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Abstract

Students and graduates alike are encouraged to enhance their skills and knowledge by moving to a different European country as both national governments and European institutions anticipate individual skill gains, closer European networks and a boost to national economies as a result. Using data from a longitudinal survey, this paper follows UK-educated Intra-European mobile graduates from undergraduate courses into employment, further study or other activities, and compares their early pathway with graduates who remained in the UK (UK stayer). UK-educated mobile graduates are divided into three groups according to their residency and location after their undergraduate course: UK nationals moving to a different European country (UK movers); nationals of other European countries returning to their home country (returners); and nationals of other European countries moving to a third European country (other mobile graduates). Empirical findings show that mobility for UK movers is mainly employment-driven whilst mobility of returners and other mobile graduates is educational-driven. However, if employed, UK-educated mobile graduates are more likely to work in skill-appropriate occupations compared to UK stayers. The transition to either employment or further study of most UK-educated mobile graduates does not take longer compared to UK stayers.

Keywords: Mobility; Graduates; High-skilled; Transferability; Early Pathways; skills.

Introduction: Mobility of UK-educated Graduates

In 2011/12, eight per cent of UK-educated graduates from under- and post-graduate courses had moved to a different European country (HEIDI¹, own calculations). This figure represents a slight increase in the proportion of UK-educated graduates from 7 per cent ten years ago. Even though mobility both during higher education and after graduation is highly desirable and many expect positive individual, social and economic outcomes of a more mobile qualified workforce, many previous studies (BEHLE, 2014, Wiers-Jenssen, 2011, Lianos and Asteriou, 2004) criticised the lack of knowledge as regards mobile graduates' transitions into employment or further study. This paper addresses this gap in previous research, and analyses whether higher education obtained in the UK is transferable to employment or further study in a different European country.

Most previous studies looked either into the employment of highly-educated migrants (Recchi and Favell, 2009); of foreign-educated returners (Wiers-Jenssen and Try, 2005, Wiers-Jenssen, 2008, 2013, Liagouras et al., 2003, Lianos and Asteriou, 2004); or of those mobile after graduating in their home countries (Teichler 2011). A coherent picture to capture the phenomenon of mobility after graduation, however, should include both, foreign-educated returners and home-educated mobile graduates and add foreign-educated mobile graduates who moved to a third country. This paper uses this approach and classifies UK-educated mobile graduates into three groups according to their residency and their current location:

- UK movers are UK residents who moved to a different European country after graduation;

¹ Heidi is the web-based information system of data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) www.heidi.ac.uk

- Returners are residents from other European countries who returned to these countries;
- Other mobile graduates are residents from other European countries who moved to a third country.

The presented research tracks the career paths of the three groups of UK-educated mobile graduates and contrasts them that of the majority of UK stayers. UK stayers are UK nationals and students from abroad who remained in the UK post-degree. The main objectives of the paper are to

- Identify the activities (employment, unemployment, or further study) UK-educated mobile graduates undertake in different European countries and compare them to those who stayed in the UK, and
- Identify the length of time it took UK-educated mobile graduates to enter employment or further study, compared to UK stayers.

The paper is aimed at national and international policy makers, especially within the UK and other European countries, and at researchers to understand skills and abilities acquired at a higher education institution (HEI) in the UK and its transferability to a different European country. In the competition between HEIs within national countries for students from other European countries, it is of paramount importance that UK HEIs understand the value they can offer to students from other European countries and to UK students planning to be mobile after graduation. This paper addresses this issue, and contrasts the post-graduation pathways of the three groups of UK-educated mobile graduates with those who remained in the UK. It is particularly interested in identifying whether UK-educated mobile graduates were able to communicate their skills and qualifications i.e. whether human capital acquired in the UK is transferable within different European countries. On a European level, the findings of this

paper can be used to further promote the European Higher Education Area as a means to create a closer-knit network between European national Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The empirical analyses use the final wave of a longitudinal study (Futuretrack) in which all applicants to higher education were followed through until two years after graduation (2011/2012). Having previously established the significant characteristics that differentiate stayers from leavers (Behle 2014), this paper addresses the early career paths of UK-educated graduates, both for those who entered further study and for those who started to work. It analyses the differences between different Intra-European mobile graduates and contrasts their pathways with those who remained in the UK after graduation.

The present study addresses the early pathways of three groups of mobile UK-educated graduates, drawing upon the empirical findings of 644 mobile graduates over an eighteen month period, in the contexts of the characteristics and different functions of mobility for individual movers. The next section presents a discussion of these, together with the role of mobility for national economies and in the progress of Europeanisation, followed by a review of pre-existing literature on the early pathways of graduate mobility. In a third section, the pathways into employment or further study are empirically analysed, separately for different categories of mobile graduates. Empirical findings are discussed in the final section in the context of the emerging European Higher Education Area and a joint European Labour Market.

The Wider Picture: Characteristics and Functions of Mobility within Europe

Currently, mobility within Europe is characterised by a high proportion of highly skilled workers (Recchi and Favell, 2009); its possible re-occurrences (Ackers and Gill, 2009), and the value it adds to previously acquired skills and knowledge (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, Behle 2014). Mobility fulfils different functions for individual graduates and in the

process of creating a joint European Higher Education Area. National policy makers and economies, again, discuss mobility of graduates in different contexts. The following section discusses these different characteristics and functions of mobility, before describing the current state of research and the formulation of research questions with regards to different activities of mobile graduates such as employment or further study.

