

Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik

Geographical Mobility of the Tertiary Educated

Perspectives from Education and Social Space

av

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Abstract

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The purpose of this research is to illuminate the complexity of measuring and understanding patterns of geographical mobility from higher education to employment. This is done by employing an educationally oriented social space perspective through a series of three complimentary papers and an integrated discussion. This topic is important for educational research because higher education institutions are expected to attract and retain tertiary educated individuals in their regional labor markets, and researching geographical mobility at the national level gives insight on the regional distribution of these individuals.

Study I summarizes peer-reviewed literature on national geographical mobility of the tertiary educated from a European perspective. The study discusses how regional characteristics, education, and demographic factors are most often cited as influencing mobility propensity and destination after higher education among the tertiary educated. The study draws attention to the prevalence of economic perspectives and lack of a relational interpretation of these factors. Therefore, this study contributes a discussion on “social space” as an approach to understanding the interrelationships of these factors. Examples of how research on higher education mobility can develop by using the concept “social space” and a discussion of social space from four philosophical starting points ensue.

The empirical basis for the two other studies is Swedish register data for individuals born between 1973 and 1982. From a spatial perspective, Study II focuses on methodological issues in studying geographical mobility at the national level. Binary logistic regression is used to examine changes in statistical outcomes when different measures of geographical mobility are employed. The study emphasizes the importance of context, specifically the need for selecting measures that are meaningful to higher education when higher education-related mobility is under investigation.

Study III uses a gender perspective to examine Swedish tertiary educated individuals of rural origins who return to rural areas after higher education. Gender-divided binary logistic regression is used to examine the relationship of social space and destination after higher education. Findings from this study indicate that although there are social space characteristics common to men and women that influence their probability of returning to rural areas, there are gender differences in the degree of influence for many of these characteristics.

Finally, the integrated discussion examines the reciprocal nature of geographical mobility and social space, which is an underlying theme in the three studies. Specifically, this discussion is based on the premise that mobility after higher education influences and is influenced by social space. Each of the perspectives used in the three studies (i.e. European, spatial, and gender) are reflected upon in relation to this reciprocal relationship.