

Scholarships for international students as a way to ensure the right to education (including case studies)

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Abstract

Access to education is recognized in several international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

However, for many people, especially those from marginalized communities, access to education can be difficult due to financial, cultural and language barriers.

In response to these challenges, there is growing recognition of the importance of scholarships and financial aid in expanding access to education for international students. Previous research has shown that scholarships can play a critical role in overcoming financial barriers and expanding access to education. For example, a study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that increased investment in education, including scholarships and financial aid, is associated with higher economic growth (below we will write in more detail about this study).

In this article, we will take a fresh look at the importance of the right to education and the role that scholarships for international students can play in securing and protecting this right. We will also discuss the challenges international students face in accessing higher education and the impact of scholarships in overcoming these barriers. Ultimately, this article will demonstrate how scholarships for international students can be a valuable tool in ensuring access to education for all and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to realize their right to education.

Moreover, we will also look at several case studies to analyze the impact of scholarships on the lives of specific students from low-income countries.

In addition, this article will show the correlation between granting scholarships and the economic growth of the countries (scholarship providers) as well as their receiving additional and unobvious at-first-sight political benefits.

Key words: *Right to education, Right to access to higher education, Human rights, Scholarships, Case study.*

Introduction

The right to education is a fundamental human right that is recognized and protected by various international and regional human rights bodies, including the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2023), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2023), and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2023). These bodies play an important role in monitoring the implementation of the right to education and promoting efforts to make education available and accessible to all.

However, for the right to education to be effective, rather than simply guaranteed, measures taken by only international bodies are not enough. It is important that this right is upheld at national and local levels.

The goal of this article is to explore the importance of the right to access higher education in the context of society as a whole, as well as to reflect on the importance of scholarships for foreign students in promoting access to education and protecting the right to education.

Moreover, this article aims to highlight the challenges that people from low-income countries and families face in obtaining an education and how scholarships can help overcome financial, cultural and language barriers.

In addition, the article seeks to demonstrate a positive correlation between education and the economic growth of countries providing it. The article also analyzes case studies of students from low-income countries to illustrate the impact of scholarships on their particular lives.

Finally, the article will touch on the potential policy benefits that scholarship-giving countries can reap beyond the obvious educational benefits and promote one more time the importance of supporting the right to access education among businesses, societies and states showing how it can benefit them in a long-term perspective.

1. Methods

Before commencing, it is important to specify the scientific methodologies applied in this scientific paper.

First of all, the literature review was carried out, which involves gathering and analyzing previous research on the topic to provide background information and context for research.

Thus, we analyzed international legislation, the practice of the international court, as well as the work of various researchers on similar topics. Namely, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, documents prepared by the United Nations Committee

on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and others (more details below).

In addition, the quantitative research method was used, which involves collecting and analyzing numerical data through surveys, experiments, and statistical analysis. The data received was analyzed - The Learning Agency, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and others (more details below).

For a more in-depth study of the impact of scholarships on the right to education of international students, due to the limitation of data in open sources, a case study (method involves an in-depth analysis of a single individual, group, or event to gain insights and understanding of complex issues) was conducted using methods of the qualitative research (method involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data such as observations, interviews, and open-ended responses) and in-depth interviews.

Due to the fact that, as part of the study, it was important for us to understand the complex social and psychological connections of the impact of having scholarships on the right to study, we conducted in-depth interviews, the results of which formed the second part of this research paper (Interviewee_1, 2023) and (Interviewee_2, 2023).

2. Meaning of the Right to Education

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 states that "Everyone has the right to education" (United Nations (General Assembly), 1948).

This is the basic rule that can be found in many documents. For example, according to Article 2 of the First Protocol of the European Convention of Human Rights, all signatory parties (all countries which signed this convention) oblige to guarantee the right to education and de-facto promote and ensure this right in their European countries (Council of Europe, 1950).

In other words, it is a cornerstone of human rights, that is also seen as a means of promoting peace, tolerance, and understanding between different cultures and nations.

However, it is important to define what the right to education is and what it includes, as well as how higher education is related to it and what forms of education it provides.

