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MIGRATION DECISIONS BY GRADUATES FROM HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OLSZTYN DURING THE YEARS 2007–2008

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A b s t r a c t

The dominating form of modern population flows are economic migrations connected with the jobs found abroad. Therefore, the main assumption of this paper was to examine the extent of the international mobility youth on the basis of migration decisions made by future graduates of the higher secondary schools in Olsztyn. The most important objectives consisted in determining the reasons for migration of a given group and the expected time of their stay abroad. Moreover, the paper indicates the ultimate places of migration of future graduates as well as the purposes of such departures.

K e y w o r d s: migration, graduates, higher secondary schools.

DECYZJE MIGRACYJNE ABSOLWENTÓW SZKÓŁ PONADGIMNAZJALNYCH W OLSZTYNIE W LATACH 2007–2008

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A b s t r a k t

Dominującą formą współczesnych przepływów ludności są migracje zarobkowe związane z podejmowaniem zatrudnienia za granicą, dlatego głównym założeniem pracy było zbadanie skali mobilności międzynarodowej młodzieży na podstawie decyzji migracyjnych przyszłych absolwentów szkół ponadgimnazjalnych w Olsztynie. Celem było określenie przyczyn migracji danej grupy oraz przewidywanego okresu pozostawania poza granicami Polski. Określono również miejsca docelowej migracji przyszłych absolwentów oraz cele tych wyjazdów.

S ł o w a k l u c z o w e: migracja, absolwenci, szkoły ponadgimnazjalne.

Introduction

The youth as a demographic category, according to the international standards, is the population of people of both genres aged 15–24 years. The lower limit is the age of graduation from the lower secondary school and minimum age for employment while the upper limit is the age standard for graduation from the tertiary school (MLONEK 1996). The vocational opportunities of young people in the labour market are highly differentiated because they are influenced by factors such as education and qualifications obtained, their social competences or the financial standing of the parents (GIERMANOWSKA 2006).

Economic emigration, that is voluntary migration from the home country for the purpose of taking a job has always existed and the currently observed, intensifying processes of globalisation in the economy and gradual lowering of barriers of various type cause that it will continue in the future (KRYŃSKA 2001). Foreign migrations represent a socio-economic phenomenon well established in the history of Poland while the phenomenon concerning the youth depends to a large extent on the situation in the Polish labour market. The unemployment rate among high school graduates (aged 15–19 years) is much higher than in the other age groups.

The study on the level of interest in economic emigration among people graduating from various types of schools (both secondary and tertiary, public and non-public) and various educat33ion profiles (technology, economies, humanities, medical) have been conducted by the Chair of Economic and Regional Policy of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn as of the moment of Poland's integration with the European Union (i.e. 2004). The fundamental objective of those studies is to determine the level of interest of the youth graduating from a given type of school in migrating abroad for the purpose of taking up employment and gaining knowledge on the major motivations for this process (SZCZEBIOT-KNOBLAUCH, KISIEL 2007, KISIEL, SZCZEBIOT-KNOBLAUCH 2008). The results presented in this publication cover just a fragment of those studies and encompass graduates of public secondary schools in Olsztyn during the years 2007–2008.

In Olsztyn there are 17 public high schools: 4 general high schools and 13 groups of schools. In those schools students can attend 4 types of courses technical high school, profiled high schools, general high school and basic vocational schools. According to the data by the Office of the Superintendent of Education in Olsztyn, during the school year of 2006/2007 the high schools in Olsztyn had 10.8 thousand students and during the school year or 2007/2008 the number of students declined slightly to 10.7 thousand. In the graduating grades of those schools in Olsztyn there were 3536 students

during the school year of 2006/2007 and 3511 students during the school year of 2007/2008.

The questionnaire-based study covered the last grade students of 11 public high schools (general high schools, profiled high schools and technical high schools). An attempt was also made at conducting the studies at basic vocational schools but the number of correctly completed questionnaires was too small to allow presentation of the situation in that group. The study covered 522 respondents in 2007 and 469 respondents in 2008 (Fig. 1).

