

# Educational Migration of Foreign University Monks in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

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## Abstract

Education is the basic life skills-fostering method for human beings to be ready to live for themselves and society. Furthermore, education can enhance life to be more prosperous combined with the social dimension that is rapidly changing. Travelling across borders is made more accessible by the fast development of information and communication technologies. These are the migration reasons for furthering their education. By examining the push and pull causes for educational migration, this article intends to investigate the notion of migration for the education of foreign university monks at Thai Buddhist universities. With the structured interview and descriptive data analysis, this article has combined material from documents, linked pieces of research, in-depth interviews, and a discussion with university monks of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. *The study's findings are as follows:*

Essential *push factors* of deciding to migrate for education to Thailand are, for instance, the limitation of the monks' opportunities for education in their own countries; the country's education system has not been developed to keep up with the changes in the world society and the financial problems in the family. These factors make these university monks decide to change their status from ordinary people to monks to be able to access education and reduce family expenses.

Essential *pull factors* of the educational migration of the monks include a network of seniors who have graduated and those who are currently studying in the destination country, combined with Thai Buddhist universities' tuition fees and the cost of living that are affordable. In addition, there are supportive religious social groups who support policies and educational opportunities for foreign university monks to raise their quality and integrate the education to benefit themselves and society.

**Keywords:** Educational Migration; University Monk; Thai Buddhist Universities; Migration factors.

## Introduction

Nowadays, the world is changing rapidly and radically in all dimensions, including social, economic, political, and technology, due to the development of information technology and the changing global economic and political structure. Consequently, various countries have to depend on and have more connections. The world once used to be big has become smaller, and people can connect within a second, reflecting that the world is entering an era-changing phase. The world's trends have transformed in the form of capital, information, and values. Also, some cultures have spread throughout the world, which has led to the world's evolution. Therefore, the globalized society is a world where human beings can connect rapidly by using information technology as a communicative tool beyond frontiers. (Pairote Kongthaweesak, 2017)

Educational migration in a globalized society is also interesting because once education progresses, both information can be exchanged and learned worldwide through advanced digital media. Consequently, learners gain vast and diverse knowledge effortlessly, leading to civic migration in different parts of the world: such as family migration for better life quality, the use of labor or job hunting, war refugee, poverty escape, or higher education to enhance one's status. These different results are the effects of different sources. In today's society, the globalization process has facilitated the decision of transnational migration, which has a significant implication in the globalization era due to at least three elements (Usamas Siemphakdi, 2019):

1. *The development of modern transportation and communication technology*, which facilitates convenient traveling and worldwide connections. People access more knowledge than in the past, the travel cost is affordable, and can spend less time traveling than in the past due to the growth of low-cost airlines. These factors help boost migration to be more widespread and accessible.
2. *The supportive role network of migration support* that has developed through the pioneering from each generation, including an overseas network community, friends and relatives' network, or even strangers from the same homeland. The mentioned factors represent social resources to help ease traveling, procurement, and beneficial suggestions. The relationship between formal settlement and the destination society via this social network is considered one of the key motivators for migration.
3. *Certification of the migration right*, which is protected by international organizations recognized and protected by the United Nations and its supervised organizations.

The educational migration of the university monks is another interesting migration type that relies on social status to facilitate migration. Suppose monks, together with Buddhists from all over the world, would like to study higher Buddhism. In that case, they often have Thailand as a destination by choosing to pursue higher education in a Thai Buddhist university called Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. According to the survey, many immigrants are for higher education (Considered in Table 1). Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University is a public university that receives a budget from the Thai government, providing a bachelor's

degree to doctorate available for both monks and ordinary people in Thai and English courses. Accordingly, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya university has become a favourable destination for monk migration. Besides, there are domestic and international campuses such as in China, South Korea, and Japan; hence, there are a lot of Thai and international students who attend this university each year. The statistics show that plenty of university monks from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia came to further their studies. Information is collected from the central unit and 12 campuses as follows (Registration and Evaluation Division of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2020).

