

Transition from Higher Education to Labour Market in Poland on the Basis of Geography Graduates *

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Danuta Piróg (Ph.D.)
Pedagogical University of Kraków; Institute of Geography
2 Podchorążych St.; 30-084 Kraków, Poland
E-mail address: dbutryn@up.krakow.pl

Abstract:

The paper presents a fragment of empirical studies on the transition process of geographers in period of six months from completion of higher education. The purpose of the research was to diagnose the situation of geography graduates at the labour market in reference to prior aspirations, expectations and plans with the respect to the labour market. The verification includes planned and actual work places, planned and actual criteria of work place selection, expected and actual recruitment criteria, expected and received amount of remuneration.

The study shows that the transition of geography graduates to the labour market is a difficult and complex process in Poland, ending in partial success and that it is quite distant from aspirations and expectations registered by such persons at the moment of completion of university education.

Key words: *geography graduates, labour market, recruitment criteria, remuneration, transition, work places*

Outline of Transition Conditions of University Graduates in Poland

The transition of university graduates in the 21st century from the stage of education to employment seems to be one of the most complex and difficult processes taking place at the labour market. The transition paths of people who finish studies in individual countries are mainly an effect of differences in economic level and economy conditions, social and cultural disparities and system differences, including the teaching systems (cf. Allen, 2007; Jacob & Weiss 2008; Noworol 2010; Plugor 2009; Roźnowski, Markowski, Łobocki & Konefał 2007, Roźnowski 2009; Schomburg & Teichler 2006; Teichler 1997, 2011; Wolbers & Maarten 2007).

In Poland, the efficiency of this process, apart from demographic and macroeconomic trends which are not friendly for the contemporary youth, is also influenced by huge supply of

graduates with higher education (Jakubowska & Rosa, 2011).

Economic transformation in Poland and changes in the employment structure related to it caused common perception of higher education as a factor strongly increasing chances at the labour market in the aspect of finding jobs and receiving much more advantageous conditions (in particular with respect to pay and position) of employment. This general tendency for increase in the correlation between education and the amount of received remuneration, revealed in the period of transformation, characteristic for market economies (and visible in Poland only after 1989), has shaped in the society a very strong and durable conviction that completion of higher studies determines the possibility of procuring attractive work and, in extreme circumstances, at least constitutes a guarantee for any type of employment (Domański, 2004). Thence, there was a dynamic increase in the number of people commencing higher studies and currently, the level of commonness of higher education in Poland is one of the highest in Europe. Poland is in the group of European Union countries with one of the largest numbers of students per 10,000 inhabitants and occupies 5th place in this hierarchy. Higher indices were only recorded in Lithuania, Finland, Slovenia and Latvia (Rocznik, 2000).

The consequence of such commonness of academic education was a constant and dynamic growth in the number of university graduates. In the academic year of 1990/ 1991, 56 078 persons completed tertiary education. Within six years, the number of graduates was doubled to 115 868 persons (1996/ 1997) and another doubling took place in just three years (1999/ 2000: 215 423 graduates). Acceleration in the growth rate of the number of graduates was significantly influenced by mass establishment of non-public schools which, in the academic year of 1997/ 1998, promoted their first graduates and which, even quicker, multiplied the number of their students and therefore graduates. At the turn of the century, the greatest increase in the number of university graduates was recorded in the entire discussed period (the number of graduates in the academic year 2000/ 2001 amounted to 303 966 persons, i.e. 41% more than in the preceding year). The continuous growth trend in the number of graduates in the 21st century persisted, resulting in over 400,000 graduates in the academic year of 2006/ 2007 (410,107); currently, it amounts to 478 916 (2009/ 2010) (Szkoly 2006; 2010; Rocznik 2001).

The growth measures for the number of students are scholarisation indices. In the last twenty years, these indices in Poland grew almost four times: the gross scholarisation index grew from 12.9% in the academic year of 1990/ 1991 to 53.8% (2010/ 2011) and net from 9.8% to 40.8%.

Availability of higher education resulting from acceptance of a substantial number of

applicants for extramural studies or non-public universities (frequently with unsatisfactory level of teaching), aggravated the situation of all university graduates at the labour market. A large surplus of people possessing higher education with respect to market needs with a simultaneous frequent absence of actual compliance between the level of possessed specialist and psycho-social competences and the degree of education specified on the diploma devalued the academic education and undermined the trust of employers with respect to higher level teaching (Diagnoza 2009).

For young people, academic education is frequently both a manner of adjusting to the observed changes at the labour market and a certain attempt at escaping the challenges of the labour market, at least during the time of studies (usually, 5 years) and it is not really related to the hope of procuring competitive competences in the course of studies at a prestigious university, but to the general improvement of the situation at the labour market during the period of studying.