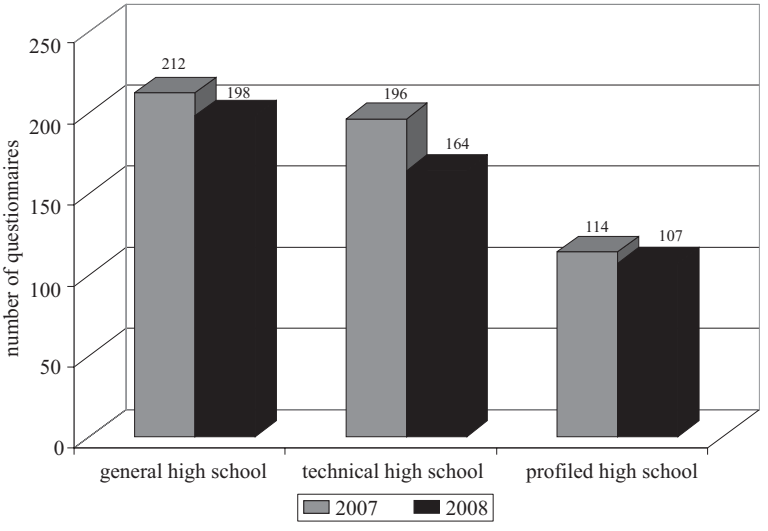

Fig. 1. Number of questionnaires received by school type during the years 2007–2008
Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

The timeframe of the study covered the school years of 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, and the questionnaires were completed three months before the graduation examination and professional examination (in case of professional schools – technical high schools and profiled high schools). That time for the study was selected on purpose because the majority of students already had specific plans for their future after graduating from the high school.

Results

Following integration of Poland with the European Union the mobility of unskilled labour increased and as a consequence the issue of youth migration became an important problem, not only economic but also social. Free flow of

labour to many countries of the Community gave the young Poles an opportunity for better work conditions, higher wages and gaining new experience. The analysis of the results obtained allowed determining the percentage of future graduates from Olsztyn high schools (from years 2007 and 2008) that planned to migrate abroad (Tab. 1).

Table 1

Plans of students after graduation from high school

Item	Plans of respondent students					
	general high school		technical high school		profiled high school	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Continuation of education	93	92	34	38	56	51
Taking up employment abroad	7	8	39	45	30	35
Taking up employment in Poland	1	1	27	22	31	24

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

In 2008, as compared to 2007, the percentage of persons declaring willingness of economic migration after graduating from school decreased. On the other hand the number of respondents expressing readiness to take up employment in Poland increased. Those differences resulted from changes that took place in Polish economy, first of all in the labour market. The fact that the level of unemployment that in March of 2007 was 14.3% and a year later decreased by over 3 percent points (11.1%) is the evidence for that change. The percentage of people declaring continuation of education after graduation did not change during the period covered and remained at 60%.

In the study of 2008, the willingness of taking employment abroad was declared mainly by students of profiled high schools (39%) and technical high schools (30%). Among future graduates of general high schools, only 7% wanted to take up employment abroad (the others planned continuing education at tertiary schools). In difference from the students of general high schools, those graduating from profiled and technical high schools in majority were educated in professions for which there was high demand in the European Union countries (the studies were conducted in schools with profile in gastronomy, electrical engineering, mechanics and construction). Respondents from those schools were aware that they would get jobs abroad without major problems.

There were many reasons for taking the decision concerning economic migration of young Poles and they depended, to a large extent, on the type of school attended (Tab. 2). The major reason, however, was the same for all the

types of schools – higher wages (87% of respondents). Those results confirmed the results of earlier studies conducted by researchers from, e.g. The Centre of Studies on Migration. The analyses conducted indicated clearly that the economic motivation was the most important reason for the increased mobility of the Poles after accession to the European Union (*Wpływ emigracji...* 2006). That was probably linked to the difficult economic situation of Poland that despite numerous changes was incomparably worse than that in the other Member States of the Community. In Poland the unemployment continues at a much higher level while the wages are at a much lower level than in the countries of Western Europe.

Table 2

Major reasons for migrating abroad for work according to graduates of 2008

Item	Major motivations for migration (% of responses)		
	general high school	technical high school	profiled high school
Higher wages than in Poland	71	95	96
Difficulties with finding a job in Poland	29	29	27
Difficulties with getting accepted for tertiary studies	14	0	6
Secured job abroad	0	5	4
Better work conditions than in Poland	14	49	57
Acquiring vocational experience	14	14	12
Language learning	70	29	57
Willingness to get to know another country	29	21	18

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

In analysing the data obtained it is worth noticing that the largest differences were found between the studies concerning students of general high schools and students of technical and profiled high schools. Although the major motivation for migration was clearly identified by all the respondents, for respondents graduating from general high schools learning the language represented the equally important motivation as wages higher than in Poland (70%). The difference is also found in the frequently of selecting the motivation of "better work conditions than in Poland". This answer was not important for respondents graduating from general high schools (14%). For the other types of schools that was the second (after wages) most frequently selected motivation for emigration.

