



Is the Segmented Skill Divide Perspective Useful in Migration Studies? Evidence from the Portuguese Case

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Abstract

Boundaries among social scientists continuously challenge the scope for obtaining broader reaching views. This constitutes the case for migration studies, generally perceived as interdisciplinary and correspondingly gathering contributions from many social scientists with diverse disciplinary background. For example, many practical and institutional boundaries separate those studying so-called voluntary and forced migration. The same sub-disciplinary division also applies to the study of highly skilled migration. Even when treated as part of overall migration, highly skilled migrants are viewed as so specific that their study must not be mixed in with other migrants. The main aim of this paper involves discussing the relevance of this divide between high and less skilled emigration, trying to understand which aspects place them in the same framework and which facets separate them out into isolated categories. Rather than discussing the issue in general, our purpose is to put forward evidence about sociodemographic profiles, migration strategies, and the integration processes of high and less skilled emigrants moving in the same context in order to systematically compare these groups. The context chosen for such a comparison is Portugal at the beginning of the new millennium: a country that witnessed a strong upsurge in emigration over recent decades in which high skilled and less skilled emigrants both coexisted. The data analysed in this article results from a large-scale survey applied to Portuguese individuals who left the country in the new century.

Keywords Highly skilled migration · Less skilled migration · Portuguese emigration

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Introduction

As in many professional practices, the division of work among social scientists has led some to deepen their knowledge in certain particular issues while neglecting what is going on in both adjacent and distant domains. The specific paths taken by all scientific fields explain their institutional apparatus, theoretical developments and practices¹ as well as the difficulties in carrying out any truly interdisciplinary research (for the social sciences, see Porter and Ross 2003). Many efforts have recently focused on explaining these disciplinary divisions and enabling the scope for joint work, highlighting the means and potential for transversal and crosscutting approaches. Although cross-disciplinary research is necessary for solving many of today's great global problems, these nevertheless remain a number of substantial borders still to overcome.

Oddly enough, the boundaries among social scientists also get re-enacted within specific crosscutting domains, already themselves the result of interdisciplinary advances, continuously challenging the feasibility of generating broader views of specific, given issues. Such is the case with migration studies, an area widely accepted as inter- and cross-disciplinary, drawing on contributions from many social scientists whose disciplinary backgrounds are not always self-evident. The integration of diverse disciplinary perspectives has undoubtedly contributed towards a better comprehension of migration and immigrant integration processes (Boswell and Mueser 2008). However, even within this field, divisions and specializations emerge that are often summarized as several "binaries that dissect the field of migration studies" (King and Skeldon 2010). For example, many practical and institutional boundaries separate those studying so-called voluntary (e.g. economic) and forced (e.g. refugees or trafficking of human beings) migration. Other lines separate those studying international and internal migration. Around each specific issue, scientific events take place, journals are published, theory is developed, and all leading to a clustering that disregards communicating with other areas of the field. As in other social sciences, specialization reflects both the complexity involved in the study of migration and the complex object "human migration" turns out to be. This has allowed for deepening several aspects associated with population movements, but sometimes at the cost of an integrated and coherent vision.

A sub-disciplinary division of this kind also emerges out of the study of skilled or highly skilled migration in comparison to studying other migrant movements. Studies on immigration in general and particularly on lesser qualified immigrants had, among others, analysed the determinants of migration, the development of ethnic communities, the incorporation of immigrants in the receiving societies, the regularity or irregularity of these migration flows, and the economic, social, demographic, and political effects of these migration flows (for an overview, Castles et al. 2014; Wrench et al. 1999; Martiniello and Rath 2010). Even when treated as part of overall migration, the highly skilled migrants, i.e., those that detain highly valued human capital, are viewed as so specific that their analysis should always remain apart from other migrant groups. Frequently, skilled (such as professional) migration is actually dealt with separately,

¹ For an overview of the process of differentiation of knowledge into disciplines, see Weingart (2010). See also Stichweh (1992) on the role of disciplines as a "unit of internal differentiation of the modern system of science".

thereby presupposing its distinct condition and theoretical needs. Skilled migration is correspondingly understood as a specific field of labour migration (e.g. Lulle and King 2016). For some authors, highly skilled movements are a specific form of mobility with its particularities better captured through applying alternative theories and concepts. Concepts such as “professional transients” (Appleyard 1989), “mobile professional” (Favell 2008), or “expatriates” (Beverstock 2002)², for example, are thus sometimes preferred as the basis for specific inquiries. Macro level analysis conceptualizes these international migration flows as brain drain, brain gain, or brain waste from a purely economically driven perspective (Salt and Findlay 1989) or as human capital flight according to more inclusive assessments (Haque and Kim 1995). A related and widely known fact is that highly skilled migrants do not generically view themselves as migrants, thus leaving this designation to poorer labour migrants – a labelling shared by societies in general. Whichever the situation, the fact remains that studies have rare undertaken systematic comparisons between high and less skilled migrants. The long-standing effect of the scientific development based on this dichotomous study of migration flows has been a mutual lack of awareness about that studied by researchers devoted to each one of these migrant groups.

The main aim of this paper precisely involves discussing the relevance of this divide between high and less skilled emigration in order to understand just which aspects unite them under the same framework and which factors separate them into isolated categories. Rather than discussing the issue in generic terms, our purpose is to collect evidence about the sociodemographic profiles and individual strategies of high and less skilled emigrants moving in the same context and then systematically compare those groups. The context chosen for such a comparison is Portugal at the entry of the new millennium. This country and period stands out as a good social laboratory for such a study: the fact that Portugal in this epoch witnessed a strong upsurge in emigration and high skilled and less skilled emigrants coexisted in this outflow has been widely recognized as one of the distinctive features of the country’s new migratory landscape (Cândido 2018; Peixoto et al. 2016; Pires et al. 2015; Pires et al. 2014).