In addition to Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has issued General Comment No. 13 on the right to education, which elaborates on the obligation of states to ensure the availability, accessibility and good quality of education (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1999). These are the key elements of education, which we are describing below:

a) Availability

The availability of functional educational institutions and programs must be adequate within the boundaries of the state. The requirements for their operation can vary depending on various factors, including the developmental environment in which they are situated. These institutions and programs must have basic needs met, such as proper shelter, gender-separated sanitation facilities, secure drinking water, well-compensated teachers, and necessary instructional materials. Other needs may include a library, computer resources, and technology for information access, depending on the specific institution or program.

In other words, educational institutions must exist with conditions suitable for learning and staying in them.

b) Accessibility

Access to educational institutions and programs must be available to all individuals without discrimination within the jurisdiction of the state. Accessibility encompasses three important dimensions:

Non-discrimination: All individuals, including those who are particularly vulnerable, must have equal access to education without any discrimination.

Physical accessibility: Education must be within safe and convenient reach, either through physical attendance at a nearby school or through technology-assisted methods, such as distance learning.

c) Acceptability

The format and content of education, including curricula and teaching methods, must be accepted by students and, when applicable, their parents. This must align with the educational goals outlined in Article 13 (1) and meet any minimum educational standards set by the state.

d) Adaptability

Education must be flexible to accommodate the evolving needs of society and communities and be able to respond to the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of students.

To sum up, it is better to highlight that the right to education is not only a matter of access to schools and educational institutions but also involves the quality of education and the availability of educational materials and resources.

In order to ensure that the right to education is fulfilled, states are obligated to take steps to make education available, accessible, and of good quality. This includes providing free and compulsory primary education, ensuring that girls and women have equal access to education as men, and creating programs to help individuals who have been marginalized, such as refugees and individuals with disabilities.

3. Access to higher education

As was mentioned before, the right to access higher education is an integral part of the right to education in general and is also recognized by various international human rights treaties and declarations.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948) says that "technical and professional education shall be accessible to all, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit" (clause 1 of Article 26) (United Nations (General Assembly), 1948).

Moreover the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Article 13, not just recognizes the right to education and sets out the obligation of states to ensure that the right is fulfilled, but also states that the "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by the progressive introduction of free education" (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1999).

Access to education at another level (in particular, to higher education) can be restricted, but only on one basis - the ability of the individual. It is from this provision that the competitiveness of admission to institutions of higher education derives. Therefore, in relation to higher education, the content of the right of access is the right to be admitted to a competitive procedure, that is, in a sense, a right to participate in the competition. Thus, the content of the right of access varies according to the level of education and in one case arises with the attainment of a certain age, while in another it may be due to other legal facts.

The European Court's decision in the Belgian case states the following: "The right to education enshrined in the first sentence of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms guarantees everyone within the jurisdiction of the Contracting States 'the right of access to educational institutions existing at a certain time,' but this right of access is only part of the right to education. " (Commission of the European Communities v Kingdom of Belgium. Safeguarding of employees rights in the event of transfers of undertakings, 1986).

It is highly important to note the terminology used by the European Court. The first sentence of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (concluded in Rome on November 4, 1950) is worded as follows "No person shall be denied the right to education." The Court introduces the term "right of access". This position is repeated by the European Court in other cases (Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark, 1976), (Károly Nagy v. Hungary, 2017). The European Court notes that the right of access requires state regulation ("Despite its importance, this right is not absolute and can be restricted; restrictions are allowed indirectly because the right of access to educational institutions "by its nature requires state regulation " (LEYLA ŞAHİN v. TURKEY, 2005) and a citizen who wants to enter a higher educational institution must comply with

established admission rules and successfully pass entrance exams, that is, pass a competitive procedure (Dmitriy LUKACH v. RUSSIA, 1999).

Thus, both international law and practice of international courts and national legislation allocate within the right to education a separate right - the right of access, and, consequently, the relevant legislative regulation of admission to educational institutions of higher education is an instrumental mechanism of implementation of this right.

Thus, the right to education guarantees the possibility to receive an education of an appropriate level in the presence of certain legal facts (successful completion of a competition for admission) but does not guarantee a particular educational institution or a particular educational program.