The result of the observed trends was devaluation of university diplomas at the labour market and excess of people possessing higher education, which was manifested by a significant, almost four-fold, increase in the number of unemployed university graduates - from 4.4% of the general number of unemployed graduates of schools in 1996¹ to 15.1% in December 2011 and an almost three-fold increase in the percentage of people with excess education among working people: from 7.5% in 1998 to 19.1% in 2008 (Kiersztyn, 2011, p. 11).

In spite of the above-described worrying trends in the transition from the stage of education to the stage of employment among graduates of higher studies in Poland after the period of transformation, studies of the fate of university graduates at labour markets were sporadically conducted. The situation is changing very slowly because the Ministry of Science and Higher Education introduced the obligation of monitoring the professional paths of graduates by individual universities only in October 2011: Art. 13a *"the university monitors professional careers of its graduates for the purpose of adjusting the study majors to the needs of the labour market, in particular after three and five years from completion of studies."* However, it is necessary to emphasize that these studies are conducted individually by career offices of specific universities with the use of various study strategies, various questionnaires, therefore comparison of results of such studies is not obvious: there are universities which publish the results of such studies, but a definite majority treats them as confidential documents, which are used by university authorities for the purpose of optimizing the didactic offer, planning the recruitment policy, etc. or they

¹ In Poland, statistics of unemployed graduates started to be maintained in 1996.

publish selected, frequently only optimistic, fragments of reports to promote a given university. Studies of scientific literature and analysis of available reports prepared by career offices allow for ascertaining that there is a research gap regarding professional fate of university graduates in a national approach and a complete absence of studies on the transfer of this group of people to the labour market, whereas scientific interest in the transfer of university graduates to the labour market at the time of market economy in Poland is just starting (Piróg 2010). What is more, universities are slowly beginning to accept the need of taking into account the pro-market preparation of their graduates, which is manifested in implementing new programme concepts, emphasising the aspect of employability in the description of graduate profiles and constitutes a certain revolution in perceiving the role of universities in Poland (Piróg, 2012).

The observed tendencies at the labour market which are unfavourable for university graduates in Poland and the ascertained gaps in the scientific and research approach to this issue induced the author of this study to commence research on the transition process of graduates exemplified by study major in geography. Selection of this group of graduates resulted primarily from the fact that the author is a geography graduate and, since 1999, has been involved in the teaching of geography students – both in the scientific and didactic aspect. Moreover, geography as a study major is currently undergoing very intense changes. After a dynamic increase in the number of geography students, recorded between the beginning of the 1990's and the middle of the 21st century, one can currently observe a significant crisis in young people's interest in studying this subject, in spite of the fact that almost all universities propose more and more attractive programme offer and specializations (Piróg, 2011).

The results presented in this study were obtained from the conduct of research on graduates of one study major on a national scale. This is the first such study in Poland after the transformation period².

Research Methodology of Transition of Geography Graduates

This study presents a fragment of results of empirical studies which was conducted between May/ June 2011 and January/ February 2012, with the use of the diagnostic poll method and the questionnaire study technique in the form of paper questionnaires (1st stage of studies)

² Similar, with respect to scale, studies among graduates of other study majors (never geography) were conducted in Poland in the 1960's and 1970's; a detailed analysis of the status of studies in this respect was published by the author as a chapter in a book entitled: Piróg D., *Studia wyższe a rynek pracy w Polsce – zarys stanu badań* [in:] B. Sitarska, K. Jankowski, R. Droba (ed.) *Studia wyższe z perspektywy rynku pracy*, Wyd. AP, Siedlce 2010, p. 67-80

and online questionnaires (2nd stage of studies).

The proper research was preceded by the testing of tools which, after optimization. studies. The first stage was addressed to all persons completing full-time geography studies in the academic year of 2010/ 2011 at all fourteen universities teaching geographers in Poland. Official letters were sent to directors of individual geography units with a request for approval for the conduct of a poll among geography students at a time closest to the moment of completion of studies (last classes, defending the B.A. and M.A. theses, separate meetings with students). The purpose of this stage of studies was to register the planned manners of looking for work, desired work places, financial expectations, willingness of self-employment and to evaluate familiarity with the labour market and satisfaction with studies in the context of looking for work. Written approval for the conduct of such studies was obtained from authorities of twelve out of fourteen universities and in each of them, studies were conducted in the period of May – June 2011. These were: the Pomeranian University in Słupsk, the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the Jagiellonian University, the University of Lodz, the University of Warsaw, the University of Wrocław, the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, the University of Gdańsk, the Pedagogical University of Cracow and the University of Silesia (cf. Fig. 1).

