Vietnamese Two-Step Migration to Australia within the Global Race for Talent

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Abstract

This article explores the impacts of the global race for talent on migration policies. It also points out the relationality in transnational mobilities that is shaped by this global scape and migrants' experiences in various aspects of life. By reviewing key policy documents and related literature, the article argues that the negotiation of transnational mobilities is an expression of two-step migrants' entwinement with the world in interrelated domains. The argument presented in this article unsettles the conventional conceptualisation of transnational mobilities as disembodied brain flows for national economic benefits. Two-step migration from Vietnam to Australia is analysed to reflect this argument. This article highlights the relational aspects in transnational mobilities that influence migrants' experiences across multiple scales. It calls for a more complex reading of education and professional migration, namely one that delineates the confusions and ambiguities of migrants' experiences and life aspirations.

Keywords: Two-step migration, transnationalism, global race for talent, relationality in transnationalism, Australian skilled migration, Vietnamese migration.

1. Introduction

The race for talent has spread around the globe since the 1990s. In 2014, this race contributed to 40 million skilled migrants with tertiary qualifications around the world (International Organization for Migration, 2014, p. 11). International students could be seen as potential customers who purchase their education for citizenship (Geddie, 2015). Several terms have been associated with this race, and those suggested by Shachar (2011, 2013) well reflect the essence of governments' ambition in recruiting highly skilled people for their socio-economic development. In particular, exclusive citizenship grants and schemes attract skills migrants with "Olympic medals", i.e. those with international recognition in a particular profession (Shachar, 2011, p. 2088) although this term refers to the intersection between sports and nationality. When it is used as metaphor, this term shows governments' increased expectation to attract citizenship through talent attraction programs to reach their "leapfrogging goals" (Shachar, 2011, p. 2094). The race attracting talent involves a "competitive, multiplayer, and multilevel scramble" (Shachar, 2013, p. 85). When excellent 'brains' seem to be wanted and welcome, "no country wants to left behind" (Shachar, 2013, p. 85).

The agendas of this race often use the metaphorical language of "talent". This term is ambiguous though. Who can be seen as talented? Are they people who hold at least a university degree as often indicated in skilled migration policies, but who cannot find a job in the destination countries? Are they

people with associate and higher degrees but work in manual sectors in the destinations (see e.g. Baas, 2006; Rizvi, 2005)? Or are they internationally famous scientists or sports athlete who indeed account for a very small percentage of a population?

Vietnam has been announced to do poorly in the global ranking of talent attraction. It is ranked the 96th position among 132 countries in the 2020 Global Talent Competitiveness Index (Lanvin & Monteiro, 2020, p. 14). Yet, little is known about how Vietnam is confronting the race for skills. This country has recently emerged in the league of labour sending destinations with 515,075 people in 2017 (accounting for 0.55% of the whole population of 92.7 million people in 2016). It has a migration rate of 4.72% of the population - higher than the global average rate of 3.5% (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2017a). The number of Vietnamese students studying abroad seems to be lower than neighbouring countries, e.g. China with 703.500 students in 2019 (China's Ministry of Education, 2020) or Thailand with 27.000 students every year (ICEF Monitor, 2021). In 2018, there were 170,000 students studying in 49 countries and territories (accounting for 0.18% of the population) (BMI, 2019). While Vietnam used to be a communist "trouble maker" (Thayer, 1999, p. 11), it has seemed to open the door for people to go out. But at the same time, the state has claimed to "lose" talented people who cause brain drain. Why does it do so?

Most of the existing policies in Vietnam explicitly state the nation's needs for modernization and industrialization as well as global integration. In some sense, these policies imply the government's attempts to run in this race. By analysing some key policy documents, this article argues that the Vietnamese Government has employed a two-pronged approach: sending out 'brains' for development and calling for Vietnamese expatriates' return and contributions.

In contrast to Vietnam's low index, Australia's 2020 global talent competitiveness index is ranked the 10th place (Lanvin & Monteiro, 2020, p. 12). Its dual project for human capital development links international education to skilled migration, implicitly associating transnational mobilities of two-step migrants with linear flows from learning to migrating. Education migrants are often depicted as rational choice makers whose mobilities are shaped by economic attractions to host countries, with international education used as a tool to achieve this end. However, there is still little research that examines possible interrelated motives of Vietnamese skilled migrants. Most of the current studies use economic frameworks that allow for calculations of benefits and drawbacks brought about by Vietnamese skilled migration on poverty reduction and economic development (for a proper critique of this problem, please refer to Nguyen, 2014). Within the context of the global race for talent, little research has been focused on the interrelationality of Vietnamese skilled migrants' transnational mobilities.

The first focus of this paper is to seek to understand what strategies Australia and Vietnam have adopted to "win" the race and compensate their loss in the race. These questions will be answered in this paper with an example of Vietnamese skilled migration to Australia cited as evidence. They may not be novel in the sense that the effects of skilled migration schemes and diaspora strategies have been thoroughly explored (e.g. Baas, 2006; Biao, 2005, 2007, 2011; Brown & Tannock, 2009). But what can be seen as new in this paper is that the author attempts to show the ambiguity of talent development and attraction projects in Vietnam. In addition, the author argues that migrants' transnational mobilities are usually negotiated through their relations with other people and things

across space and time in interrelated scales and domains. Migrants' interactions with the surrounding world must be read as always becoming and existentially open. This is the second focus of this paper.