The right to education, including higher education, is considered crucial for individuals to fully realize their potential, and for the development of societies as a whole.

However, despite the recognition of the right to higher education, there is still significant inequality in access to higher education, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, and low-income individuals. This unequal access to higher education can perpetuate existing socioeconomic disparities and limit opportunities for social mobility.

Studies have shown that access to higher education is a key factor in reducing poverty and promoting economic growth (Altbach, 2004; King & Baum, 2003). Furthermore, access to higher education has been shown to improve health outcomes, increase political participation, and contribute to more peaceful and democratic societies (Ziderman, 1990; Brunner & Wils, 2010).

The provision of higher education is often a responsibility of the state, and there is a growing consensus that states have a duty to ensure that all individuals have equal access to higher education. This may involve the implementation of policies and programs aimed at increasing access for disadvantaged groups, as well as addressing the financial barriers to higher education, such as tuition fees and student loan schemes (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

Therefore, the right to access higher education is a crucial component of the right to education and is essential for promoting equality, socio-economic development, and human rights. Despite progress in recognizing this right, much work remains to be done to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic background, have equal access to higher education.

To go further and to answer to the question of what higher education it is important to note that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1976 developed the first version of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Lately, it was revised and improved twice – in 1997 and 2011.

According to the ISCED, there are 9 levels of education (plus the lowest one – 0 level which is including programmes during childhood education) (United Nations, 2011).

Hereby briefly presented the levels of education in table format:

Table 1: ISCED 2011 briefly

Lower education	ISCED 0:	Early childhood education ('less than primary' for educational attainment)
	ISCED 1:	Primary education
	ISCED 2:	Lower secondary education
Secondary education	ISCED 3:	Upper secondary education
	ISCED 4:	Post-secondary non-tertiary education
Intermediate stage between secondary and higher education	ISCED 5:	Short-cycle tertiary education
Higher education	ISCED 6:	Bachelor's or equivalent level
	ISCED 7:	Master's or equivalent level
	ISCED 8:	Doctoral or equivalent level
	ISCED 9:	Not elsewhere classified

Thereby according to the ISCED 2011, higher education can be found at levels 6-8: at the undergraduate level, masters level and doctoral level. And it means that analysing the right to access to higher education means the right to undergraduate, masters and doctoral education.

4. Scholarships are a way to ensure access to quality education

In 2020, the Learning Agency located in Washington conducted research on the correlation between the quality of learning and subsequent income levels in the USA (and economic benefits for the country in general) (Boser, 2020). They tried to calculate and show how increasing the quality of education can benefit businesses, society and states.

The research shows that improved math skills can increase the annual salary by \$21,000. That is \$400,000 in 20 years (Boser, 2020).

Good skills in reading and writing can bring you an additional \$11,000 per year or more than \$200,000 in two decades (Boser, 2020).

It is also interesting that graduating with a high school diploma is equivalent to an additional \$7,000 per year in salary (Boser, 2020).

According to Boser's research, the national and state-level economic benefits of improved education are estimated to be over \$200 billion. It is evident that workers are not the only ones who stand to gain from improved educational outcomes, as wages are the foundation of the economy. As a result, we analyzed the overall impact of salary increases.

Their estimates show that approximately 11 million workers in the U.S. would benefit from improved math skills, resulting in an additional \$235 billion in annual earnings. This translates to a \$235 billion increase for the national economy each year if math education is improved. Over a 20-year period, this amounts to a staggering \$4.7 trillion. It's important to note that this analysis is relatively conservative, as it only takes into account full-time adult workers in the prime of their careers.

The impact of education on economic outcomes is substantial. People with higher levels of education tend to have higher lifetime earnings and pay more taxes. Furthermore, a highly educated population drives national economic growth and can foster greater unity and trust in democratic societies.

Therefore, investing in public education creates a virtuous cycle for the economy. As education standards rise, the economy strengthens, which in turn allows for further investments in education. In some nations, the education sector has even become the primary catalyst for economic development.

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea came up with similar results about the impact of education on the country's development in its study (Korea, n.d.).