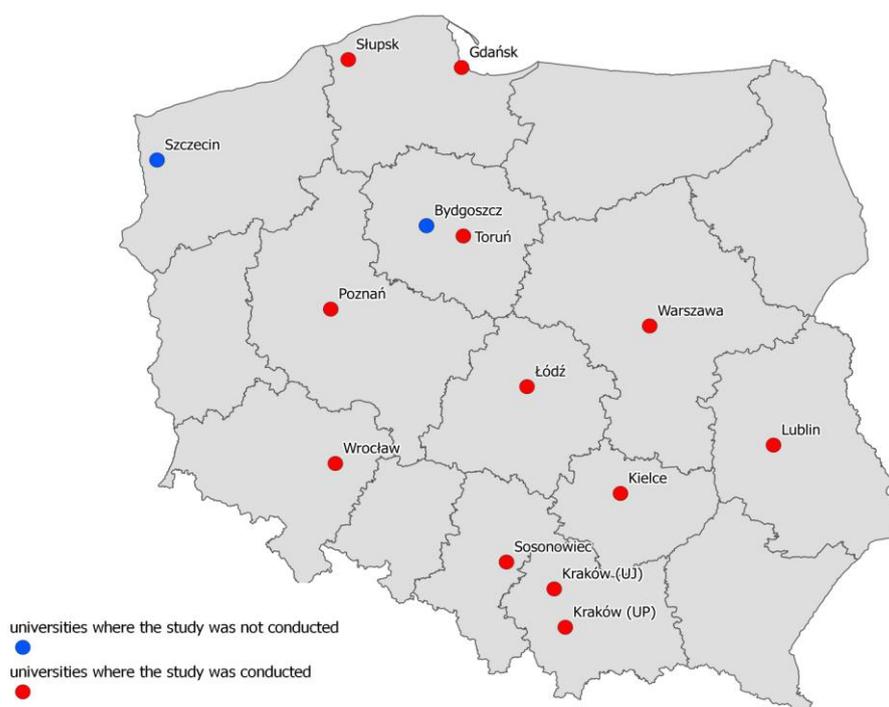


Fig. 1. Universities teaching geographers in Poland

At this stage, research conducted mainly with the use of paper questionnaires. The author

personally, with the assistance of directors and academic employees of selected units, met with students at every university at previously arranged special meetings or weekly classes, explaining the purpose of the research and asking for participation in the poll. Only 17% of questionnaires were received via e-mail, mainly from persons who were not able to come to the university on the day when the test was conducted and expressed their willingness to participate in it. The research was confidential, yet not anonymous, due to fact that the respondents were asked to provide their e-mail address on the completed questionnaire. In this manner, questionnaires were received from 1 347 persons, which constitute approx. 78% of all alumni who finished full time geography studies in the academic year of 2010/ 2011. The respondents were representatives of all types of studies: i.e. first degree (B.A.) – 46.2%; second degree (supplementary M.A. studies) – 35.4%, as well as uniform M.A. studies which, at the moment of the poll, still functioned at some universities (e.g. the Pomeranian University in Słupsk, the Pedagogical University of Cracow). With respect to the gender structure, women were dominant (64%).

Another, second stage of the research took place approx. half a year after completion of studies by the respondents, i.e. January/ February 2012. At that time, electronic questionnaires were sent to all people who, during the first stage, declared that after completion of geography studies they were immediately planning to look for jobs or look for jobs and continue studies at the same time. 597 respondents expressed such plans and electronic invitations were sent to all of them to participate in the poll (a personalized link with an individual password necessary to log in the database). The purpose was to diagnose the actual situation of specific geography graduates at the labour market in reference to prior expectations and plans; the reference is possible solely when this status is known after several months from completion of studies and the degree of implementation of plans and aspirations is checked individually in every person included the study. A basic innovation of the study was its personalization. A pair of questionnaires of every respondent (questionnaire of a given person completed in June 2011 and in February 2012) was a basis for analyses, determination and hierarchisation of factors increasing efficient and satisfactory transfer to work after completion of geography studies. Plans of specific persons were registered, and such persons were followed at the labour market for the purpose of finding out whether and in which degree such plans were implemented. For this purpose, the statistical material collected in two databases was used to generate a final database which was a relational combination of both. The basis for a one-to-one relation in the final database was the e-mail address attribute provided in both questionnaires. The e-mail address constituted the unique key, unambiguously identifying the same polled person at the moment of completion of geography studies and approx.

half a year after completion of studies. The advantage of a relational database is the possibility of a separate analysis of answers of respondents provided in 2011 and in 2012 with a simultaneous quick possibility of referring the results from one database to the answers collected in the second database. The relational database also allowed for maintenance of data from "June" questionnaires which are not related to the "February" questionnaires for the purpose of using them for basic analyses.

The combined databases were subjected to formal and substantive control for the purpose of discovering potential errors and discrepancies. In formal respect, completeness and fullness of the set was checked. With respect to substance, logical and arithmetic control was performed.