In sum, this paper analyses certain of the characteristics, practices, and aspirations of the most skilled recent Portuguese emigrants in comparison with their less skilled emigrant compatriots. In keeping with many studies on this subject, we defined the boundary between more and less skilled according to possession of a higher education degree. While it is true that “skills” to a large extent transcend the competences of formal education, and particularly the completion of tertiary education degrees,³ due to operational reasons or limited access to data, this perspective has however long since been chosen to distinguish between higher and lower skilled emigrants – or, more commonly, the high skilled and the others. In the present study, we adopt this same perspective even while recognizing that this distinction is not historically immutable and has become increasingly indeterminate in recent years (OECD 2014).

² The latter may also be divided into sub-concepts, for example, assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates (Przytuła 2015).

³ According to Lulle and King (2016), for example, “skill levels lie on a continuum, and any attempt to differentiate ‘high’ from ‘low’ is bound to be arbitrary. The traditional markers based on educational attainment (e.g. tertiary level for the highly skilled) do not always work well. For example, tertiary education is not necessarily a guarantee of possession of designated skills, whilst some of the specific skills and competences sought by employers are not necessarily conferred by higher education”.

The new evidence we put forward results from the research project “Back to the Future: New Emigration and the Portuguese Society (REMIGR)”,⁴ funded by the Portuguese national funding agency for science, research and technology, which took place between 2013 and 2015. This included, as one of its main research instruments, a large-scale questionnaire applied to a sample of Portuguese individuals (including both those born in Portugal and those with Portuguese citizenship born abroad) who left the country from 2000 onwards.

The article is structured as follows. After this introductory section, we set out a brief state-of-the-art summarizing the most relevant contributions to the theoretical split between the study of highly skilled movements and the bulk of economic migration on the one hand, and contextual knowledge about recent Portuguese emigration on the other hand. We subsequently present a short methodological section detailing the main features of the survey carried out under the aforementioned research project. A systematic discussion of the results follows with comparisons among several traits of recent Portuguese high skilled and less skilled emigrants. In the final section, departing from the main results of the article, we will point to the analytical advantage of combining the study of high and low skilled migration in a common framework for explaining contemporary Portuguese migration flows.

The Study of Highly Skilled and Less Skilled Migration

In comparison with research on economic migrants, there has been relatively scant study of highly skilled migrants. Most studies have focused on the economic effects of highly skilled migrants, their integration into labour markets, the match or mismatch between their qualifications and jobs in the destination country, the immigration of specific highly skilled groups (physicians and engineers, e.g.), returning or contacts maintained with the home country (including premature returns, also called expatriate failure – e.g. Harzing and Christensen 2004) and more generally on the economic and political impacts on the origin and destination countries (for an overview, see Chiswick 2011b). Many studies identify the importance of these migration flows to the respective national economies and the development of specific productive sectors (Manole et al. 2017; Nathan 2014), thus in support of migration policies that intend to attract immigrants with high levels of human capital.

When every skill level is simultaneously studied, the main questions address the selection process applied to immigrants with different levels of human capital (Bhagwati and Hamada 1974; Grogger and Hanson 2011), the evolution of the benefits and effects of high skilled vs. low skilled migrants (Chiswick 2011a), the relevance of skills to the destination country migrant selection process (Borjas 1987; Chiswick 1986), attitudes towards both immigrant groups (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010), and the integration processes of high- and non-qualified workers (Wapler and Hochfellner 2014).

The migratory process for highly skilled individuals emerges as different to that encountered by migrants with lower levels of human capital. The former are generally attributed greater scope over selecting migratory destinations, with migration driven by reasons of pursuing careers or maximizing the returns on their human capital and with non-problematic integration processes. Approaches to the latter group analyse processes of labour transfer

⁴ The project included researchers from Universidade de Lisboa, Universidade de Coimbra, and ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

from low-wage countries to high-wage countries, deeply integrated into networks of family and friends that enable both the migratory movement and the integration process in the respective host society. Migration admittance channels for high skilled workers also represent an analytical means of selecting and segmenting special/welcomed types of migrants that holds consequences for both their legal status and economic integration (Hercog and Wiesbrock 2016). In contrast, the migration of low-skilled workers into advanced countries remains a highly contentious issue (Dadush 2014), despite high demand for such workers for carrying out a range of essential tasks, especially services.

However, this rigid differentiation between these two types of migrants is difficult to sustain as both groups commonly pursue similar strategies and migratory objectives. For example, regarding migrant integration processes, the distinction between high and low skilled migrants often leads to misconceptions about the relationship between qualifications and integration outcomes. In a stylised way, the human capital of highly skilled individuals is perceived as a resource that positively contributes to their integration while lesser qualified immigrants possess fewer resources and therefore face specific obstacles in their integration processes. As demonstrated by different case studies (Anderson et al. 2006; Baganha et al. 2010), the presence of highly skilled individuals in low-skilled positions conveys how the relationship between human capital and integration is less direct than often portrayed.

As regards recent Portuguese emigration, the research available confirms that such migration never ceased even following the country's adhesion to the European Union in 1986 and the period of growth and modernization that followed. The persistence of outflows contrasted with the very low visibility of emigration both in public discourse and in academic studies with these fields displaying greater interest in the novel movements of foreign immigration then spreading in the country (Candeias et al. 2014; Malheiros 2010; Marques 2010). After the 2008 financial crisis and the acute economic problems that subsequently impacted on Portugal, the reality and perceptions of these outflows changed. An upsurge in emigration took place and outflows became a primary source of concern for the public in general and even for migration scholars. The large scale of recent emigration in that period gained widespread acknowledgement, with some estimates pointing to volumes in the peak years of the crisis similar to those of the 1960s (Pires et al. 2014; Pires et al. 2015).

