

Transnational Mobilities – From International Education to Professional Migration in Australia

Dr. Chi Hong Nguyen ^a

^aEnglish Language Department, FPT University, Can Tho Campus, Vietnam (chinh6@fe.edu.vn)

Abstract

This article explores the significant contributions in the body of research on Australian two-step migration to the field of migration and transnationalism. It also evaluates some pitfalls within the diverse research directions. While the policy stream considers education-related migration as fixed arrival movements, the body of research on transnationalism views the way skilled migrants make sense of transnational mobilities as an ongoing process. By considering transnational mobilities as embodied experiences constituted through migrants' engagement with the world, this article calls for a theoretical and methodological approach that pays attention to migrants' interactions with others and things across multiple domains of life and policy discourse.

Keywords: Australia, migration policies, skilled migration, transnational mobilities, two-step migration

1. Australia's skilled migration policy and international education

Since 1983, Australia has restructured the economy to respond to the challenges of the global market by developing knowledge-intensive production to compete against Asian economies with cheap labour. Therefore, a high quality base of human skills is in demand to develop the new economy (Houghton & Sheehan, 2000, p. 11). While the need for a highly skilled workforce to sustain the knowledge economy has been soaring, the Australian population is aging. In fact, 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 (The Treasury, 2010). One of the measures to promptly fill in the skilled labour shortage and solve labour market problems is to increase the number of professional migrants and retain Australia-educated international graduates to work on a permanent basis (Shah & Burke, 2005, p. 5). To attract potential Australia-educated migrants, Australian international education has tended to link to strong immigration incentives since 1998-1999, when Australia's immigration policy was shifted from family migration to skilled migration (Hawthorne, 2005).

Prior to 1998, former international students could apply for PR offshore within a period of 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' demand for PR in Australia (Cully, 2011, p. 4). Due to a booming number of skilled migrants and employers' complaints about skilled migrants' communication skills and work experience,

Australia's skilled migration policy has included the points test system to select suitable migrants for the labour market since 1 July 1999. Former international students have also been allowed to apply onshore immediately after graduation since 2001 (Ziguras, 2012, p. 41). This selection route is expected to meet Australian employers' demand (Cully, 2011, p. 4). Australia-educated applicants are then given more priority in PR application reviews. The prospect of migration through international education has given Australia a marketing advantage in recruiting fee-paying overseas students from 187 countries, making its international education the third largest export industry of an \$18 billion revenue in 2009-2010 (Adams, Banks, & Olsen, 2011, p. 23).

The link between Australian international education and skilled migration schemes is explicitly manifest in the skilled migration policy. 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. Accordingly, Australia-educated applicants are given priority over other skilled foreigners (Koleth, 2010, p. 8). This priority is expressed in the points test - a mechanism used to select skilled migrants who are expected to fill in skilled labour shortages in Australia. The Australian Government has employed the points test system with a focus on applicants' academic qualifications and work experience from 1999 to 2009, and plus Australian employer sponsorship since 2009. Since July 1999, the Australian skilled immigration program has awarded five additional points out of the current pass mark of 65 to applicants who obtain their diploma or degree from an Australian institution. This priority enhances the ability of eligible former and current overseas students to migrate to Australia on a permanent basis. The number of Australia-educated migrants accounted for more than half of the number of skilled migrants during the period from 2001 to 2003 with 283,000 students-turned-migrants from 2001 to 2010 (Koleth, 2010, p. 8).

Due to the high demand for permanent residency (PR) from international students, since 2003 the Australian Government has required student applicants to complete a minimum two-year stay in Australia to qualify for bonus points in the points test and to be exempted from work experience requirements. Again, this requirement reflects the Government's favour given to Australia-educated migrants. In addition, those who do not meet the criteria for a Permanent General Skilled migration visa can apply for Skilled Graduate Temporary visa (Subclass 485). This visa allows international graduates from Australian institutions to remain in Australia for 18 months following graduation to gain work experience and improve their English skills. 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. 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. This Knight Report (2011) acknowledges that there is likely an intersection between international education in Australia and prospects of migrating to Australia after graduation, even if it is only the minds of prospective students (p. 6). With the priority given in Australia's skilled migration policies, international students may choose to study in Australia first, and apply for PR after graduation by achieving the passing score in the points test. This process is known as two-step migration.

In short, these changes in the skilled migration policies show the close link between Australian international education and the Government's attempt to meet the labour market demand by

favouring Australia-educated professional migrants. The changes in Australia's skilled migration policies have made education-related migration to Australia different from previous immigration flows of skilled migrants. Within the growth of international students in Australia, research has looked into the interplay between Australian international education and skilled migration in several directions, which can be classified in two main streams: migration and transnational mobilities. This article sketches out the diversity of research strands within each of the main streams, and discusses some limitations and debates in each stream.

