

# Professional Learning Derived From International Academic Mobility During PhD Programs

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**Abstract.** This paper discusses the type of professional learning that international academic mobility makes possible during a PhD program. The conceptual approach used Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, which allows analyzing PhD students as 'newcomer' members who bet on mobility under the idea of *illusio*. The methodology used was qualitative. The information was obtained through semi-structured interviews with twenty-four new researchers who studied in four prestigious PhD programs in education and history in Mexico. The findings demonstrate that mobility fosters relationships with peers abroad, makes it easier to learn to do research, favors the reconversion of capital within the scientific field, and offers practical knowledge related to the need to publish results in order to achieve international recognition.

**Keywords:** education, history, international academic mobility, Mexico, PhD, PhD program, professional learning

## Introduction

This article is derived from a larger research project whose objective was to identify the conditions under which international academic mobility during a PhD program contributes to the construction of scientific capital by new researchers. This text presents the results corresponding to the impacts or effects of such international experiences in terms of professional learning for working life. The study holds significance in the context of enhancing scientific training within the country, as it contributes to a deeper understanding of the professional development derived from the successful completion of international academic mobility. Such insights serve as a foundational basis for the enhancement of the quality and effectiveness of scientific training experiences offered domestically.

The conceptualization of 'international academic mobility' in the extant literature exhibits a degree of ambiguity, with some scholars associating it with the movement of students, faculty

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members, or postdoctoral researchers across nations (Shen et al., 2022). In the context of this study, international academic mobility is used to refer to short-term academic experiences abroad by PhD students enrolled in Mexican graduate programs, who decide, within the framework of the institutional policies of their program, to study for a certain period of time in an institution in another country.

Having said this, the review of the related literature focused on those studies related to the following questions: what are the benefits of international mobility for the training of researchers? What kind of knowledge is acquired? Given the scarcity of literature dedicated solely to the examination of short-term international academic experiences (Eduan, 2019), the search encompassed a broader spectrum of international experiences, encompassing both extended full-term degree programs and postdoctoral experiences conducted abroad.

Regarding full-term degree mobility, research inquiries conducted within the Latin American context have consistently documented a notable proclivity among individuals to remain within the host country after completing their studies abroad, a phenomenon often referred to as "human capital flight" or "brain drain" (Buti, 2008; Didou & Gérard, 2009; Garcia de Fanelli, 2009). In contrast, research conducted in the sub-Saharan African region has indicated a positive correlation between the choice of destination country and engagement in international research activities within the realms of social sciences and humanities at the faculty level (Eduan, 2019).

Jiménez Zunino (2020), in a study of Argentine postgraduates who undertake international academic mobility, argued that those who live this experience hope that it can be an advantage for their subsequent entry to the academic labor market. While Moreno (2020), who analyzed the experiences of PhDs in exact or natural sciences who studied the full PhD or postdoctoral degree in the United States, concluded that the field of hard sciences itself orients motivations towards the possibility of accumulating capital and relationships by gaining experience abroad. This last conjecture partly motivated the present research, in the sense of identifying the same situation, but in the case of short mobility experiences (research stays) during PhD programs in soft sciences (Becher, 1989).

In Mexico, scholars have advanced the argument that the knowledge and experiences acquired abroad are often transferred into their pedagogical practices, "which contributes to a renewal of disciplines, to the conception of new objects of study, to the influence of foreign modes of thought on the organization of scientific work" (Gérard & Maldonado, 2009, p. 107). Also, some authors concluded that a long-term experience abroad forces the development of problem-solving skills, adaptive skills, socialization, and reflective decision-making related to academic and professional training (Gómez López, 2020).

In the Asian sphere, scholars have contended that experiences related to international academic mobility exhibit a favorable association with one's participation in scientific collaborative networks. This is because in-person engagement plays a pivotal role in securing invitations to events that serve

as pathways for gaining access to these networks (Chunguang et al., 2022). On the same page, authors from Europe and Latin America also highlighted correspondences between international mobility and the scientific production of active researchers. Cañibano et al. (2010) highlighted a direct relationship between the mobility of Andalusian researchers and their production in international co-authorships, which is also reflected in the study by Rivera et al. (2017), who concluded that there is a direct relationship between the countries where the researchers carried out their PhD studies (of a full nature) and the nationalities of the researchers with whom they collaborate to publish.