Given the scarce details provided by official data, there are shortcomings with our knowledge about the amount and the characteristics of recent migrant human capital outflows. However, existing evidence confirms that emigration has involved individuals of all skill levels, from the lowest to the highest (including PhD holders, for instance) (Peixoto et al. 2016). They were all negatively affected by the prevailing economic circumstances with high unemployment and poor labour market perspectives (Lopes 2014; Peixoto et al. 2016). Considering overall numbers, the data confirm that emigration continued to be dominated by individuals with low to medium skills, corresponding to primary and secondary school education levels (cf. Pires et al. 2014; Pires et al. 2015).⁵ Even in destination countries with high proportions of highly

⁵ According to the Emigration Observatory, the gross highly skilled emigration rate was 10.7% in 2001 and 10.6% in 2011, which limits the scope for any massive brain drain in this period. In turn, the OECD and the United Nations (OECD UNDESA 2013) report a slightly higher rate, around 12.9%, based on the 2010/11 censuses. It should be noted, however, that these data refer to the census years and may therefore not have captured the possibly accelerated growth in skilled departures after 2011.

skilled emigrants, such as the UK, their numbers only corresponded to about a third of all emigrants; while in countries with low proportions, such as France, they accounted for barely 6% of the total (cf. Brücker et al. 2013; Pires et al. 2014; Pires et al. 2015).

Despite starting from a relatively low position, there has been growing interest in studies of qualified or highly qualified Portuguese emigration. Some more comprehensive works have examined these migrants in the light of brain drain theory (Araújo and Ferreira 2013; Delicado and Alves 2013; Gomes et al. 2015). Others analysed the media discourses on the topic (Amaral and Marques 2013; Araújo and Ferreira 2013; Cogo and Badet 2013; E. Araújo and Ferreira 2013), while the impact experienced by Portugal has also been studied (Faria 2012). Furthermore, some authors narrow their focus to the case of specific countries, such as France (Lopes 2014), or adopt a broader scope at the European level (Azevedo 2014). The most frequent study theme has approached a specific professional group, such as healthcare professionals (Pereira et al. 2015; Ribeiro et al. 2013), Portuguese teachers and lecturers (Pereira 2007), and, especially, academics and doctoral degree students (Araújo 2007; Delicado 2010, 2011; Delicado and Alves 2013; Fontes and Araújo 2013).

The common point shared by the aforementioned works is their adoption of emigrants holding higher education degrees as their subgroup unit of analysis. At least explicitly, the migrant group with the lowest levels of qualifications has not been examined in such detail, including those holding considerable professional (non-academic) skills with the studies by Queirós and Monteiro (2016) on the emigration of construction workers among the most relevant exceptions. That emigration was not the object of systematic and continuous study in Portugal from the 1980s into the early twenty-first century contributed to a certain degree of invisibility of these outflows. However, the increase in media attention on more qualified emigration, particularly young graduates, within the context of economic crisis and recession, also partially explains the greater salience of this object of study in recent years. Paraphrasing Cairns et al. (2014), when observing the evolution of “youth studies”, we may also state that in the study of recent Portuguese emigration flows, the attentions of academics and politicians have fallen more on the qualitatively fascinating issue of highly qualified migration than either on the quantitatively more significant reality of lesser qualified migration or on the study of the communalities and differences between these two groups of emigrants.

In this paper, we aim to extend the analysis focused on the most qualified emigrants towards comparative analysis in which this group’s position undergoes comparison with that of their less qualified peer emigrants, that is, those who do not hold a tertiary level qualification. In the following sections, after we establish the methodological framework, we set out indicators taking into account the sociodemographic profiles of both types of migrants, their migratory trajectories, their integration into their destination countries, and the relationships they maintain or intend to maintain with Portugal in the future.

Methodology

The empirical evidence underpinning this text was produced by the project REMIGR. The project’s main aim was to outline the profile of the most recent wave of Portuguese emigration – individuals born in Portugal or with Portuguese nationality, who left the

country after 2000 (inclusive) – and the relationships maintained with the country of origin. One specific characteristic of this project arose from it encompassing emigrants with different levels of qualification, thus enabling the establishment of a reference group and not limiting analysis to either only the subgroup of more or of less qualified persons (Pires et al. 2014; Pires et al. 2015).

The data used here result from a survey applied according to a mixed-modes survey (Dillman et al. 2014), which combined online surveys with paper-and-pencil surveys. The former collected responses from over 100 countries while the traditional questionnaire version was applied in six countries: France, Luxembourg, the UK, Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique. The inquiry process took place between May 6, 2014 and May 25, 2015. The 6086 questionnaires were validated following verification. Of this total, 73% were collected via the Internet through a purpose created website. The limitations associated with such a methodology are well known (Fricker and Schonlau 2002). Deploying new technologies to conduct surveys (that is, online surveys) of a population with an unknown universe is problematic. Researchers have shown how this type of surveys has problems regarding sample coverage and differential levels of survey access potentially resulting in the self-selection of respondents, among other issues. Various studies have identified the unequal social and demographic characteristics of online versus face-to-face survey respondents (Couper 2000; Fricker and Schonlau 2002; Weinberg et al. 2014). The research team, aware of these limitations, here acknowledge that the results obtained, albeit elucidating the characteristics and modes of current Portuguese emigration, are not susceptible for inferences as regards the universe of emigrants leaving the country after the year 2000.