2. The diversity of research directions

The first strand in the research body of Australian skilled migration includes policy-based studies and government reports, which describe patterns and trends of skilled migration (e.g. Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2009; DIBP, 2014; Nelson, 2003). For the purposes of information archives, as well as informing relevant authorities and the public, government reports provide statistical information on numbers and trends of international students and skilled migrants in Australia with little explanation on how international students may switch their temporary student visas into bridging or PR visas. In a slight contrast, government commissioned reports (e.g. Birrell, Hawthorne, & Richardson, 2006; Cully, 2011; Hawthorne, 2010; Koleth, 2010; Knight, 2011; Richardson *et al.*, 2004) admit there is a link between Australian international education and skilled migration, which is manifest through the priority of Australian education given in the points test system. The primary objective of these studies is to provide suggestions to the Australian Government and international education industry. For example, The Knight Report (2011) has proposed that Australia's migration controls should mitigate risks in the initial visa decisions offshore involving students with "genuine" (p. x) purpose of arriving in Australia for an educational outcome rather than a migration intention. This report also acknowledges that it is hard to judge students' initial intentions and changes in their intentions after they have reached Australia. In general, most government or government commissioned reports describe quantity increases or decreases of international students and skilled migrants over a period for immigration management services. These reports consider students-turned-migrants as objects of the migration policies without explicating how they respond to the policy regime (see also Koleth, 2010; Knight, 2011).

A number of studies in demography, international education, and public policy management (e.g. Birrell & Perry, 2009; Gribble, 2011; Hawthorne, 2005 & 2010; Rizvi, 2005a, b & 2007; Tran & Nyland, 2011; Zhang & Li, 2001; Zигuras & Law, 2006) have shown that Australia's skilled migration policies have significant impact on students-turned-migrants' initial choices of study programs, decisions to migrate, and labour market outcomes. By interpreting the statistics of skilled migration stated in government reports, these studies associate international education with a precursor to skilled migration, which has enabled the growth of skilled migrants from 35,000 in 1998-1999 to approximately 97,500 in 2005 (Hawthorne, 2005, p. 689). Many international students are found to consider international education as an "investment" or "ticket" for skilled migration (Rizvi, 2005b, p. 177). The large inflows of Asian two-step migrants in Australia are then associated with brain drain in source countries (see also Gribble, 2011; Rizvi 2005a&b, 2007).

However, there are few studies examining the return of Australia skilled migrants to their home countries. Among this scarcity is the demographic study by Zhang and Li (2001), which analyses the

statistical information published by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Education. These researchers find that the recent return rate of Chinese students studying in Australia has been increasing to 44.9% (p. 193), a significantly high number due to the attraction of Australia's skilled migration. In general, research with the focus on exploring the impacts of skilled migration policies on international students' study choices is unable to explicate how decisions to migrate are shaped by influences of other people at scales other than the skilled migration policy alone. How migrants' decisions to migrate are transformed into relocation is also paid little attention to in these studies. Studies in this direction conceptualize decisions to migrate as being influenced solely by Australian institutions without considering possible confluences of socio-economic conditions, as well as community and family circumstances.

By postulating that education-related migration is one of the outcomes of Australian internationalization of higher education, some researchers and policy-makers propose recommendations to the Australian international education industry by examining the link between international education and migration. For example, Nelson's (2003) ministerial statement on Australian international education has stressed the importance of diversifying the range of academic disciplines to reduce the concentration on business and IT degrees, which attract international students for PR purposes after graduation. Birrell (2006) suggests an increase in intake of domestic students in accounting, and simultaneously providing technical and language skills for international students to deal with Australian employers' complaints of Australia-educated migrants' lack of professional knowledge and communication skills. Similarly, by conducting a qualitative study with a large number of Vocational Education and Training (VET) students and teachers, administrators and executives at 25 VET providers in Australia, Tran and Nyland (2011) have revealed that a number of international VET students in Australia perceive themselves as "PR hunters" (p. 8). Their aspirations for permanent residency (PR) are shaped and re-shaped by the "social world" (p. 8) including the migration prospects enabled by VET diplomas and learning environment. Tran and Nyland have argued that despite the migration aspirations, international VET students should engage in a high quality learning practice. These researchers call for VET providers to focus on providing high quality education for international students who "act on their dreams for the future and are motivated by multiple, differing and shifting aims" (p. 28).

The call for VET industry to focus on quality training programs is similarly found in Birrell and Perry's (2009) work, which reveals that the changes in Australia's migration policy affect students' choices of study programs in health, IT, engineering, accountancy, and some other vocational practices including hairdressing and cooking. International students' motivations to take VET programs may be shaped by migration prospects as well as professional development. By taking one step beyond government-commissioned reports and policy-based studies which separate skilled migrants from the surrounding world, these studies in this direction collectively suggest that decisions to migrate are not only made by international students themselves. Instead, these researchers initially recognize migrants' interactions with the "social world" which includes those at home countries, as well as teachers and local people in home societies. Influences of those who are relatively immobile in home and host societies are significant to students-turned-migrants' decisions to migrate and/or invest in future professions.