The answers to these questions are explored through four main sections. In the first section, the author sketches the context of the global race for talent. The second section that analyses some key policy documents and related literature situates Vietnam's two-step migration to Australia within this global discourse. The third section summarizes the key points that the author withdraws from the policy analysis of the first and second sections. It is argued throughout in these sections that policies often read migration as disembodied actors with rational agencies. In contrast, two-step migrants' experiences of transnational mobilities are reflective of their engagement with the world in related aspects of life, and this is presented in the last section of this article. This also means unpacking the winning or losing of the race among countries should be extended to understandings of how skilled migrants experience their mobilities under the effects of the skilled migration policies shaped by the global discourse of this race.

2. The global race for talent

The global knowledge economy has created more intense demands for highly skilled workers – those who are expected to improve economic productivity by their ability to produce, distribute and use knowledge and information for their work (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 1996). The collected earning and labour capacities of individuals can increase productivity gains that make a nation's economic development more stable. These gains, in return, help eradicate poverty (Son, 2010). In this sense, human capital is considered as an engine that pushes competitive advantage in the global labour market. A global race for talent has been created. Though many government policies do not explicitly acknowledge this race, they seem to associate it with demands for skilled people.

In OECD countries, life expectancy is increasingly longer (82 years for women and 77 for men), whereas birth rates are decreasing (OECD, 2013a, p. 26). At the beginning of the 21st century, 15% of people in the OECD countries were aged over 65, and it is forecast to reach 25% by 2030 (OECD, 2007, p. 12). The size of working-age population in these countries grows slowly, being projected at 4% in the first half of the 21st century, compared with 76% in the last half of the previous century. In addition, discussion on ways to attract talent from overseas has now been one of the foci of global and national socio-political agendas. Talent is recruited to help increase national competitive advantage through innovation and creativity, especially locally trained people who are able to adapt to and integrate in international labour markets (Chellaraj, Maskus, & Mattoo, 2005, p. ii). Foreign skilled people can also address skilled labour needs in regional areas and enable the right mix of skills to help generate wealth creation (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC], 2006).

The US uses the H-1B visa scheme to select foreign applicants who possess "theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge" in special fields (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015, p. 1). This visa program, which allows many international graduates and skilled migrants to work in the US and later apply for the Green Card, can be seen as the US Government's attempt to attract and retain skilled migrants for economic growth. The attraction of talent is also enacted to achieve national political agendas in the global economic integration. Permission to freer transnational mobilities from and to some communist countries than the time

during the Cold War shows these governments' efforts in changing their political images from unfriendly to democratic countries, with Vietnam and China as typical examples (see Biao, 2011; Nguyen, 2014).

European countries are the most attractive destinations for international migrants in general, accounting for 31% of all international migrants (Munz, 2014, p. 2). Despite differences in human talent attraction strategies, East and Southeast Asian as well as some African countries have become emerging players in this global race. Singapore, China, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Algeria, and Nigeria have obtained high rankings in the Global Talent Index (Munz, 2014, p. 4). Each country has a different focus on skills that are expected to meet the shortage of key personnel in the development of their targeted industries. Most seem to give priority over the best and the brightest that possess western degrees as well as English- (or French-) speaking cultures and communication abilities. This global race is extended to include individuals who want to seek western education to compete for jobs in the international labour market.

The most notable strategy that can help increase the quantity and quality of foreign skilled people is done through two-step migration which articulates the dual projects of international education and skilled immigration. These projects allow international students to apply for permanent residency (PR) upon their graduation. Globally, the dual projects of international education and skilled migration have partly contributed to the increasing global number of students enrolled in tertiary education outside their country of citizenship. While the number of international students was only 0.8 million in 1975, it increased to 1.64 million in 1999 and 4.3 million in 2011 (OECD, 2013b, p. 1). The world observed 4.85 million and 5.3 million international students in 2016 and 2017 respectively (Migration Data Portal, 2020). In 2013, OECD countries hosted 77% of international students almost half of whom were enrolled in the US (17%), the UK (13%); Australia (7.6%) and Germany (6%) (OECD, 2013b, p. 2). Asia is traditionally the biggest source area of foreign students, accounting for more than 53% of the total (OECD, 2013b, p. 32), although there are variations in international student enrolments between countries. In some sense, while human capital theory assumes a linear relationship between "learning" and "earning" (Brown & Tannock, 2009, p. 381), the global race for talent has constructed a new relationship between studying overseas and migrating. Again, the flows seem to be South-North (or East-West) direction.

In receiving societies, skilled migrants are associated with locomotives for economic growth. Their productivity is often assessed through their abilities to generate innovation and remittances. The global governance of talent through migration with a focus on migrants' educational qualifications refers to a "talent-for-citizenship exchange" (Shachar, 2006, p. 159). For example, obtaining the 2nd position in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index in 2020 (Lanvin & Monteiro, 2020, p. 12), the US has emphasized two issues that are critical to their success in attracting talent: enriching the quality of the national workforce and enacting smart skilled migration policies. Skilled immigrants are reported to produce a "significant and positive impact" (Chellaraj, Maskus, & Mattoo, 2005, p. ii) on patent applications and innovations in the US. Skilled migrants accounted for 47% of the increase in the US workforce and 70% in Europe in the 2000s. They helped fill in labour shortages in fast-growing industries (OECD, 2014, p. 1). Skilled migration is believed to refresh the working-age population and boost uses and creations of technological advances.