Jacob and Meek (2013) elucidated that mobility tends to concentrate around the central regions of the world, such as the United States of America. Nevertheless, with the advent of advanced communication technology and the availability of robust research infrastructure, a cohesive cohort of interconnected researchers can significantly contribute to enabling a nation with limited scientific resources to attain global excellence in research and innovation.

The examined studies put forth a multitude of advantages associated with prolonged study abroad experiences, particularly those encompassing the entirety of a postgraduate program. Nonetheless, a limited number of these studies have delved into the repercussions of shorter durations spent abroad. In a comparable analysis to the one presented herein, Shen (2018) employed empirical data from visiting Chinese doctoral students to illustrate that international exposure during doctoral education plays a vital role in enhancing the caliber of research training and fostering international networks, particularly when recipients receive exemplary supervision and substantial research mentorship.

Likewise, there are no studies that prioritize the perceptions of the individuals themselves (researchers in training) for their subsequent professional performance in the context of Latin America (Mexico), which is important because most of the existing literature has concentrated on Anglo-European contexts, Oceania, and (East) Asia (Shen et al., 2022).

In this article, the question to be answered is: what are the professional learnings identified by new PhDs in history and education, derived from short-term international academic mobility? The hypothesis is that the main learning outcomes are related to the characteristics of each scientific field and to the needs identified by individuals during their PhD programs.

This article is structured as follows. In the following section the conceptual bases are explained, as well as the methodology used for data collection and interpretation. Next, the findings are presented in five groups, in terms of learning for the working life of the new PhDs. First, learning for teaching practice or tutoring. Second, learning for the profession of becoming a researcher. Third, the configuration of networks with peers abroad. Fourth, the reconversion of capitals within the scientific field and how this could represent an advantage in it. Fifth, learning related to the need to publish results to acquire international recognition. Some of the results were exposed in terms of pedagogical application and the profound impact on research outcomes. Moreover, historians have been observed to acquire social capital, whereas educators experience the contrary. Additionally, the practical

knowledge acquired by novice PhDs in both fields may serve as an advantageous asset for their integration into the scientific realm when implemented within their professional settings.

### Research specifications

The choice of scientific disciplines for observation was made based on personal interest. The researcher's prior experience in research has centered around postgraduate education, and a decision was taken to sustain this focus. Consequently, the choice was made to compare it with another field in the social sciences known for its structured and autonomous nature, along with a well-established international tradition. In this case, history was chosen.

The conceptual approach used for this research is that of the scientific field (Bourdieu, 1994). In short, it proposes the following: the social world is divided into several fields, one of which is the scientific. The scientific field is characterized as a space of symbolic struggles to gain positions within it and, for this, its members (competitors) seek to accumulate a series of capitals, mainly scientific capitals based on acts of knowledge and recognition by peers. Thus, PhD students—as 'newcomers' to the field—are agents with a scientific *habitus* that is molded during their studies at a PhD program and that, together with the *illusio* of each disciplinary space, guides their actions and strategies.

The concept of *illusio* is central because it refers to "what gives meaning to existence, by leading to investment in a game and in its future, in the *illusions*, the possibilities. They are proposed to those who are immersed in the game and expect something from it" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 276). Consequently, international mobility can be analyzed under this idea, in the sense of thinking of it as a strategy that "is worthy. It pays to play it" (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 93), since it promises possibilities of generating scientific capital. On the other hand, *habitus* is the learned set of preferences or dispositions by which a person orients to the social world. It is a system of durable, transposable, cognitive "schemata or structures of perception, conception and action" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 27).

The participants of this research have been identified as "newcomers" to the scientific field because "they all share the identity of being (early-career) researchers and are knowledge agents and bearers" (Shen et al., 2022, p. 1321). In the context of this study, at the time they were interviewed, they had already graduated from their PhD programs, and they were at a moment of "entry" to the field. Thus, the notion of the "rules of the game" are recognized and expressed in their narratives. They discover them through interaction in the field (incorporation of a *habitus*) and which, for the most part, contemplate the search for scientific authority in order to position themselves in a highly competitive space.