**Table 1.** The Statistics of Foreign Monks in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2020.

No	Source country	Number	No	Source country	Number
1	Myanmar	685	13	USA	5
2	Laos	199	14	nationality unknown	4
3	Vietnam	196	15	Australia	3
4	Csmbodia	137	16	South Korea	3
5	Bangladesh	57	17	Estonian	2
6	China	29	18	Russia	2
7	India	22	19	Taiwan	2
8	Nepal	22	20	Indonesia	1
9	Thai Yai	20	21	Japan	1
10	Malaysia	18	22	England	1
11	Bhutan	7	23	Palaung	1
12	Sri Lanka	6	24	Akha	1
<b>Sum 1,424</b>					

The purposes of providing education at Buddhist universities in Thailand are as follows:

**1. Religion Maintenance.** Religion maintenance is considered the duty of the monks to provide education. Its primary curricula must be preserving the essential content of Buddhism, such as the admission to the Dharma level and learning the disciplines (Pali and Grammar), as these courses are the ones that are studied to maintain Buddhism and to be inherited.

**2. Benefits for the public.** The Buddhism education management aims to help the public, such as the underprivileged people to access educational opportunities and the villagers

who lack the financial support for their children's education. Therefore, it is a frequent trend to send children to be ordained in Buddhism to learn. Nowadays, the study of the monks is a way of contributing to society, which refers to the curriculum that relies on the Ministry of Education's system combined with Dharma courses. After graduation, some would leave the Buddhist monkhood, and live their lives using the knowledge they have gained in universities to make a living. It is classified as one way to contribute to society in the Thai university monks' education system, sharing what Anusorn Boonruang (2008) iterated: that monk education serves as the future prediction of the stability of the monks' lives. Even when they decide to leave the Buddhist monkhood, they still can have the professions to support themselves or pursue a career in the future. In addition, they acquire the moral discipline to maintain themselves properly. However, suppose these university monks decide to continue in their ascetic lives. In that case, they can still spread Dharma knowledge to others while having worldly wisdom to keep up with society.

Educational globalization has resulted in widespread educational migration, which considers the destination country's educational advancement and the origin country's slow growth. Being an education business in various countries that attract learners, being a social network, gaining information from others, thus create a driving force for those who would like to choose an educational institution and the destination country to fulfill their wishes. Accordingly, this article aims to study the driving and pull factors for educational migration of foreign monks in Thai Buddhist Universities.

### **The concept of educational migration**

There has been a migration of people considered a phenomenon for a long time since human beings formed a society and migrated their habitats for safe and fertile settlements. These behaviours go hand in hand with human social development. More importantly, there was a society building migration before the nation-state. It is also the foundation of building a nation-state in the modern era, such as the emergence of the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Osamas Siemphakdi cites imperialism as a motive for migration to reestablish ancient towns by exploring new territory (online) migration as a natural part of human social evolution. More crucially, migration was prioritized over the state in the construction of human societies. International migration has significant implications in the globalization era as a result of modern transportation and communication technology that facilitates travel and connectivity around the world, as well as the role of social networks in providing migration support, and finally, advocacy of the right to migration through institutions and international law based on human rights to the freedom to travel and live where one wishes. According to Everett S. Lee (1983), migration is a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence without regard to distance or whether it is voluntary or involuntary. This does not differentiate between local and foreign migration. According to Kusol Soonthornthada (1995), migration is an unstoppable shifting social movement. As a result, it is critical to comprehend the migration process and its relationship to the economy, politics, and cultural integration of a global system in which labour mobility has a social power that can lead to long-term settlements. There is also the creation of new ethnic populations in the country that may be accepted as labourers, leading to economic, social, and political concerns. According to Supang Chantavanich (1997), migration refers to the temporary or permanent movement of significant groups of people from one location to another. Both possibilities are international (between societies) or domestic (between regions) migration. When it comes to educational migration, varied higher education management is expanding globally. Many countries provide

more transnational education to entice international students to study at their institutions. It is also another method of generating revenue that can aid in the development of the economy. In today's global education industry, transnational education is becoming increasingly important. According to future trends, countries in Asia will be an essential target for world-renowned universities to invest in. The countries that declared the policy, such as China (Hong Kong), Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea, all want to be the region's educational center. Surprisingly, many countries have encouraged their universities to establish international branches. Furthermore, a cross-Asian collaboration between higher education institutions will become more active, such as the "Campus Asia" project, which is a collaboration between the governments of ASEAN Plus Three, namely ASEAN, Japan, China, and South Korea, to exchange students and professors, as well as transfer academic credits from various universities participating in the project (Pathanida Phanthumsen, 2012).

