

FACTORS INFLUENCING AFRICAN POSTGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CHOICE OF SOUTH AFRICA AS A STUDY DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

Continued targeting of international postgraduate students by developed countries for skilled migration is an issue of major concern by most African countries as it exacerbates the problem of brain drain in the continent. Many countries realised that increased provision of postgraduate studies within the continent would go a long way in dealing with the problem. Success will however depend on the ability of countries in the continent to attract international postgraduate students. This study aimed at investigating the factors that influence African postgraduate students' choice of South Africa as their study destination. Focus group discussions, in depth interviews and a structured online questionnaire were the main methods used to collect the data. The findings show that factors related to lower cost of living and tuition as well quality of education offered are the main ones that influence postgraduate students' choice of the country. Those responsible for marketing the country and its institutions to international students can capitalise of lower cost of living and tuition as these provide a good source of competitive advantage for the country compared to its major competitors, most of whom are developed countries. In terms of quality of education, the findings showed that students are attracted by the fact that South African qualifications are respected in their home countries as well as internationally. This is also something the country and its institutions of higher learning can capitalise on in its efforts to position itself on the international students market. It is also something that needs to be safeguarded by ensuring that the best service quality standards are practiced and maintained. Those responsible for marketing the country and its institutions of high learning should also look at the factors that are having less impact on students and see if improvements can be made to enhance impact.

References Available on Request.