Individual Benefits and Skill Gains

For individual graduates, mobility can lead to an increase in skills and thus adds value to previous education. An obvious connection between mobility and skills exists in increased language proficiency, cultural awareness and global competences (Behle and Atfield, 2013). Other skills and abilities that can be enhanced by mobility include the ‘improved personal and professional self-image, self-confidence, the ability to handle ambiguity, the insight into their own value systems and overall maturity’ (Cai, 2013, 466). Spending time abroad is one way to accelerate progress towards independence and autonomy and to incorporate evidence of courage and flexibility (Frändberg, 2014). Murphy-Lejeune (2002) describes how mobile individuals adapt to their situation in a foreign country in order to maximise their new life conditions. ‘Life abroad is a powerful experience of discovery of self and others because it shakes personal and social representations and introduces into identity processes perturbing elements, notably the notions of moving identities and flexible cognitive borders’ (ibid., 30). Two recent studies (Maddux et al., 2013, Leung et al., 2008) expanded this list by problem-solving skills and creativity. The authors found that extensiveness of multicultural experiences is positively related to creative performance (in terms of insight learning, remote association, and idea generation) and creativity-supporting cognitive processes (i.e. retrieval of unconventional knowledge, recruitment of ideas from unfamiliar cultures for creative idea expansion) (Leung et al., 2008).

Increased maturity and the augmented skills, abilities and attitudes are expected to set graduates apart from fellow applicants when looking for a job (i.e. increase their employability), and it is expected that these skills are particularly valuable for international jobs (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008). However, it remains questionable whether mobile graduates educated in the UK are able to communicate their enhanced skill sets, whether human capital is transferable within different European countries or whether parts of the education are related to country-specific human capital which is not transferable to other contexts (Støren and Wiers-Jenssen, 2010).

Besides adding value to previous education, mobility within the European Union effectively widens the labour market geographically so that graduates who do not manage to find entrance to skill-appropriate positions within their national labour markets can search for jobs in other countries. Europeans seem to be well aware of the opportunity of mobility as a solution to unemployment or difficulties in finding a job (European Foundation, 2006). During employment in a different European country, graduates can built up useful international networks, and it has been identified as a suitable coping strategy in order to increase and maintain individual graduates' employability for the UK, European-wide or indeed internationally (BEHLE, 2014).

Educational and employment-related mobility has also been embedded in the discussion of youth mobility cultures (Brooks and Waters 2010), specifically in the context of gap years and working holidays (Fränberg, 2014, Findlay et al., 2006, King and Shuttleworth, 1995).

Mobility as a Means to increase Europeanisation and Europe's Competitiveness and Growth in a Globalised Economy

The EU's mobility agenda encourages the mobility of workers as a means of enhancing the efficiency of national labour markets and thus increasing Europe's

competitiveness and growth in a globalised economy (Favell and Hansen 2002). Mobility within the EU is mainly employment-driven rather than controlled by national or EU legislation (Favell and Hansen 2002, European Foundation 2006). Free movement of workers is at the heart of the vision of Europe as a free-trade area in order to create a joint flexible and more efficient European labour market, to match labour supply to demand, to iron out inefficiencies in national markets, and to reduce unemployment (Bosswell and Geddes, 2011). Mobile graduates are more likely to understand the chances and opportunities of a joined European labour market (BEHLE 2014). Thus, mobility acts as an accelerator in the process of Europeanization which is why the mobility of young professionals is explicitly promoted in the Europe 2020 agenda flagship initiative ‘Youth on the move’. As a concrete action to increase mobility, professional qualifications and experience should be properly recognized in all European countries (European Commission, 2010).

Especially in the area of science and engineering, mobility of graduates is expected to result in knowledge and best practice transfer. Particularly, advanced and developing countries benefit from international mobility of students and graduates as it accelerates the rate of technological change and speeds up the adoption of best practices around the world (Freeman, 2010). Similar benefits can be expected within European countries, albeit not on a similar scale. However, mobility of graduates also poses specific problems on a European level: Returning graduates must be aware that the achievement of a degree from a foreign country does not make them more employable in the labour market *per se*; they will need to prove that they actually increased their relevant knowledge and skills. As local employers and/ or higher education institutions might not be aware of the skills and knowledge graduates acquired as a part of their degree, it is essential that HEIs promote their curriculum and the quality of the education they provide (Wiers-Jenssen 2008, Cai 2013, Tzanakou and

Behle, 2016). A recent study (Tzanakou and Behle, 2016) reported substantial barriers for mobile UK-educated graduates to transfer their skills and knowledge for a different labour market or HEI. Ten years ago, when analysing the circumstances of Greek returners, Lianos and Asteriou (2004) criticised the lack of reliable and efficient methods of professional orientation and labour market information systems; however, it is currently unclear if this has since improved.

Implications for National Economies

Mobility of graduates also has consequences for the national economies. If UK-educated graduates move abroad to find suitable employment, they can act as ambassadors for the UK (Behle, 2014). Findlay et al. (2006) interpreted the mobility of students as training for professionals and managers destined for an international career in global corporations and other transnational organisations. In a similar notion, graduates' mobility can be seen as an exchange of skilled workforce in order to maintain and upskill qualifications, skills and competencies. UK-educated mobile graduates act, in this train of thought, as a highly qualified reserve army of labour for future skill-induced shortages of labour. On a less positive note, research from Italy shows that mobility of graduates can be interpreted as a reaction to the mismatch between produced human capital and economic demands. In this context, the mobility of graduates can be identified as 'brain drain', i.e. graduates who fail to enter suitable employment in their home country move to a different country to find more appropriate employment. Constant and D'Agosto (2008) noted that mobile Italian graduates would probably not leave Italy if they had adequate research funding in their home country, and King and Conti (2013) state that many Italian graduates left their home country because of the closed labour market, negative work experiences, and regional unemployment.