Certain differences between the motivations most frequently selected in 2007 and 2008 (with the exception of the main motivation). In 2007, the

respondents selected difficulties with finding employment in Poland much more frequently (46%) than in 2008 (28%). This might result from the already mentioned decrease in unemployment during the period between consecutive rounds of the study. Additionally, following Poland;s accession to the European Union and as a result of increased outflow of labour, structural unemployment increased meaning that in some vocations the demand for labour is higher than the supply. As a consequence, the studied students of high schools in 2008 were less afraid that after entering the labour market they would not find employment.

To obtain more comprehensive image of motivations that determined the decisions of young people on migration abroad it is also worthwhile to analyse the reasons for possible resignation from economic migration (Fig. 2). The respondents could change the decision concerning economic migration for three major reasons: obtaining satisfactory wages in Poland (55% in 2007 and 61% in 2008), obtaining permanent employment contract (47% and 43% respectively) and being persuaded by the family (31% and 47% respectively). The largest change occurred in the aspect of the family. In 2007, every third respondent declared that persuasion by the family could be the reason for resignation from migration; a year later almost a half of the respondents expressed that opinion.

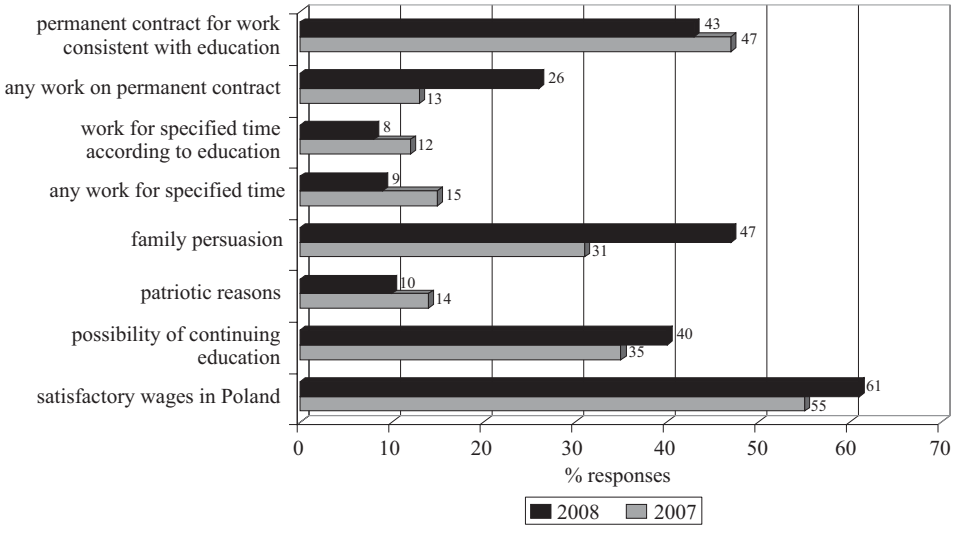

Fig. 2. Reasons for possible resignation from taking up employment abroad
Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

The questionnaire also contained the possible answer that there is no such reason that could make them resign from migrating abroad, but graduate students of none of the schools during none of the year of study selected that

answer. This indicates that the decision concerning migration was not final and that under favourable economic or family conditions they could change the decision and look for a job in Poland.

Migrations from Poland, for many years have been characterised by concentration on a few target countries. Prior to the accession of Poland to the European Union, according to the BAEL data, the target destinations of migrations were first of all Germany – 38%, USA – 14% and Italy – 11%. Following the accession those proportions were subject to major change and the current major destinations are the United Kingdom, Germany and Ireland. According to BAEL 34%, 20% and 10% of Poles respectively decided to migrate to those countries: (OWEN et al. 2007). Similar choices of destination of their migration were also made by graduate students of high schools from Olsztyn (Fig. 3). In the analysed years the most frequent destinations selected were: the Unite Kingdom, Ireland and Germany. The share of those countries in 207 was 85% and in 2008 it decreased slightly to 79%.