For our purposes here, those with a higher level of academic degree (ISCED levels 5 to 8) classify as “more qualified” (or high skilled) and those with educational qualifications below this level (ISCED 0–4) rank as “less qualified” (or less skilled) migrants.⁶ Thus, the exercise correspondingly involves comparing respondents with undergraduate, master’s or PhD degrees ($n=4.263$) with the reference category of respondents holding secondary school or lower levels of qualification; see Table 1.

The weight of respondents with higher levels of schooling was an expected consequence both of applying the survey online and also of the dissemination strategy for this form of inquiry, which prioritized networks in which the most qualified maintain a dominant presence. This also explains why individuals who graduated from secondary school predominate among the “less qualified”. One objective of carrying out traditional face-to-face surveys in six countries precisely involved trying to correct the bias in the sample, enabling us to reach out to a universe closer to the reality of migration – known to still be dominated by emigrants with low levels of education (Peixoto et al. 2016; Pires et al. 2014; Pires et al. 2015).

It should also once again be noted that the theoretical and methodological option to separate “more and less qualified” emigrants according to whether or not they possess a higher education qualification are admittedly reductive and incomplete: this reduces the qualification concept to a schooling or academic level and remains incomplete as this does not incorporate any indicator reflecting the set of occupations and competencies that define the different levels of professional qualification.

⁶ Throughout this article, we refer to “highly qualified” as “high skilled”, “highly qualified”, or just “qualified”.

Table 1 Levels of school qualification

Portuguese school levels	ISCED level	<i>n</i>	%	More qualified/less qualified
None	0	11	0.2	29.8
1st cycle of compulsory school	1	99	1.6	
2nd cycle of compulsory school	2	168	2.8	
3rd cycle of compulsory school	3	405	6.7	
Secondary school	4	1122	18.5	
Bachelor or equivalent	5	2392	39.4	70.2
Master	6	1553	25.6	
Doctoral	7	318	5.2	
Total	8	6068	100.0	

Source: Survey of Portuguese Abroad – Project REMIGR

Even when taking into consideration the non-representativeness of this sample and the framing of the professional qualification levels, we believe that, given the robustness of the final sample, the results are both interesting and significant given the otherwise almost non-existence of comparative studies between the profiles of the most and least qualified emigrants either in Portugal or in other contemporary contexts.

In the following section, we analyse both groups of migrants according to their level of integration and their integration processes and the relationship they maintain with the country of origin and their future migration plans.

Results

In terms of the distribution by sex and age, the sample of the most qualified emigrants is very well balanced between the sexes, with a higher female weighting but by only two percentage points. For immigrants with lower school qualifications, males predominate with a ratio of close to 60/40 in favour of men. These data thus seem to reflect, on the one hand, the reality of less qualified traditional emigration, with a greater proportion of males. On the other hand, they also reflect the structure of the Portuguese population in which women are slightly more skilled than men.⁷ Regarding age, as in the structure of the Portuguese population,⁸ the less qualified respondents are slightly older than the most qualified, with average ages of 37 years and 34 years, respectively.

Migration profiles

Portuguese emigration after 2000 is not concentrated into any single migratory destination but has rather intensified the geographical dispersion of migratory flows

⁷ According to the 2011 population census, the percentage of higher education degree holders was 12.4% for men and 16.9% for women (INE, Population Census 2011).

⁸ In 2011, 10% of the population aged 40 or over had a higher education qualification, rising to 27.1% in the population aged 25–39 (INE, Population Census 2011).

(Malheiros et al. 2016). This development and persistence of migratory destinations across several continents represents one of the outstanding characteristics of contemporary Portuguese emigration. The respondent migratory destinations confirm this territorial diversification and demonstrate how qualified and less qualified people present both differences and similarities in their destination countries.

The main destinations for skilled emigrants are the UK (24%), Brazil and Angola (9% each), Mozambique (8%), and Germany (7%). Regarding the less skilled, the main destinations are the UK (23%), France (20%), Luxembourg (14%), and Angola (10%). Hence, one similarity positions the UK as the leading destination regardless of the level of qualification under analysis. The second resemblance between the two samples arises from the predominance of European destinations, although more pronounced in the case of the less qualified respondents (76% went to this continent) than in qualified respondents (62%). Another similarity is the significant weighting of Portuguese-speaking countries – Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique – ranking among the main destinations.

We should note that the distribution by country largely reflects the six countries chosen for case studies and have been subject to, in addition to the scope for online responses, a field survey. For this reason, it is important to highlight how some countries that did not feature among the selected case studies but which nevertheless rank among the major destinations: Germany (7% of the more skilled and 4% of the less skilled), Switzerland (4% of both), and the Netherlands and Belgium (3% and 2%, respectively).

Regardless of the methodological issues involved, the heavy weighting of European destinations among all recent Portuguese international mobility constitutes a fact duly confirmed by other sources (Pires et al. 2014; Pires et al. 2015). Free movement within the European Union, geographical proximity, transport and communication facilities, migratory networks based on already existing flows, and active recruitment networks provides the main factors explaining the preponderance of European destinations.

The channels used for migration may also explain some of the specific destinations. In the case of the less qualified, the figures obtained largely reflect historical paths of emigration (especially to European and North American destinations) which, due to cumulative causation factors (Massey et al. 1993), tend to persist over time. In the case of the high qualified, highlighting the specific highly skilled recruitment policies in effect for work forces in some countries is important. The case of healthcare professionals attracted to countries such as the UK and Germany is already well documented (Buchan and Secombe 2003; Buchan 2007; Dubois et al. 2006). This need for skilled labour has also been demonstrated for Norway with the need to recruit IT professionals for the oil and gas sector furthermore remaining uncontroversial within the framework of the ongoing national political debate (Brenne and Jensen 2013). Another case of high-skilled recruitment is Ireland where there is a high demand for IT specialists, engineering, finance, and health service professionals (Talbot 2013).