Previous international and UK based Research on the Early Pathways of Returners, (home-educated) Movers and other mobile Graduates within Europe

A review of previous international research (published in Støren and Wiers-Jenssen, 2010) shows that education from abroad, in general, is of less value to national employers and thus, migrants were more likely to be unemployed, or, if they found entrance to the labour market, worked often in low-skilled jobs and gained less wages. Similarly, the classical study by Chiswick (1978) described the changes of migrants' earnings in the course of time. Initially, migrants earned less than the native population, however, their earnings rose rapidly with them gaining experiences in the USA which eventually exceeded that of the native population. It is currently unclear, however, how and if these findings can be applied to mobile UK-educated highly skilled graduates within Europe, given the enormous political efforts to create a joint European labour market and a European higher education area.

The transitions mobile graduates undertake, either to employment or to further study, are currently under-researched, and both quantitative and qualitative studies on the topic are hard to find (Behle, 2014, Geddie 2012; Brooks and Waters, 2011). The following review of previous research is mainly based on the labour market outcomes of foreign-educated Norwegian (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008, 2003, 2011, 2013, Støren and Wiers-Jenssen, 2010) and Greek (Liagouras et al., 2003) returners; and on a European-wide study about the labour market activities of graduates (Teichler, 2011). In this review, the term 'movers' is used for those who were mobile after graduating in their home countries; 'returner' for those who, after undertaking their undergraduate studies in a different European country (degree mobility), had returned to their home countries; and 'other mobile graduates' for those who had studied and graduated in a foreign country and, following that, had moved to a country different to their home countries.

Employment

If graduates manage to enter employment, a high proportion of them work in higher status jobs requiring at least some tertiary education. Movers are more likely to work full-time and earn high wages, compared with stayers. Both movers and returners were more likely to work in internationally orientated organisations with higher earnings than non-mobile graduates. Movers and returners reported employment with good career prospects, opportunities to learn and high status. Many were working in managerial or professional positions and/or organizations that are innovative with respect to technology, tools or instruments (Teichler, 2011, Wiers-Jenssen, 2013, 2011).

On a less positive note, mobile graduates were more likely to report temporary work contracts and other lower levels of job security (Teichler 2011). Some studies show a mismatch between employment and level of education resulting in mobile graduates being overqualified for their current jobs (Støren and Wiers-Jenssen, 2010, Currie, 2007). Lianos and Asteriou (2004) described how the lack of proper information networks in the labour market and of professional orientation leads to a prolonged job search for returning graduates to the Greek labour market and thus to high levels of unemployment or underemployment.

Further Study

In a European comparison, Teichler (2011) found that mobility after graduation was mainly employment-motivated and that only about one in six of the graduates embarking on further study did so at least in part in another country. In a qualitative study, Brooks and Waters (2010) found that UK movers planning to go abroad for postgraduate studies come from more socially diverse backgrounds and paid more attention to the reputation of the specific departments in which they wanted to study.

Unemployment

All groups of mobile graduates had long transitions to employment and were likely to experience spells of unemployment after graduation. Returners had to develop more extensive job search strategies; however, holding a degree from a foreign HEI did not seem to have lasting, stigmatising effects (Wiers-Jenssen, 2013). A large proportion of Greek returners did not find entry to a subject-related occupation (Lianos and Asteriou, 2004). Compared to home-educated graduates, those with a diploma from abroad were more frequently unemployed (Støren and Wiers-Jenssen, 2010).

Research Questions: Mobility of UK-educated graduates

It is problematic to transfer the previous research of these selected empirical quantitative studies as, first of all, hardly any of them refer to UK-educated graduates, and secondly, because they usually fail to include a necessary comparison with non-mobile graduates. Using a multiple regression model Behle (2014) showed that UK-educated mobile graduates from undergraduate courses were significantly more likely to come from high or highest social classes and/or had studied at the highest reputation institutions compared to those who remained in the UK. Graduates who had studied languages and who had previously experienced mobility as part of their undergraduate course were also more likely to be mobile. The class of degree was not significant for the distinction between stayers and leavers. It is currently unclear, however, how these differences were translated to their activity after graduation.

These groups will need to be contrasted with those who remained in the UK after graduating from a UK HEI, including former international students and students from other European countries. Based on the differentiation of these three different groups of mobile graduates, the following research questions were identified:

- What kind of activity do UK-educated mobile graduates undertake in different European countries, and how does this compare to non-mobile graduates?
- If employed, how long does it take UK movers to enter the labour market? Does it take them longer compared to returners, other mobile graduates and UK stayers?
- If employed, what kind of occupations are mobile graduates engaged in?
- Are there any differences between the three groups of mobile graduates in terms of their participation in further study?
- Who, of all groups of mobile graduates, is the most likely to experience unemployment, and when do mobile graduates experience unemployment?