Other international organizations, such as The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (UNESCO, 2015) and The World Bank (World Bank, 2017), have also conducted research on the relationship between education and economic growth, and have proved that there is a positive correlation between increased investment in education and higher economic growth.

These studies have once again confirmed that education is essential for personal development, economic growth, and social progress, as quality education provides an opportunity to improve the standard of living of the population, and their good income brings a positive impact on the state.

For this purpose, states are obligated to guarantee and ensure that the right is fulfilled for all individuals with skill-based access to education (without financial obstacles) and to do so scholarships play a critical role in providing this access for national and international students, especially from low-income and developing countries.

International scholarships can help to mitigate these barriers and increase access to education for students from all walks of life. In 2018, the Institute of International Education

reported that there were over 1 million international students enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States, representing 5.5% of all students. Of these international students, 39% received some form of financial support, including scholarships (Institute of International Education, 2018).

Below we will give examples of particular benefits of providing scholarships for international students based on existing scholarships or fellowships programs selected for explanatory purposes:

Ensuring equal access to education:

The main purpose of scholarships for international students is to provide equal access to education for people from different walks of life. By providing financial support, scholarships help remove barriers and enable students to pursue higher education abroad. It promotes cultural exchange, diversity and global understanding among students.

For example, we can take the Fulbright Program. This project, initiated by the US Department of State, offers scholarships to students from all over the world. Its goal is to promote mutual understanding between the US and other countries through educational and cultural exchange. This program has enabled thousands of international students to study in the US, promoting global collaboration and dialogue (Fulbright Program, 2023).

Empowering students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds:

Scholarships play a vital role in empowering students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Many international students face financial difficulties that hinder their access to quality education. Scholarships help level the playing field by providing financial aid that enables talented students to realize their educational aspirations.

For instance, the Chevening Scholarships, funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Chevening Scholarships are for outstanding people from all over the world. These scholarships cover tuition fees, living expenses and other expenses, allowing recipients to complete a master's degree in the UK. This program allows people with leadership potential, regardless of their financial situation (Chevening Scholarships, 2023).

Promoting Diversity and Cultural Exchange, as well as Research and Innovation:

Another purpose of scholarships for international students is to encourage diversity and cultural exchange in educational institutions. By attracting students from different countries and backgrounds, scholarships help create a vibrant and inclusive learning environment. This exposure to diverse perspectives enhances the academic experience of students and prepares them to become global citizens.

The Erasmus Mundus program supported by the European Union offers scholarships to students all over the world. It encourages mobility between European universities and

universities in partner countries, promoting academic cooperation and intercultural understanding. The program promotes the exchange of knowledge, ideas and cultural practices, enriching the educational experience of participating students (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2023).

Diplomatic Relations and Alumni Networks/Connections:

Scholarships for international students provide significant benefits for diplomatic relations between countries. Firstly, they promote cultural exchange by bringing together students from different countries, promoting understanding and respect for different cultures. This exchange of ideas and experiences helps break down stereotypes and prejudices, building bridges between countries.

Secondly, scholarships promote cooperation in the field of education and partnership between educational institutions of different countries. International students bring unique perspectives and knowledge to their host universities, enriching the academic environment. Such cooperation can lead to joint research projects, academic initiatives and the establishment of long-term educational links between countries.

In addition, scholarships create opportunities for networking and personal connections between international students and local communities. When students return to their home countries, they become ambassadors, helping to build goodwill and mutual understanding through face-to-face communication. These ties lay the foundation for long-term bilateral cooperation such as trade agreements and joint initiatives.

Ultimately, scholarships for international students serve as a demonstration of a country's "soft power" by showing its commitment to education, cultural exchange and international cooperation. By developing talented individuals through scholarships, countries build trust, enhance their global reputation, and promote positive diplomatic relations on a broader scale.

For instance, this is implemented through the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship program. It is a prestigious scholarship initiative offered by the Hungarian government to international students. Its goal is to provide excellent educational opportunities and promote cultural exchange between Hungary and other countries. The program offers fully funded scholarships for undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies in various specialities at Hungarian universities (Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship program, 2023).