In this manner, a set with complete data from 375 graduates was separated, i.e. response rate of 68.2% was obtained and this personalized set of graduates constituted the study group for further in-depth statistical quantitative and qualitative analyses. The study group represented all types of full-time studies in a quite equal manner, i.e. questionnaires were received from 32.5% graduates of 1st degree studies (B.A.); 32.0% of second degree studies (supplementary M.A.) and 35.5% of graduates of uniform M.A. studies. At this stage of study, women were even more clearly dominant (64.3%).

Transition of Geographers to Labour Market: Selected Research Results

The transition process of geography graduates to the labour market in a period of approx. six months from completion of studies was varied. At the moment of the second stage of the study (January/ February 2012), almost half of the respondents were employed or worked for their own account (48.5%). The remaining 51.2% were people who did not work and looked for employment, who were supported by others or who were studying.

In a traditional approach, the percentage of people having gainful employment was the measure of successful transition. Currently, the transition is perceived in a wider context, *inter alia* via analysis of employment conditions (type of contract), stability of work, possibility of using the competences acquired in the course of studies at work, level of satisfaction with work in reference to aspirations and expectations with which a graduate commenced searching for the first job (Gajderowicz, Grotkowska, Wincenciak, 2011).

In this study, on account of restrictions related to the text volume, references were mainly made to the transition of geographers from the point of view of fulfilment their plans and aspirations with respect to the labour market. The verification was conducted in reference to:

1. planned and actual work places;
2. planned and actual criteria of work place selection;
3. expected and actual recruitment criteria;
4. expected and received amount of remuneration.

Work Places: Expectations vs. Reality

The examined population, upon complementation of studies, indicated diverse work places as desired; however, all graduates wished to work in closely-related professions, both with respect to the study major and the type of specialization selected by them in the course of academic education. The most numerous group of respondents wished to work in state and local government administration (12.7%); subsequently, in spatial planning offices (11.4%). The third place was occupied by the educational system (10.9%). Just after schools, there were land survey and cartographic companies (10.1%). Relatively many students (9.5%) declared their willingness to create work places by establishing their own companies. Geography students were also clearly interested in work in tourist traffic servicing, because in total 9.4% of them indicated hotels and tourist agencies as desired work places. A slightly lower percentage of declarations referred to institutions dealing with environmental protection and meteorological stations and observatories (5.7% and 6.2%, respectively).

Unfortunately, the recorded intentions of geographers were fulfilled in a slight degree. Over half (58.3%) of working graduates performs work not related to the study major and not even requiring higher education; only one-fifth works in line with the completed study major.

Graduates employed at positions not related to their study major (and also frequently to the educational degree) mainly work in broadly-understood trade (25.5%) and services (22.7%). Persons employed in trade are sellers in various types of stores, warehouses, bookstores; they are trade representatives. Respondents who are providing services have varied areas of operation, encompassing mainly gastronomy, and, in individual cases, financial counselling, accounting, medical services, postal services and construction services. Persons who practice professions closely related to the completed studies work mainly in the educational system as teachers (14.4%); they are employees of land survey and cartographic companies (7.7%), local government (7.2%) and tourist industry: tourist agencies, hotels (4.5%) and scientific units, mainly universities (3.3%). No graduates were recorded dealing with spatial planning or environmental protection. Persons working in administration are mainly employed in commune offices, city offices, marshal

offices, starosty offices, the Central Statistical Office and province labour offices. Graduates related to tourism work in tourist agencies as full time employees of agencies and tour guides for foreign trips and as hotel personnel (work at reception desks, in administration). Geographers who use their competences in the area of cartography and systems of geographic information work mainly in private companies providing services in this area.

Therefore, as evidenced by the research results, unexpectedly, the most satisfied are people who wanted to work in education (even 3.5% more people found work there than expected). In other groups, a larger (among those, who wanted to work in land survey and cartographic companies) or a smaller (in the case of desire to work in administration and tourism) population received work in the desired industry. Surprise by procuring work in education results from the fact that in Poland, on account of the drop in the birth rate and reforms in the educational system, which definitely limit the number of geography classes at all levels of teaching, we are dealing with numerous dismissals of geography teachers. Therefore, what is the reason of such successful transition to employment in the educational system? The genesis of this phenomenon will be quickly explained when we proceed to the analysis of answers of geographers to another question regarding the type of contract on the basis of which they are employed. Only individual persons working as teachers had contracts for a specific period of time and all others worked as fill-ins, which means that they can lose their jobs at any moment if the full time teacher comes back to work. This relatively high commonness of work as fill-ins results both from significant feminization of the teaching profession in Poland (81%) and, which is related to it, more frequent maternal leaves and care leaves of women and, more importantly, the right to the so-called paid health leave in this professional group. In line with Art. 73.1 of the Teachers' Charter Act of January 26, 1982, a teacher employed on a full time basis, having worked for at least seven years at school, may be granted health leave by the head master of the school for the purpose of pursuing recommended treatment, not exceeding one year at one time (Journal of Laws, 2006). Many teachers in Poland make use of this right and in this manner graduates may be employed as fill-ins. Almost no geographer, in the period of six months from completion of studies, fulfilled the plan of establishing one's own company; only two persons declared willingness to conduct their own economic activity.

