

# Education as an Investment in A Changing World: How Families Leverage International Education Pathways to Overcome Domestic Challenges

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents a case study that examines how family investment into education is being impacted by an increasingly global higher education market. Building on the existing body of literature that analyses the neoliberal approaches to internationalization within higher education institutions, this paper presents a more intimate family-focused investigation that sought to answer two questions. 1) How are family attitudes toward educational investment being influenced by the internationalization of higher education? 2) Do concepts such as fairness or equity impact family decision making when considering investing in international education? Through multiple rounds of semi-structured interviews with students enrolled in international cooperative institutions in China, this paper's findings revealed an escalating anxiety surrounding both the direction of economic and educational change within society that manifests itself in a progressively more transactional view of learning among families. Participants identified international education pathways as being part of an educational landscape that demands increasing expenditures of time, effort and financial resources to gain, or maintain, societal advantages. Ideas of equity and fairness were found to be a consideration for participants on a societal level, but not within their individual decision making. An understanding of how institutional pushes towards greater internationalization impact family decision making is vital if we are to create a more equitable global education market.

**Keywords:** Higher education, Internationalization, Student migration, Family decision making, equity in education