Overall, scholarship programs bring numerous benefits to countries. They enhance the intellectual capital, research capacity and cultural diversity of the countries' higher education institutions. The programs also stimulate economic growth, facilitate international communications and strengthen diplomatic relations. Overall, the scholarship programs play

a vital role in countries development as a knowledge-based economy and a global hub for education and innovation.

5. Case studies

In order to explore and understand the impact of scholarships on the ability to access higher education for specific people, in-depth interviews were conducted with scholarship recipients.

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of scholarships on students' ability to pursue higher education. Through these interviews, we aim to explore the real-life experiences and perspectives of scholarship recipients and how scholarships have impacted their journey towards higher education.

The main hypothesis of this study is that scholarships guarantee the opportunity to receive a quality education outside of one's home country, and also provide the right to access higher education, regardless of the financial capabilities of the student and his family.

There were two in-depth interviews conducted as part of the preparation of this research paper. They were conducted anonymously and for scientific/research purposes.

The first part of the conversation with interviewees concerned their experience of studying in their home country, and the second part concerned their experience in another country, as well as the impact of the scholarship on the opportunity to study and how this experience affected the interviewee's life in general.

Below we present general information about the background and education of both interviewees.

Table 2: Brief information about the interviewees' home countries and education

Question	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2
<i>What is your home country?</i>	Ukraine	Russia
<i>Please confirm that you obtained your bachelor's degree in your home country.</i>	Yes, I do confirm.	Yes, I do confirm.
<i>Which university did you attend?</i>	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv Institute of International Relationships	Moscow State University
<i>Please describe the reputation of your home country's university.</i>	The university is one of the top three universities in the country. The university has a fairly good reputation in the academic world.	Ranked as one of the strongest academic institutions

The first part of the interview focused on the interviewees' experiences at their home country university (on the atmosphere at the university, social life, relationships with faculty and students, etc., quality of education, availability of resources, training programs, opportunities for international cooperation, exchange programmes and career opportunities after graduation).

Interviewee 1 shared her undergraduate experience and expressed regret about the lack of student life during those years. She felt that these were excellent years that were spent solely on studying and using the computer. She acknowledged that financial opportunities were limited at that time, but she still felt that she missed out on experiencing more during those formative years. From the age of 18 to 22, she found herself engrossed in their studies with little room for any other activities.

At university Interviewee 1 had a diverse group of friends including close friends and acquaintances, and never felt isolated. However, there wasn't a lot of student life on campus due to the rigorous academic demands.

One thing that stood out to her was the distance between students and teachers. It was challenging to approach a professor after class with questions, as there was a cult-like reverence for them. While this level of respect was normal in Interviewee 1's home country, Interviewee 1 found it strange, and it hindered the educational process. Despite this, the level of teaching was top-notch, and students were encouraged to read extensively and analyze the material thoroughly.

The workload was heavy, and Interviewee 1 felt overloaded at times. However, the university provided a high level of education and foreign language proficiency, which was valuable. There were many textbooks available in the library, and most materials were also available in electronic form. They utilized tablets to record lectures and prepare for seminars, and some teachers would send them additional information via email.

Although the university had agreements with other European Union universities for exchange programs, it was difficult to participate. Studying abroad was not considered part of their university studies, so students had to attend both institutions concurrently, which was challenging. As a result, few students took advantage of this opportunity. Instead, Interviewee 1 pursued non-formal education through short-term Erasmus training programs during her studies.

While there were no job fairs or employment opportunities on campus, graduates of the University of International Relations in Ukraine were highly regarded in the job market. After completing her bachelor's degree, Interviewee 1 was encouraged to continue her studies at the master's level at the same university, but Interviewee 1 ultimately decided against it due to the repetitive nature of the courses. Instead, she considered pursuing a master's degree

abroad. Later on, Interviewee 1 had the option to attend graduate school, but Interviewee 1 opted to continue her studies abroad instead.

Interviewee 2 had a little different experience at her home country's university. The atmosphere during all education was amicable and cosy due to the relatively small class of approximately 300-400 people. Professors personally knew students since study groups were limited to 15 people.

