers
   d. Language barriers in class
   e. Lack of access to learning Norwegian
   f. I'm unhappy with the course quality
   g. There's a lack of information about assessments/exams
   h. The studies in Norway don't overlap well with my studies back home
   i. Yes, for other reasons
   j. No, I have no faced no challenges while studying in Norway

21. You stated that you've faced other challenges while studying in Norway. Please specify:

22. Do you feel you have met any challenges while living in Norway?
   a. I feel it’s difficult to get to know Norwegians
   b. I feel it's difficult to get to know Norwegians
   c. I have faced financial difficulties
   d. I have met language barriers
   e. I feel unsafe in Norway
   f. I have had difficulties aclimatising to Norwegian weather
   g. I have faced prejudice because of my ethnicity/nationality
   h. Yes, for other reasons
   i. No, I have faced no challenges while living in Norway

10 Shown when choosing «20h. Yes, for other reasons»
23. You stated that you've faced other challenges while living in Norway. Please specify:

24. Did you experience a culture shock when coming to Norway? A culture shock can be defined as frustration, stress, anxiety, uncertainty, anger, physical discomfort etc. due to cultural differences. Please choose one:
   a. Yes, but only in the beginning
   b. Yes, and I still feel like that, but I'm trying to adapt
   c. Yes, and I think the cultural differences between Norway and my country are too big to get past
   d. No, there were some cultural differences but not a real culture shock
   e. No, I had no issues with cultural differences/culture shock when coming to Norway

25. Please rate the following statements as they apply to you:

   [Strongly agree – Disagree – Neither disagree nor disagree – Agree – Strongly agree]
   a. It's difficult getting used to the teaching style in Norway
   b. The relationship between student and professor is very different in Norway than in my home country
   c. I feel I can ask my teachers for help if I need to
   d. I have seriously considered leaving my institution in Norway this past school year
   e. I feel I participate fully in my classes
   f. I would recommend my university in Norway to other students from my country
   g. I understand what I need to do to get a good grade in my classes
   h. I have difficulties finding time/resources to study Norwegian

26. Please rate the following statements as they apply to you:

   [Strongly agree – Disagree – Neither disagree nor disagree – Agree – Strongly agree]
   a. I felt I got a culture shock when coming to Norway

11 Shown when choosing «22h. Yes, for other reasons»
b. I feel I have faced prejudice in Norway because of my ethnicity/nationality

c. I'm often homesick

d. I think it's sometimes difficult communicating with Norwegian students due to cultural differences

e. I think learning Norwegian will improve my stay in Norway

27. Please rate the following statements as they apply to you:

[Strongly agree – Disagree – Neither disagree nor disagree – Agree – Strongly agree]

a. I have a good support network in Norway
b. I have more than one Norwegian friend
c. There's a good social environment in my classes
d. I prefer spending time with other international students to being with Norwegians
e. I feel lonely
f. I enjoy participating in my university's social events

28. Please rate the following statements as they apply to you:

[Strongly agree – Disagree – Neither disagree nor disagree – Agree – Strongly agree]

a. I feel there's a lot of financial pressure to stay in Norway
b. It's difficult finding a part-time job, even if you need one
c. I think my university is good at preparing for international students
d. I'm worried I can't stay in Norway due to financial reasons
e. I've faced challenges with bureaucracy while studying in Norway
f. You can have a good life in Norway without knowing Norwegian

29. Are there any challenges you have met that you feel haven't been mentioned so far in this survey? (optional)
Demographics

Please fill in the following information

1. Age:
   a. >20
   b. 21-25
   c. 26-30
   d. 31-35
   e. 36-40
   f. 41-45
   g. 46-50
   h. 51+

Nationality:
   a. Brazilian
   b. Chinese
   c. Indian
   d. Russian
   e. South African

University in Norway:
   a. University of Oslo (UiO)
   b. National University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

Sex:
   a. Male
   b. Female
Study program/area (e.g. political science, engineering etc.):

Are you in Norway on exchange or for a full degree?
   a. Exchange
   b. Full degree

