

Mobility of Irish educated Ph.D. graduates (0049)

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Background

In 2010, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched in order to ensure a more comparable, compatible and coherent system of higher education within Europe. Mobility of the highly educated is politically desired as individual, societal and economic gains are expected. Individuals are able to increase and maintain their language skills, cultural awareness and global competencies (Behle and Atfield, 2013) and also to improve their personal and professional self-image, self-confidence (Cai, 2013) and even increase their problem-solving skills and creativity (Maddux et al., 2013, Leung et al., 2008). Socially, it is expected that an increase in mobility functions as an accelerator in the process of Europeanization. Intra-European mobility increases an understanding of European values (Van Mol, 2013) and helps graduates to understand the chances and opportunities a joined European labour market has to offer (Author, 2014). On an economic perspective, mobility is an exchange of skilled workforce in order to maintain and upskill qualifications, skills and competencies. Mobility, in this train of thought, is a growth driver for national economies (Mosneaga and Winther, 2012). However, mobility of the highly skilled also implies negative connotations as it might imply a reaction on the mismatch between produced human capital and economic demands (Author, 2015). Previous research also found significant differences between the early pathways of returning students and home educated graduates (Author, 2015).

Research Questions and Data used

The presented research analyses the career paths of Irish-educated Ph.D. graduates. First of all, it differentiates between four groups of mobile Ph.D. graduates:

- Returners (i.e. graduates who were born in a country outside of the Republic of Ireland and returned to this country after gaining the degree)
- Irish mobile citizens (i.e. Irish citizens who were mobile after gaining their doctorate at a HEI in the Republic of Ireland)
- Inward mobile graduates (i.e. graduates who were born in a country outside of the Republic of Ireland but remained in the Republic of Ireland after gaining their degree)
- and other mobile Ph.D. graduates.

The career path of mobile graduates will then be contrasted with that of graduates having remained in the Republic of Ireland. It will be possible to distinguish between different kinds of employment (within and outside higher education institutions), and to analyse graduates involvement in teaching and education.

Bearing these functions of mobility for the highly skilled in mind, the paper addresses the following research questions:

- How do the four groups of mobile Ph.D. graduates (i.e. returners, Irish mobile citizens, Inward mobile graduates, and other mobile Ph.D. graduates) differ in terms of their personal and higher education related characteristics (e.g. age, gender, subjects)?
- When do mobile graduates leave the Republic of Ireland, and where do they go? Are there any differences between the different groups of mobile Ph.D. graduates? How common are returning migrations (i.e. graduates who, after spending a specific period of time in a foreign country, returning to the Republic of Ireland)?
- How do the pathways to employment differ across the different groups of mobile graduates? What kinds of employment do mobile graduates undertake in other countries, and how is it related to their area of expertise? Are mobile graduates involved in research and teaching in their current positions?
- How do the pathways between returning Ph.D. graduates and Irish mobile graduates be compared? Are there any subject-related differences, and how did this develop over the last ten years?

The presented paper follows three cohorts of IRC-funded Irish educated doctorates (start of Ph.D. studies between 1998-2004, 2005-07, and 2008-2010) using a quantitative survey conducted on behalf of the Irish Research Council in 2013/2014. The paper presents the pathways of approximately 821 Ph.D. graduates one third of which came from outside the Republic of Ireland. Nearly half of the sample consists of Irish graduates currently living in the Republic of Ireland after graduating. Additionally, 13 per cent of foreign graduates remained in the Republic of Ireland. 23 per cent of the sample consists of Irish citizen currently not living in Ireland, and the remainder of the sample are six per cent of returning graduates and 6 per cent of other mobile graduates.

First Results

First results indicate that approximately one third of Ph.D. graduates were mobile after graduation, mainly within other European countries. Non-Irish graduates were more likely to be mobile, only about one third remained in the Republic of Ireland whilst 18 per cent currently live in the UK. The USA was a strong magnet for international researchers funded by the IRC as nearly a quarter of them currently live there. Physics and Computer Science graduates were the most likely to move to the USA.

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