

ABSTRACT

Transition of University Graduates to Labor Market
Comparative Study of Nine European Countries

Osmo Kivinen, Matti Lindberg & Juha Hedman

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Osmo Kivinen
Professor, Director
Research Unit for the Sociology of Education
University of Turku
20014 Turku, Finland
phone:+358-2-3335878
fax:+358-2-3336524
oskivi@utu.fi

Matti Lindberg (corresponding author)
Researcher
Research Unit for the Sociology of Education
University of Turku
20014 Turku, Finland
phone:+358-2-3336579
fax:+358-2-3336524
matlin@utu.fi

Juha Hedman
Researcher
Research Unit for the Sociology of Education
University of Turku
20014 Turku, Finland
phone:+358-2-3336542
fax:+358-2-3336524
juhedman@utu.fi

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By comparing university graduates' actions both in educational and labor markets 1) before entering a higher education institution ("screening"), 2) during studies ("studying") and 3) after graduation ("job search"), we get a sound comparative grip on the differences in the functions that participation in higher education serves in various countries. We anchor the concept of transition to age. (see fig. 1) Thus our general framework of transition is quite simply a time span from 23 to 32 years of age. We analyze the differences in various countries in each of the three phases of transition and explore the conditions of an optimal pattern of transition. For example, such matters as late entrance, work during studies and early graduation are explored as a part of a larger framework of transition. Thus we compare the early careers of university graduates in nine European countries, and discuss the functional differences related to transition of university graduates to labor markets.

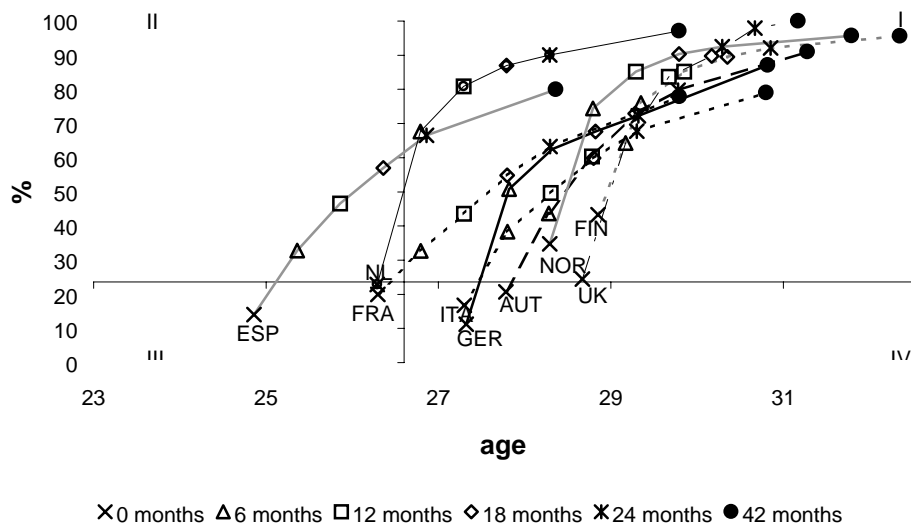


Figure 1 *Framework for comparing the different phases of transition, operationalised by the share of university graduates in full-time employment by age.*

We compare the transition of university graduates to labor market in nine European countries in late 1990's; Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Austria, Spain, Finland and Norway. Our data is from a large Higher Education and Graduate Employment in Europe (CHEERS) -survey organized by the European Commission funded Targeted Socio-Economic Research (TSER) -program. Our data holds information on 27,000 graduated in 1994-1995. The survey was focused on early career, i.e. three and a half years onwards from graduation. Therefore actions after graduation (phase 3) are also adequately covered in this survey.

The three phases are studied by using Optimal Matching Analysis (OMA), which is a sequential analysis application. Through the results of OMA we further discuss the conditions and possibilities for a unified European Higher Education Area suggested by the European Union.