The quality of education varied depending on the course and professor. Some courses, such as language courses, economics, and regional studies, were taught effectively, while others lacked interest from both professors and students.

The university had the means to provide additional training programs and educational materials, but students, including Interviewee 2, did not actively seek them out, and the university did not promote them much.

Opportunities for international cooperation and exchange programs were limited due to the specificities of the interviewee's studies in a foreign language. However, there was an opportunity to participate in an exchange program during the third year.

Career opportunities after graduation varied, with most students ending up in different sectors not directly related to their studies. Some languages provided more opportunities than others. Interviewee 2 worked with the language but did not enjoy the area itself, working with security services.

Opportunities for further education, including postgraduate studies, were available, but few people pursued them as they were considered repetitive and mostly pursued obtaining an additional diploma. Most people pursued them as a backburner activity while working full-time jobs.

As was mentioned earlier the second part of the conversation with interviewees was about their experience and education abroad.

Table 3: Brief information about the interviewees' education abroad

Question	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2
<i>Have you continued your education after graduating from your home country's university? If so, please reply to the questions below.</i>	Yes, I have.	Yes, I have.
<i>Which university (universities) did you attend? Please provide a brief description of the university's location(s), programme(s) and dates of education. (in mm/yyyy – mm/yyyy format)</i>	1) Master's degree in University of Public Services, Budapest, Hungary, Sept 2016 – Jan 2018	1) Master's degree in Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary, Sept 2019 – June 2021 2) Master's degree in Oxford University, Oxford, UK, Sept 2022 – Sept 2023

	2) Ph.D. in University of Public Services, Budapest, Hungary, Sept 2018 – June 2024 (tentatively)	
<i>Did you obtain a scholarship(s) for these continued studies? If so, please provide your name and a brief description of this scholarship(s).</i>	Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship: awarded to students to get their education in a Hungarian university, covering tuition fees and providing a living stipend (this scholarship was received twice for Master degree education and Ph.D. education)	1) Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship: awarded to students to get their education in a Hungarian university, covering tuition fees and providing a living stipend 2) Weidenfeld-Hoffmann Trust scholarship: The Trust provides around thirty graduate scholarships a year for graduates and early career professionals from developing and emerging countries to study at Oxford and participate in a specially created Leadership Programme which gives them the tools to make a difference in whichever sphere they can. The Weidenfeld-Hoffmann Trust is the largest philanthropic scholarship supported by the University of Oxford.

Interviewee 1 had an amazing experience of studying abroad, especially during her master's program. She found that her program was a breath of fresh air, also the campus and dorms were amazing. Despite financial problems, Interviewee 1 still had a great time in Budapest, which she found to be a charming and attractive city. She had a diverse group of classmates from different countries, which made her feel like she was in a dream.

Introductory events, campus buddies, and mentors helped her adjust well to her new environment. Interviewee 1 was not afraid to fly to another country, because she knew that the university was waiting for her there. Interviewee 1's educational journey began in September 2016 and continued until graduation.

Although she encountered problems during her graduate studies, including subjects she found useless and poor organization, she persevered and was successful in taking charge of her own studies. Although the university's involvement in academia was low, Interviewee 1 valued community life in the university and events organized for international students.

Interviewee 1 also found that the quality of education was lower than at her home country's university. However, the experience was more interesting due to the fact that there were many group projects that she did not do at her home country's university. There was also less pressure as the scholarship was not dependent on her grades.

Interviewee 1 mentioned a lack of books and materials but appreciated that articles and other materials were sent to them electronically. Although the amount of information was less than what she was used to, there were many opportunities at the university, including events and lectures given by ambassadors. As a downside, no one helped her with her employment, and she found it problematic to find a job with her diploma in Hungary.

Overall, the experience of studying abroad has enriched her and given her new experience and skills. Interviewee 1 fondly remembers her time in Hungary and the opportunities it provided.

Interviewee 2 noted that the university atmosphere is intense but enjoyable, providing a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Social life is a significant part of the Oxford experience with a vast number of societies, formal dinners, public lectures, and daily events. Currently, UCU (The University and College Union) strikes are happening, involving professors and being supported by students in solidarity with their faculties.