Sending countries seem not to want to lose the race. They have called for the return of skilled people that is assumed to link to professionalism, dynamism, capabilities of "technological entrepreneurship, access to leading clusters of research and innovation" (Guellec & Cervantes, 2002, p. 71) and "social remittances" in terms of innovation and social-cultural capital (Levitt, 1998, p. 927). These forms of capital contributed tend to be calculated on the frequencies and/or numbers of technological transfer projects, amounts of remittances, and numbers of returnees. Receiving countries can benefit from receiving large remittances. In 2013, the remittances sent to Albania accounted for 8.5% of the GPD. Similarly, the contribution of remittances to GDP in Armenia in the same period was 21%, and the Philippines 9.8% (World Bank, 2014). This amount of money was seen as a sign of development offset against brain drain. These forms of capital are also calculated through the translation of technological innovations per (im)migrant into patents and technological transfer projects. In this way, skilled migrants are quantified and disembodied when they are merely seen as engines that can generate contributions to economic development.

The articulation of international education and skilled migration schemes are not commonplace practices in some developing countries because of their domestic incapacity to provide world-class education to attract foreign students and probably political intentions to retain existing political ideologies. Governments of these countries run foreign talent attraction programs by offering financial benefits and status recognition to skilled foreigners. Some developing countries in Asia, such as China, can be seen as typical examples of using diaspora strategies as "rituals" to attract former nationals (Biao, 2011, p. 821). Vietnam issued a decree (Number 87/2014/ND-CP) which is an amendment of other similar previous decrees to attract talent from abroad (The Central Government, 2014). South Korea has relaxed its visa rules and the current points-based system to allow international students and foreign skilled workers to obtain permanent residency, as far as they meet the requirements for income, business investment and/or high educational qualifications (*The Korea Herald*, 2014, p. 1).

Different strategies are drafted and employed to retain students by expanding domestic provision of higher education programs, oblige them to return through requirements and bonds in scholarships, and engage returning students and diasporic population for contribution in response to a perceived brain drain (Gribble, 2008, pp. 28-34). By doing this, governments of these countries hope to turn brain drain into brain gain, because returning students and migrants bring practical benefits to national development. Some source countries like Vietnam and China are relaxing requirements for return by allowing students to remain in destination countries for a longer period after graduation to gain international experience and extend professional relationships. Diaspora strategies are also enacted to call for former nationals' contributions through technology and knowledge transfers, remittances and professional networks. Governments of these countries also encourage contributions of diasporic communities, without having to return home physically. Their practice of sustaining and extending relationships with diasporic networks for engagement can be seen as rituals that help them advance the enactment of civil and political rights (see also Biao, 2011; Nguyen, 2014).

The global race for talent, in other words, seems to be a discourse which makes countries quickly compete each other in terms of enriching their skilled human reservoir. Within this global discourse, highly skilled people appear to have more access, rights and ability to move across borders. However, state control to retain skilled labour force also creates constraints to transnational mobilities. Communist countries are even stricter in selecting and forbidding or limiting whom to go because of

their attempt to retain communist ideologies. At present, travel is limited by the Covid-19 pandemic. Governments have restricted mobilities from those who have not been vaccinated. Not matter how the conditions are, mobilities always seem to be a "resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship" (Skeggs, 2004, p. 49). In this sense, possibilities of international education and migrating, as well as possibly transiting in another country, returning and re-migrating make transnational mobilities of two-step migrants fluid, rather than linear trajectories.

3. Two-step migration from Vietnam to Australia in the global race for talent

This section analyses Vietnam's human capital development policies and Australia's skill migration schemes. These countries actively employ different strategies for talent attraction. Transnational mobilities of two-step migrants are always embedded in both national and global scapes.

3.1 Vietnam's human capital improvement project

In 1996, the Vietnamese Government announced their ambitions for industrialisation and modernisation by 2020 (VCP, 1996, pp. 2-3). To facilitate and speed up these processes, the government called for uses of scientific and technological advances in production. Human capital was considered as the most important asset for the country to ingrate into the world's labour market and stabilize economic development (The Central Government, 2013). In 2001, the Vietnamese Government specified strategies to attain high quality workforce by aiming to increase the percentage of the workforce with vocational and tertiary degrees to 30% (VCP, 2001, p. 18). Attainment of a highly skilled workforce has become important for the success of the government's plans for industrialisation and modernisation.

By looking into many key policy documents (e.g. Ministry of Justice [MOJ], 1999, 2007; The Central Government, 2011; VCP, 2001, 2011, 2021; Vietnam International Education Development [VIED], 2013) relating to talent or skilled workforce development, the author found that the Vietnamese Government seems not to directly associate their demands for skills with the global race for talent. Instead, since 2001, such words as "skills for socio-economic development", "skills to join the world's trade" and "global economic integration" have become common. They may not like to boast what they are not really successful when Vietnam is often ranked a very low position in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index. The political report in the 11th VCP's Congress in 2011 (VCP, 2011) emphasized that globalization and revolutions in science and technology enabled the formation of the global economy that Vietnam had to keep up with. This point was re-mentioned in the political report in the 13th VCP's Congress in 2021, which insisted "international integration" as one of the keys to the domestic development (VCP, 2021). In particular, Decision Number 579/QD-TTg on Vietnam's Human Capacity Building Strategy aimed to attain 2,170,500 highly skilled workers and tertiary lecturers in prioritized fields such as public administration, state policy, international law, science, technology, healthcare, finance, banking and information technology from 2010 to 2020 (Nguyen, 2014). The purposes were to "speed up the modernization and industrialization processes" and "integrate the world's economy" (The Central Government, 2011, pp. 3 & 5).