There is also recognition that recent migratory flows have taken on a diversified character in terms of the sociodemographic profiles of migrants, migratory patterns, and migration motives (King 2002). Regarding the reasons for migration, the survey data report these as differing in accordance with the migrant skill profile (Table 2). Economic motivations (unemployment and/or low wages) constitute strong migratory motives in both groups, but in the more skilled, these get supplanted by the relevance

attributed to the “realization of new experiences”. This item collected 41% of the answers from the most qualified respondents but fell back to 23% among the less qualified respondents indicating how, for some migrant groups, the set of values associated with consumer societies, and particularly among those classes holding human capital, assumes a central place in the migration decision process. These motivations, classified according to Inglehart’s (1977) terminology as post-materialists, have already been identified among migratory movements originating in Eastern Europe (Wallace 2001), Croatian youths (Colic-Peisker 2008) and Spanish doctors in the UK (Blitz 2014).⁹ These data do not however mean that economic or professional considerations are no longer relevant in skilled migrant decision-making processes. Deeper analysis of the data reveals that 52% of those who indicated the desire to carry out new experiences as a motive for migration, also pointed to materialistic considerations for taking this option.¹⁰

We would here note that present in this type of consideration, especially for the more skilled, is the perception that the Portuguese labour market shall hinder and where not prevent the development of their professional careers. The less skilled emigrants, in addition to mentioning the desire to obtain new experiences, especially emphasize dissatisfaction with their salaries and the prospects of unemployment. The poor outlook for the future is a factor emphasized by the skilled and the less skilled and correspondingly reflecting a general feeling of disillusionment with the future development of the country at the time of emigration.

Family related motivations receive low levels of answers in both groups denoting more individualized migratory projects. In the case of the most qualified emigrants, the individual nature of these migratory projects receives further support by the high proportion of unmarried people (48%) and how most respondents left the country on their own (56%). In the case of less qualified emigrants, these percentages are 46% and 33%, respectively, indicating a greater involvement of collective considerations in the migration decision process.

When comparing the previous migratory experiences of both groups, the first conclusion is that, independently of the group, the trend is for this being the first emigration experience of respondents. However, the more skilled group displays a higher proportion of migrants with previous migratory experiences: 38% compared with 24% of the less skilled. In the most qualified group, some of these experiences may refer to academic experiences undertaken, for example, under the Erasmus program or similar mobility schemes. In fact, 72% of the more skilled who reported having already resided abroad had carried out periods of study or training outside Portugal, and among these, 65% stated that the completion of this study/training period abroad influenced their subsequent decision to reside outside the country. These findings suggest that the biographies of these skilled migrants feature diverse periods

⁹ According to Inglehart’s proposal, post-materialistic values tend to regress in situations of crisis and uncertainty (leading to the reinforcement of materialistic values) and become stronger in situations of economic security. The results here, interpreted according to Inglehart’s proposal, reveal a paradox: skilled emigrants (and not only) seem to choose to leave the country not because they are in a situation characterized by deep uncertainty but rather because they feel economically secure and therefore favourable to post-materialistic values.

¹⁰ The migratory motives were questioned through a multiple-choice question in which respondents could select up to three response options.

Table 2 Migration motivations

	More skilled	Less skilled
Wanted to have new experiences	40.5	22.9
Had no future for professional career	35.9	18.7
Wanted to study or improve professional formation	18.2	6.9
Opportunity for own business	5.6	3.9
Didn't had future in Portugal	37.3	39.8
Was unemployed in Portugal	17.9	22.1
Unsatisfied with salary	18.2	23.1
Family motives	10.6	16.2
Other motives	12.2	7.5

Source: Survey of Portuguese Abroad – Project REMIGR

of residence abroad, which contribute to developing “migratory dispositions” that make subsequent emigration more likely (Góis et al. 2016). The survey results do confirm the effects of participating in study/training programs abroad on later emigration, a facet already recognized by different studies (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Parey and Waldinger 2010). According to Parey and Waldinger (2010), the completion of a study period abroad during the first cycle of higher education raises the likelihood of working abroad after completing that cycle by 15–20%.

Integration

To analyse the differentiated respondent integration patterns in the destination countries, the labour activity sectors were compared across two moments in time alongside the responses to a battery of indicators related to the integration difficulties experienced.

The longitudinal comparison of the labour activity sectors of immigrants (Table 3) allows us to understand the changes that occurred in their respective professional trajectories of the sample under analysis.

In the case of the most qualified, there was and there is greater dispersion across the various sectors while reporting a reduced weighting for personal and domestic activities. In Portugal, one third of the most qualified sample was employed in the education sector and in financial activities and business services. Although both remained the most frequent sectors at the time of the survey, there is currently a greater concentration in the latter with about 18% of skilled emigrants. The major weighting of “other situations” (both in Portugal and in the country of destination, they represent about 25%), which include difficult to classify situations, poses certain obstacles to this analysis. In the less qualified sample segment, the work associated with trade, accommodation, catering, and transport services predominated in Portugal, on 30%, in conjunction with civil construction and the public works sector, on 19%. In the country of destination, these two sectors continue to occupy the top positions.