Persons who are satisfied by the scope of duties at work constitute 17.5% of employed graduates, where almost 90% are graduates working in professions that are closely related to geography studies. The most numerous group (44.3%) declares partial satisfaction; the others (38.3%) are not satisfied with the nature of work that they perform.

Selection Criteria of Work Place: Plans and Fulfillment of Plans

Expectations and stances of young people with respect to the labour market show, to a large extent, the criteria which they were planning to be guided by while choosing the place of employment at the moment of completion of studies. The respondents were asked to indicate three criteria, assigning index 1 to the most important criterion and subsequently 2, 3 to less important criteria when making such decision. For the purpose of determining the hierarchy of criteria, weights were applied³.

In general, absolutely dominant planned criteria for selection of a work place for graduates were: amount of remuneration (20.4%). Possibility of professional development (16.7%) and compliance of tasks to be implemented at a work place with the profile of completed studies (11.3%). The prospect of long-term employment was also important for them, along with interesting tasks at a given position and good atmosphere at work. Least important criteria were social utility of work and reputation of the place of employment.

When analyzing answers to this question at the moment of entry to the labour market, it is necessary to state that the instrumental and autotelic aspects occupied almost parallel leading position in the examined criteria. The instrumental criterion was represented by the amount of remuneration for the performed work. In the group of immaterial criteria, dominant aspects were the amount of work related to the comfort resulting from practicing the profession for which one is feeling professionally prepared and a relatively high level of peace with respect to continuity of employment. Almost non-significant for geographers at that time were the issues of prestige of a work place, its location or social utility of performed work. Exceptions were persons ready to work at positions below their qualifications, which valued convenient location of their work place.

In the course of actual work searchers, the declared criteria evolved intensely. Employed persons conceded that the dominant criterion for commencing the performed work was definitely the desire to have any type of employment (28.3%) and subsequently, even though with less impact on the decision was work time (standardized or flexible) – the criterion which was practically not listed by the geographers at the moment of graduation (15.0%). The third place was occupied by the amount of remuneration (11.1%) and the next position in the criteria hierarchy was connected with by convenient location of a work place. All other criteria had relatively small

³ Weight 3 was assigned to the first position, weight 2 to the second position and weight 1 to the third position in the hierarchy of indications.

significance (e.g. the prospect of long-term employment) or were almost not taken into account (reputation of a work place or its social utility). A definitely unimportant criterion for commencing work was the possibility of rapid promotion (cf. Fig. 2).