The methodological strategy used was qualitative. It was based on semi-structured interviews with twenty-four individuals from four different PhD programs (two in education and two in history) who had completed at least one period of international academic mobility during their PhD studies. It should be noted that the four programs were chosen from a sample of 23 PhDs in Education and 15

PhDs in History belonging to the then National Register of Quality Postgraduate Programs (PNPC in Spanish)<sup>1</sup> of the National Council of Science and Technology (Consejo Nacional de Humanidades, Ciencias y Tecnologías, CONAHCYT) of Mexico. These programs have the main characteristic of having been evaluated at the highest levels of qualification of the PNPC.<sup>2</sup>

The interview design was semi-structured. Although it maintains a series of common questions, it allows flexibility when necessary and this guides the researcher to explore in depth certain issues that emerge during the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Its development was based on a list of questions or issues that were built from research related to the topic and in reflection with the research question and the conceptual approach of the scientific field.

Interviewees were selected based on specific criteria, including the following:

1. They had successfully completed a doctoral program in Mexico between 2006 and 2018 in one of the four selected postgraduate courses.
2. During their doctoral studies, they had engaged in at least one international academic mobility experience, lasting between 1 and 12 months.
3. They had voluntarily consented to participate in the research, having been duly informed about the privacy and use of the gathered information.

Access to potential interviewees was facilitated through the cooperation of the coordinators of the chosen doctoral programs, who, in turn, ensured that each candidate willingly agreed to partake in an interview. In order not to identify them, they were randomly assigned a pseudonym. Acronyms were used to name the PhD programs: DHCC and DHUF for the ones in the History field as well as DECIF and DEUPE for the ones in the Education one. Specific information about the interviewees is presented in Table 1.

Each interview was recorded with their prior consent. It was then transcribed, coded, and analyzed with the support of the scientific software *Atlas.ti*. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, and for the purposes of this paper, the author undertook the task of translating the quotes.

## **Results: Learning for academic life**

Prior to elucidating the outcomes in relation to the information provided by the students, it is imperative to consider the comparability between the two subjects. As per prior research, the academic field of education exhibits greater heterogeneity owing to its genesis from diverse disciplines such as

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<sup>1</sup> According to CONAHCYT's self-evaluation report corresponding to the first semester of the 2021 fiscal year, in 2021, the creation of the National Postgraduate System (SNP) was determined to replace the PNPC. This evaluated postgraduate programs and assigned them a rating from lowest to highest.

<sup>2</sup> The PNPC has four levels of evaluation. Ranked from the lowest to the highest: Recently Created, In Development, Consolidated and International Competence. The 4 programs chosen in this research are within the two highest levels.

pedagogy and psychology. Conversely, the field of history demonstrates a higher degree of homogeneity, stemming from its foundation within the European historiographic tradition, as well as the limited presence of Mexican scholars who pursued studies abroad.

**Table 1. Data from the interviews to twenty-four doctoral students**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Civil status</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>PhD program</b>	<b>Host country of the mobility</b>	<b>Duration of the mobility</b>
Diana	Married	Female	DHCC	Brazil	9 months
María	Single	Female	DHCC	Spain and Italy	6 months
Fátima	Single	Female	DHCC	Spain	4 months
Josefina	Single	Female	DHCC	Spain and Italy	5 months
Pablo	Married	Male	DHCC	Switzerland and Argentina	12 months
Roque	Single	Male	DHCC	United States and Guatemala	6 months
Yesenia	Single	Female	DHCC	Spain	6 months
Aura	Married	Female	DHUF	Spain	1 month, 2 weeks
Raúl	Single	Male	DHUF	Portugal	12 months
Santiago	Single	Male	DHUF	France	3 months
Dante	Married	Male	DHUF	Spain	1 month
Omar	Single	Male	DHUF	Germany	12 months
Marina	Single	Female	DEUPE	Spain	2 months
Ilse	Single	Female	DEUPE	Spain	6 months
Héctor	Married	Male	DEUPE	United States	7 months
Nora	Single	Female	DEUPE	Colombia	6 months
Carmen	Single	Female	DEUPE	Spain	4 months
Sara	Single	Female	DECIF	Germany	3 months
Julián	Single	Male	DECIF	Chile	1 month, 1 week
Bety	Married	Female	DECIF	Argentina	2 months
Gonzalo	Married	Male	DECIF	United Kingdom	6 months
Frida	Married	Female	DECIF	Spain	1 month
Melissa	Single	Female	DECIF	Argentina	4 months
Soledad	Married	Female	DECIF	Spain	2 months

Note. Data collected by author between September 2020 and September 2021.

### *Learning for teaching and academic mentoring*

The broader research project, from which this article is derived, demonstrated that international academic mobility complements and strengthens the comprehensive training of PhDs in both History and Education, not only because the stays nurture ongoing doctoral research, but also because the experience also offers lessons for academic working life.