The quality of education at the program is exceptional and comprehensive, providing a multi-disciplinary and engaging curriculum with academic lectures, discussions, student projects and presentations, field trips, and practitioner meetings.

Resources, training programs, and educational materials are abundant at the university library, providing access to any paper or educational material. Additional training programs are also available for IT and research skills.

Opportunities for international cooperation and exchange programs are likely available, although this has not been personally checked. After graduation, career opportunities are hopeful, and for those interested in pursuing an academic career, there are opportunities to apply for a DPhil (PhD).

The last part of the conversation was aimed at the impact of the scholarship on the opportunity to study and how this experience affected the interviewees' lives in general.

We will go into the details of these interviews below.

Table 4: Brief information about the interviewees' costs of latest education and impact of scholarships on their ability to study abroad (*due to the comparison the indexes were calculated to the same currency*)

Question	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2
<p><i>Do you know how much your current education costs per year and how much you approximately need for accommodation and life per year? If yes, please provide details about the cost of education and living expenses.</i></p>	<p>Tuition fees: about 400,000 forints per semester (around \$1,150 USD)</p> <p>Living expenses: 200,000 forints per month (around \$575 USD) (includes food, 1-2 clothing items, some cosmetics, some entertainment activities).</p> <p>If you do not live in a dormitory, you need extra 160,000 - 170,000 forints per month to rent an apartment (around \$475 USD).</p>	<p>Tuition fees: £29,100 (around \$36,000 USD) Living expenses: £17,500 (around \$21,700 USD)</p>
<p><i>Which university would you have been able to study abroad without a scholarship? Did the scholarship alleviate any issues you might have had in obtaining this education from a financial, documentation and any other perspectives (health insurance, accommodation, etc.)?</i></p>	<p>My family would not be able to pay for any education abroad.</p> <p>Thanks to the scholarship I received tuition fees, money, residence permit, insurance, accommodation. The scholarship was lucky ticket.</p>	<p>I will not be where I am without the scholarship! The scholarship supports me financially (tuition fees, living grant), academically and professionally by giving access to the community of like-minded people and providing training on my soft leadership skills.</p>
<p><i>Do you think that studying abroad significantly contributed to your personal growth? If so, describe how so.</i></p>	<p>Of course, 100%.</p> <p>Life here has changed me a lot. I have become more openminded and interacting with people from so many countries and cultures is a great experience. I think that I got more experience from communicating with people, listening to stories about how they live, what their rules and orders are. Knowledge of other religions has become something new for me. We live in our own world and do not particularly think that people are different, what is</p>	<p>Studying abroad has shaped me significantly by exposing me to a variety of cultures and viewpoints and by making me look at things from different perspectives.</p>

	<p>normal for you, is not for others. This is what life abroad taught me. I think this is colossal personal growth for me.</p> <p>When you understand how diverse the world is and you are open to different things, it makes you very flexible. When you become flexible, you stop worrying about some things, it greatly simplifies your life.</p> <p>The more we see, communicate and travel, what we have gone through and experienced, and when we have new challenges, we are not very afraid of them, as we have a lot of diverse experiences that help us cope with everything. When you are in a bubble, talking with the same people, walking along the same route, it's very scary when the usual rhythm goes astray. Therefore, the experience of living abroad is the expansion of your own borders.</p>	
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Interviewee 1 said the tuition fees at her university were approximately 400,000 forints per semester (around \$1,150 USD), although she couldn't remember the exact amount. As for living expenses, she estimated that it was around 200,000 forints per month (around \$575 USD) for basic necessities such as food, a few purchases, cosmetics, and some entertainment activities. If one does not live in a dormitory, they would need to spend an extra 160,000 to 170,000 forints per month for rent (around \$475 USD).

Interviewee 1 highlighted that without the scholarship she received, her family would not have been able to pay for her education, and the scholarship helped alleviate the financial burden by covering tuition fees, residence permit, health insurance, accommodation, and living expenses.

When asked about the impact of studying abroad on her personal growth, the interviewee said that it had a significant impact. She mentioned that living in a different country and interacting with people from diverse backgrounds had made her more open-minded and flexible. She gained a new perspective on religion and realized that people from different cultures have different rules and orders that are normal for them.