Empirical Findings

Data

The research questions were analysed using Futuretrack data. Futuretrack was a longitudinal survey following all applicants to higher education in the UK in 2006 and throughout their undergraduate course up until two/three years after graduation. For this analysis, the data set was limited to graduates who responded to the last wave of the survey and who, at the time of the field phase for the final wave in Autumn/Winter 2011 and 2012, lived either in the UK or in a different European country (n=14,012). 644 respondents stated that they lived in a different European country at the time of the interview. As the responses for female graduates and those with a high score of tariff points² were overrepresented, the data were weighted initially for gender and tariff point biases. A second weighting procedure was undertaken to control for an institutional bias which occurred with two institutions (for

² In the UK, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) allocates tariff points to applicants to evaluate their post-16 qualifications.

more information about the weighting procedure see Purcell et. al., 2013). All data were weighted according to these procedures.

Following the theoretical approach and findings from previous research, three groups of Intra-European mobile graduates were identified in the data set:

- UK movers were either born in the UK or had lived there before applying to enter higher education in 2006 and lived in a different country at the time of the final interview (n = 322);
- Returners are European student who returned to their home country after graduation. Returners had undertaken their whole undergraduate study in the UK and not just one section of it (e.g. ERASMUS) (n= 230);
- Other mobile graduates had applied from outside the UK and lived in a different country from both the country of application and from the UK at the time of the final interview. Just like returners, they had undertaken their whole undergraduate study in the UK (n=92).

The vast majority (94 per cent) of the sample remained in the UK after graduation ('UK stayers'); three per cent were classified as 'returners', two per cent were defined as 'UK movers', and one per cent was now living in neither their home country nor the UK ('other mobile graduates') (weighted figures). The proportion of female graduates is higher in most groups of UK-educated mobile graduates and with UK stayers. The proportion of minority ethnic groups was lower in UK-educated graduates. Mobile UK-educated graduates were more likely to come from higher social classes and were more likely to have studied at highest tariff universities. Mobile UK-educated graduates were more likely to have gained a First Class Honours in their degree. One third of UK movers had graduated from three-year courses whilst approximately half of all UK stayers and returners had studied for three years

on their undergraduate course.

A detailed profile of each group can be found in the appendix.

The following figures show the early pathways of European mobile graduates and UK stayers, defined as the first eighteen month after graduation in May 2009 (from three-year-courses) or in May 2010 (from four-year-courses). Graduates from three and those from four year courses were pooled to boost the numbers of European mobile graduates. In cases where there were differences due to the lengths of their courses, this has been described in the text. The months defined as '1' on the x-scale indicates therefore either May 2009 or May 2010 (depending on the length of course); '2' is June 2009/2010, and so on. In some cases, however, students graduated in June or July, and many students used the first few months after graduation to search for a job, take a holiday, or work in a summer job. For example, if a respondent graduated in June 2009, took a holiday in July 2009 and started employment in August 2009; only the activity 'employment' in August 2009 will be shown on the charts. This explains the peak in Figures 1 (employment) and 4 (unemployment) at around four months. In Figure 3 (further study), the low point was also around four months as this was when all graduates had finished their undergraduate courses. Figure 2 describes employment in non-graduate occupations and is restricted to employed graduates which is why there is no high or low point at around four months. Due to small numbers, Figure 2 and Figure 4 were limited to the first twelve months after graduation.

Employment

The following Figure 1 describes graduates' entry to employment following graduation. It can be seen that after three to four months, approximately 60 per cent of UK stayers had entered employment.

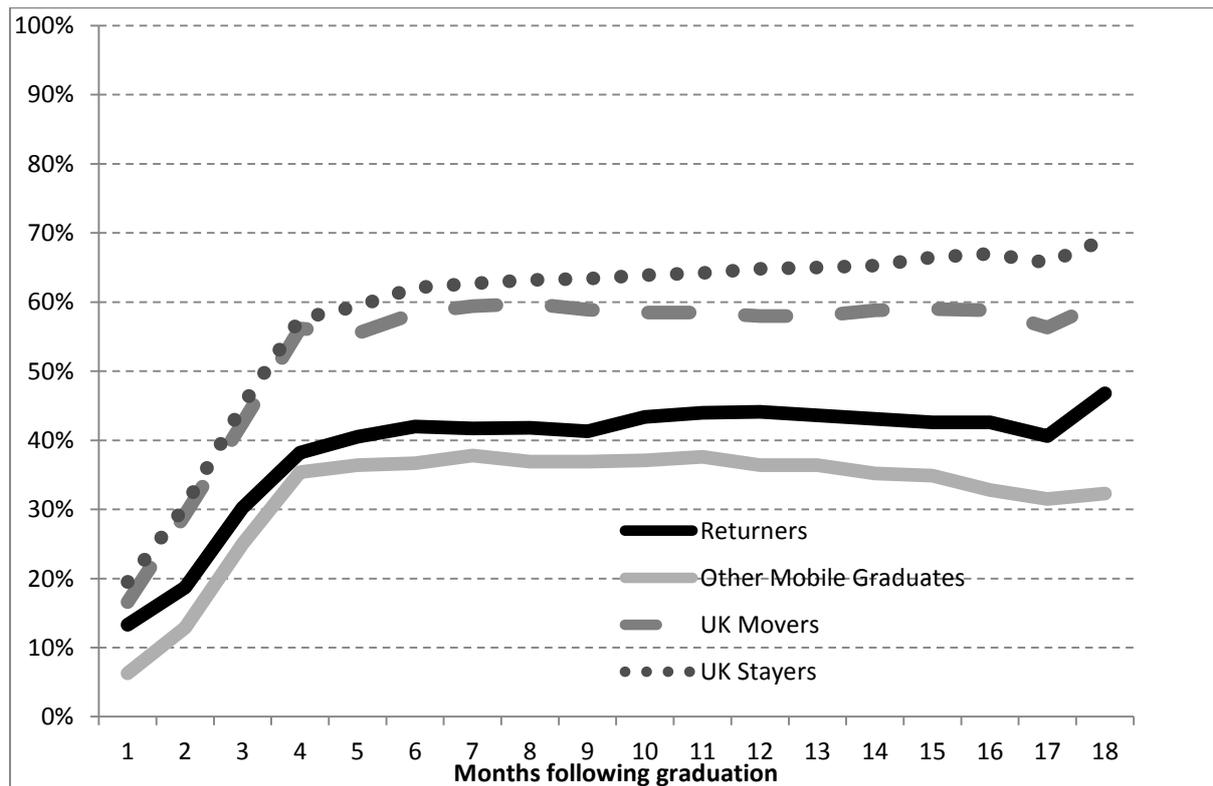
Roughly the same proportion of all UK movers also entered employment, and the proportions of graduates in both groups remains high throughout the first eighteen months after graduation. As a contrast, approximately 40 per cent of returners and other mobile graduates had entered employment four months after graduation, and there was no substantial increase in the proportion of those entering employment during the observed time frame.