The new PhDs in history mentioned that they have been able to apply much of what they learned during their stays they took abroad in their teaching practice and/or in their work dynamics, as well as their students' training:

mainly because of the learning you get from seeing other pedagogical and content models that are being used in other universities. I was astounded by the methods employed there. ... I have thus attempted to put something like that into practice here [at the university where she currently works]. I regularly invite specialized colleagues, and we also hold panels for discussion and debate (Fatima, DHCC, July 2020).

One gains expertise in this format. The fact that I have moved around has, of course, also helped me to develop the work with the students I receive, to be able to connect them with other colleagues, etc. I have also had PhD students who have come from Argentina, and I have even had undergraduate students who have come from abroad to work in economics or administration (Pablo, DHCC, September 2020).

Thus, historians have implemented new teaching methodologies, nurtured their bibliographic materials, and improved the reception of foreign students who come to work with them, which are contributions that they identified as “valuable” and that arise from interaction in diverse academic spaces. For their part, the PhDs in education expressed the following:

Additionally, it has been very beneficial to me as a professor teaching undergraduate students. All the subjects I learned from those who conducted research there (abroad) can be used as examples in my seminars. (Sara, DECIF, September 2020).

This nurtured me as a future researcher. ... It also taught me a lot about what I do not want and how I should not treat people who come to a scientific stay with me. Let us say it taught me a lot about how *not* to do things (Melissa, DECIF, July 2020).

These accounts provide evidence that PhDs from both disciplines enjoy learning about training methods and teaching strategies they have seen used abroad. In this case, there are not notable differences between subjects.

### *Learning for the research profession*

PhD programs have the special mission of teaching how to do research. Therefore, the effects of international academic mobility at the PhD level will be reflected in this aspect. Some historians highlighted the opportunity to know and master the documentary sources that exist abroad. Yesenia's case exemplifies this situation, particularly on the level of contribution in her line of research:

I believe it is crucial to visit all of these locations, *Archivo de Indias*, the National Library of Spain, the Vatican archives, etc. while pursuing a PhD. They are really crucial for intellectual development and the hard acquisition of texts, books, and documents. It also greatly aids in the development of the mind and helps one to realize the research process in a more global sense and to broaden perspectives beyond one's locality, municipality, or state. ... I think it is essential that students in PhD programs have the experience of being able to travel abroad in order to know how the archives and libraries are, as well as the historiographic production that is done in other countries. This is because not everything is available in Mexico (Yesenia, DHCC, June 2020).

The contributions of international academic mobility to the research profession are directly related to the *illusio* of each field, as demonstrated by the quotation above. The historian recognizes the importance of approaching the key archives of the discipline at the international level, learning how history is studied in other fields and perfecting the knowledge of the line of research by getting in contact with the main sources of information.

In addition, the PhDs in history recurrently referred to how international academic mobility broadened their scientific vision, either to better plan their future research ("you realize that you cannot limit your research to just one point. You have to see the whole picture... I think that this is partly due to the mobility abroad" (Yesenia, DHCC, June 2020)), or to adopt new methods of scientific work, as Santiago indicated:

I had a very local way of doing research. What do I mean? The 'going to the archive for three months, start writing, going to the archive for three months, start writing.' Over there, the first thing they told me was 'Do not write anything! Go to the archive, read everything you can, talk to people and then, with the dialogue and what you have read, you will be able to interpret it much better'. Let us say that this is what gave me something new. Working and arguing with a



different method [...] my stay really helped me to update and shape a different way of doing research (Santiago, DHUF, August 2020).

These narratives confirm that research training does not only imply the mastery of certain methodologies, sources, or theories, but that there is a whole series of practical knowledge that is discovered in the interrelation with other agents in the global field. This is recognized by the trainers themselves, as Quiroz Schulz and Médor (2021) demonstrated when interviewing the academic boards of Mexican graduate programs, who emphasized that "regardless of the discipline, international academic mobility grants several formative benefits to students such as broadening their vision on the objects of study, creating contact networks and strengthening their skills of expression and socialization of knowledge" (p. 1030). In this line of ideas, the PhD students in education expressed the following:

In the PhD program, I do think it is very important to do some kind of mobility because it allows to get to know other ways of working, other institutions outside the Mexican system (Frida, DECIF, July 2020).