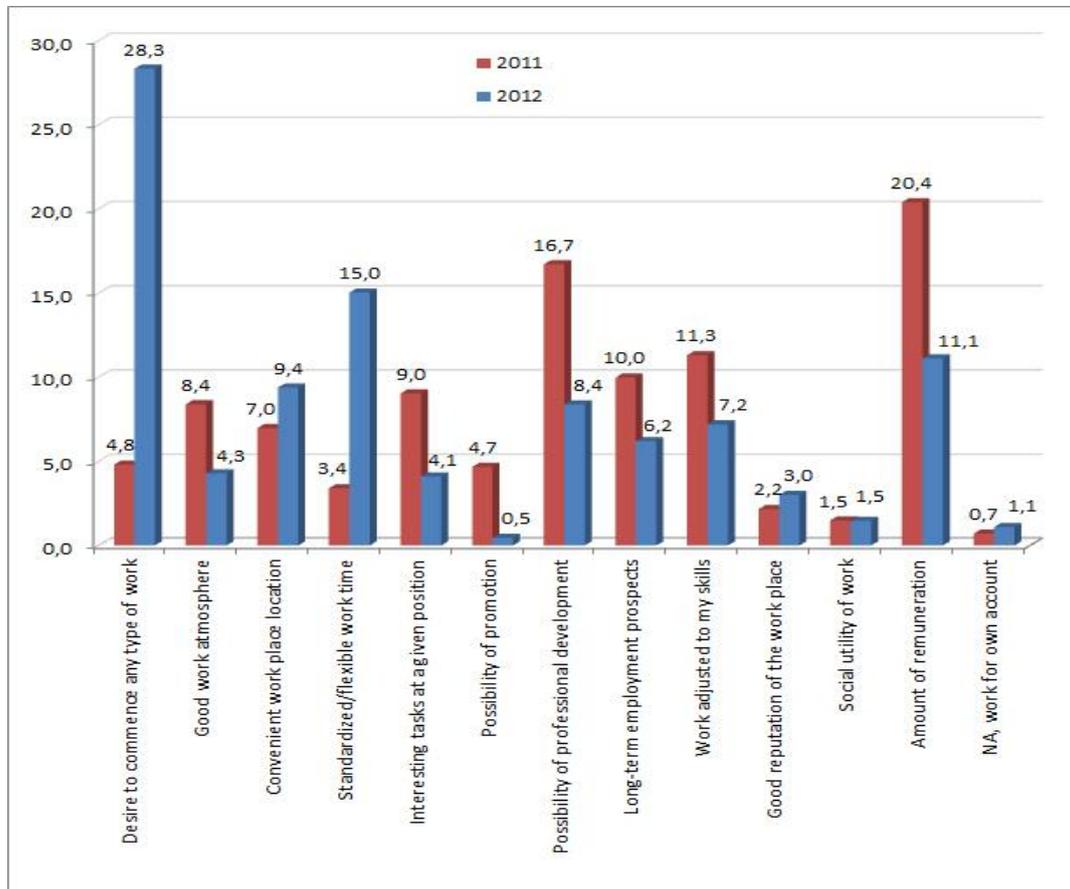


Fig. 2. Planned and actual criteria for selection of a work place

As shown by the study, the experience of looking for jobs rapidly verified the graduates' expectations in the discussed period and their determination to transfer from the study stage to the employment stage was so great that it resulted in reorientation of the discussed criteria or even complete relinquishment of them. At the end of studies, young people – when declaring their criteria for selection of work – revealed their expectations about the conditions and the nature of employment. Therefore, at that time only a small group of persons selected the answer “desire to commence any type of work.” Actual efforts to find work greatly deprived the graduates of such, slightly idealistic, convictions about selecting a work place among several offers and on the basis of personal criteria (especially in the case of it being the first work). As a result of it, geographers prioritized procurement of employment in general, even if the performed work did not comply with any or with the majority of criteria indicated by them several months earlier. Thence, in the group of key criteria indicated by the graduates who had work, in principle no autotelic criteria

were recorded. For a definite majority of graduates, the current work is a temporary solution; therefore, almost nobody expected promotion or interesting tasks for implementation.

Expected and Actual Recruitment Criteria

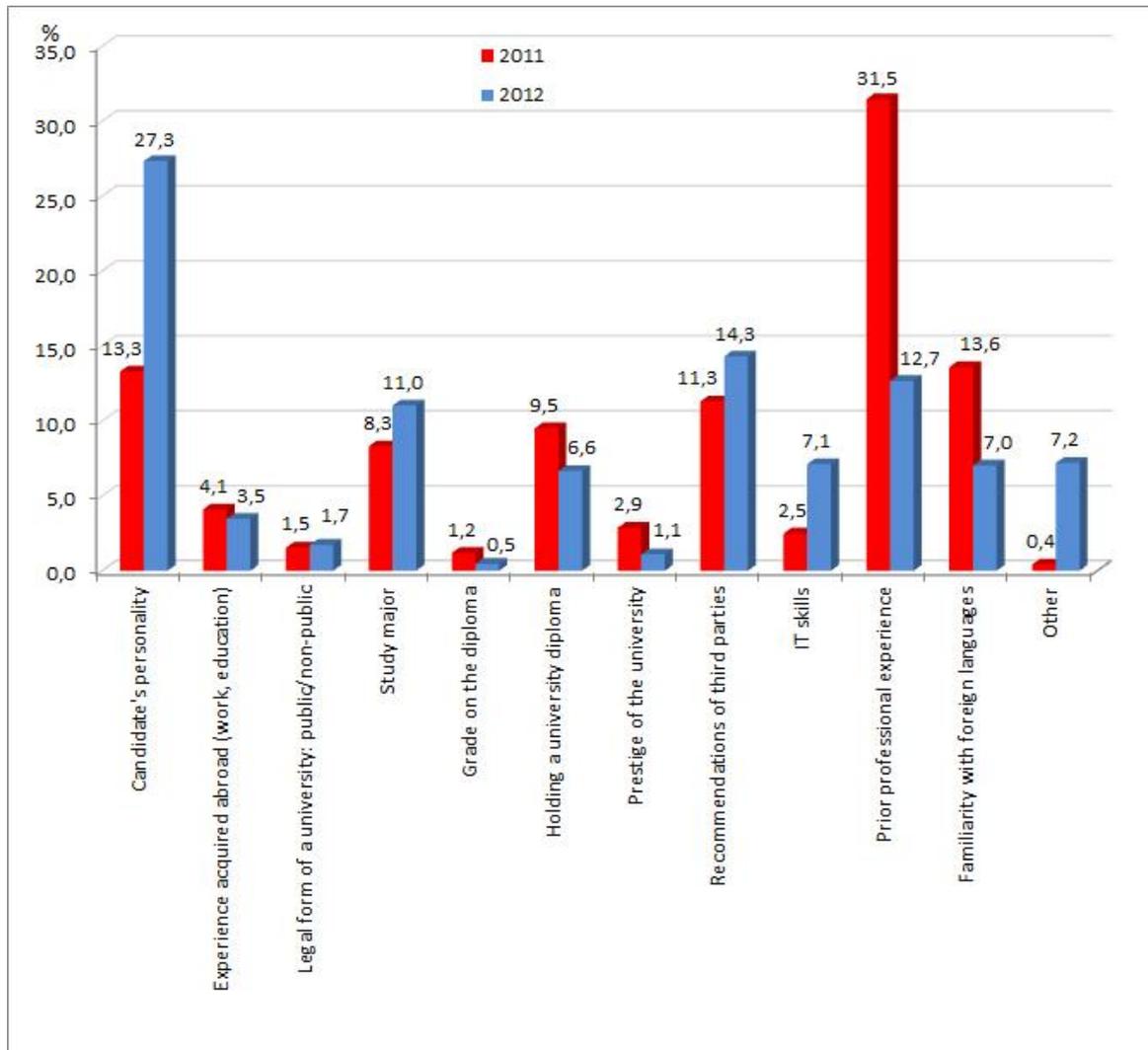
In Poland, no comprehensive studies are published which would indicate the criteria used by the employers in the process of recruiting new employees. However, it is worthwhile getting to know the convictions of persons entering the labour market with respect to the expected important factors which may, in their opinion, influence procurement of employment, because such convictions may condition strategies of searching for employment. The respondents, just like in the case of criteria of choosing the place of work, were asked to indicate three criteria, assigning index 1 to the most important criterion and 2, 3 to less important criteria when making such decision. For the purpose of determining the hierarchy of criteria, weights were applied in a manner discussed in a prior section of the study.

