

Spatial and social mobility in the context of education

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MAIN TOPIC

In my thesis I want to analyse spatial mobility of young, high-qualified people in Poland. My priority will be to assess the scale and determinants of spatial mobility in the context of different levels of education and career choices. I am interested in relationship between social and spatial mobility and influence of quality of school on career path.

Since the beginning of the 1990's, Poland has been experiencing an educational boom. The number of students has increased from 390 409 students in 1990/91, to 1 764 060 in 2011/2012. The number of universities has also increased from 112 to 456. The enrolment rate for the age cohort of 19-24 has increased from 9,8% in 1991 to 40,6% in 2011. This phenomenon mainly resulted from the opening of higher education to private sector and establishing part-time paid programs at public colleges. The access to tertiary education has increased significantly among all social groups, however similar to other OECD countries (OECD 2010), individuals from families with high SES are overrepresented at universities. In times of *knowledge-based economy high enrolment rate in tertiary education is very positive, however, expansion of higher education also to some problems like a decline in the value of university diplomas or work under qualifications (overeducation).*

Since times of Mincer's model (1974) education is treated in economy as investment, where the main motivation for individual to learn longer is having higher income in future. The rate of return to education differs across countries – from 1,9% in Netherlands (for women) to 19,2% in Philippines (for women) (Trostel, Walker, Wooley 2002). As a result of Psacharopoulos (1994), the higher the level of economic growth, the lower the rate of return to higher education. Since the 1990's observed a decline in the value of the diploma in Poland, higher education can no longer be considered a guarantee to success. However, many Polish research show that people with a higher level of education earn more, and have a tendency to acquire jobs more often. Results of the *Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)* (IBE 2014) have shown that in OECD countries, and in Poland especially, level of education has still more influence on income and chance to have a job than credentials.

Education, especially higher education, is a crucial channel of social mobility in meritocratic societies. A change in character of tertiary education from elitist to mass, made higher education more accessible, but this does not mean that social advancement is easy. Forty-nine percent of Polish students pay their tuition fees and 45% (2011) study in a part-time program, which is higher than the average for OECD countries (21%). Some Polish research (Świerzbowska Kowalik and Gulczyńska 2000, Herbst, Rok 2014) show that free studies are more accessible for individuals from larger cities and families with high SES.

An assumption can be made that education inequalities in tertiary education have reached a new dimension - students from underprivileged families have to pay tuition fees for a lower quality education. There is no standardized measure of quality for different tertiary schools, but there are some indicators showing that students in private tertiary schools receive lower quality service. For example teachers in private schools are less accessible to students (37,3) than in public schools (15,1). Ninety-five percent of them work in private schools as a second post, which suggests that they pay more attention to academically stronger students from public universities. They also offer mainly part-time programs where teaching time is up to 40% shorter compared to that in full-time studies (Herbst, Rok 2014).

Upward social mobility is often linked to spatial mobility. Move out from small settlements is often the only chance to move up the social ladder. For the middle class, a characteristic is their career path combining spatial mobility with social mobility, what Watson called social spiralism (1964). Large cities attract young, talented people and give them the chance for fast social advancement what Fielding (1992) describes as the escalator region effect.

Spatial mobility is highly valued by employers and regarded as one of the dimensions of labour mobility. International corporations expect their employees to always be ready to move for their job. The Polish society is not very mobile – almost 2/3 live in the same settlement for their whole lives (CBOS 2010). If they do decide to change their place of residence, for the majority it is only once in their lifetime. Most migrations are short-distance, up to 50 km. The main reason for their migration is leaving their family's home and starting their own family (CBOS 2010).

Many researches (Ritsila, Ovaskainen 2001, Faggian and others 2006, Mosca, Wright 2010, Ishitani 2011) show that the propensity to move increases with the level of education. Highly

qualified individuals can freely choose their destination and the rate of return to education is higher. In some countries, for instance USA and Great Britain, beginning a tertiary education is a reason to move away from the family home. In Poland, high spatial accessibility of tertiary education and a lack of mobility tradition, result in the distance between the home town and university to be rather short – 40 to 90km (Herbst 2012).

Migrations after graduation are mostly classical work migrations. The main individual characteristics which have an impact on migration decisions include: the age, level of education, gender, nationality, having a partner, being the owner of a house, present work situation and previous migration experience. Cintio i Grassi (2011) remarked that the processes of student migration often have two stages. First, young people move out to a place where their chosen university is, and then after graduation they move once more to the place they want to work. Faggian and others (2006) classified migration behaviours before and after people had completed their studies into five different types: stayers – who study where they live and do not move after graduation, late movers – who study where they live, but after graduation they move out, stickers – who move out to study but after graduation they stay, return migrants – who move out to study and after graduation come back home, repeat migrants – who move out to study and then move out once more to find a job.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Main objectives:

- To assess the scale and determinants of spatial mobility in the context of education and career choices
- To assess the scale of social mobility
- To assess the relationship between social and spatial mobility

The research will lead to answering the following questions:

- What is the influence of selected characteristics of the family and social environment on education and career choices?
- What is the influence of the school system's change and introduction of external exams on the choice of university and field of study?
- To what degree do choices and achievements from previous stages of education and career path?
- What are the most common types of education mobility behaviours?
- To what degree are educational choices consistent?
- To what extent does education enable social advancement?
- What is the influence of the socioeconomic status on families, characteristics of students and their school careers, which foster choices of public/non-public schools, full/part-time studies?