Education has been prioritized to help achieve the target of this decision. The number of vocational colleges and universities was expanded from 103 in 1993 to 322 in 2007 (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2009, p. 9). Some universities were allowed to collaborate with foreign universities

to teach twinning programs (in 2012, there were 212 twinning training programs) (VIED, 2013). The government also paid higher expenditures on education which became the third largest social investment. This kind of investment went from 10,000 billion Vietnamese dong (VND) in 1996 to 12,677 billion VND in 2000 and 63,547 billion VND in 2008 (The Central Government, 2012, p. 1). This amount accounted for 5.65% of the GDP in 2013, a leapfrog from 4.88% in 2008 (World Bank, 2020). In 2018, the Vietnamese Government expenditure on education was reported at 14.7% of the total percentage of the government expenditure on all sectors (Trading Economics, 2020). International collaboration in terms of sending students to study overseas, educational exchange programs and staff mobilities were initiated by the government's uses of diplomatic ties with 176 countries (which increased to 189 countries by 2019). At the same time, the government has also employed a "go" approach (Nguyen, 2014, p. 186) by allowing and encouraging young people to study abroad in developed countries.

The growth of Vietnamese students studying abroad can result from the government's permission for international education, their efforts in universalizing basic education, and the domestic economic development. Vietnam has an average economic growth rate of 8%. Its GDP per capita went up, from $97.8 in 1987 to $1,168 in 2010 (Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2011, p. 3). Vietnam's GDP has increased from 39.59 billion USD in 2000 to 354.87 billion USD in 2021 (O'Neill, 2021). The completion rate of high school graduates increased from 1.2 million students in 2005 to 2.8 million high school students in 2010 (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2011). As a consequence, demands for tertiary education grew stronger, from 200 students among every 10,000,000 people in 2010 to 450 students per 10,000,000 people in 2020 (World Education News & Review [WERN], 2020). In 2019, 1.67 million students were enrolled in 237 universities in Vietnam (172 public universities and 65 private universities). Some who had failed the entrance exams to universities had to study at vocational or polytechnic colleges or went for work (Nguyen, 2021). Studying overseas has emerged as a possible option for excellent students who can secure sponsorship, second-chance students who have failed the entrance exams to the domestic universities, and students who come from wealthy families. The number of students studying overseas increased fast, from 60,000 in 2008 to 100,000 in 2011 and 170,000 in 2018 in 49 countries (BMI, 2019; Nguyen, 2014, p. 181) Among the global number of 3.7 international students in the same period (OECD, 2011, p. 318), the number of 170,000 Vietnamese students accounts for 4.5%.

Labour export programs that send semi-skilled labour to work on contract in other nations are also found to be contributory to the country's attempt to join the global labour market. This initiative has been deployed since the late 1990s under the effects of Decree 152/1999/ND-CP, which portrayed labour export as a development strategy and poverty eradication. At a macro-level, this initiative was aimed to enrich national revenues and improve bilateral relations with other countries (Ministry of Justice [MOJ], 1999, p. 1). Vietnam has recently become one of the source countries of labour (Asis & Piper, 2008). From 2008 to 2010, there were 105,364 skilled workers being sent to foreign countries by 421 licensed businesses designated in the labour export programs (Department of Overseas Labour, 2021, p. 10). By June 2021, this number increased to 560,000 workers working in 43 countries and territories. China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Romania have been the most popular destinations (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). Skilled migrants accounted for 43%, but the percentage of university-educated workers was very low. IOM's report in 2017 indicated there

were a total number of 515,075 skilled and semi-skilled Vietnamese workers working in 15 countries and territories (IOM, 2017a)

Within Vietnam's population of 92.7 million in 2016, there were 3.8 million legally migrating for work overseas, accounting for 4.72% of the total population (IOM, 2017a). Male migrants accounted for more than a half, and male migrants in the age range 30-39 constituted to 30.1% of the total number of legal work migrants. In the year 2000, labour export programs generated a revenue of 1.5 billion to two billion USD, accounting for 6% of the country's total export value (Nguyen, 2014, p. 188). In 2011, the total remittances generated by both Vietnamese refugees and migrants were nine billion USD, constituting to 8% of Vietnam's GDP (DIAC, 2012, p. 1). In 2019, the annual revenue generated by labour export programs was estimated at 1.7 to 2 billion USD (Nguyen, Pham, & Tran, 2019, p. 77). The Vietnamese Government's human capital development project has been aimed to enrich the quality of the workforce and transformed the ingrained mindset as a "trouble-maker" (Thayer, 1999, p. 11) by other countries into a democratic society.