Based on policy-driven and government (commissioned) studies and considering skilled migrants as active agents in responding to the policy mechanism, another body of research addresses issues of skilled migrants' integration into Australian society through employment and further education, as well as Australian employers' responses to skilled migrants' professional performance. For example, a number of studies examine skilled migrants' employment outcomes and further education in Australia (e.g. Birrell, 2006; Birrell & Hawthorne, 2006; Birrell & Healy, 2008; Blackmore *et al.*, 2014; Chiswick & Miller, 2006; Jackling, 2007; Richardson *et al.*, 2004; Shah & Burke, 2005; Thapa, 2004). Some studies (e.g. Hawthorne, 2005 & 2010) discuss labour market outcomes of skilled migrants in Australia, but they tend to analyse available statistics on a macro-level without probing in migrants' actual experiences of relocation and employment. Other studies (e.g. Chiswick & Miller, 2006; Rizvi, 2007; Thapa, 2004) look into skilled migrants' actual work performances, and find that some migrants can find jobs that are relevant to their expertise obtained in Australia, whereas others accept to do low-paid and manual jobs, or get unemployed due to lack of English language fluency and work experience. Studies that focus on employment outcomes portray skilled migrants as either disruptive subjects to Australian labour market due to their limited English language ability, or victims of labour exploitation, even though they obtain higher qualifications than the Australians on average, causing a wastage of skills in Australia (see also Shah & Burke, 2005). Other studies, including some government commissioned reports, employ large-scale surveys to examine the influence of the non-English speaking background of migrants on employment search (e.g. Birrell, 2006; McDonald & Worswick, 1999; Richardson *et al.*, 2004).

Within the research direction in skilled migrants' employment in Australia, some studies examine employers' perspectives. For example, by analysing the impacts of Australian employers on skilled migrants' job performance to inform Australia's skilled migration policies, some studies explore Australian employers' motivations in sponsoring skilled migrants (e.g. Khoo, McDonald, Voigt-Graf, & Hugo, 2007), and reasons for some skilled temporary migrants to apply for PR in Australia (e.g. Khoo, Hugo, & McDonald, 2008). Studies with foci on skilled migrants' employment and employers' motivations in sponsoring skilled migrants collectively recognize migrants and employers as active agents in responding to the skilled migration policy regime in terms of shaping decisions to migrate and efforts to relocate. However, they tend to consider skilled migration as an end process after international education, and largely neglect influences of other people in migrants' home countries as well as those in Australia such as friends, relatives, or colleagues.

In general, although studies on skilled migration in Australia are powerful in explicating the link between Australia's skilled migration policies and international education through different perspectives of stakeholders, they are limited in terms of theoretical and methodological aspects.

3. Theoretical and methodological limitations of studies on Australian skilled migration

Because government reports focus on informing relevant authorities, they tend not to employ a particular theory to present statistics on international student mobility and skilled migration. The researcher has also found that many current demographic studies using government reports do not even have a theoretical framework to explain the link between Australian international education and skilled migration (e.g. Hawthorne 2005 & 2010; Shah & Burke, 2005). It is reasonable to accept that demography tends to analyse statistic information without employing a sound theoretical framework.

Ways of collecting and analysing data through archival systems can be seen as suitable avenues to reach conclusions to inform the public and authorities.

However, studies other than government and demographic reports examine skilled migration on a cost-and-benefit perspective. This perspective implicitly dictates that the Australian Government selects migrants that best meet the labour market demands through the current policy mechanism, and skilled migrants weigh risks and anticipated benefits in making decisions to migrate and designing strategies to relocate in attempting to meet the migration policy and labour market requirements. In examining migrants' reasons for migration, these studies examine attractive factors that impel migrants to leave home societies and pull them to Australia. Although some studies take into account of social processes such as roles of families and networks, but still assume that migrants are free agents in pursuing economic benefits in another country. These studies downplay non-economic factors such as cultural determinants and social ideologies (see also Arango, 2004; Massey *et al.*, 1993) and separate migrants' experiences from their relations to the social world.

Further, because of the economic insight implicitly mentioned in the examination of Australian labour market and migrants' employment outcomes, the scales of analysis in these studies tend to examine spatial categories where migration occurs as push and pull factors from one place to another. Thus, they tend to conceptualize migration as discrete events or series of discrete event, conceptualizing migrants' experience of places as economic pushes and pulls (Silvey, 2004, pp. 495 & 496). By conceiving migrants as "disembodied actors responding rationally to economic forces", studies in this stream do not address the questions of political and gender-specific processes that construct the scales of mobilities (Silvey, 2004, p. 492). In contrast, migrants are always embedded in a web of interactions with others in various social scales, from family to community and society contexts. Contact with other people at a range of scales potentially leads to challenges and possibilities which influence the ways migrants experience mobilities. This is why Silvey (2004, p. 495) calls for a radical examination of migration as a political and social process that happens through migrants' embeddedness in the world with families, communities, and societies.