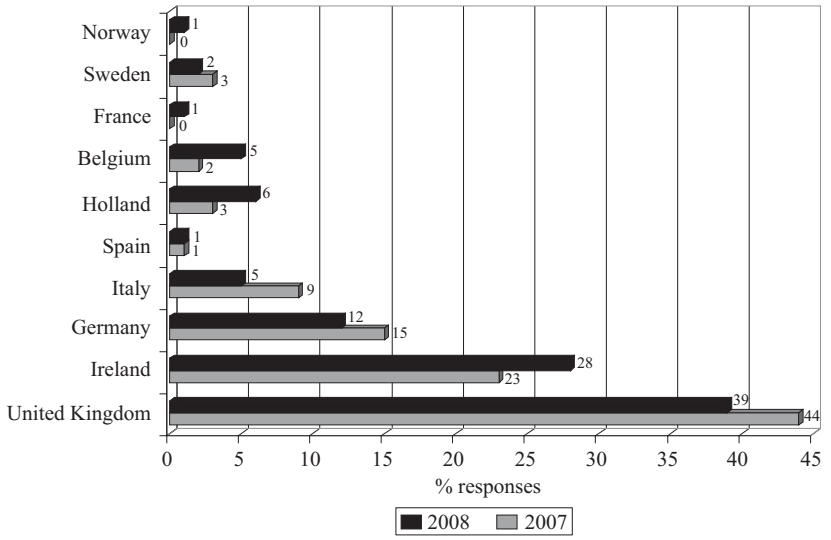

Fig. 3. Migration destinations

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

The largest group of respondents selected the United Kingdom and Ireland, which was motivated by possessing friends or family there. That fact would facilitate migration significantly as it would minimise the stress and help in organisation of the migration. The migrants would be sure that they would not be left without work, that if they had problems of, e.g. administrative nature, they could expect help from somebody close to them. Comparing the years 2007

and 2008 it is also worth noticing that the percentage of those choosing work in the United Kingdom decreased by 5 percent points while the percentage of those opting for work in Ireland increased by 5 percent points. That difference resulted from changes that occurred at the described labour markets. The demand for employees from Poland in the United Kingdom was decreasing as the market was already saturated and it was increasingly difficult to find a job there.

The percentage of people opting for migration to Germany was much lower than in the earlier presented BAEL data (20%) at 13%. The difference resulted probably from the specific characteristics of those migrating to that country. According to OKÓLSKI and GRABOWSKA-LUSIŃSKA (2008), the migrants to Germany were much older (over 30 years of age) and worse educated than those migrating to the United Kingdom and Ireland. It is also characteristic that Germany is the main country for seasonal migration. Among the students covered the average age was 19 years; they also had no family of their own or responsibilities in Poland, so it was easier for them to take the decision to migrate to the United Kingdom even though the distance is a couple of times longer than to Germany.

Following the accession of Poland to the European Union the proportions between definitive, settlement migration and temporary economic migration were clearly reversed. After the period of domination (still during 1980s) of permanent emigration, the model of migration for temporary work (seasonal, short- and medium-term) returned. Those changes were also noticeable in the studies conducted (Tab. 3).

Table 3

Planned duration of economic migration

Duration of migration	lanned duration of migration (% respondents)					
	general high school		profiled high school		technical high school	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Up to 1 year	69	73	32	45	43	37
From 1 to 5 years	24	18	51	45	40	49
From 5 to 10 years	2	2	5	4	7	6
Permanent	5	7	12	6	10	8

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

Among the respondents only a minor proportion declared that the migration would be longer than 5 years (13% in 2007 and 11% in 2008). That was the consequence of hopes that within the coming years the situation in Poland

would improve significantly and the differences in the levels of wages and unemployment rates between Western Europe and Poland would be closed.

In case of the declared duration of the stay abroad differences between schools with different profiles were visible. It was found out that the vast majority of prospective graduates from general high schools declared the seasonal character of migration only. Almost $^1/_3$ of the students from both rounds of the studies declared migrations for periods not exceeding one year. This confirmed the assumptions that for the youth graduating from general high schools continuation of education is the priority. They could migrate for the duration of holiday period (June-September) to start studies after return, in October.