The Vietnamese Government has taken a "carrot and stick" approach to human capital management (Nguyen, 2014, p. 187). Skilled and semi-skilled labourers are supported to work overseas on contract. This is seen as a socio-economic strategy that enhances national revenues and lessens domestic unemployment issues. Favourable policies such as Decision 365/2004/QĐ-NHNN issued in 2004 allow those who are descendants of war martyrs and veterans and those who are poor to apply for loans from the Vietnam Bank for Social Policies that they can use for their overseas work migration (MOJ, 2004). At the same time, several policies such as Decrees 81/2003/NĐ-CP and 144/2007/ND-CP impose severe financial penalties to their families in Vietnam if they do not return to Vietnam after the extended work contracts. They are also banned from going abroad within five years (MOJ, 2007). Similar penalties are applied to non-return sponsored students. Before the departure for their study sojourns, those who receive the state sponsorship must sign a contract of prospective work in Vietnam upon their graduation. Late return or non-return may culminate in legal prosecution and confiscation of their relatives' properties (VIED, 2011). These forms of penalties are reasonable because the government wants a return on their investment. This return is interpreted as both the physical presence of the students and their contributions though the latter cannot be calculated concretely.

Contributions to national socio-economic development are also expected from Vietnamese expatriates. There are favourable policies that support the diasporic attraction schemes. For example, Decision 40/2004/QH11 in 2004 attracted Vietnamese expatriates to return and contribute by allowing them to rent houses in Vietnam on a long-term basis, establish companies, receive income tax reduction, and get the paperwork for their business applications processed with priority. Vietnamese expatriates are also permitted to apply for Vietnamese citizenship in case the country where they currently live allow dual citizenship. The dual citizenship in Vietnam is mainly based on the principle of jus sanguinis and skills that are internationally recognized and necessary for the country's development (MOJ, 2009, p. 2). In 2014, the government issued Decree Number 87/2014/ND-CP, which focuses on carrying out specific talent attraction schemes. Accordingly, Vietnamese expatriates and foreigners who hold patents in technology or academics with high profiles of research outputs and capabilities are invited to collaborate with Vietnamese people and institutions. (The Central Government, 2014, pp. 1-2). On return, they are entitled to receive generous remuneration and provision of accommodation and work space.

Most of these policy documents seem to acknowledge globalization and Vietnam's participation into the global labour market as the main driving forces. Globalization is seen as both a "collaborative" and "competitive" force (MOET, 2014, p. 8). The government does not explicitly use such a phrase as race for talent. Yet it is clear that their attempts to join the global economy market is clearly driven by the needs to increase the skilled workforce in order to compete against other countries. Vietnam's participation in the discourse of talent has been shaped by its internal socio-economic transformations after the Vietnam War and collapse of the communist bloc, which has urged the government to take a farther step into the international community for economic and labour market integration. In this sense, transnational mobilities of two-step migrants from Vietnam are influenced by the global discourse of human capital.

3.2 Australia's discourse of human capital: The international education – migration nexus

Since 1983, Australia has restructured the economy to respond to the challenges of the global market and competing against Asian economies with cheap labour. A high-quality base of human skills is in demand to develop the new economy.

However, the Australian population is ageing. The proportion of the Australian population aged over 65 has been increasing from 8% in 1970 to 15% in 2010, and this number is projected to 23% in 2050. In Australia, life expectancy has increased from 68 years in 1960 to 78 years in 2010. It is projected to be 83 in 2042. However, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2011) and Kelsey-Sugg and Docherty (2021), Australian fertility rates are low, with approximately 1.73 babies per woman in 2001, 1.96 in 2008 and 1.66 in 2029. Australia's workforce participation rate (people aged 15 to 64) slightly increased from 61.3% in 1980 to 64.4% in 2005, but it fell below that of some other OECD countries (Abhayaratna & Lattimore, 2006, p. 23). This rate decreased to 66.2% in April 2021 (Trading Economics, 2021). The ageing population that is partly caused by the low fertility rate and humble rates of workforce participation influence Australia's economic growth (ABS, 2011). In addition, globalisation forces including expansion of goods as well as demands for capital, information and services have enabled the growth of Australian knowledge economy. The government needs to recruit foreign skilled workers to fill in the skill shortage.

Recruiting Australia-educated international graduates to work on a permanent basis is one of the strategies that Australia has been practicing since the 1990s (Shah & Burke, 2005). Before 1998, foreign students could choose to apply for PR within three years after graduation from offshore. The then skilled migration policy was employed as the Australian Government's strategy to meet "supply-driven" migration posed from skilled applicants' demands for PR in Australia (Cully, 2011, p. 4). Since 2001, international students can apply for PR onshore immediately after graduation. This selection method was expected to meet Australian employers' demands for foreign workers' quick and effective adjustment to the labour market (Cully, 2011, p. 4). The prospect of migration through international education has given Australian higher education a competitive advantage, making its international education the third largest export industry of a 19.1 billion AUD revenue in 2009-2010 and 37.6 billion in 2018 with students from 187 countries (Adams, Banks, & Olsen, 2011, p. 23; Tehan, 2019, p. 1).