In other dimensions of the relationship with the host society, there are also observable differences depending on the emigrant level of qualification. As regards the difficulties experienced in the present country of residence, more qualified emigrants

Table 3 Longitudinal comparison of labour activity sectors (%)

	More skilled		Less skilled	
	Portugal	Currently	Portugal	Currently
Manufacturing industry	9.3	11.5	14.2	12.9
Construction	11.6	11.7	18.8	19.5
Trade, accommodation and catering, transport	10.1	9.0	30.2	26.2
Financial activities, business services	16.9	17.6	8.3	9.3
Education	16.0	12.9	4.0	3.3
Health	9.4	11.6	2.8	2.4
Personal, family and domestic activities	1.2	1.8	3.7	8.8
Other situations	25.6	23.8	18.0	17.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of Portuguese Abroad – Project REMIGR

report greater difficulties than their less qualified peers for the items related to access to health services and dealing with the administrative apparatus (Table 4). This difference may derive from the existence of a greater proportion of skilled emigrants in non-European countries that lack consolidated universal health systems. In the case of bureaucratic difficulties, we would note that, in addition to visa problems (common to the less qualified), skilled migrants experience difficulties in legalizing their professional activities and gaining recognition for their qualifications.

The less qualified emigrants contrast with the most qualified due to the higher values returned for the items referring to social discrimination and language problems in the destination country. This higher level of perception of discrimination on behalf of the less qualified does not support theories of perceived discrimination (Pettigrew and

Table 4 Difficulties in integrating, averages

	More skilled	Less skilled	Difference
Difficulties in access to health care	2.2	1.9	0.3
Bureaucracy	2.9	2.7	0.2
Integration of children into school	1.9	1.8	0.1
Obtaining social support	2.4	2.3	0.1
Difficulties to rent a house or apartment	2.9	2.8	0.1
Few friends or loneliness	2.5	2.4	0.1
Cost of living	3.3	3.4	-0.1
Difficulties in finding a job	2.0	2.2	-0.2
Climate	2.6	2.7	-0.1
Discrimination / racism	2.0	2.2	-0.2
Language / language problems	2.2	2.5	-0.3

Source: Survey of Portuguese Abroad – Project REMIGR

Scale: 1, not difficult; 5, very difficult

Taylor 1990), which assert that the most disadvantaged groups experience lower levels of perceived discrimination. The problems (in terms of access to housing or employment) experienced by the least qualified Portuguese emigrants in some European countries may account for these answers. The difficulties with the destination country language may result from either of two explanations: on the one hand, the greater concentration of less skilled emigrants in countries where Portuguese is not the official language; on the other hand, a matter of literacy as lower academic qualifications interlink with lower levels of foreign language proficiency.

Relationship with the Country of Origin

Portuguese emigration, as with other global scale migratory movements, rarely implies an immediate and definitive rupture with the country of origin. On the contrary, emigrants often seek to develop practices in their destination country that allow for an approximation (sometimes only symbolic) to the country of origin. This set of activities, of an economic, sociocultural, and political nature, developed by emigrants in order to maintain connections with the country of origin has been analysed according to the transnationalism perspective (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002; Levitt 2003). As Marques and Góis (2008) have shown, migrants relate with their country of origin in different ways and with varying degrees of intensity with their country of origin. These “transnational” practices are often confined to specific spheres (e.g. remittances) and sporadic behaviours, and it is that holders of higher levels of cultural, human and economic capital more regularly engage in such transnational practices (Marques and Góis 2008).

Comparing the relationships maintained with the country of origin by qualified and less qualified emigrants enables us to deepen this question and to analyse the influences of cultural, human, and economic capital on these transnational practices. In the study carried out, this question was assessed according to a set of questions regarding the sending of remittances, home visits, and media usage to communicate with and obtain information about Portugal, and participation in the political sphere and the future plans of respondents.

The sending of remittances attains very similar proportions between the two groups, dividing the samples into almost identical halves (50% of the more qualified and 51% of the less qualified send remittances). However, the actual delivery of remittances takes on distinct rhythms and volumes according to the level of respondent qualification. In the case of the less qualified, the sending of remittances takes place at least monthly for 50% of respondents. This very intense regularity drops away among the more qualified for whom the proportion stands at 36%. For this emigrant group, the most frequent occurrence is sending remittances on only a few occasions per year.

The total of remittances also differs in accordance with the level of respondent qualification.¹¹ While the more qualified group send remittances with a monthly average of € 985, the less qualified sample members send an average monthly total of € 803. Furthermore, over a third of the most qualified emigrants who report sending remittances indicate values of over € 1000 per month. On the other hand, the lower qualified

¹¹ In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate the monthly average of remittances, regardless of the periodicity. The averages were then calculated according to the intermediate point of each step.

respondents essentially divide into two with one group reporting between € 251 and € 500 a month and another sending over € 1000 a month (25% and 24%, respectively). Thus, while the less qualified send more often but commonly lower values, the more qualified send less frequently but repatriate higher amounts. The data on the income obtained by each of these migrant groups account for the difference in the amount sent: while 60% of the less qualified receive income equal to or lower than € 2000, 69% of the most qualified have incomes of above this value. Should we apply the Itzigsohn and Saucedo typology (2002), we may consider Portuguese respondent remittances fall into the category of what these authors term a “resource dependent transnationalism” in which transnational practices are conditioned by the immigrants’ economic resources.

The application of the financial remittances also helps in understanding the differential in their frequency. The less qualified emigrants stated that the money served to help the family (40%), to pay outstanding loans (40%), to make savings (31%), and to meet the costs of raising their children (22%). The most qualified apply their remittances to savings (55%), to paying credits and loans (37%), supporting family members (26%), and investments (18%). The greater preponderance of family members as remittance recipients among the less skilled migrant group may thus account for the greater frequency of sending remittances to their country of origin.