The figures differ slightly between graduates having studied on a three and those who studied on a four year course, as graduates from shorter courses were less likely to enter employment (and more likely to get enrolled on further studies). Nevertheless, the proportions of UK stayers and UK movers entering employment remained the highest (between 52 per cent and 69 per cent) even if the groups were separated by the length of courses. Returners who graduated from a four-year undergraduate course were, compared to other mobile graduates and returners from three year courses, more likely to enter employment, with 43 per cent of them employed five months after graduation. Over the course of the next months, this figure rose to 50 per cent.

In all groups, there was no noteworthy difference with regards to the duration graduates needed to enter employment. All three groups of UK-educated mobile graduates, as well as UK stayers, took up to four month to enter employment. These findings are in stark contrast to previous research in which mobile graduates took longer to enter employment.

Figure 1: Entry to employment or self-employment following graduation

Figure 1: Entry to employment or self-employment following graduation



Source: Futuretrack2006, weighted, wave 4 respondents only, graduated leavers living in the UK or in a different European country only. Period covers May to October after graduation.

Previous research was also concerned with the quality of employment. The following tables 1 and 2 describe the situation of employed graduates twelve months after graduation. Table 1 refers to their use of subject/discipline knowledge and skills developed on their undergraduate degrees. Whilst only 59 per cent of all employed UK stayers stated that they used their subject or discipline knowledge, 71 per cent of UK movers and 75 per cent of returners were employed in jobs in which they applied their subject or discipline knowledge. A similar pattern can be observed with the skills graduates had developed on undergraduate courses with three quarters of UK stayers responding that they used the skills they had developed on their course for their current employment. The proportion of other mobile graduates using their skills for their current job was even higher, compared to UK stayers.

Table 1: Characteristics of employment one year after graduation, employed graduates only

| | UK stayers | UK movers | Returners | Other mobile graduates |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Use of subject or discipline knowledge acquired on undergraduate course | 59 % | 71 % | 75 % | 69 % |
| Use of skills developed on undergraduate degree | 75 % | 86 % | 85 % | 91 % |

Source: Futuretrack2006, weighted, wave 4 respondents only, graduated leavers living in the UK or in a different European country only.

Table 2 refers to the type of graduate employment, one year after graduation. This is described in terms of a new classification of graduate occupations (SOC-HE) (Purcell et al., 2013) according to which occupations were classified in experts, orchestrators, communicators and non-graduate jobs. Expert occupations are knowledge-intensive, and graduates are required ‘to draw on and use their specialist HE knowledge and skills in the course of their daily work’ (ibid., 21). Typical occupations were educational professionals; programmers and software development professionals; or finance and investment analysts and advisers. Orchestrators work in ‘jobs which require them to draw on and orchestrate their knowledge and the knowledge of others to evaluate information, assess options, plan, contribute to choices of tactics and development of strategies, make decisions and co-ordinate the contributions of others to achieve objectives’ (ibid, 21). It is deliberate that not many graduates were classified as orchestrators as it requires extensive experience. Examples for orchestrator occupations were financial project management professionals or management consultants and business analysts. Finally, graduates in communicator occupations ‘require

interactive skills that may be based on interpersonal skills, creative skills or high-level technological knowledge, capacity to access and manipulate information and/or an understanding of how to communicate information effectively to achieve objectives' (ibid., 21), typical occupations were writers and translators, sales accounts, or business development managers. Jobs in which no graduate skill or knowledge was required were classified as non-graduate occupations.

Three quarters of returners were in expert, orchestrator or communicator occupations compared with 61 per cent of UK movers and just over half of other mobile graduates and UK stayers. UK stayers were more likely to work in non-graduate employment compared with UK-educated mobile graduates and less likely than UK movers and returners to work in expert occupations. Interestingly, the proportion of returners and other mobile graduates working in orchestrator occupations was more than twice that of UK stayers and UK movers, which might indicate a high demand on specific transferable skills they acquired during their education at a UK HEI such as fluency in English, together with their country-specific knowledge.