Because of paying little attention to migrants' interactions with others at various social scales, current migration studies tend to examine skilled migration within one geographical locale, mostly in Australia at a discrete stage of migration. However, under influences of others in home and host societies, migrants experience migration in close relation to transnational spaces. Portraying migration within one space may limit an understanding of how migrants make sense of space through their interactions with the surrounding world. In their immersion in the world with others, migrants also experience an opening of possibilities through space and time. In terms of time, current studies, however, are limited in exploring either migrants' decisions to migrate or relocation, without explicating the transformations of their past in the present or future. They tend to describe migrants as fixed and passive entities under socio-economic and political transformations in home and host societies.

By situating skilled migrants as active agents in responding to the policy regime rather than seeing them as objects of the set of policies, other studies in this stream implicitly employ the structuration theory. Studies following this theoretical perspective have been successful in portraying skilled migrants as neither "independent actors behaving in a voluntarist fashion", nor "puppets whose

actions are entirely determined by structural mechanisms” (Findlay & Li, 1999, p. 53). However, these studies conceptualize migrants’ agency in choosing and choosing not to choose social and economic structures they want to embed on their own. For example, some studies describe skilled migrants’ decisions to stay on in Australia after graduation by seeking ways to meet the PR policy requirements or return to home countries by making a rational choice by themselves. Nevertheless, migrants’ interactions with social and cultural norms or even political ideologies in home and host societies which potentially influence their decisions (see also Biao, 2005 & 2007; Koehne, 2005; Waters, 2005 & 2006) are rarely mentioned, while migrants may somehow follow these norms without question. Even when they choose to break with or follow some social norms, they may follow other norms such as social fashions of seeking PR or family responsibilities in home societies. In other words, skilled migrants are always embedded in social structures neither by complete nor lack of choices.

Further, some studies in this stream attempt to examine skilled migrants’ relation to others, but they tend to ignore to look at the influences of immobility of other people in Australia and home countries. In contrast, studies in transnational mobilities conceptualize migration as being influenced by the relative immobility of others which leads to the opening of possibilities for international mobility through migrants’ accumulation of finance, social knowledge, and networks (King & Skeldon, 2010, p. 1623). These immobile people could be those whom migrants encounter on an everyday basis, and even whom they never meet in social environments. The research strand of Australian skilled migration largely neglects migrants’ conditions and their relations to other people in home societies, thus viewing skilled migration as entailing only physical movements from one location to another with fixed departure and arrival points.

Because of the focus on viewing migration as a fixed point of arrival in Australia, extant migration studies implicitly view the relocation of skilled immigrants through an assimilationist perspective. Influenced by this perspective, they tend to examine skilled migrants’ efforts in seeking employment and integration in Australia without examining how they negotiate identities and national belonging in the new society. Further, because of seeing migration as an arrival in the destination country, these studies pay little attention to how migrants enact and sustain further mobilities, through either corporeal movements or virtual communication across borders. However, migrants may develop and use transnational relationships and practices to incorporate in the host society, and maintain their connections to the home country rather than attempting to assimilate entirely in Australia. Migration does not cut them off the relationships they establish with those who stay behind. Transnational practices such as business activities, communication, or religious practices are found influential to the ways migrants negotiate their mobilities through decisions to migrate, relocation, or return (see also Baas, 2010; Biao, 2007), and possibly enhancing further mobilities.

In terms of methodological concerns, the researcher notices that some studies focus on separate influences on migrants’ decisions to migrate and relocation in Australia, such as choices of study programs in Australia, cost-and-benefit calculations of migration, and integration efforts through employment. However, skilled migrants (as well as human beings in general) tend not to experience one influence at a time, but usually one set of influences in relation to other sets at various social levels because one single influence is always affected by other influences at the same or a different scale. At the macro-level, professional migration is influenced by political, economic, and social

forces on global and national scales (Castles, 2010). At a micro-level, it is migrants who live their lives in relation to other people such as families and friends. After arrival, they may employ various strategies for relocation, which are influenced by not only family members residing in home societies, but also socio-economic, cultural, and political conditions in both home and host societies (see Baas, 2010; Biao, 2007; Robertson, 2008; Waters, 2005 & 2006). Such influences may arise from more than one nation. However, migration studies in Australian context tend to examine migrants' aspirations for migration and relocation within a "container model" (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002, p. 308) of a nation, namely Australia in this case, in which migrants are viewed as potentially disruptive to the mainstream society. Examining confluences of macro-contextual conditions, as well as family and personal circumstances in various social and geographical settings becomes significant in unpacking skilled migrants' sense-making of migration.