The examined youth, when completing their studies, believed that the employer, in the recruitment process, primarily pays attention to previous professional experience of a candidate (31.5%). This conviction probably results from common opinions regarding this issue and personal reflections of young people becoming acquainted with job offers placed on the Internet, press and in other media. Partially, the respondents' conviction about the role of experience in procurement of work is confirmed by studies based on analysis of press offers which were focused around three themes: acquired features (e.g. good organization of work time), characteristics related to personality type (enthusiasm, optimism, etc.) and professional experience. Subsequently, according to people completing their studies, employees value familiarity with foreign languages (13.6%), personality traits and character of a candidate, i.e. the so-called soft skills (13.3%) and recommendations of third parties (11.3%). The fifth place in the hierarchy was holding a university diploma and the completed study major. Other criteria, including experience acquired abroad, legal form of a university, prestige of a university, IT skills, have, according to the respondents, slight significance in the recruitment process. Lowest position in the hierarchy is occupied by the grade on the graduation diploma (1.2%). These data clearly testify to young people's conviction that completion of higher studies in Poland, selection of a study major, place of study, renown of a university and quality level of acquired knowledge and skills expressed by the grade on the diploma have small or even very small impact on who is employed in a given company. This sad conclusion is probably the aftermath of numerous undesired activities of employers and

unsatisfactory (for the labour market) profile of competences of university graduates. Extreme marginalization of the grade of studies by the respondents is not accidental, but it probably results from numerous experiences of people with higher education looking for employment and sharing their experiences in this respect, from which it clearly follows that this criterion was not an object of interest on the part of employers. The collected answers provoke to putting forward a risky thesis i.e. that in Poland, there is almost a complete lack of trust of the world of business and employers to reliable evaluation of graduates' skills by the academic environment. This split has numerous causes; one of them seems to be mutual conviction about absence of common areas of activities, depreciation of the role of employers in constructing study curricula by the academic staff and the employers' conviction that academic education is frequently extremely non-pragmatic.

The respondents' premonitions proved to be partially accurate. In their opinion, in the actual recruitment process, the employers were primarily guided by personality traits of a candidate (27.3%), subsequently by recommendations of third parties and then by their prior professional experience and study major. Employers also took into account (even though this was of lesser significance) the IT skills, familiarity with foreign languages and holding a university diploma. In the graduates' opinions, prestige of a university and their grade on the diploma had no significance for employers (cf. Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Expected and real recruitment criteria



It is unfortunate that the respondents' presumptions with respect to the important role of connections in procurement of work were confirmed, along with marginal significance of diploma quality. It is probable that lack of significance attached to the quality of diplomas in the recruitment procedure resulted from the fact that a significant group of graduates work at positions which do not require completion of higher studies. However, it is worrying that information about the quality of work of a graduate in the course of studies (specified on the diploma) is underestimated, in particular in professions which are closely related to the study major in geography. Definitely more worrying is the fact that a significant percentage of working persons, i.e. 19.7% (in line with their expectations) received their positions thanks to non-substantive criteria, i.e. connections.