In addition, Thailand's government has a policy promoting Thailand as a centre for education in neighbouring nations. The 7th and 8th Educational Development Plans have been established as the benchmark for international education centres, according to the 15-year Long-Term Educational Development Plan (1990-2005). The No. 9 of the Higher Education Development Plan (2002-2006) likewise emphasizes the issue's significance. As a result, the Thai government places a strong emphasis on international education to keep up with globalization trends and respond to trade liberalization policies. According to the WTO service agreement, providing education services could create revenue for the country, which causes international education business rivalry (Walai Wattanasiri, 2010).

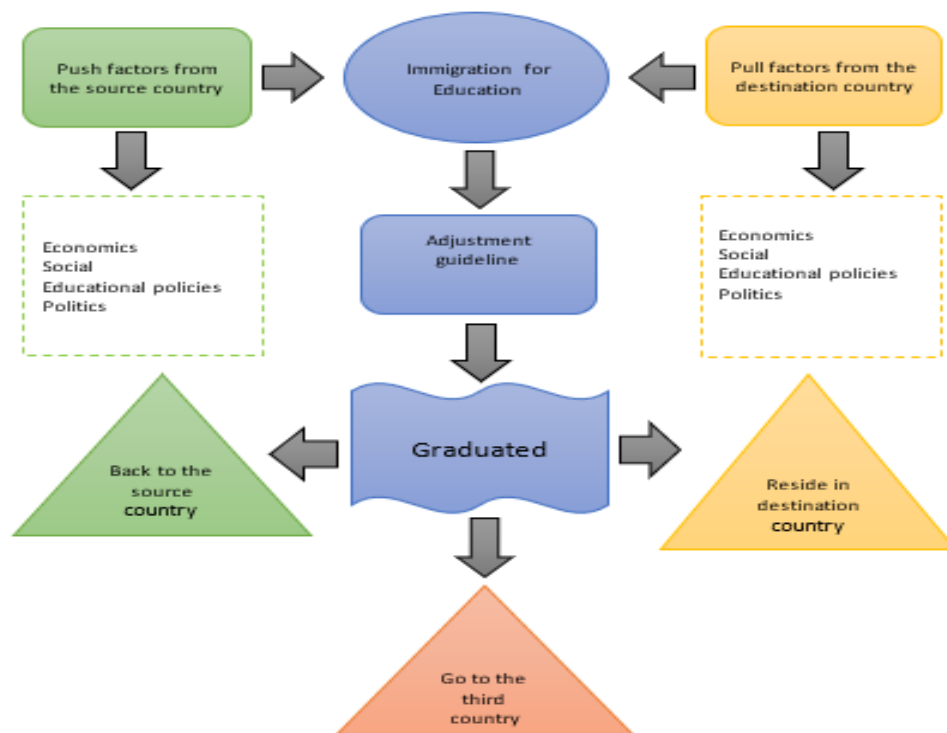
According to Anusorn Boonruang (2008), educational migration is driven by two main factors: the push factor from the country of origin in terms of economic, social, educational, and political contexts, and the pull factor from the destination country, which includes socioeconomic contexts, education courses, and the state's lenient policies that encourage educational migration. The interaction between the economy and society has a direct impact on each country's educational management. As a result, students from countries with slower educational systems feel compelled to relocate to nations with more advanced educational systems, where it is easier and more convenient to learn numerous fields, which will benefit their personal development later. This strategy is also regarded as a source of capital for future development and improved quality of life. Gaining more significant opportunities as an intellectual asset, in other words, leads to changes in status and social roles. Anusorn Boonruang (2008) also cited the educational movement of Buddhist monks from Xishuangbanna to Thailand to further their studies of the Dharma. When it came to sexual rights, the monks benefited socially and culturally because males were allowed more options than females.