In addition, students-turned-migrants do not belong to a homogenous group, and their motivations for education and migration are multifaceted. Some are classified as economic student migrants who want to compensate for their study journey costs and maximize earning outputs in their professions (Baas, 2006 & 2010), parents' choice for social status (Waters, 2006), or increase long-term employment opportunities (Biao, 2005 & 2007; Waters, 2005 & 2006). Some decide to reside in the host country due to the cultural appeal of the West, their projects of cosmopolitan self-fashioning (Ho, 2011), or their desire to seek possibilities for self-actualizing in a foreign land (Waters, 2006). For others, migration after education is seen as an escape from political turmoil at home (Glaser, 1978; Mountford, 1997) or a way to reunite their family members and join social networks (Ackers, 2005). However, some of the current migration studies (e.g. Birrell, Hawthorne, & Richardson, 2006; Cully, 2011; Hawthorne, 2010; Koleth, 2010; Knight, 2011; Richardson *et al.*, 2004) depict a set of fixed reasons for migration with quantitative methods. Although there is nothing methodologically wrong to conduct quantitative studies in migration by testing a pre-supposed set of hypotheses, such a method may close up a deeper exploration of skilled migrants' negotiations of transnational mobilities from decisions to migrate to relocation and future intentions. The quantitative approach seems to consider migrants as rational choice makers and strip them out of their emotional relations to other people and settings, whereas emotions are an important part of human beings' lives.

4. Pitfalls in research on transnational mobilities of skilled migrants in Australia

Research on transnational mobilities of skilled migrants in Australia has examined transnational mobilities of international students (e.g. Clarke, 2005; Koehne, 2005; Rizvi, 2005a/b; Singh, Rizvi, & Shrestha, 2007) and skilled migrants in Australia (e.g. Baas, 2010; Biao, 2007; Robertson, 2008; Voigt-Graft, 2005). Among the scarcity of research on skilled migrants could be Robertson's (2008) doctoral thesis. By examining how students-turned-migrants make sense of citizenships and belonging as well as corporeal and virtual mobilities in Australia, Robertson has revealed that their choices and experiences of memberships and mobilities are shaped by macro-level influences such as migration policies, global regimes of mobility, and the media. In addition to macro-political influences, research in other settings have shown that international students and migrants' mobilities are also shaped by their interactions with others including migration brokers, communities, families, and friends (see also Baas, 2010; Biao, 2005 & 2007; Collins, 2008; Waters, 2005 & 2006; Yeoh *et al.*, 2013).

In examining migrants' interactions with others in the social world, some research in Australian context has engaged with migrants' everyday activities to make sense of mobilities. For example, by arguing that much work on transnationalism focuses on macro scales, without paying proper attention to migrants' everyday lives, Clarke (2005) explores the mechanics of "travelling-in-dwelling" and "dwelling-in-travelling" of British gap-year working holiday makers in Sydney. He reveals that to deal with anxieties, share fun and relax, these migrants passively choose to "travel-in-dwelling" through electronic communication, and actively use media means and face-to-face conversations at hostels and expat bars with other friends to "dwell-in-travelling" (p. 319). Clarke's study shows that migrants share the world with other migrants and objects within a social world including places such as expat bars and hostels, as well as virtual places constructed on electronic devices. It is a world which is both emplaced and given order through migrants' dwelling-mobility.

However, Clarke's research examines gap-year working holiday migrants in Australia, whereas skilled permanent migrants may have different responses to the surrounding world. For example, by exploring influences of transnational practices involving intermediaries in the migration industry, Biao's (2005 & 2007) research on the Indian "body shopping" industry shows that some Indian information technology (IT) graduates use Indian labour brokers to gain entry to work in Australia. By going through the recruitment and arrangement of these brokers, some migrants further utilize the cultural practice of dowries from families with daughters wanting to marry them to increase the likelihood of migration. Some of these migrants choose to take IT degree programs overseas and ask for dowries to support their international education journeys, while others' international education journeys are willingly and fully funded by the girls' families prior to their weddings. In this vein, these Indian skilled migrants experience the influence of migration brokers in relation to their "ethnicization" (Biao, 2007, p. 9) and cultural norms. Also taking the role of kinship into account, Voigt-Graft (2005) compares three groups of Indian migrants in Australia: the oldest Indian migrants, IT migrants, and those attempting to escape from political and social instabilities. This study reveals that Indian skilled migrants tend to construct and make use of transnational networks along kinship lines through offshore arranged marriages and chain migration processes. Voigt-Graft's findings about influences of kinship on transnational practices of migrants share some commonality with Basch's (2001) study on Eastern Caribbean transnational migration. Basch (2001) confirmed that kinship is perceived as the "central pegs of migrant transnational social fields" (p. 126).