It helped me to be able to contribute to the field of knowledge in which I work. Because sometimes we don't dare to do certain contributions; however, based on the experience and comments that emerged with the work team of the [host researcher] I learned to express my contributions (Marina, DEUPE, December 2020).

This demonstrates that international academic mobility represented a contribution not only to the craft of doing research, but also to the recognition of the dynamics of global science and their specific fields, which is fundamental for researchers in today's world, mostly because "more research is conducted together by students, postdoctoral researchers, and academic faculty members, and international academic mobility is playing growing important roles" (Shen et al., 2022, p. 1335). Comparatively, individuals within the realm of education tend to emphasize the significance of interpersonal relationships at the research profession, whereas historians accord greater priority to their interactions and engagements with archival sources.

### *Configuration of work networks and social capital*

Individuals' professional practices can be impacted by the international academic mobility learnings, to the extent that the individuals are able to draw on their prior experience and apply it to the present. In the words of one interviewee: "the fact of having been on a stay gives you the moment and the learning. However, the trajectory of recognition is built later" (Fatima, DHCC, July 2020).

The idea of “trajectory of recognition” mentioned by Fatima can be related to the concept of scientific authority put forward by Bourdieu (2000). It refers to the "capacity to speak and intervene legitimately (with authority and in an authoritative manner) in science" (p. 12). Obtaining this recognition is a constant quest of the agents of the scientific field that is part of the *illusio*: those regularities that shape the scientific *habitus* to the extent that they are incorporated and result in dispositions that, in turn, translate into the practical mastery of the game and how it works (Aguiar, 2017).

Three historian interviewees expressed their opinion regarding the importance of international academic mobility to establish relationships with researchers from abroad “face to face” i.e., in a physical way: "I think that something that makes it much easier to start projects is to meet people directly and have the opportunity to talk beyond the conference, to approach at the end to ask questions, etc." (Dante, DHCC, September 2020).

It always helps a lot to have that flowing conversation. Although Skype, Zoom, and even emails have made it easier to communicate, I believe that none of these tools can fully replace the relationship that can only be built by being present, physically present, and speaking to someone (Omar, DHUF, September, 2020).

The ability to do these transactions extends beyond simply using the computer and being present. You can also trade books with others. I have even sent hard copies of my thesis to acquaintances I made there. All this also allows you to achieve a more personal relationship. Your work has a different impact. In order for new projects to be launched and for existing ones to be enhanced, networking also entails becoming aware of the work being done in the community. Everything enables a crucial response, so you are not just sending your work out there and hoping for the best. You are well-known to a lot of people. There are better chances for acceptance in relatively small specialized groups because they have heard of you on some forums. (María, DHCC, July 2020).

This refers to the construction of social capital, since the fact of having contacts in different spaces gives new PhDs the security of being able to attempt greater participation in a field that, as María mentions, is sometimes closed just to “specialists.” In this sense, the relationship with foreign researchers gives the agents the feeling of being able to position themselves better because, in some way, *they have their backs*.

On the other hand, a relevant finding in the field of education is that it was difficult for the PhD students to establish lasting working contacts with the experienced researchers who received them abroad. Most of the time, because they had a full agenda and little time to meet them and propose

future collaboration projects. Faced with this situation, some interviewees mentioned having thought of alternative strategies for approaching peers, for example, Gonzalo's case:

What I do think is that more so than with established researchers, many of the interactions that are valuable are also with other students. They may connect you with others and open up other opportunities. You never know where they may end up. (Gonzalo, DECIF, July 2020).

This speculation about establishing relationships with PhD students (as he was), may be a strategy for the future (the dominated ones may become the dominant ones). It is convenient to create relationships with them now, and contrasts with the difficulty perceived by the agents in regard to collaborating with experienced researchers. Hence, newcomers notice the rigidity of the field's hierarchy and realize they are in a peripheral position with few opportunities for dispute. Another example can be seen in Hector's testimony:

In my opinion, international stays are really beneficial for building relationships with other scholars, and it is always a bonus if they encourage you to join a research network. However, I think it is really complicated. It is similar to starting off in a scientific field... Nobody wants to teach you, no one wants to spend their time, and no one wants to have beginners on their team. Therefore, it is preferable "not to invite them." That is what I learned. It has been extremely difficult to reach networks because of this. Nonetheless, I strongly advise, as a learning experience, to be aware of what is being done in other countries with regard to your field of study, and then come back and place it into practice. (Héctor, DEUPE, August 2020).