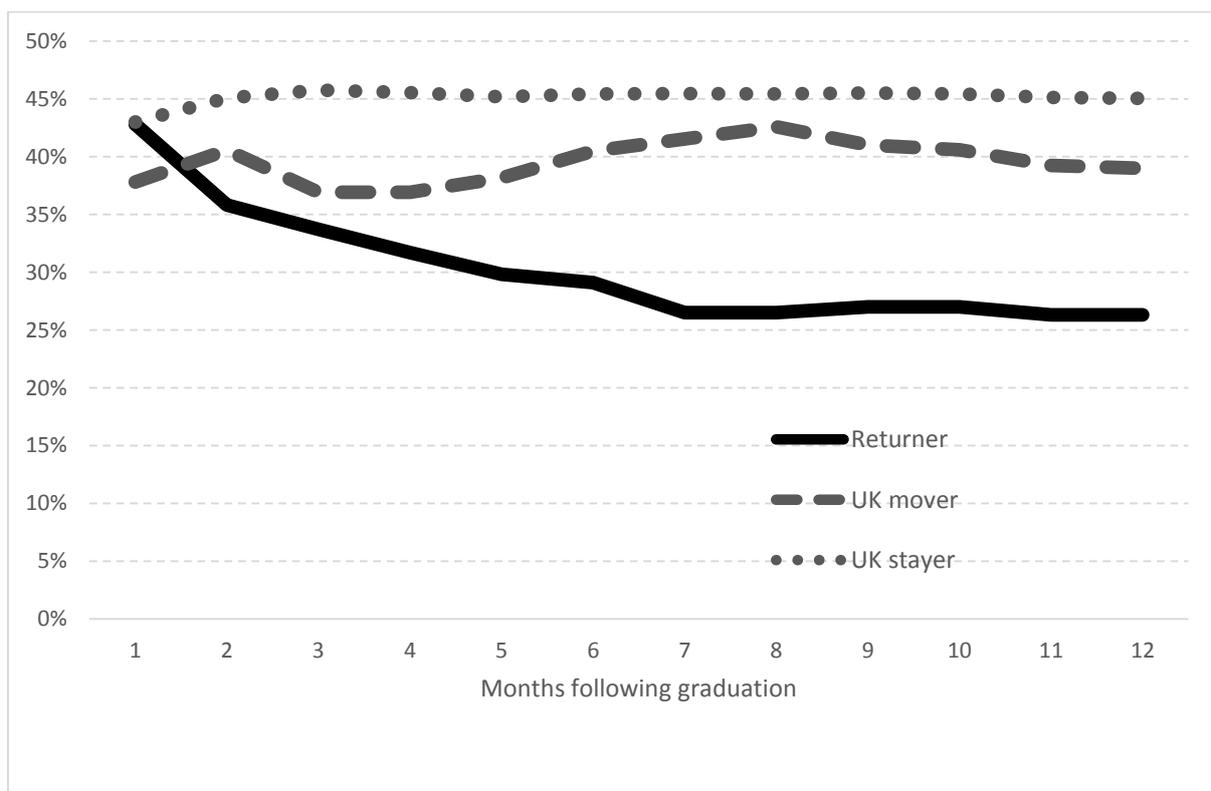
Table 2: SOC-HE, one year after graduation, employed graduates only

| | UK stayers | UK movers | Returner | Other mobile graduates |
|--------------|------------|-----------|----------|------------------------|
| Expert | 37% | 45% | 49% | 37% |
| Orchestrator | 5% | 5% | 12% | 13% |
| Communicator | 13% | 11% | 13% | 4% |
| Non-graduate | 45% | 39% | 26% | 46% |

Source: Futuretrack2006, weighted, wave 4 respondents only, graduated leavers living in the UK or in a different European country only.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of graduates employed in non-graduate occupations. Due to the small cell sizes, only the first twelve months after graduation were shown for returners, UK movers and UK stayers. Directly after graduation 43 per cent of employed UK stayers and employed returners worked in non-graduate employment. Whilst the proportion of UK stayers working in non-graduate employment has remained stable over the observed time period this has not been the case for returners. The proportion of employed returners working in non-graduate employment has decreased over time, and, after twelve months, only 26 per cent were still working in non-graduate occupations. Employment of UK movers in non-graduate employment is initially lower compared to the other two groups; however, it remains stable at this level.