The Australian Government expects to recruit skilled migrants who are presumably proficient in English, locally trained, and have adjusted to Australian social and cultural life (Ziguras & Law, 2006, p. 64). There are at least 10 visa sub-classes for skilled applicants from overseas. Australia-educated

visa applicants can have priority over other skilled foreigners who have not studied in Australia. Since 1999, the Australian Government has employed the points test system with a focus on applicants' academic qualifications and work experience, and from 2009, Australian employer sponsorship. Skilled independent work visa applicants (Visa Subclass 189) must meet at least 65 points in the points test. It includes the following criteria:

Table 1: Points calculator for Skilled Independent Visa (Department of Home Affairs, 2021)

Criterion	General description	Point
Age	between 18 and 45, and those who are between 25 and 33 years old can get up to 30 points	15 – 30
English language skills	Valid evidence of either of the following tests: International English Language Testing System (IELTS) of 8 for each sub-band score Test of English as a Foreign Language internet-based Test (TOEFL iBT) of 28 for listening, 29 for reading, 30 for writing, and 26 for speaking Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic) of at least 79 for each sub-test Occupational English Test (OET) of at least A for each sub-test Cambridge C1 Advanced Test of at least 200 for each sub-test	0 – 20
Skilled employment experience	Those who have at least 8 years of employment experience outside Australia can be awarded 15 points, and another 8 points for those with 8 years of work experience in Australia	0 – 35
Educational qualifications	educational qualifications conferred by Australian institutions or recognized ones (the higher an applicant's degree is, the better score she or he can get, and a doctorate can be awarded 20 points)	10 – 20
Australian study requirement	Applicants must meet the Australian study requirement of at least 16 months previously completing a degree onshore	5
Professional year in Australia	Completion of a professional year in Australia	5
Credentialed community language	Applicants' community language must be accredited at the paraprofessional level and above	5
Study in regional Australia	Applicants must have at least 1 degree, diploma or trade qualification from an Australian educational institution obtained while living and studying in an eligible area of regional Australia	5

Partner skills	Applicants' spouses must be under 45 years old, have competent English, be an Australian citizen or permanent resident, and have suitable skills for a nominated occupation	0 – 25

Applicants with Australian study and work experience can be given certain priority. This priority shows the Australian Government's dual human capital development project through the link between higher education and skilled migration. The higher points that applicants are awarded for their higher degrees also express the Australian Government's attempt to construct a highly skilled labour force through two-step immigration. Due to the economic downturn caused by Covid-19, Australia's migration program skill stream has given priority to migrants who can drive its economic development, employment creation, and business investment (Department of Home Affairs, 2021). In addition to the normal skilled migration scheme sponsored by employers, its Global Talent visa (Subclass 858) invites candidates of exceptional achievements in a profession, sports, the arts, and academia and research in the past two years. These updates show that Australia expects both financial incentives and brain that skilled migrants can bring about to the domestic economy and enhance its performance in the international talent attraction arena.

While the allocation of global talent visas has been limited to 15,000 places in 2021-2022 (Department of Home Affairs, 2021), the priority given to Australia-educated skilled visa candidates has remained unchanged. The number of Australia-educated migrants accounted for more than half of the number of skilled migrants during the period from 2001 to 2003 and 283,000 student migrants in 2010 (DIAC, 2010, p. 49). In 2017, 799,371 foreign students were enrolled to study in Australia, with 350,472 foreign students enrolled in higher education institutions although the total number of international students slightly decreased to 631,748 students in 2020 and 525,892 students in 2021 (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2021). International students in Australia are allowed to remain onshore to earn professional work experience, and this permission shows the government's expectation to recruit candidates who are familiar with work structures, national and organizational cultures in Australia, and English proficiency as these people can quickly enter the workforce. Those whose first student visas were granted after 5 November 2011 can be allowed to stay on in Australia up to four years after graduation with bridging visas, depending on their qualifications (DIBP, 2014). Knight (2011) proposes that this bridging duration can help graduates obtain "practical experience in Australia" which can make their qualifications "more valuable" (p. viii) in their home countries, another third country, and particularly foster the possibility of PR in Australia.

Within the global two-step migration, international student mobility and skilled migration from Vietnam to Australia has been increasing. In 1975, there were only 335 Vietnamese students (mostly from the South of Vietnam) studying in Australia under the Colombo Plan (Andressen, 1993, p. 228). This number has increased since the 2000s as shown in the following table:

Table 2: Number of Vietnamese students in Australia (Australian Embassy in Vietnam, 2017)

Year	Number of Vietnamese students
2002 - 2003	1,851
2003 - 2004	2,107

2004 - 2005	2,101
2005 - 2006	2,843
2006 - 2007	3,845
2007 - 2008	6,878
2008 -2009	9,389
2010 - 2011	8,376
2013	26,015
2017	19,708

In 2013, Vietnam was one of the top four source countries in Australian education (Australian Education International [AEI], 2013, p. 1). In 2017, this position remained the same, but the actual number decreased to 19,708 students (Australian Embassy in Vietnam, 2017). Between 2012 and 2013, 1,592 skilled visas were granted to Vietnamese applicants, and this number accounted for 30% of all PR visas granted in Australia (DIAC, 2013, p. 3). The period between 2018 and 2019 observed an increase in this number to 2,192 (Department of Home Affairs, 2019).

