



I Encontro Internacional de Língua Portuguesa e Relações Lusófonas

L U S O C O N F

2018

Livro de Atas

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Economic impact of international students: the case of Polytechnic Institute of Bragança

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Abstract

This research aims to analyse the economic impact of international students of the Polytechnic Institute of *Bragança* (Portugal) on the regions. Therefore, a quantitative approach methodology was chosen, using a questionnaire survey. The data collection instrument was sent by email to the 1,449 international students enrolled in the academic year 2016/2017, and 478 valid responses were obtained. This analysis enabled a socioeconomic characterization of the international students and, with the obtained global values of the monthly expenses, it was possible to estimate the economic impact of these students in the cities where they study (*Bragança* and *Mirandela*). The following indicators were obtained by international program: i) Erasmus+ Students contributed with 2.2 million euros; ii) International Credit Mobility Students with about 612 thousand euros; iii) International Mobility Students with 1.6 million euros; iv) Double Degree Students with 917 thousand euros; v) Prospective Students with 275 thousand euros; vi) the Students in other international protocols with 1.1 million euros; vii) the Students without any international program contributed the most with 5.5 million euros. Overall, the international students who attended the Polytechnic Institute of *Bragança* in the academic year 2016/2017 generated an estimated economic impact on the region of 12.3 million euros.

Keywords: international students, economic impact, polytechnic institute of *Bragança*, Portugal.

1. Introduction

Over recent years, there has been an increasing interest from higher education institutions (HEIs) to determine their importance to the regions in which they operate. Thus, the present study intends to determine the economic impact that international students enrolled in 2016/2017 academic year at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (IPB) have on the region, namely, Bragança and Mirandela municipalities.

The IPB is “a higher education public institution with its mission defined as creating, transmitting and disseminating technical-scientific and professional knowledge through the articulation of study, teaching, applied research and experimental development.” (Legal dispatch 62/2008). The IPB as an institution located in the northeast of Portugal, promotes “(...) the internationalization of higher education, by encouraging the mobility of its students and graduates and by establishing joint educational and research projects in cross-border spaces, European and internationals” (IPB, 2018).

The IPB began its teaching activities in 1986 with the School of Agriculture and School of Education. Currently, the IPB has five schools, four located in the municipality of Bragança, namely: i) School of Agriculture; ii) School of Technology and Management;

iii) School of Education; iv) School of Health, and the School of Public Management, Communication and Tourism located in the municipality of Mirandela.

This work is structured in three main parts: i) in the first, a theoretical framework about the economic impact of international students is presented; ii) in the middle part the research methodology is described and the analysis of the obtained results in the study are done; iii) in the third and last part, final considerations are given.

2. The economic impact of international students

The Portuguese higher education registered in the last 30 years an evolution on the number of students enrolled, from 117,000 students in 1987 up to 362,000 in 2017. These values are demand indicators, but considering a fair distribution between the 286 higher education institutions (HEIs) registered in 2017 in Portugal only, on average, 1,266 students would be enrolled for each HEI (DGEEC & DSEE, 2017; PORDATA, 2018).

The current economic situation in Portugal is characterized with budget cuts, constant pressure over the HEIs to justify their value to society (Fernandes, 2009) and consequently, the institutions are competing aggressively among themselves in the recruitment of students (Amaral & Magalhães, 2007; Guichard & Larre, 2006). In the perspective of Fernandes (2009) HEI should analyse and prove the economic contribution of their presence for the region and by doing so they could compete in a more unbiased way for public funding's and also justify the current ones.

The economic impact of HEI for the region is associated with the contribution of the national and international students. The latter represents, today, a significant share for the institutions, with the globalization of markets and societies increasing the number of international students (López et al., 2016). In the last 40 years, the worldwide number of foreign students, evolved from 0.8 million in 1975 to 4.6 million in 2015 (OECD, 2017) and a growth in the coming years could lead to a value of 7.2 million in 2025 (Böhm et al., 2002). The 35 countries members of OECD registered in 2015, 3.3 million of international students, with Asian students representing 1.56 million (47%), and of these 612,000 are Chinese, followed by the European students (782,000; 23.7%), Americans (265,000; 8%) and Africans (254,000; 7.7%) - (OECD, 2017).

Therefore, the internationalization provides a differentiating experience, by the quality of education, the knowledge of other societies, the acquisition of skills, and international students are a source of income, contributing with their personal expenses to local economies (OECD, 2017). Other factors affect the international education demand, namely the presence of other colleagues of their home country, the living cost (accommodation and food), the language domain and fee value (Beine et al., 2013; OECD, 2013).

A study carried in nine regions of United Kingdom, the second inbound country of international students after the United States, proves that the expenses of these students are an essential contribution to the regional economy (Kelly & McNicoll, 2017; Universities UK, 2017). About United States, in 2015, it was found that 62% of the HEI maintained or increased their share of international students, contributing 32.8 billion to the country's economy (Varn, 2017).

3. The case of the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança

The study presented was conducted in a Portuguese higher education institution (Polytechnic Institute of Bragança - IPB) and it intended to understand how the presence of international students can influence the region. In the academic year 2016/2017 IPB registered 1,449 international students that represented 20.0% of all enrolled students in that year and the study focused on these students.

3.1. Methodology

The methodology followed a quantitative approach. We intended to understand the international students' consumer behaviour and their spending pattern. We developed an online questionnaire that was sent to the 1,449 emails that the International Relationship Office and the academic services made available. From the implementation of the questionnaire, 478 responses (33.0% response rate) were gathered. Next sections present the analysis we obtained from the sample.