Remuneration: Expectations vs. Actual Situation

The respondents, when completing their studies, had rational, thought-out and not exaggerated financial expectations with respect to the remuneration in their first job. On average,

they wanted to earn PLN 1,956 net; over half of respondents were hoping for a net pay ranging between PLN 1,501 and 2,000. A significant group of students (18.4%) was ready to commence work for remuneration ranging from PLN 1,001 to 1,500, whereas 20% of graduates expected their pay to be between PLN 2,501 and 3,000. Quite high and unrealistic financial expectations of pay higher than PLN 4,000 net were voiced by only 1.9%.

The registered expectations were clearly different in the group of women and the group of men. On average, the population of female students wanted to earn PLN 1,875 net, whereas male students counted upon remuneration of PLN 2,101 net. Definitely lower average financial aspirations of women are partially a result of their preferences with respect to work place, including employment in education, which, especially at the beginning of a career, is badly paid.

Working geography graduates received, on average, PLN 1,516 net; therefore, the pay was lower by almost one-fourth with respect to their expectations. As many as 80.3% of respondents earn less than they expected. A group of 12.0% has remuneration compliant with their expectations, and only 7.7% earn more than they expected. Among working geography graduates, only one-third declared remuneration between PLN 1,001 and 1,500 and it should be remembered that this financial range was most expected by young people at the end of studies. Almost one-fourth earns less than PLN 1,000 in their first job after studies and only few receive a net pay between PLN 2,001 and 2,500 (4.9%). A slight impact of sex was noticed on the amount of pay: on average, women earn slightly less than men (PLN 1,478 and 1,581, respectively).

According to Sedlak & Sedlak, it follows from the National Remuneration Poll that in 2011 highest pays were received by graduates of technical studies – the median in this case was PLN 3,000 net (PLN 3,155 gross). Graduates of humanities received lowest pays: half of them earned between PLN 1,800 and 3,000. Their pay expectations were not exaggerated, because in their first job, they wanted to earn PLN 1,920 net (<http://wiadomosci.nf.pl/News/33419/Ile-chcialby-a-ile-zarabia-absolwent/praca-po-studiach-zarobki-absolwentow/>). Therefore, we can see that pay expectations and real remuneration of geographers are close to remuneration of graduates receiving lowest pay.

Conclusions

The study conducted among geography graduates shows that in Poland, their transition to the labour market is a difficult and complex process, ending in a partial success and that it is quite distant from aspirations and expectations registered by such persons at the moment of completion

of university education.

In a half-year period from completion of studies, only approx. half of respondents were employed and their work frequently did not correlate with their academic preparation or was performed on the basis of not advantageous or unstable contracts. Only every fifth graduate performed work related to the completed study major and these were mainly persons employed in education, in the cartographic industry and land survey and in administration. The remaining respondents most frequently worked in trade and services at low positions.

According to geography graduates, holding of higher education influences procurement of work Poland in a small degree, whereas the prestige of a university and the grade on the diploma have almost no impact. Key role, in their opinion, is played by the candidate's personality traits, prior professional experience and connections.

The first job brought limited satisfaction to young people; both in the material and non-material sphere, because every third person did not want to work in a given industry, but commenced such work solely to have some source of subsistence. The above-mentioned limited satisfaction with the nature of work changes into almost complete absence of satisfaction with respect to pay. Every fifth graduate receives less than PLN 1,000 net (with the current EUR exchange rate this amounts to approx. EUR 230). Such low wages prevent complete financial independence expressed by, e.g. separate place of residence than the parents, starting a family.

At the same time, it is not possible to state clearly whether commencement of any type of job, distant from the subject of the completed studies or even addressed to people with lower education is a consequence of the so-called over-education and related smaller number of work places for employees with high qualifications and competences than the supply of such potential employees in Poland. It is possible that the examined proceedings of graduates of geography studies are only a proof of their adaptation skills to constantly changing conditions, understood as willingness to change qualifications, place of employment and adapt to non-standard forms of employment, non-typical places of work (Kryńska 2008, 2011) or a stage of building the so-called transition capital (Bańka, 2005). Thence, it seems indispensable to monitor both the professional careers of people who accepted unsatisfactory conditions of work and positions, as well as those who after studies were employed in line with the study major and level of education. This monitoring may show whether and - if yes - how far does the professional career of geographers depend on the first step made along it.

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