The changes in the skilled migration policies show close links between Australian international education and the government's attempt to meet labour market demands by attracting Australia-educated professional migrants. This skilled migration scheme prioritizes skilled applicants' knowledge and skills with familiarization with Australian work and life culture. The priority shown in the points test shows Australia's response to the current shortage of skills and ability to run quickly in the global race for talent by improving their competitive advantage. In this way, transnational mobilities of student migrants are often read as disembodied, linear brain flows that are important economic development and competitive edge. Accordingly, education-related emigration is said to lead to brain drain, whereas an influx of skilled immigrants creates brain gain for economic development. Two-step immigration becomes an inseparable segment of the nation's human capital development for economic growth.

4. Uses of mobilities in education in the race

In this section, the author does not discuss the roles of education in society such as provision of public goods, generation of economic values through the growth of for-profit universities, enhancement of educational values and individual human capital accumulation and the like. It is argued in this section that international education can be supported by government attempts to expand, recruit, retain, and engage skilled workforce for competitive advantage. This section captures the main characteristics of government uses of mobilities in education as shown below:

- Professional and student international mobilities enter the political agendas for socio-economic development in both receiving and sending countries.

- Encouraging students to study overseas and pulling them back with both incentives and punishment for late return or non-return can be seen as a quick response to the demands of skills in developing countries like Vietnam.

- International student mobilities are closely linked to the prospects of subsequent immigration in receiving societies like Australia. Therefore, engaging graduates in accumulating professional

experience in the destination countries can be done through the relaxation of requirements for return. Physical presence is still important to national development.

- Mobilities are selective and must be trained and tamed. What is meant here is that students who can choose to study abroad must meet certain conditions of financing as well as academic, and in some circumstances, political backgrounds (the Vietnamese Government has given more priority to descendants of war martyrs and veterans). Two-step migrants must meet certain eligibility of residing, working and studying in Australia to apply for a skilled visa. Meeting the requirements for familiarization with socio-political conditions seems to be a necessity for transnational mobilities to incur.

- The "finish line" of the global race for talent is indefinite, but it is always envisaged through concrete steps in fulfilling current skill shortages.

- Mobilities are always linked to interrelated influences of macro-level factors in demography, economy, politics, and education.

- Enhancing the capacity of domestic higher education can be used for export in receiving societies like Australia and for retaining skilled human capital

- Transnational mobilities through education ultimately remain individual choices that are influenced by interrelated effects in various domains. This is what policy discourse often misreads as disembodied brain flows.

The section that follows unpacks the interrelatedness in transnational mobilities that current literature indirectly discusses. The author's job in that section is to clearly point out the links among the confluences of various aspects of life that two-step migrants may encounter.

5.   The relationality in transnational mobilities

Migrants' involvement in the world goes beyond the ordered and calculated projects of policy-makers. This section outlines how the negotiation of transnational mobilities with multiple forces and influences that shape decisions to move and the migration outcomes for migrants.

Two-step migrants' transnational mobilities are affected by the sets of policies in international education and skilled migration. For example, international students' decisions to study in Australia may be shaped by their aspirations to apply for PR, making some educational providers produce degree programs that are prioritised in the Skilled Occupations Lists (Baas, 2006; Ziguras & Law, 2006). Many international students migrate to study overseas and study to migrate by considering their international education journeys as the first step to obtain PR (Baas, 2006). International students' decisions to study overseas for subsequent skilled migration are also influenced by wage attractions in receiving countries (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). However, many studies in demography and international education policy, as well as government-commissioned reports often associate two-step migration as a linear trajectory beginning with international education and ending in skilled immigration in which migration policies shape foreign students' choices of study programs and their subsequent decisions to migrate (e.g. Birrell & Perry, 2009; Cully, 2011). Transnational mobilities are treated as disembodied in homogeneous brain flows from home to host societies. If these brains cannot

perform their knowledge and skills in host societies, they are considered as being incompetent individuals.

In contrast, transnationalism studies consider mobilities as embodied practices of migrants' embeddedness in transnational spaces in a range of scales, producing heterogeneous experiences of mobilities. For example, the negotiation of transnational mobilities within intra-national legal domains shapes their decisions to migrate and transnational practices, unsettling their belonging and membership in more than one society (Baas, 2010; Collins, 2009; Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014). Two-step migrants also negotiate their mobilities with national agendas of human capital with their own circumstances through diaspora strategies, visa restrictions and citizenship rights (Biao, 2011; Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014). The negotiation of transnational mobilities is known to extend to cosmopolitan lifestyle and infrastructure in global cities that influence two-step migrants' aspirations for self-development and exploration (Ho, 2011; Tseng, 2011). Some two-step migrants' transnational mobilities are affected by intermediary agents and brokers' services in luring potential students for the prospect of migration (Baas, 2010; Biao, 2005 & 2007).

In addition, skilled migrants may decide to migrate under the influences of their involvement in familial and communal domains that also influence the ways they sustain their transnational practices across borders (Biao, 2005 & 2007). Nguyen's (2021) interpretative study of 15 skilled migrants from Vietnam living Australia has found that these migrants encounter a mix of reasons for their mobilities at the same time. Some experience personal upheavals of losing a family member or divorces in Vietnam together with employment and intergenerational security benefits in Australia. Others suffer from the lack of political patronage in the home country, are lured by the attraction of the Australian skilled migration policies, and consider migration as an adventure. That means transnational mobilities are embodied through two-step migrants' engagement with socio-economic and political structures in global, national and local scales, as well as familial and personal situations. International student mobility and subsequent migration are stimulated by not only the increasingly global interconnected scapes of political, economic and educational discourses, but also migrants' "social imaginaries" with "consumer desire and subjective awareness of global opportunities" (Rizvi, 2009; p. 269) shaped by their engagement with many stakeholders. Skilled migrants do not directly race in the global race for talent, they do have bargaining power to negotiate their mobilities with the regimes of talent attraction.