3.2. Characterization of the international students

From the sample we stated that the students are male (51.2%), with an average age of 23.3 years (median 22.0 years). The international students (IS) come from several countries but the majority comes from Cape Verde (30.9%) and Brazil (25.4%), and in a smaller percentage from São Tomé and Príncipe (6.6%), Poland (5.3%), Spain (5.1%) and Angola (3.0%). In continental terms we found that 46.9% comes from Africa, 26.4% from America, 20.7% from Europe and 5.9% from Asia.

International students can come to study in the IPB under different international cooperation agreements which allows them to have a scholarship. The majority comes under an international agreement (57.4%) and the remaining ones come without any sponsorship, on their own expenses.

The ones that have an international scholarship are under the Erasmus+ program (54.1%), international mobility (21.1%), Double Degree (13.8%) and also from their home local governance protocols.

The majority of the students (62.6%) chose IPB has their first choice to study abroad and this decision is made due to the fact that IPB had an agreement with their home institution (44.5%), for economic reasons (29.3%) or because they heard positive information from other colleagues (18.6%). They come to enrol for an undergraduate degree (66.9%) or in a master degree level (27.3%).

The period of stay can range from one or two semesters (44.0%) up to over three years (55.9%). When the region of origin is taken in consideration one can easily observe that there is an association between the region and the period of stay ($X^2(9) = 271, p < 0.1\%$). The students that come from the European Union intend to stay only one semester and the students that come from African countries whose official language is Portuguese (PALOP in Portuguese) are the ones that intend to remain more than three years.

3.3. Consumer behaviour of the international students

The international students come to stay for a long period of time, as such they need to find a place to stay. The majority rents a single room (45.3%) or a double room (21.4%) and 23.3% rent a house. Only 8.4% live in a students' dorm.

During their stay they need to spend in the region in order to acquire all the assets they need for their daily live, such as food, personal items, and so on. Table 1 presents the monthly spending of the IS on six major categories: accommodation, food, personal assets, leisure activities, transport and other expenses.

Table 1. International students' monthly expenses. (in euros)

	Accommodation	Food	Personal items	Other expenses	Leisure activities	Transports
n	448	457	448	409	442	418
Average	145.7	119.0	71.5	66.1	62.0	37.3
Standard deviation	84.1	97.7	98.5	131.0	110.9	100.7

[Source: Own elaboration]

From table 1 it is possible to see that the major expenses per month students have are with accommodation and food, reaching 264.7 euros. Considering all the categories of spending the students have an average monthly expense of 470.8 euros (median 335.0 euros).

We also wanted to understand how were these students financed during their time of stay and it was possible to see that the majority are financed by their family or partner (58.7%) and the rest are financed by a scholarship (26.6%) and some are already financially independent (9.5%). It was also possible to study if there were different spending patterns according to the international program that supported the students. Table 2 presents the monthly spending per international program.

Table 2. International students' monthly expenses per international program. (in euros)

International program	n	Accommodation	Food	Personal Items	Leisure activities	Transports	Other expenses	Total spending
Erasmus+	93	145.5	187.8	126.9	132.8	65.0	111.2	692.0
International mobility	85	138.0	89.0	49.7	43.7	29.1	21.1	354.4
Double Degree	50	125.1	77.4	45.4	37.6	13.7	27.0	316.5
Prospective Students	7	165.8	142.9	104.3	73.3	75.0	168.8	612.9
Other protocols	30	208.7	170.7	92.1	65.1	34.5	79.4	601.7
No international program	202	141.5	108.4	59.3	51.6	37.9	64.3	433.6

[Source: Own elaboration]

Table 2 shows that the students that spend more per month are the ones that come under Erasmus+ program and the ones that spend the smaller amount are the ones that come under double degree protocol. From the amounts determined in table 2, and with a proper extrapolation to the 1,449 IS it was possible to estimate that during the academic year of 2016/2017 IS that attended IPB spent 12.3 million euros on the Mirandela and Bragança municipalities.

Specifically, by international program, the students under Erasmus+ program spent 2.2 million euros, the International Credit Mobility 611 thousand euros, international mobility students 1.6 million euros, double degree students 917 thousand euros, prospective students 275 thousand euros, other international protocols 1.1 million euros and the last but certainly not least IS that come under international program are the ones that spend more on the region reaching 5.5 million euros.

4. Conclusions

In this study we described the economic impact of IPB's international students on the region of *Bragança* and *Mirandela*, in the academic year 2016/2017.

From the obtained results we estimate that international students spent an average of 470.8 euros per month. However, significant differences were verified when we looked separately to the students according to their different protocols. In fact, students from the Erasmus+ spend, in average, 692 euros per month, students from the International Credit Mobility spend 1.058 euros per month, International Mobility 354 euros per month,

Double Degree 317 euros per month, Prospective Students 613 euros per month, and, finally, students not included in international programs or students coming from other protocols spend 434 and 602 euros per month, respectively. All of them, said that the expenses are mainly with accommodation and food.

Overall, the economic impact of these students was over 12 million euros which represents an amount as large as 40% of the annual budget attributed by the state (Portugal, 2016).

This study allowed us to conclude that the IPB strategy of internationalization can attract students who generate expenditures on the regions and will contribute to their economic development. In a region portrayed by economic and social disadvantages, such as where *Bragança* and *Mirandela* municipalities are located, this has a considerable impact that must be continuously stimulated.

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