Bourdieu (2000) mentions that depending on the position that the "newcomers" occupy in the field, they can use strategies of succession (focused on carrying out innovations circumscribed within the limits authorized by the dominants) or strategies of subversion (risky placements in which the cost of a complete redefinition of the principles of legitimization of domination is paid). Gonzalo and Héctor's narratives are in another type of strategy in which they do not directly confront the "dominant," but neither do they follow them. They "go around" them by working with others who are less well positioned or implementing what they have learned in local spaces where it is easier to dispute scientific authority. Of course, this severely restricts access into the discipline's global scientific community.

Regarding this matter, Frida noted that international academic mobility did not influence her subsequent professional connections, primarily because she lacked interest in it. Instead, she believed it was more advantageous to leverage her contacts in Mexico.

Actually, keeping this connection [created during international academic mobility] has not caught my interest. I believe that I might eventually look for it. Yet, everything I have done since finishing my PhD degree has been in a different field. Let us say that, with this mobility, I have landed myself in a different way than I had intended. I am now in a new field. I completed the post-PhD program with the professors from my master's program and my master's group. They were also the ones that got in touch with me about the organization where I currently work. In fact, these are the most fruitful connections I have ever made. (Frida, DECIF, July 2020).

Frida's negative perspective concerning the maintenance of networks or affiliations with individuals associated with international academic mobility aligns with the viewpoint that policies aimed at fostering mobility must be founded upon the motivations, ambitions and needs of individual scientists (Jacob & Meek, 2013).

Thus, the narratives of PhDs in the field of education convey the perception of difficulty in positioning themselves in international spaces. This could be interpreted as an obstacle or negative effect, but also as a reason to seek alternatives for action and diverse positioning strategies, as established by Gonzalo or Frida. In contrast, the PhD students in history expressed that their international academic mobility experiences gave them the advantage of interacting “face to face” with the “specialists” in the global field, with whom they could collaborate later.

### *Capital reconversion and advantages in the scientific field*

The collaborations that result from interactions contacts made during international academic mobility and that are currently operating under working conditions can be viewed in the context of a capitals reorientation, whereby a social capital is used to produce an economic capital in the workplace. An example of this is provided by Fatima, who, as a result of contacts she made during international academic mobility, signed an agreement for international collaboration and later incorporated one of the foreign researchers in a project on which she is currently working:

Projects that later produced results emerged from interactions made at the [international research center]. When I came here to work as a professor, it was feasible to negotiate an agreement between [the HEIs where she completed her international academic mobility] and the [University where the interviewee currently works]. Collaboration has been crucial, so I looked for him [the host researcher] in the second project I registered. They are approximately *ten steps ahead of us*, so I do not want to lose our relationship. So, it is beneficial to review what we are doing and let them know about it. (Fatima, DHCC, July 2020).

It is clear that international academic mobility intervened to create a possibility, even though this form of capital reconversion cannot be accomplished just via the decision and action of individuals because it also requires the support of an institution (among other circumstances). This is related to what was expressed by Eduan (2019, p. 780), who states that “study abroad factors alone may not sufficiently explain international collaboration”.

Another example where international academic mobility learning could be converted into economic capital was mentioned by Maria, who is in a post-PhD position and has proposed activities derived from her experience abroad:

Recovering manuscripts through a UNESCO heritage fund is one of my proposals in this case [in my present work]. I discovered this information during the lectures I attended in Spain [during international academic mobility]: how to collaborate with international organizations, what qualifications are necessary to join different institutions, how to obtain funding, etc. I am talking about the kinds of experiences that fail to show up on paper but are still a part of the mobility experience and have had an impact on my current work life in my post-PhD and, probably, later in a final hire (Maria, DHCC, July 2020).

Maria implies by this that she was able to learn specific methods to manage access to information and resources during international academic mobility, methods that she continues to use in her post-PhD career and that may help her build up her economic capital in the event that she is awarded a later contract.

Similarly, managerial duties, which are an essential component of modern scientific activity, are reinforced as essential through experiences that take a lot of time and effort (like the planning of international academic mobility) since they will pay off in the future. In the following narrative, Gonzalo explains that his current work activity involves a lot of time in administrative activities, but that taking on these tasks is necessary in a scientific career:

I am the Institute's coordinator for postgraduate research. It is an administrative post, which means I have to spend a lot less time on the things I enjoy most, like research and teaching. Yet, all of these things need to be done. These are the labor rituals that one must endure in order earn credibility and a place in the institution (Gonzalo, DECIF, July 2020).