Studying abroad helped her to expand her own boundaries and become more adaptable to new experiences and challenges. She added that having diverse experiences helps to cope with anything and simplifies life. Therefore, studying abroad not only provides academic knowledge but also contributes significantly to personal growth.

Interviewee 2 also provided information about the cost of education and living expenses for her current university, which was £29,100 for tuition fees (around \$36,000 USD) and £17,500 for living expenses (around \$21,700 USD) per year.

Interviewee 2 (same as Interviewee 1) stated that they wouldn't have been able to study abroad without it. The scholarship provided financial support for tuition fees and living expenses, as well as academic and professional support by giving access to a community of like-minded people and providing training on soft leadership skills.

Regarding her personal growth from studying abroad, the interviewee expressed that it had significantly shaped her by exposing her to different cultures and viewpoints, and allowed her to look at things from different perspectives. She felt that this experience had expanded her own borders and made her more flexible, which in turn had made her less afraid of new challenges.

The notion of unaffordability of the programmes mentioned above without scholarships is confirmed by statistics on average wage levels in the home countries of the interviewees. According to the official data the average monthly salary in Russia (Federal State Statistics Service, 2023) and Ukraine (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2023) from 2019 to 2021 were (Please note that the exchange rates used to convert the salary figures from local currencies to US dollars may fluctuate over time and affect the accuracy of the USD amounts provided):

In Russia:

- 2019: 44,550 rubles (\$572 USD)
- 2020: 49,100 rubles (\$671 USD)
- 2021: 51,600 rubles (\$700 USD)

In Ukraine:

- 2019: 10,461 hryvnias (\$405 USD)
- 2020: 12,030 hryvnias (\$428 USD)
- 2021: 14,100 hryvnias (\$515 USD)

Thus, we can conclude that studying abroad significantly expands opportunities and horizons, but without scholarships it is extremely problematic or even impossible for residents of countries with low monthly average incomes.

Moreover, these case studies support the hypothesis that scholarships play a crucial role in ensuring the opportunity to receive a quality education outside of one's home country. For the interviewees scholarships provided access to higher education, regardless of their financial capabilities or the financial situation of their families. By offering financial support, scholarships enabled these students to pursue educational opportunities that may have otherwise been out

of reach. Therefore we can confirm that scholarships are instrumental in promoting equal educational opportunities and bridging the gap between students' aspirations and their financial constraints.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the interviews and statistics provided demonstrate that studying abroad offers a valuable opportunity for personal and academic growth, but financial barriers can prevent students from low-income countries from accessing these opportunities. Scholarships and financial aid play a crucial role in making higher education and international experiences more accessible and inclusive. By providing support for tuition fees, living expenses, and academic and professional development, scholarships can help students expand their horizons, develop important skills, and ultimately improve their career prospects. It is important for universities and governments to continue investing in scholarships and financial aid programs to ensure that more students have the opportunity to benefit from studying abroad and contribute to a more diverse and globally connected society.

It is worth noting again that access to higher education is a basic human right, as recognized by the United Nations. However, the reality is that financial barriers often prevent students, particularly those from low-income countries, from accessing this right. Scholarships and financial aid programs are essential in addressing this inequality and providing students with the means to pursue their academic and career goals.

The availability of scholarships for students from low-income countries is particularly important in promoting global diversity and equity in higher education. By providing financial support to students from diverse backgrounds, universities and governments can ensure that higher education is accessible to everyone, regardless of their financial background or country of origin. This is not only important for promoting equal opportunities, but also for cultivating a more diverse and inclusive academic community.

Moreover, providing scholarships to students from low-income countries not only benefits the individuals but also has a positive impact on their communities and countries as a whole. By empowering students with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to succeed, scholarships can help to break the cycle of poverty and contribute to the development of more prosperous and equitable societies.

As such, it is important for universities and governments to prioritize funding for scholarship and financial aid programs, in order to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to access higher education and pursue their dreams. By doing so, we can work towards a more equitable, diverse, and globally connected society.

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