

Social Mobility: Contributions from Technical, Professional, and Vocational Higher Education in Chile

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Research Domains

Technical, Professional and Vocational Higher Education (TPV)

Abstract

The following paper analyzed the contribution of Technical, Professional, and Vocational Higher Education (TPV) in the promotion of upward social mobility in Chile. By understanding social mobility as the variation in the position of a person or family in a hierarchical social structure, two methodologies were applied: a) analysis of educational mobility considering data of the whole Chilean education considering the cohort that finished secondary education in 2014, b) analysis of the economic benefit of studying in higher education and accessing the labor market after graduating from secondary school. The results show that TPV promotes greater educational mobility than University Education by forming a large proportion of first-generation students in Higher Education. Likewise, evidence is presented to show that TPV is a real alternative that allows transforming, in a short period, the material conditions of thousands of people.

Full paper

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One of the main challenges of several countries is to move towards a sustainable human development model, where all its inhabitants have the same opportunities to access quality education (SDG4) and decent work (SDG8), among other elements, to achieve greater social mobility associated with the reduction of inequalities (SDG10).

In this context, the objective of this study is to examine the contribution of Technical, Professional, and Vocational Higher Education (TPV) in the promotion of upward social mobility in Chile. The above is proposed as a product aimed at installing and fostering the discussion on the contribution of the TPB concerning the improvement of the living conditions of thousands of individuals and families throughout the country.

The concept of social mobility is understood as the variation in the position of a person or family in a hierarchical social structure, which can be either ascending, if this change implies an improvement in living conditions, or descending, if because of the change the person is placed in a lower hierarchical social position (Torche & Wormald, 2004).

From this initial concept, we can specify two lines of work under which this paper operationalizes social mobility. The first is income or socioeconomic mobility, a phenomenon associated with the direct variation in people's autonomous monetary income and/or assets (IDB, 2017). The second line of analysis focuses on studying educational mobility. On this, Torche (2018) posits that educational mobility is the association between the educational levels achieved by parents and their children in adulthood, defining it as a measure that delivers information about equality of opportunities in a society.

The main results of the study can be summarized in the following two points that describe the two types of conducted analyses.

- When positioning Chilean higher education institutions in social mobility indicators, it stands out that it is the TPV institutions where the largest number of people who exceed the educational level of their parents are educated. In the case of universities, although at the total level of the education system, they do not educate a high proportion of first-generation students, there are several institutions that when examined concerning themselves in the proportion of their first-generation graduates present some indicators similar to those of some TPV institutions. When examining these indicators separately according to the geographical region of the institution of the graduates, relevant differences are found (See chart 1).



- When analyzing the evolution of the profit ratio for a person who decides to enter higher education at the age of 18, it is observed that the speed with which a profit ratio greater than 1 is obtained is directly related to the actual duration of the study programs: the first are those who study two-years programs at technical institutions (30 years, 12 years after entering higher education), followed by those who study four-years programs in technical institutions (33 years, 15 years after entering HE) and finally those who access universities (37 years, 19 years after entering HE). Likewise, it is observed that the decision to study at university becomes more profitable as time progresses, although all types of institutions are still profitable compared to not accessing higher education (See chart 2).



One finding to highlight is that the evidence reviewed confirms that it is always better to continue studying versus not studying, and as such, TPV is a real alternative that makes it possible to transform, in a short period, the material conditions of thousands of people. In this regard, it was observed that it is TPV that is currently educating the largest number of first-generation students in higher education. Likewise, although it can be seen that in the long-term university education has a higher return than technical education, it is evident that, in all contexts, and especially in the short and medium term, the TPV generates better benefits/returns versus accessing the labor market once secondary education has been completed.

Considering the results, the relevance of discussing the development strategy required by the country, the occupations in demand, and how we can improve the living conditions of our inhabitants is raised,

and in this regard, this document provides relevant evidence, since TPV allows a leap in living conditions, rapidly transforming the reality of thousands of people.

References

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