This demonstrates how agents believe that certain management activities will give them scientific capital of the bureaucratic or “power” type and that, although some may not enjoy it, they do so because it will bring them a “profit.”

By extension, international academic mobility encourages learning how to get around essential bureaucracy in scientific management: “moving implies a particular managerial capability that either

one must possess or counterpart, and one also learns from that" (Pablo, DHCC, September 2020). One even learns to benefit from them:

One thing—let us call it more administrative—was seeing how many scholarships there are to travel for a research stay without having to spend a lot of money from your own pocket. This used to not seem like such a big deal to me. Since I began my teaching profession, I have observed that many people believe it to be quite difficult to travel to Europe, which is true, but it is also not impossible (Santiago, DHUF, August 2020).

Since Santiago did not previously know there was support available for international academic mobility, he did not use such resources, but now he does. What Santiago said can be interpreted as an advantage he believes he has in the field as a result of his initial overseas sojourn. He further noted that he had been able to encourage his students' mobilities by using both this knowledge and his contacts:

In order for one of my students to travel to Navarra last year, we got in touch with my tutor's French brother who is currently living in Spain. So, it truly widens the scope of educating young people and how to mentor them, or how my stay gave me a number of subjective aspects that later evolved into other academic elements. (Santiago, DHUF, August 2020).

This is a perfect example of the kind of learning made possible by international academic mobility: from knowledge of scholarship opportunities and experience participating in calls for proposals (management knowledge), to adoption of training practices and the capacity to activate contacts abroad (social capital) to secure students' acceptance. In short, agents incorporate new practices that are useful in their profession, while reconfiguring their scientific *habitus* and reproducing what the field requests. In this particular instance, no discernible distinction between the subjects was evident, as both respond to contemporary global imperatives, including engagement in international networks and projects, adeptness in obtaining funding, fulfillment of administrative responsibilities and bureaucracy, as well as the aptitude for involvement in competitive funding proposals.

### *To publish or perish*

One of the most visible demands of the scientific field, regardless of discipline, is to publish research results. International academic mobility also provides learning in this regard. Two interviewees stated:

I believe that [international academic mobility] greatly increases your awareness of the value of publishing, authoring articles, and attending conferences. The fact that your publications speak wonders about you and serve as akin to your letter of introduction in the academic community—not only among historians but, I believe, in the scientific community in general—was made very apparent to me. Given this, it became abundantly evident to me through this experience that publishing should not just be done for the sake of publishing and that one must be extremely careful about the publisher or magazine one chooses to publish in. I also learned this from these stays. (Yesenia, DHCC, June 2020).

When I spoke with several of my colleagues who were there [foreign HEI of the international academic mobility] and were enrolled in a PhD program, they advised me that it was preferable to develop numerous smaller items that were derived from the thesis rather than just one large one. Let us use the example of a book whose contents were all destroyed and from which further use was no longer possible. It is preferable to use each chapter, for instance, with its own modifications, in articles or book chapters. Since over there too, despite not fitting under the SNI's<sup>3</sup> logic, they do fall under the logic of publication, of making yourself visible through your own research. ... Another thing I discovered is that if I want to fully embrace the logic of the "SNI show," I must be aware of when and where to publish individually, and when to publish as a team. (Gonzalo, DECIF, July 2020).

For his part, a new researcher in history mentioned:

There is a distinction between Mexico and Europe that I frequently observe. Publishing in the former is extremely tough, mainly because there are so few forums and magazines. While there are numerous journals in Europe where you can publish in Spanish, even if you are in France. This provides you access to a far bigger audience. (Santiago, DHUF, August 2020).

These narratives convey the idea that "getting into the publication game" is important and the perception that international academic mobility provided learning connected to tactics to "improve their participation in the game." Due to the dynamism of their professors, peers, and calls to the National System of Researchers (SNI), newcomers are aware of the value of publishing. Most of the time, though, they are unable to do it. In order to help them crack the code of "publish or perish,"

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<sup>3</sup> The National System of Researchers (SNI by the name in Spanish) was created by Presidential Agreement published in the Official Gazette of the Federation on July 26, 1984, to recognize the work of people dedicated to producing knowledge and technology. The recognition is granted through peer review and consists of granting the designation of *National Researcher*. This distinction symbolizes the quality and prestige of scientific contributions (Consejo Nacional de Humanidades, Ciencia y Tecnología [CONAHCYT], n.d.).

international academic mobility provides them with a portal through which they can hear other voices, see other realities, and learn about other spaces.