Transnationalism studies acknowledge that two-step migrants negotiate their mobilities within interactions with other people and things in many aspects of their lives, producing constraints and possibilities. Some skilled migrants straddle their lives and shuttle between two countries to juggle their transnational businesses for economic reasons, seek educational purposes for their children, and earn a better quality of life at retirement in Western countries (Ley & Kobayashi, 2005). Asian parents also influence children's international education and decisions to migrate after graduation (Ho & Bedford, 2008). Migrants' interactions with others also involve the ways they follow communal norms and practices of mobilities that influence students' imaginations of studying overseas for migration (Biao, 2005 & 2007). Their mobilities are shaped by and shape the relative immobilities and mobilities of others.

Some of their engagements with others are experienced through their interactions with things. For example, some two-step migrants use Australian education credentials as "tickets" (Rizvi, 2005, p.

177) to apply for PR to meet their desires, which are shaped by their families and communities in home societies, as well as friends in Australia (Baas, 2006). Some use their new citizenship to achieve pragmatic pursuits offered in the host society, whereas failures to obtain ostensible achievements in migration may impede them from returning to countries of origin for a visit (Teo, 2011). Transnational spaces with particular places and things such as expatriate clubs, houses and souvenirs also affect migrants' emotions and belonging (Liu-Farrer, 2011). Their interactions with others and things through their involvement with public norms and regularities also lead to constraints and possibilities for their mobilities. Some are known to use cultural practices of marriage to enable skilled migration through international education (Biao, 2005 & 2007), whereas others have to suffer employment precariousness in confronting ethnic discrimination in seeking employment and waiting for the grant of legal status from PR to citizenship (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014). Through their encounters with other people and things, they experience the influences of their past on their present lives and plans for the future (Baas, 2010; Biao, 2007; Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014). In transnational spaces, migrants contemplate further mobilities or navigate in the destination society within "social-cultural-political matrices" (Yeoh & Huang, 2011, p. 684) in which things and people matter to the meanings of mobilities. The meanings of mobilities are shaped and re-shaped through migrants' embeddedness in and across spaces which "[allow] people to be themselves and validate their distinct identities" (Florida, 2005, p. 7). The embodiment of their mobilities is constituted by and constitutes their embeddedness in the world in a range of scales.

Migrants experience confluences from their engagements with other people and things in various interrelated scales and domains, which could be referred to as migrants' 'entwinement with the world' (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 35). Thus, addressing the relationality of transnational mobilities requires a relevant theoretical and methodological approach that allows attending to the confluences of two-step migrants' entwinement with the world. Exploring the relationality of transnational mobilities in and through migrants' engagement in the world enables us to understand the complex articulations of their hopes, desires, aspirations and formation of hybrid selves, as well as negotiations of belonging at various intersecting social scales. Attending to the migrants' entwinement with the world also broadens understandings of spatial and temporal linkages in migration in which migrants exercise choices and make decisions through their experiences of multiple times and spaces.

6. Conclusion

This paper has sought answers to two main questions: what strategies have Australia and Vietnam adopted to run in the global race for talent, and how do skilled migrants' experience of transnational mobilities in running in this race mean to them? By reviewing related policy documents and literature, it has primarily found that skilled migration schemes that favour Australia-educated graduates have been adopted by Australia. This strategy can fill in the country's shortage of skills, boost their international education export and certainly, create certain influence on talent attraction and retention schemes in other countries, including Vietnam.

Vietnam has encouraged students to study in developed countries as a measure to tackle the domestic lack of skilled workforce. At the same time, the government has tried to retain, attract and engage these graduates and expatriates for human capacity building. An ambivalent 'go and return' approach of human capital management has been taken. This approach shows the state attempts to join the global

race for skilled workers. It also expresses their willingness to become a democratic and politically open socialist country. Australia has allowed immigration following international education to address the ageing workforce and increase national advantage for the development of the knowledge economy. In this vein, the transnational mobilities of two-step migrants from Vietnam to Australia are situated within national socio-economic and political agendas that are also linked to wider global forces and processes.

In economic and political discourses, transnational mobilities of two-step migration manifest as disembodied flows, imagined in homogeneous terms wherein people can be governed by states as human capital. However, two-step migrants have their own aspirations and expectations that are formed through their interactions with others in circumstances that influence their subjectivities in transnational mobilities. Individual migrants have a bargaining power in negotiating their mobilities under the effects of the global and national agendas of running for talents. Therefore, future research should look into the question of how two-step migrants negotiate their mobilities within the global discourse of human capital, and national socio-economic and political structures that both enable and impede international movements, by adopting their own positions in these processes. In this sense, skilled migrations will be not read simply as disembodied flows of people across national borders.

Compliance of research and publication ethics

I, as the Corresponding Author, declare and undertake that in the study titled as "Vietnamese Two-Step Migration to Australia within the Global Race for Talent", scientific, ethical and citation rules were followed; Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry Journal Editorial Board has no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, that all responsibility belongs to the author/s and that this study has not been sent to any other academic publication platform for evaluation.

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