As a result, under the International Buddhist Association of Xishuangbanna and Thailand patronage, Tai Lue adolescents were ordained to study Buddhism through an open curriculum that included domestic and international studies. Monks are required to return to their places after crossing the border into the Xishuangbanna university to utilize the knowledge that has been transferred from Thailand to extend additional knowledge to others in various sectors. Another example is crossing the border into the study of Kengtung monks in northern Thailand, where the methods of travel differ, such as travelling alone, entering through the patronage of Thai monks (illegal), or entering through the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand's patronage system or directly through the Buddhist University. These university monks all have the same goal: to study and expand their possibilities. After completing a

mandatory course, these university monks will initially travel to a large city near their origin and then gradually expand their settlements to numerous temples.

Meanwhile, monks will pursue other vocations or use the culture they have learned to help their countries thrive. In conclusion, worldwide migration patterns in the globalized world are rising and will soon become one of the future's megatrends. This phenomenon illustrates the modern world's economic, political, communication, social, and cultural components of international society.

Furthermore, the concept of educational migration is influenced by changing socioeconomic variables and the desire for a better future. There is also an educational component, which comprises policies to attract more individuals to their educational system. Supporting this transnational education approach helps the destination country's economy and culture spread. Accordingly, this study offers the following framework to delineate the concept of educational migration of foreign monks to Thai Buddhist universities, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Vision Concept Frame of the Immigration of Foreign Monks to Thai Buddhist Universities

### Factors affecting educational migration for foreign university monks in Thai Buddhist Universities

According to a study of the educational migration of foreign university monks in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University based on documents, questionnaires, and interviews with the sample group, which includes undergraduate university monk students studying at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University's central unit as well as campuses in

the north and northeastern parts of Thailand. The data gathering comprises submitting an online questionnaire and interviewing students at a central unit, comprising 316 persons and a 20-person in-depth interview group. By stating the purpose and requesting consent, we employ the unintentional method. A structured interview is undertaken using statistical data analysis and descriptive data analysis when the students provide their permission. Thus, the findings can be summarized as two points: push and pull causes for foreign monks' educational Migration to Thai Buddhist institutions and educational management goals for Buddhist universities. The details are as follows:

### **1. Push and pull factors for educational migration of foreign university monks**

From ancient times to the present, monk migration has been a movement to spread Buddhism and advance Dharma education. However, in the current situation, monks are migrating due to political and administrative influence, which has an impact on the economy, society, and education confidence, as well as the population's unstable and unpredictable living situation as a result of a political change that could happen at any time. According to academic concepts, migratory reasons can be separated into two categories:

#### **1.1 Push Factors**

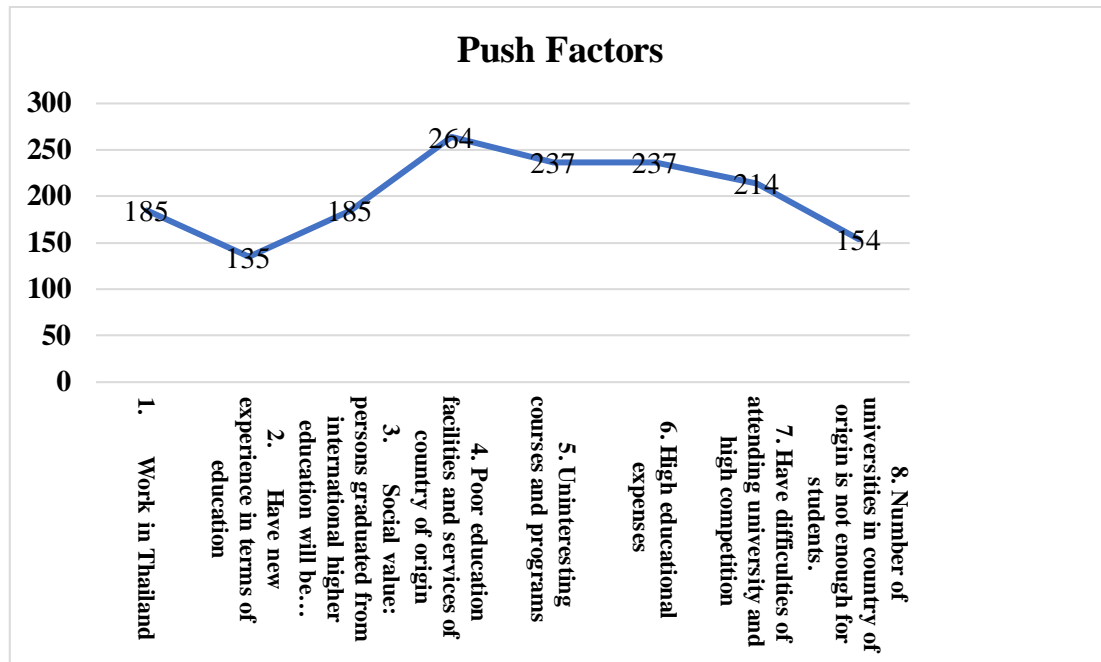
Migrating from the previous monastic territory occurs due to the need to change or enhance the way of life, particularly the educational system, and disadvantages from rights limits and restricting educational options. Credible education personnel, educational quality, social acceptance, and economic situations that affect the family's well-being, social, political, governance, conservative issues, and rights issues between men and women are all driving elements in educational migration. These are all "Push factors from the country of origin" causes of educational limits in the country of origin.