As regards another indicator for the relationship maintained with the country of origin, visits to Portugal, these are more frequent among the groups with higher qualifications. About 30% of the most qualified visit Portugal at least once every 3 months. When the period of visit frequency is extended to 6 months, the accumulated total reaches 64%. In the less qualified group, only 14% visit the country with a regularity of less than 3 months and 37% with a regularity of less than 6 months. For these emigrants, the most frequent situation is the annual visit, reflecting the response of 41% of the less qualified respondents. Higher incomes and the scope for companies to pay for such travel by more qualified members of staff explain these differences.

Recourse to the media in order to maintain ties with Portugal also displays different intensities according to respondent qualification levels (Fig. 1). However, the hierarchy identified by each group does not greatly differ. In both cases, the most frequent is communicating with family and/or friends in Portugal. The least frequent, in both groups, is listening to online radio programs. The differences between the two groups derive from the practices that occupy intermediate positions: while the more skilled tend to consume Portuguese newspapers more frequently (paper or online), those with lower qualifications prefer to watch Portuguese television channels.

When analysing indicators for political participation related transnational practices (Fig. 2), the comparison positions the most qualified emigrants with higher levels of activity in the public sphere. Although the hierarchy is not very distinct, the average values are always higher for those with higher academic qualifications. In all cases, passive participation (listening and reading news) predominates over active participation (voting in elections in the country of origin or destination). The greatest difference between the two groups emerges from electoral participation in the country of origin.¹²

¹² However, some of the respondents who emigrated most recently may not have had the opportunity to participate in electoral acts in the country of origin or destination as no electoral act took place either in Portugal or in their country of residence between the time of departure and the time of the research questionnaire.

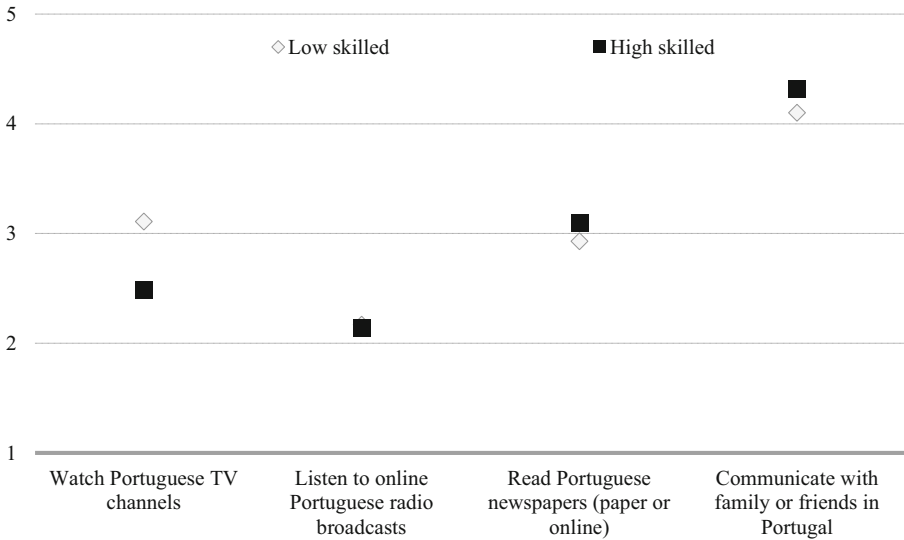


Fig. 1 Frequency of transnational practices (Source: Survey of Portuguese Abroad – Project REMIGR) (Scale: 1-never; 5-daily)

We would also note that when taking into consideration the results for the total population, the study on electoral participation in Portugal and Europe based on Eurobarometer data (Freire and Magalhães 2002) identifies education as a relevant factor in some types of elections.

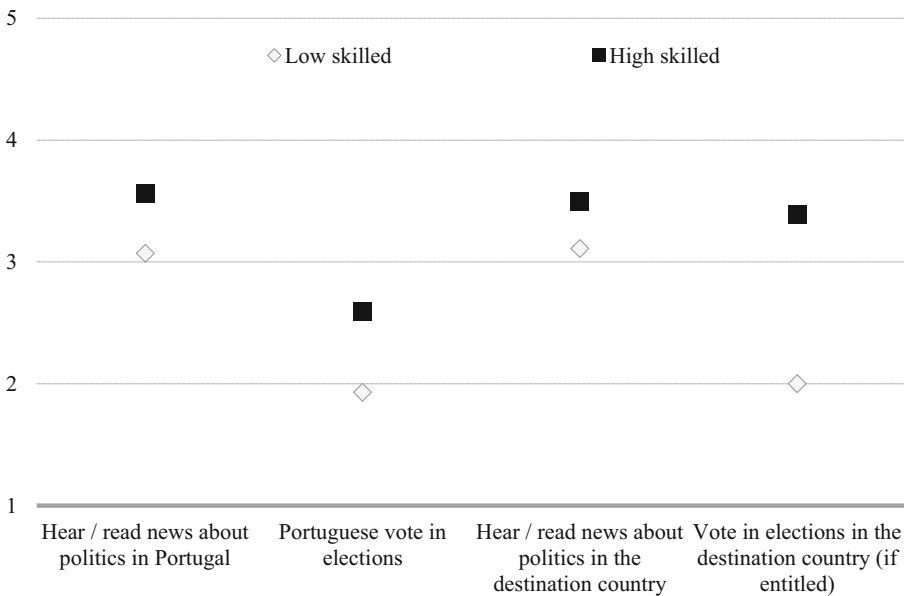


Fig. 2 Frequency of political transnational practices (Source: Survey of Portuguese Abroad - Project REMIGR) (Scale: 1-never; 2-rarely; 3-occasionally; 4-often; 5-whenver possible)

Finally, we compared respondent outlooks as regards their own futures, which turn out to be quite diverse. Around one-third of the most qualified emigrants do not have definite plans for the future with indecision being the most frequent position in this group. In the less qualified group, the opinions are distributed between an intention to stay permanently in the destination (35%) and to return to Portugal (32%). The two groups also divide in terms of their onward migration plans, an intention expressed by 14% of the more qualified emigrants, a ratio of more than double that reported by the less qualified group (6%).