Owing to the extensive nature of this article, a comprehensive examination of the publications resulting from international academic mobility by students is not undertaken. Nevertheless, within the broader research framework, a comparative difference between disciplinary fields could be perceived. In the domain of history, the prevalent publishing dynamic entails scholars extending invitations to one another to collaborate on books or periodicals, wherein each contributor authors individual texts. Conversely, in the realm of education, collaborative authorship is more pervasive. Consequently, discerning the appropriate venues, collaborators, and publication formats is a skill set that is further fortified through international exposure and experience.

## Conclusions

The results of this study support the notion that international academic mobility is an important activity in a PhD program and its processes. This is due to the fact it offers participants a number of lessons that they can subsequently use in their teaching, in the training of researchers, and in their scientific work.

The interviewees from both disciplines found that the lessons acquired for teaching practice were quite comparable. As other scholars had noted (Gérard & Maldonado, 2009), using foreign-sourced literature as well as implementing novel teaching methods both contribute to the renewal of the disciplines. The incorporation of training tactics, which cannot be developed in any other way than through this type of learning during international academic mobility, was a remarkable discovery.

The most crucial thing is to observe and converse with more knowledgeable instructors, even if they did not lead by excellent example, you may still learn "how *not* to do things."

Regarding the lessons learned for doing research, it was the historians who demonstrated that they had accumulated practical expertise in various ways, from mastering foreign sources (mostly historical archives), to formulating better research questions, to understanding the norms of the global scientific community.

The existence of social capital is one of the main presumptions of these principles. In this regard, the interviewees claimed that they have incorporated a number of behaviors and attitudes into their professional practice that they learned during their international academic mobility and that have improved their performance in the field, such as how they interact with their peers and their ongoing quest to be a part of global professional networks.

In this regard, a finding of this research is that the new PhDs in the field of education perceived difficulties in interacting with experienced international researchers (highly recognized in the scientific field), which could be interpreted as an obstacle or negative effect of international academic mobility, but also as a reason to seek alternatives for action and diverse positioning strategies, either



with peers with a similar level of experience or with local researchers. In contrast, historians expressed greater possibilities for interaction, highlighting the advantages of “face-to-face” meetings. In this regard, the positive correlation of international academic mobility with membership in international collaborative networks, which had been identified by other authors (Chunguang et al., 2022), can be confirmed in the case of historians, but not in that of educators.

Learning related to the use of contacts (social capital) or practical and management knowledge (bureaucratic scientific capital), which are applied in the workplace and can be converted into economic capital, was identified as having a high applicability. In a way, this suggests advantages in the scientific area (better game play) that can assist the “newcomers” to better position themselves in it.

Finally, the dynamics of publication requirements are another lesson that can be leveraged to one's advantage in order to establish a position in the scientific community. The interviewees claimed they did not previously know that. Now, as a result of international academic mobility, they have been able to incorporate this knowledge into their work. This includes identifying spaces abroad where it is feasible to make their work known, understanding the rules for publishing in journals in other countries, and knowing when, with whom, and in what formats to do so.

This does not necessarily speak of co-authorships with international peers (Cañibano et al., 2010; Rivera et al., 2017), but of notions or practical learning of the agents for the dissemination of their research, whether individually or collectively authored.

It is imperative to underscore that the outcomes presented in this study could be affected by the sample size. Moreover, it should be noted that the analysis lacks a comparative perspective with individuals who did not partake in international academic mobility.

Another limitation is the inability to provide an in-depth analysis of each individual case in terms of the linguistic, cultural, and academic diversity of the destinations. While recognizing the significance of these, the constraints of space and resources within this paper have led to a more generalized treatment of the subject matter. This limitation is important to acknowledge as it may leave certain nuances unexplored, potentially prompting future researchers to delve deeper into specific cases for a more comprehensive understanding, both within Mexico and across international settings, in order to assess the potential replication of these findings within similar contexts.

Despite these acknowledged limitations, this study contributes significantly to the advancement of our comprehension of the potential educational benefits stemming from participation in international academic mobility during doctoral study. These benefits hold the potential to augment the professional capabilities of emerging PhD scholars in the field. Armed with this valuable insight, it becomes feasible to propose and implement more effective short-term international academic experiences as integral components of the doctoral training process.

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