The following case studies of Phra Chanphen (Pseudonym) and Phra Chaiyasin, university monks from Laos, said, "Laos education is not as open as Thailand, especially in the monk status, Laos society considers that one should study only the Dharma to inherit the religion. Moreover, universities in Laos are still to be developed a lot because now it is not as developed as Thailand, which leaves the university students no choice." Phra Chaiyasin added "It is not only monks who migrate to study in Thailand, but also wealthy people moved to study in Thailand. Like us, as we are poor, we decided to become ordained to study and ask for funds from the destination temple. In this university, we also provide the supportive funds, which is an advantage for poor who want to study." From the case of Phra Sujana (Pseudonym), a university monk from Nepal said, "When it comes to the push factors for educational migration, the monks and novices of Nepal would have to study only Dharma, not the worldly knowledge. Besides, being poor cannot study in a university in the country due to Nepal education is available for those who are affordable. The poor in rural areas cannot attend school because the cost is quite high."

From the above sharing, the main push factors for Buddhist monks to decide to migrate for education to Thailand is due to the opportunity and access to education in the country of origin that are favourable for those who are affordable and monks are expected to study only Dharma rather than worldly knowledge. The following essential point is the educational policy of the country of origin has not been developed to keep up with the current changes. So, the new generation of learners is therefore considered to be lagging. There is no equality in education, and the family's financial problem, which has many children, can cut off educational

opportunities. Therefore, this group of university monks decided to change their status from ordinary people to monks to have access to education and reduce family expenses.

Accordingly, Figure 2 summarizes the push factors that result in the educational migration of foreign university monks to Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.



**Figure 2.** The Push Factors

### 1.2 Pull Factors.

The factors, that support the driving force of the source area caused by new settlement areas or countries wishing to relocate to a better destination region, contribute to the improvement of migrators' living standards and the security and safety of their own lives and property. In this case, the monk migration appears to be a pull factor for educational opportunities and a change in social status. In this study, the destination area is Thai Buddhist University, or Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. The following are excerpts of the monks' sharing that indicate the pull factors:

"The factor that pushed me to migrate for school is because Thailand can be deemed technologically advanced and has more experts than Laos," said Phra Sommai (Pseudonym), a Laos university monk. Furthermore, coming to study abroad is similar to a Thai student studying abroad. Those who study for a foreign country's graduation will have a wider variety of knowledge than those who have graduated from the country. In the example of Phra Toolee (Pseudonym), a Laos university monk, "I came to study in Thailand because I wanted to get a larger and more diverse knowledge than I could get in my own country." However, there is an issue with the central region's language and cultural adaption, distinct from Laos, but he tried to learn and adapt. The good news is that there are Buddhist university monks and Thai folks to assist him. This is not the main problem of educational migration.