The structure of answers given to that question by students of vocational schools showed an entirely different distribution. The respondents graduating from profiled high schools in 2008 declared in equal proportions the duration of migration of one year and periods up to 5 years. This is a big change as compared to the preceding year because the proportion of respondents declaring short-term migration (up to 1 year) decreased by 13 percent points while the number of respondents declaring the duration of migration of from 1 to 5 years increased by 6 percent points. Among the students of technical high schools the proportions were just the opposite; the share of those declaring migration for up to 1 year decreased (by 6 percent points) while the share of the respondents declaring that they would migrate for longer – 1 to 5 years increased (by 9 percent points).

Taking the decision on economic migration abroad involves a large number of problems that can be faced by future employees. The main task of the migrant is to find a job in a foreign country, which is becoming increasingly difficult from year to year as a consequence of high competition in labour markets open for foreigners. During the studies conducted an attempt was made to find out how the students covered were searching for jobs and at which stage those preparations were (Tab. 4).

Students of general high schools started looking for employment the earliest. That group prepared the best for migration and was the most aware of the related problems. It could also be noticed that as they were planning the migration for just a short time (June – September) it was important for them that immediately on graduation from school the trip should be prepared and that they could be able to go (on return – in October – they would be able to continue their education). The other groups (profiled and technical high schools) declared much less frequently declared being in progress of searching for employment already during the period when the studies were conducted.

Table 4

Time of commencement of search for a job according to prospective graduates

Item	Job search (% respondents)					
	general high school		profiled high school		technical high school	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Already searched	82	86	51	61	47	55
After graduating from school butt still in Poland	13	14	33	36	21	24
After graduating but already abroad	5	0	16	3	32	21

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

To obtain more complete image of preparations by the potential migrants it was also worthwhile to find out at what stage the organisation of that migration was (Tab. 5).

Table 5

Advancement in organisation of migration according to prospective graduates of 2008

Item	Advancement of preparations for migration (% responses)		
	general high school	profiled high school	technical high school
I have done nothing in that field	29	50	55
Cooperation with employer has been established	42	15	24
Cooperation with employment agency abroad has been established	29	0	6
Cooperation with employment agency in Poland has been established	0	15	14

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

Among the respondent students graduating from vocational schools (profiled and technical high schools) more than a half had done nothing as concerns organisation of their migration. Only a minor proportion established contacts with employment agency (in Poland or abroad) or with the prospective employer. This means that students of those schools could take overhasty decisions on migration and not implement them as the studies were conducted two months before the end of school time. It should be noticed, nevertheless, that students of vocational schools pointed mainly at family and friends in answering the question on who helped them in organisation of the migration. In case of profiled high schools 38% pointed at family and 43% at friends. The situation was similar in case of technical high schools where 58% of respondents

indicated the family and 33% friends. This could mean that they did not organise the migration on their own but engaged the family and friends in the process.

Conclusion

The subject of migration has become very important, particularly after accession of Poland to the European Union, as such an immense flow of migrations has been observed never before. For that reason the studies on economic migration conducted among prospective graduates from secondary schools in Olsztyn allowed better understanding of that phenomenon.

The migration decision by the students covered were not final. This is confirmed by the fact that none of the students covered, in answering the question concerning possible reasons for resignation from migration declared that the decision on migration was final and that there was no reason for which the respondent would be ready to abandon it. The results indicate that the decisions were caused mainly by the difficult situation in the Polish labour market. The unemployment rate among the people aged 15 to 24 years is twice higher than in the other age groups. Some of the blame for that situation should be taken by ineffective education system management as it is frequent that obsolete educational curricula or lack of competence among people managing education cause that young people loose from the start at the Polish labour market and take decisions on economic migration and work below their qualifications. Changes in the Polish education system are highly needed and they should involve not only the organisational structure, curricula of education, financing and management but, first of all, the courses of education. Education should strengthen the focus on the future. That orientation will be possible only after conducting extrapolation of trends, i.e. when education is based on projections concerning specific vocations and types of occupation that would be in demand in coming years or in several years time.

The level of the declared migrations among the youth graduating from high schools in Olsztyn depended on school type. The highest percentage of those planning economic migration in 2008 was recorded among prospective graduates from the profiled high schools (42%), it was slightly lower among prospective graduates from the technical high schools (35%), while among the prospective graduates from general high schools only 8% of the respondents declared willingness to migrate.

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