Aiming to understand how Indian students experience of the process of migration, Baas (2010) begins his inquiry by examining their imaginations of transnational mobility before migration. Through international education in Australia, which enables these students to realize the possibility of PR that can compensate the constraint of their Indian passports on mobilities. These students consider acquiring PR in Australia after graduation as a way to achieve their imaginations of transnational mobilities. However, due to social, academic, and financial constraints, some of these students perceive that they have not arrived in the destination yet, even though they have already departed India. In this vein, these students experience a confluence of constraints: from political limit of the Indian passport on mobilities to family and personal constraints at various social scales, as well as the opening of possibilities in their encounter with constraints. Their migration seems to be an unfinished journey. Migration is experienced as an ongoing journey in which space matters through migrants' interactions with the surrounding world. For example, in crossing the ocean, some

Asian students may feel homesick and lonely in Australia. By attempting to confront a “not-at-home” feeling, some are determined to make new friends, transforming the new home into a space of lived experience with the “practicalities” of the study programs and interactions with other local people. Space is not their individual construction, but a “social formation” (Singh, Rizvi, & Shrestha, 2007, p. 201).

In short, the current research profile on transnational mobilities of skilled migrants in Australia has mentioned the confluences of the mobility regimes including migration policies, cultural norms, friends and families in host and home societies, as well as (global) migration brokers. These studies have examined both opportunities and challenges that migrants face in attempting to make sense of their transnational mobilities from the initiation of migration to relocation. The need to attend to confluences of macro-contextual influences such as migration policies, socio-economic and political conditions, social and communal practices, as well as those in home societies as well as those in the host country is important in understanding how migrants share the social world with others. Under confluences of others and things at different social scales, migrants may experience a transformation of their decisions to migrate to possibilities and constraints through the journeys. Some may achieve what they have set out before migration, whereas others fail to do so, but realize other possibilities opened up. In this vein, migration entails more than just migrants’ imagination of migration before departure, but also arrival experiences and feelings of in-betweenness during relocation. In addition, migrants use various tools and relationships to initiate migration and make sense of relocation. These tools may include education credentials, English language capital, working experiences, and ethnic relationships that they sustain in transnational social spaces. These current studies have shown that these tools are not used in isolation, but migrants seem to use a particular tool in relation to others. Finally, through transnational practices, current research on transnationalism has suggested the influences of moorings on mobilities. In this vein, the meaning of space is experienced in close relation to migrants’ interactions with other people in home and host societies. Such an understanding of space through migrants’ interactions with others shifts the conventional perception of migration one-way movements to a complex and lasting process (Colic-Peisker, 2006, p. 211).

5. Conclusion

This article presented changes in Australia’s skilled migration policies which have prioritized Australia-educated applicants through the points test system. The growth of international students in Australia is said to link to aspirations among skilled migrants. The researcher identified some main approaches in research on skilled migration to Australia, which include government reports, studies on impacts of migration policies on international students’ choices of study programs and forming decisions to migrate, and migrants’ experiences in relocation. While this stream of research is powerful in explicating the impacts of migration policies on migrants’ experiences, it tends to conceptualize migration as a fixed arrival point in Australia without probing in transnational practices. In contrast, the research stream on transnational mobilities conceives migration as a lasting process in which migrants are portrayed as active agents in manoeuvring within the policy regimes and interactions with others across space and time. Understanding that migration is not an end but a process involving transnational mobilities can offer new insights into current research profiles on professional migration as well as transnationalism and mobilities.

To understand transnational mobilities as an ongoing process, we need to pay attention to migrants' relation to the surrounding world. Because migrants always share the world with others, they negotiate transnational mobilities through confluences of others in home and host societies, rather than experience separate sets of events or influences. Transnational ties and practices enable them to stretch social relations across cross-border spaces, thus the meanings of space lie in the ways they interact with others transnationally. Their transnational mobilities through spaces are temporal as well, when their relocation experiences and expectations for the future are shaped through their past. Examining how their past transforms their present lives and future aspirations becomes important in understanding migrants' negotiations of transnational mobilities. To unpack such negotiations of transnational mobilities, a relevant theoretical framework must attend to migrants' lived experiences which are shaped by confluences of their interactions with others across space and through time.

Compliance of research and publication ethics

I, as the Corresponding Author, declare and undertake that in the study titled as "Transnational Mobilities: From International Education to Professional Migration in Australia", 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.