METHODOLOGY

Research will be based on the survey “Education- mobility-work market” conducted by the Educational Research Institute. The sample size is 5000, respondents are aged between 25-30, attained at least secondary education. The questionnaire consists of 70 closed questions. Respondents were asked about their education (location of primary school, location of secondary school, type of secondary school, chosen subjects on final exam (matura), type of university (public/private), chosen program (bachelor/master), full-time studies/part-time studies, field of study), their present occupational situation (e.g type of employment contract, level of income), their history of spatial mobility (when and where they lived, when and why they moved) and their social background (parents’ level of education, parents’ occupation, conditions on living in childhood, cultural capital).

The data from survey will be joined with the public data containing information about the results of external exams, the results of Educational Added Value, information about communities and the tertiary school ranking.

This data will allow for:

- The building of econometric models explaining determinants of migration before and after studies
- The calculation of the odds for social upward mobility conditional on individual characteristics and educational choices
- The calculation of the rate of return to higher education for different programs of tertiary schools (public/private, full-time/part-time, bachelor/master)

In order to better understand the process of making educational and professional decisions, as well as their dependence on family background and place of residence, a quality analysis were conducted. Seventy interviews involving people aged between 25-30 who graduated university from 4 cities in Poland – 2 large (Warszawa, Wrocław) and two small (Lublin, Olsztyn) - will help to recreate their educational and professional paths.

PROGRESS OF THE THESIS

The thesis is in the initial phase. The survey and the interviews have been conducted. I have not started econometric analysis, but simple cross-tabulation show first conclusions.

Main conclusions at the moment:

1. The mobility of young Polish people (25-30 years) is very low. About 75% of respondents have never changed place of residence.
2. Young women in Poland are more mobile than men, but the reasons of migration for women are different than for men. The reason of their first migration is because they are beginning their studies, but generally men’s migrations are often connected with work,

and women's migrations are related to starting a family. In 2002-2013 almost 30% of women and 22% of men have changed their place of residence at least once.

3. The parents' level of education can be an important determinant of spatial mobility. People who come from families with a higher level of education can have higher expectations toward education, than people with a lower education capital. We can expect that children whose parents are better educated will be more mobile and will choose schools that are not as close to their home. Initial analyses do not confirm a relation between the mother's level of education and mobility during education. Only 16% of people whose mother attained university and 23% of people whose mother attained vocational school, choose to attend high schools in another county. This counter-intuitive result is linked to the distribution of the human capital across the country. Most people with a higher education live in cities, while people who are less educated are more prevalent in small towns. If we reduce the analysed population to only people from smaller towns (20 to 50 thousand), we observe a positive relationship between the mobility and mother's level of education.
4. Cities are centres of economic growth and they attract people who are focused on self-development and their career. Moreover, the best universities and the largest firms are located in cities. People from small towns (up to 10 000 people) who want to succeed in their career have to migrate to larger cities. The size of their hometown is a strong determinant of spatial mobility. Forty percent of young Polish people from small towns and only 17% from the largest cities have changed their current town at least once between 2000 and 2013.
5. In some countries, starting university is linked with high spatial mobility, but this mechanism is not very visible in Poland. Beginning a tertiary education is the reason to move only for 10% of secondary schools graduates. The reasons of such low mobility are probably: the lack of tradition to study far from home, problems with renting an apartment and the costs of living in other cities.
6. Open access to tertiary education caused that the analysed generation has experienced massive social advancement. Three quarters of tertiary school graduates have a higher level of education than their mothers do. More than half of the graduates from secondary technical schools stem from families where the mother has not passed a secondary school final exam (matura). Nevertheless, social background has still influenced both their educational and professional decisions. The parents' education level, their occupation and the place of residence are still strong determinants of decisions such as the type of secondary school, the decision to pursue an education after secondary school, and the choice of full-time or part-time studies.
7. Compared to 90's, the education in Poland has become more available at all levels, for all social groups. The emerging problem is the inequality in access to high quality education. Children from large cities and families with high SES go to secondary schools where results

of matura exam and Educational Added Value are higher. Stratification on the secondary school level is not very strong. Students whose mother has a college degree, went to secondary schools where results of the matura exam and Education Added Value were 1/3 standard deviation higher than in the average school.

8. The impact of social background is much stronger at the level of tertiary education. Parents SES and size of the place of residence have very significant influence on quality of tertiary school education. People from low SES of family graduate colleges where quality of education is low. They also often study part-time and they have to combine studies with work. Their work after graduation is less often connected with their field of study.
9. Poland still dominates the model of individual development where academic knowledge and professional experience are attained separately. When beginning their studies, only 20% of students work, and at the end 40%. Forty-five percent of working students declare that there is no connection between their work and their field of study.
10. The strongest determinant of professional status is gender. Gender does not determine the access to education, but has a great impact on the choice of profile at secondary schools, choice of subjects on the matura exam and the choice of field of education in college. Young women do not work more often than men (17% of women and 11% of men). Women participation in the labour market is also lower – they do not work and they are not looking for a job because of motherhood. Thirty-seven percent of women with a secondary education, and 25% with a college education are financially dependent on their families.
11. Young, working women earn 23% less than men, even when comparing men who have completed their secondary education to women who have completed college. Men's financial expectations are 30% higher than women's.
12. College graduates do not have an advantage over people who completed their secondary education. In both groups the percentage of people who are looking for the job are on the same level. The type of college (public or private) and the type of program (full-time or part time) have no influence over the probability of having a job.
13. There is a relationship between the level of education and income. College graduates earn 15% more per month, than secondary schools graduates. Differences in the level of income among college graduates are higher than differences between people with a different level of education. College graduates whose mother has a college degree earn 19% more per month than those whose mother completed secondary school.

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