Conclusion

This article set out to compare the situations faced by recent Portuguese emigrants, whether born in Portugal or holding Portuguese nationality, who left the country after the year 2000, taking their level of academic qualification as a differentiating criterion. The “more qualified” emigrants were those who hold higher education degrees and those with qualifications of below that level classified as the “less qualified”. The main theoretical issue under consideration was correspondingly the importance of common and distinct traits – characteristics, attitudes and strategies – in higher and lower skilled emigrants in order to ascertain whether it makes sense to study these groups separately or, on the contrary, always requiring a common framework.

The results presented require interpreting with some caveats. Firstly, this is not a faithful portrayal of Portuguese emigration as the criteria of randomness and sample representativeness were not met. Secondly, the systematic comparison between the two groups fails to test the spurious effect of these relationships, that is, the existence of other factors underlying the cross-tabulation by qualification. This therefore constitutes exploratory analysis that, despite its limitations, does effectively outline, in synthetic terms, the dual profile of Portuguese emigration.

Despite these limitations, the data nevertheless establishes some interesting conclusions. The more skilled migrants are slightly younger and have a more balanced sex ratio than the less skilled. They emigrate largely to the UK even while in comparative terms there is a higher weighting in the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) member states – particularly Angola, Mozambique, and Brazil. Most were on their first stint of emigration and, in most cases, departed not only for a new experience but also due to the perception of a lack of future in Portugal, particularly because of the limited opportunities for career progression. In the destination country, their professional insertion focuses especially on the financial service and business service sectors followed by the education sector. The main difficulties of integration are, as also in the least qualified group, the cost of living, access to housing and the climate. Regarding their ongoing relationships with Portugal, about half return remittances and, while not tending to do so on a monthly basis, send larger amounts than their less qualified peers. Most visit Portugal once every 3 or 6 months. In the destination country, they make recourse to the media to communicate with family members and frequently read online Portuguese newspapers. Finally, as far as their plans for the future are concerned, the more qualified emigrants remain mostly undecided.

The less skilled emigration group is slightly older and more asymmetric in terms of distribution by sex. This emigration has Europe as its main general destination and the

UK in particular even while also seeking out Portuguese-speaking countries (likely the choice of the most qualified among these migrants). Those who emigrated did so mainly because they considered they had no future in Portugal but also because of dissatisfaction with their salaries and the desire to gain new experiences. This was, in most cases, their first experience of emigration. In terms of labour integration, they mainly gain employment in the sectors of civil construction and public works, commerce, accommodation, catering, and transport. They state as their main difficulties the cost of living in the destination country, access to housing, and the climate. In their ongoing relationships with Portugal, about half of the less qualified Portuguese send remittances, usually on a monthly basis, and the most common incidence for visiting Portugal is once per year. They use the media to communicate with their family and watch Portuguese television channels. Most of these migrants plan to remain in the destination country while a slightly lower proportion intends to return to Portugal.

Despite these differences, it is hard to deny that more and less skilled emigrants not only constitute part of the same process but also display numerous convergences. They are affected by common factors and make choices within the same environment even if deploying the resources specific to each group. On the one hand, both types of emigrants were hit by the same economic hardship and pushed into migration. Unemployment and poor career prospects affected both groups. On the other hand, they share the same decision-making context: the ease of circulation within the European Union and the labour opportunities available explain why the UK ranks among the main destinations for both groups. Recourse to well-established networks and the same migration systems (such as those uniting the Portuguese-speaking countries) is also another shared factor. As migrants, their behaviours prove similar in many different ways: they face similar difficulties, send remittances home, and visit and communicate with the country of origin while reporting mutually uncertain prospects about their futures. Additionally, the option for a specific destination country and labour market vacancies depend on their respective specific resources. The level of skills was thus mobilized to adapt individual needs to the available opportunities and serving to trace a particular pathway through a common landscape.

In sum, higher skilled and lower skilled migration do deserve separated scrutiny but not to the extent of excluding a common framework. Their specific resources, the jobs available in the labour market, and the specific challenges arising from the recognition of skills suggest the need for different lines of research and furthermore justifying the existence of specialized studies for each of these migrant groups. However, specialization must not conceal the need to incorporate a common framework for migration, including both common structural factors and constraints. Even if high skilled migrants deserve specific attention, the reasons they migrate, the paths they choose, and the obstacles they face are broadly the same as any other migrant. The attribution of specific migration patterns to high skilled workers (e.g. liquid migrations as Engbersen et al. 2013 named contemporary intra-European migration flows), in addition to considering less skilled migrants as trapped in stereotypical economic migrant images, fails to recognize the complexities of current migration flows. Albeit important, human capital is only one variable that influences the constitution of migration patterns. Other factors (e.g. demographic characteristics and country of destination) also impact on the differentiation of migrations, thus producing migration streams that display some characteristics both of heterogeneity (while including different groups of migrants)

and of homogeneity. That is, migrations that are currently very varied comprising migrants with different characteristics in terms of qualifications, professions and demographic profiles, migration projects, and transnational relations maintained with the county of origin. Alongside these differences, it is possible to acknowledge that both groups of migrants share some similarities that mainly results from the fact that current Portuguese emigration constitutes a form of expansion of the opportunity structure (employment, training, professional career) beyond the national context, which aimed to respond to obstructions experienced within national borders during the economic crisis, and that both groups make their decisions in the same institutional context marked by the facilities of circulation within the EU and between Portuguese Speaking countries.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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