Figure 2: Employment in non-graduate occupations, employed graduates only

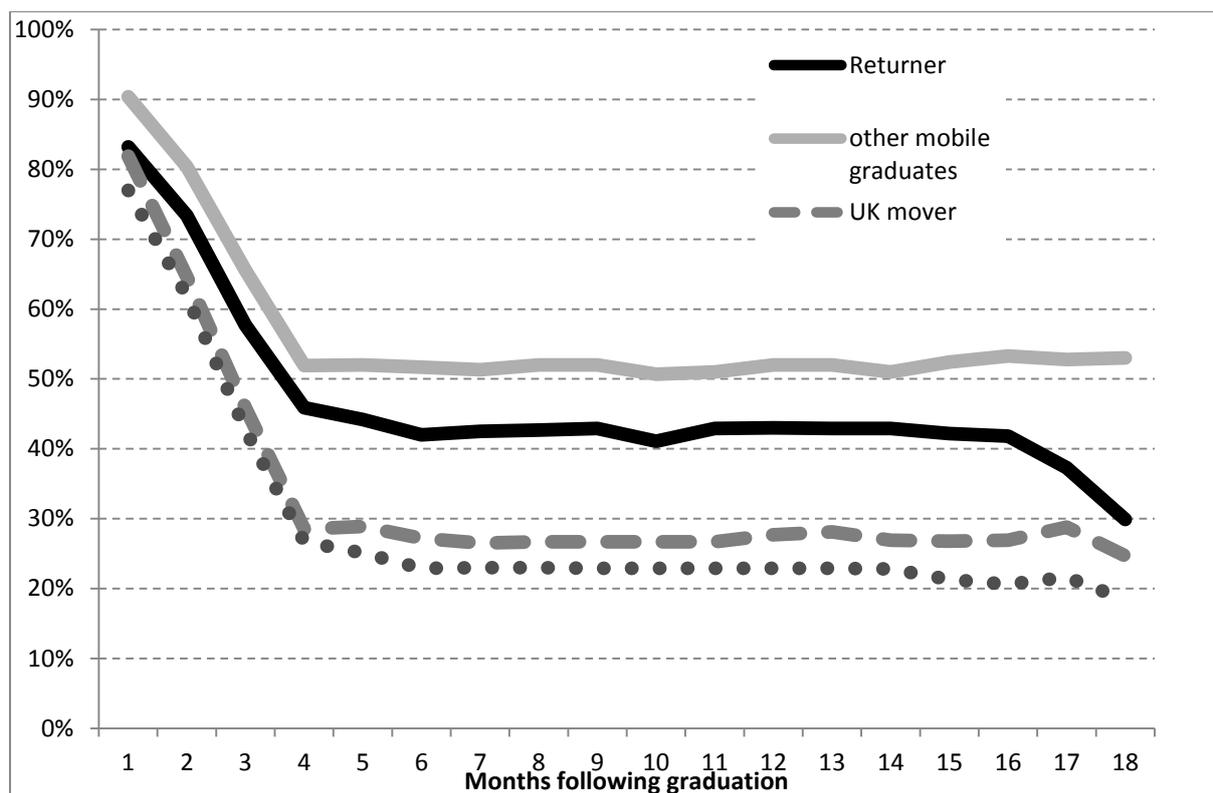


Source: Futuretrack2006, weighted, wave 4 respondents only, graduated leavers living in the UK or in a different European country only.

Further Study

Four months after graduation, approximately half of all other mobile graduates and returners had entered further study, whilst less than 30 per cent of UK stayers and movers had enrolled themselves in further study. These proportions have remained stable over time for all except returners where, after fifteen months, it has decreased.

Figure 3: Entry to Further Study following graduation



Source: Futuretrack2006, weighted, wave 4 respondents only, graduated leavers living in the UK or in a different European country only.

In a recent qualitative study (Tzanakou and Behle, 2016), mobile UK-educated graduates reported barriers getting their UK degree accepted by HEI admission officers and employers.

As a consequence, some graduates had to re-enrol themselves in undergraduate degrees.

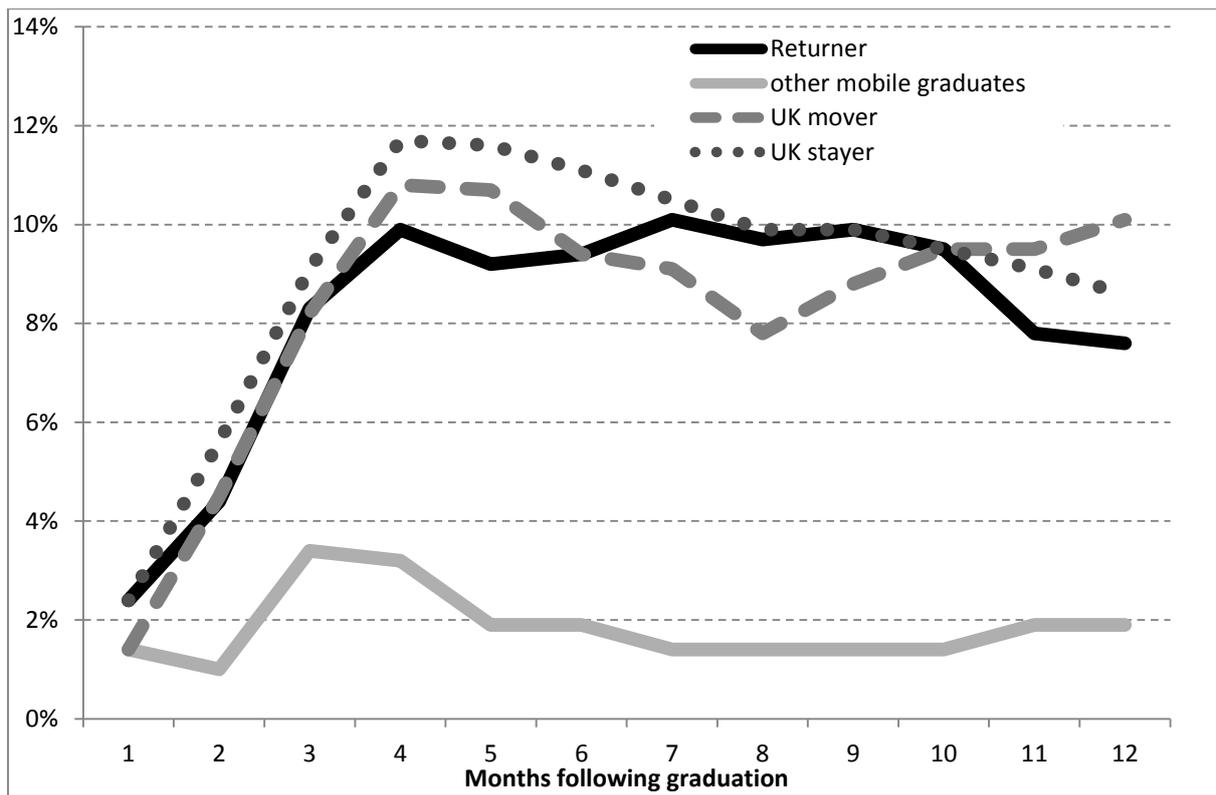
Futuretrack data, however, cannot prove that these findings are representative for all mobile graduates as the overall majority of them entered post-graduate courses. However, the type of course differs slightly dependent upon the type of movers: Of all graduates entering further