What degree are you currently studying for?
   a. Bachelor's degree
   b. Master's degree
   c. Other

How long have you stayed in Norway so far?
   a. Less than 6 months
   b. 6-11 months
   c. 1 year
   d. 2 years
   e. 3 years
   f. 4 years
   g. 5 years or more

How long do you plan to stay in Norway?
   a. Less than 6 months
   b. 6-11 months
   c. 1 year
   d. 2 years
   e. 3 years
   f. 4 years
g. 5 years or more
h. Indefinitely
i. Permanently

Contact information for gift cards and interviews

All respondents to this survey are eligible to be part of a lottery to win one of three 200 kr gift cards. Please fill in the form in the link below to enter.

Additionally, I wish to interview students about their experiences as international students in Norway in early 2016. This is completely voluntary, and you may at any point withdraw. If you're interested in being contacted, please fill out the following form:

https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/68670.html (opens in new window)

or contact me at chrivan@student.uv.uio.no.

Do you have any comments about this survey? (optional)

Thank you for your help!

Thank you for finishing this questionnaire! If you have any questions or would like a copy of the thesis when it’s done, please contact me at chrivan@student.uv.uio.no.
Appendix C: Interview guide

Could you tell me a little about your educational background?

Motivations

Just generally, why did you decide to go abroad in the first place? *(possible prompt: was it for professional reasons, for instance?)*

Have you studied or lived abroad in the past? Have you travelled abroad?

How did you get information about studying abroad?

Why did you go to Norway, specifically? Why UiO/NTNU?

What did your family and friends think about your decision?

What impressions did you have of Norway before going?

Do you feel studying abroad has been a valuable experience? Why?

Challenges

So you arrived in Norway at [date]. Tell me about coming to Norway and meeting the Norwegian culture for the first time.

Let’s discuss your experiences of being an international student at a Norwegian university. How do education here differ from education back in [country]?

- Did you find it difficult to adapt?
- How is your relationship with your teachers? Is it different from back in [country]?
- What does your assessments in your class usually look like? What do you think about this method?

What’s your experience with the Norwegian language?

What does your social life look like? What do you think meeting Norwegians as an international student is like? What kind of friends do you have (are they Norwegians, internationals, fifty-fifty…)

Is there anything you miss particularly about your home country?

How do you feel about UiO/NTNU’s support for international students? If UiO/NTNU asked you for one suggestion to improve the stay for international students, what would you say?

What are your future plans?
Brazil – primary analysis

- Brazilians concerned with safety
- Felt encouraged to get international experience by government, wanted to experience the world
- Many wanted a permanent residency
- Many felt alone when coming to Norway
- Not many issues with language barriers
- Difficult to get to know Norwegians, difficult to communicate with Norwegians due to cultural reasons
- Financial pressure, difficult finding a job
- Free tuition not as important as other countries

Russia – primary analysis

- Primary motivation: relatives in Norway, free tuition, relevant study programmes
- Wanted to experience the world and improve career prospects back home
- Many have been to Norway before, most have travelled abroad in the past
- Disagrees that their government actively encourages students to go abroad, unlike participants from other countries. Felt encouraged by family, however
- Many wants a permanent residency
- Language barriers in class, student/teacher relationship different from Russia
- Prejudices because of nationality

India

- Primary motivations: free tuition, immigration, scholarship
- Competitive university admission process in India?
- Perceived improvement of career prospects in India
- For the majority, this is their first time abroad
- Encouraged to go abroad by their family
- Language barriers in and outside of class
- Felt alone when coming here, difficult to get to know Norwegians, difficult to communicate with Norwegians, cultural differences
- Financial pressure, difficulties finding a job
- Difficult finding time/resources to study Norwegian, but thinks learning Norwegian will improve life
- Many lack a good support network

**China**

- Primary motivations: relevant study programmes, free tuition, scholarship
- Adventure + improved career prospects in China
- Government actively encourages students to go abroad?
- Family encouragement: very mixed response
- Not going abroad because of safety issues
- Language barriers in class and outside
- Mostly happy with academic life
- Difficult to get to know Norwegians
- Financial pressure