References

1. Ackers, L. (2005). Moving people and knowledge: Scientific mobility in the European Union. *International Migration*, 43(5), 99-131.
2. Adams, T., Banks, M., & Olsen, A. (2011). Benefits of international education: Enriching student, enriching communities. In D. Davis & B. Mackintosh (Eds.), *Making a difference – Australian international education* (pp. 8-46). Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press.
3. Arango, J. (2004). Theories of international migration. In D. Joly (Ed.), *International migration in the new millennium* (pp. 15-35). Aldershot: Ashgate.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2009). *Prospective migrants*. Canberra: ABS. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3416.0Main+Features32009>
5. Baas, M. (2006). Students of migration: Indian overseas students and the question of permanent residency. *People and Place*, 14(1), 8-23.
6. Baas, M. (2010). *Imagined mobility – Migration and transnationalism among Indian students in Australia*. London: Anthem Press.
7. Basch, L. (2001). Transnational social relations and the politics of national identity: An Eastern Caribbean case study. In N. Foner (Ed.), *Islands in the city: West Indian migration to New York* (pp. 117-141). Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
8. Biao, X. (2005). Gender, dowry and the migration system of Indian Information Technology professionals. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 12(2-3), 257-380.
9. Biao, X. (2007). *Global "body shopping": An Indian labour system in the Information Technology industry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
10. Birrell, B. (2006). *The changing face of the accounting profession in Australia*. Report prepared for CPA Australia. Melbourne, VIC: Centre for Population and Urban Research.
11. Birrell, B., & Hawthorne, L., & Richardson, S. (2006). *Evaluation of the general skilled migration categories*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Immigration and Cultural Affairs.
12. Birrell, B., & Healy, E. (2008). How are skilled migrants doing? *People and Place*, 16(1), 1-20.
13. Birrell, B., & Perry, B. (2009). Immigration policy change and the international student industry. *People and Place*, 17(2), 64-80.

14. Blackmore, J., Gribble, C., Farrell, L., Rahimi, M., Arber, R., & Devlin, M. (2014). Australian international graduates and the transition to employment – Final report. Melbourne, VIC: Deakin University.
15. Castles, S. (2010). Understanding global migration: A social transformation perspective. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(10), 1565-1586.
16. Chiswick, B. R., & Miller, P. W. (2006). Immigration to Australia during the 1990s: Institutional and labour market influences. In D. A. Cobb-Clark & S-E. Khoo (Eds.), *Public policy and immigrant settlement* (pp. 3-24). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
17. Clarke, N. (2005). Detailing transnational lives of the middle: British working holiday makers in Australia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(2), 307-322.
18. Colic-Peisker, V. (2006). “Ethnic” and “cosmopolitan” transnationalism: Two cohorts of Croatian immigrants in Australia. *The Journal of Migration and Ethnic Themes*, 22(3), 211-230.
19. Collins, F. L. (2008). Bridges to learning: International student mobilities, education agencies and inter-personal networks. *Global Networks*, 8(4), 398-417.
20. Cully, M. (2011). *Skilled migration selection policies: Recent Australian reforms*. Canberra: DIAC.
21. Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP). (2014). *Migration programme statistics*. Canberra: DIBP. Retrieved from <https://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/statistical-info/visa-grants/migrant.htm>
22. Findlay, A. M., & Li, F. L. N. (1999). Methodological issues in researching migration. *The Professional Geographer*, 51(1), 50-59.
23. Glaser, W. (1978). *The brain drain: Emigration and return*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
24. Gribble, C. (2011). National policies on skilled labour and the cross-border student market, with a focus on Vietnam. In S. Marginson, S. Kaur, & E. Sawir (Eds.), *Higher education in the Asia-Pacific: Strategic responses to globalization* (pp. 291-307). Dordrecht: Springer.
25. Hawthorne, L. (2005). “Picking winners”: The recent transformation of Australia’s skilled migration policy. *International Migration Review*, 39(3), 663-669.
26. Hawthorne, L. (2010). *Competing for skills: Migration policies and trends in New Zealand and Australia*. Wellington: IMSED.
27. Ho, E. L-E. (2011). Migration trajectories of “high skilled” middling transnationals: Singaporean transmigrants in London. *Population, Space and Place*, 17(1), 116-129.
28. Houghton, J., & Sheehan, P. (2000). *A primer on the knowledge economy*. Melbourne, VIC: Centre for Strategic Economic Studies.
29. Jackling, B. (2007). The lure of permanent residency and the aspirations and expectations of international students studying accounting in Australia. *People and Place*, 15(3), 31-41.
30. Khoo, S-E., Hugo, G., & McDonald, P. (2008). Which skilled temporary migrants become permanent residents and why? *International Migration Review*, 42(1), 193-226.
31. Khoo, S-E., McDonald, P., Voigt-Graf, C., & Hugo, G. (2007). A global labour market: Factors motivating the sponsorship and temporary migration of skilled workers to Australia. *International Migration Review*, 41(2), 480-510.
32. King, R., & Skeldon, R. (2010). “Mind the gap!” Interpreting approaches to internal and international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(10), 1619-1646.
33. Knight, M. (2011). *Strategic review of the student visa program 2011*. Canberra: Australian Government. Retrieved from http://www.immi.gov.au/students/_pdf/2011-knight-review.pdf
34. Koehne, N. (2005). (Re)construction: Ways of international students talk about their identity. *Australian Journal of Education*, 49(1), 104-119.
35. Koleth, E. (2010). *Overseas students: Immigration policy changes 1997 – May 2010*. Canberra: Department of Parliamentary Services. Retrieved from <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/bn/sp/OverseasStudents.pdf>
36. Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 431-466.
37. McDonald, J. T., & Worswick, C. (1999). The earnings of immigrant men in Australia: Assimilation, cohort effects and macroeconomic conditions. *The Economic Record*, 75(228), 49-62.
38. Mountford, A. (1997). Can a brain drain be good for growth in the source economy? *Journal of Development Economics*, 53(2), 287-303.
39. Nelson, B. (2003). *Engaging the world through education – Ministerial statement on the internationalization of Australian education and training*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

