
Session 4

S4-K: Spatial and Regional Mobility (Chair: Tabea Schlimbach)

Zeit: Freitag, 21.04.2023, 11.30 - 13.00 Uhr
Ort: Amerika-Zimmer

The role of spatial mobility in realizing status aspirations for VET occupations

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»Should I stay or should I go?« Prevalence and predictors of spatial mobility among youth in the transition to vocational education and training in Germany

Linda Hoffmann (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, BIBB), Alexandra Wicht (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung BIBB/Universität Siegen)

International master's students at German universities: What factors influence time to degree?

Theresa Thies (Bayerisches Staatsinstitut für Hochschulforschung und Hochschulplanung, IHF)

S4-K: 1 The role of spatial mobility in realizing status aspirations for VET occupations

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Introduction

Choosing an occupation and the transition to vocational education and training (VET) mark crucial thresholds in young people's life courses. Recent studies show that approximately 45 percent of adolescents entering VET have to compromise on their desired occupations. This concerns in particular compromises in the task that are carried out in the aspired versus the realized occupation, but also the socioeconomic status (SES) of occupations as well as the working conditions (Ahrens et al., 2021; Nießen et al., 2022; Scheels et al., 2022).

Such compromises have strong implications for young people's job motivation and satisfaction as well as the successful completion of vocational training (Hardie, 2014; Beckmann et al., 2022). The role of individual and social characteristics such as social background, personality and performance differences in the formation of such compromises has been well studied. By contrast, research focusing on the role of individual spatial mobility is lacking.

We seek to fill this gap in research by asking and answering the following research question: *Does the degree to which young adults become spatially mobile affect the socioeconomic status of their VET occupation as well as the (mis)match between aspired and realized VET occupation in terms of SES?*

Theoretical considerations

Our theoretical framework bridges theories on occupational aspirations and the realizations of these aspirations, such as person-environment fit theory (Holland, 1997) or level of aspirations theory (Starbuck, 1963), with literature on (labour-market) returns to spatial mobility. Economic theory postulates that commuting is a choice. Individuals should accept longer commuting distances if compensated by better housing and/or better job opportunities (Hamilton, 1982; Manning, 2003). We apply this general idea to the commuting patterns of school leavers/VET entrants and relate it to the socioeconomic status of their aspired and realized VET occupation. By linking aspired and realized levels of socioeconomic status of occupations and by drawing attention to school leavers/VET entrants from a longitudinal perspective, we expand on previous research.

We expect students with higher mobility to attain higher socioeconomic status occupations. Moreover, we hypothesize that these students are more likely to obtain a VET position in the occupation they aspired to.

Data & Methods

We use longitudinal data from the National Education Panel Study – Starting Cohort 4 (NEPS-SC4) on youths' transition from school to vocational training and link the data with administrative information on NUTS-3 regions and functional labour market regions (Eckey et al., 2006). Our dependent variable is defined as the socioeconomic status of the individual's VET occupation (ISEI-08). Using mixed multilevel models, we examine whether (1) the individual's spatial mobility relates to the socioeconomic status of the attained VET occupation and the opportunities to realize aspirations and (2) whether the link between status attainment and aspirations is stronger among spatially mobile youths. We also conduct further multigroup comparisons (by education, occupational sectors, and the regional opportunity structure) to identify effect heterogeneities.

Preliminary results

Our results show that, analogous to aggregate data analyses (Bogai et al., 2008), adolescents seeking VET appear to be highly mobile. About 17 percent of youth are mobile within functionally defined labour market regions and 23 percent are mobile across these regions. Overall, spatial mobility, especially within and across labour market regions, is associated with attaining training places in VET occupations with higher socioeconomic status. However, we find considerable heterogeneities across occupational sectors and social groups. While IT occupations are available everywhere and, thus, mobility is not necessary to attain these higher-status occupations, being mobile yields higher status returns for youths in service and sales occupations. Moreover, it turns out that only individuals with medium to high educational qualifications benefit from spatial mobility in terms of the social status of the VET occupation they attain. Young people with low educational qualifications reach VET occupations with rather lower social status irrespective of spatial mobility. Analyses of the relationship between spatial mobility and the realization of status aspirations are still to be conducted.