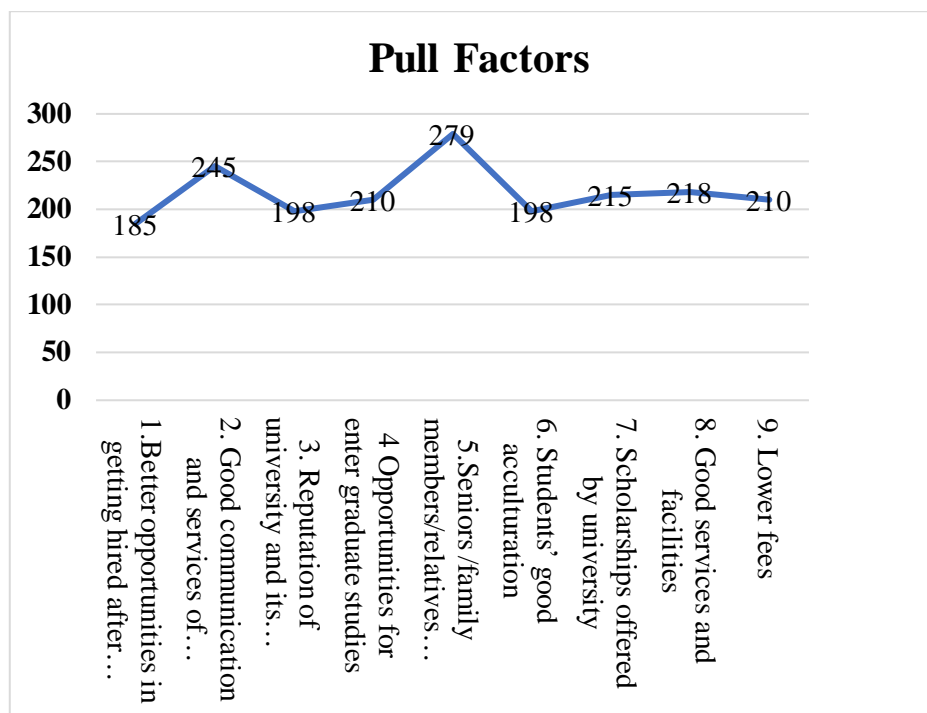
In the case of Phra Taecha (Pseudonym), a university monk from Burma, and Phra Jian (Pseudonym a university monk from Cambodia mentioned the pull factor that "Because there



is a seniors' network who came to study earlier and recommended him to come to study. This is learning from seniors in terms of language, culture, travel, address, and other factors, as well as learning English from studying." Another case of Phra Sujana (Pseudonym), a university monk from Nepal stated the pull factor that made him decide to migrate for education to Thailand because "There is a low cost and open access to monks' education. Another important point is that the process of entering a Thai Buddhist university is not complicated."

From the aforementioned case studies, it appears that the main pull factors of monks' educational migration are the network of seniors who have completed their studies and who are currently studying. It is an educational guide for the next generation. In addition, Thai Buddhist universities' tuition fees are cheap, the cost of living is not much compared to the students who are laity. Furthermore, there are religious policies and educational opportunities, which provide opportunities for groups of foreign university monks to raise their qualities of an education system, curriculum, tutors, and learning support department which is recognized for the quality of education, as well as being able to integrate education for benefits to themselves and to help society as well.

In sum, Figure 3 displays the pull factors that result in the educational migration of foreign university monks to Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.



**Figure 3.** The Pull Factors

## Conclusion

The economic, political and social factors are some of the push-and-pull factors that attract migrants to seek new working and education opportunities overseas. Migration also facilitates the change in social status and improves the quality of life. In the past, monks' social status was changed by coming to study in a destination country that provided opportunities to people of all genders, ages, classes, and statuses, such as Thai Buddhist universities or

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, which enabled graduates to have a better life. Furthermore, Thai Buddhist universities have a well-defined educational policy. Quality education is easily accessible to people of all classes and statuses in Thailand. This results in openness in the view of integrating education, which is a factor that attracts monks in different countries to migrate for education. Most importantly, this group of monks sees education as an enhancement of their social status and that of their family.

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