40. Richardson, S., Stack, S., Lester, L., Healy, J., Ilsley, D., & Horrocks, J. (2004). The changing labour force experience of new migrants – Inter-wave comparisons for Cohort 1 and 2 of the LSIA. Canberra: DIMIA.
41. Rizvi, F. (2005a). International education and the production of cosmopolitan identities. In A. Arimoto, F. Huang, & K. Yokoyama (Eds.), *Globalization and higher education* (pp. 77-92). Hiroshima: Institute for Higher Education, Hiroshima University.
42. Rizvi, F. (2005b). Rethinking “brain drain” in the era of globalization. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 25(2), 175-192.
43. Rizvi, F. (2007). Brain drain and the potential of professional diasporic networks. In L. Farrell & T. Fenwick (Eds.), *Educating the global workforce – Knowledge, knowledge work and knowledge workers* (pp. 227-238). New York, NY: Routledge.
44. Robertson, S. K. (2008). *Negotiated transnationality: Memberships, mobilities and the student-turned-migrant experience* (Doctoral dissertation, RMIT, Melbourne, Australia). Retrieved from <http://researchbank.rmit.edu.au/eserv/rmit:6794/Robertson.pdf>
45. Shah, C., & Burke, G. (2005). *Skilled migration: Australia*. Working paper No. 63. Melbourne, VIC: Centre for the Economics of Education and Training.
46. Singh, M., Rizvi, F., & Shrestha, M. (2007). Student mobility and the spatial production of cosmopolitan identities. In K. N. Gulson & C. Symes (Eds.), *Spatial theories of education: Policy and geography matters*. New York, NY: Routledge.
47. Silvey, R. (2004). Power, difference and mobility: Feminist advances in migration studies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 28(4), 490-506.
48. Thapa, P. J. (2004). On the risk of unemployment: A comparative assessment of the labour market success of migrants in Australia. *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, 7(2), 199-229.
49. The Treasury. (2010). *Intergenerational report 2010 – Australia’s aging population*. Canberra: The Australian Government. Retrieved from http://www.treasury.gov.au/igr/igr2010/Overview/html/overview_04.htm
50. Tran, L. T., & Nyland, C. (2011). International vocational education and training – The migration and learning mix. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 51(1), 8-31.
51. Voigt-Graf, C. (2005). The construction of transnational spaces by Indian migrants in Australia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(2), 365-384.
52. Waters, J. L. (2005). Transnational family strategies and education in the contemporary Chinese diaspora. *Global Networks*, 5(4), 359-377.
53. Waters, J. L. (2006). Geographies of cultural capital: Education, international migration and family strategies between Hong Kong and Canada. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31(2), 179-192.
54. Wimmer, A., & Glick-Schiller, N. (2002). Methodological nationalism and beyond: Nation-state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks*, 2(4), 301-334.
55. Wolf, M. (2000). Why this hatred of the market. In F. Lechner, & J. Boli (Eds.). *The globalization reader* (pp. 9-11). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
56. Yeoh, B. S. A., Leng, C. H., Dung, V. T. K., & Yi'en, C. (2013). Between two families: the social meaning of remittances for Vietnamese marriage migrants in Singapore. *Global Networks*, 13(4), 441-458.
57. Zhang, G., & Li, W. (2001). International mobility of China’s resources in science and technology and its impact. In OECD (Ed.), *International mobility of the highly skilled* (pp. 189-200). Paris: OECD.
58. Ziguas, C. (2012). Learning the hard way: Lessons from Australia’s decade of innovation in student migration policy. In D. E. Neubauer & K. Kuroda (Eds.), *Mobility and migration in Asian Pacific higher education* (pp. 39-52). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
59. Ziguas, C., & Law, S. F. (2006). Recruiting international students as skilled migrants: The global ‘skill race’ as viewed from Australia. *Globalization, Societies and Education*, 4(1), 59-76.