study, 10 per cent of returners and eight per cent of UK stayers had started a different undergraduate course one year after graduation. Nine per cent of all UK movers entering further study were enrolled in other courses such as postgraduate teaching certificates or a language school.

Unemployment following graduation

A final figure (figure 4) addresses the proportions of unemployment of the three groups of mobile graduates. Various previous studies (e.g. Lianos and Asteriou, 2004, Støren and Wiers-Jenssen, 2010) showed prolonged periods of unemployment for returners. However, findings based on the Futuretrack data show that compared to UK stayers, there were no major differences in the proportion of returners and UK movers reporting unemployment. Four months after graduation, ten to twelve per cent of UK movers, UK stayers and returners were unemployed, and, over the course of one year, this figure diminished slightly. Other mobile graduates, compared to all other groups, were least likely to face unemployment. In contrast to findings from Norway (Støren and Wiers-Jenssen, 2010), employers do not seem to be uncertain about degrees obtained in the UK.

Figure 4: Unemployment following graduation



Source: Futuretrack2006, weighted, wave 4 respondents only, graduated leavers living in the UK or in a different European country only.

Conclusion

The presented research discussed whether mobile graduates educated in the UK were able to communicate their skills and qualifications i.e. whether human capital is transferable within different European countries or whether it is, fully or in parts, related to country-specific human capital which is not transferable to other contexts (Støren and Wiers-Jenssen, 2010). The current research looked into a cohort of UK-educated graduates and separated out three different groups: UK movers (UK domiciled graduates moving to a different European country); returners (European students returning to their home country); and other mobile graduates (European students returning to a third country). The pathways of these groups of UK-educated graduates were contrasted with those who remained in the UK after their graduation (UK stayer).

Approximately three to four months after graduation, a high proportion of UK movers had entered employment, similarly to UK stayers, whilst returners and other movers were less likely to be employed. After one year, with regards to the quality of employment, it could be seen that of all employed graduates, UK-educated mobile graduates were more likely to enter employment in which they used the knowledge or skills they developed on their undergraduate course, compared to UK stayers. Also, all three groups of UK-educated mobile graduates were more likely than UK stayers to work in expert or orchestrator occupations in which a high level of skills was necessary. Immediately after their graduation, a similarly high proportion of young people entered a non-graduate occupation; however, whilst the proportion of UK movers and UK stayers was fairly constant, the proportion of returners in non-graduate jobs diminished over time.

The results confirm that UK-educated mobile graduates were, as such, successful in entering the national labour market, and that the majority of them could transfer their qualification and

skills gained in the UK to a workplace in a different European country. As a result, the political notion of European mobility as a chance to enter a widened labour market, especially in the current recession, was successful. However, it could be seen that employment in non-graduate occupation was prevailing for many UK movers and UK stayers during the first year after graduation. The similarities between UK stayers and UK movers are even more striking if we consider that UK movers come, on average, from higher social classes and/or have studied at higher tariff HEIs (see Table 1, appendix, and Behle, 2014). Employment in non-graduate occupations can, in some cases, be seen as stepping stones to more skill-appropriate jobs (see for example Purcell et al., 2005, p. 59). In these cases, graduates enter non-graduate employment to avoid unemployment, and, in this position, try to enter a more skill-appropriate occupation. The results clearly show that returners used non-graduate employment as stepping-stones to skill-appropriate employment which was not the case for UK movers. One explanation for the differences within UK-educated mobile graduates could be that many UK movers saw their time in a foreign country either as an extension to their education in which they gained country-specific skills, notably language skills, or that they used their employment to fund an extended holiday, as seen with many New Zealanders who move to the UK (Conradson and Latham, 2005, Frändberg, 2014).

The lower proportion of returners and other mobile graduates in employment (both skill-appropriate and non-graduate employment) is explained by their higher participation rate in further study. Mobility for UK movers is mainly employment-driven whilst mobility of returners and other mobile graduates is educational-driven. One explanation for this difference could be that returning and other mobile students did not find entry to the local labour market due to their UK qualification and thus required a higher degree from a national HEI to acquire country-specific human capital on a higher level study. Alternatively, graduates might also want to extend their careers decision process by entering further study

(Rehn et al., 2011, Marginson and von der Wande, 2007). It could also reveal differences in the reputation of the Bachelor degree as an entry degree to the labour market. In the UK, a BA is the typical mark to enter employment in the majority of professional occupations whilst in many other European countries graduates (and employers) are still sceptical about the acceptance of a BA for their chosen occupation.

The low participation of UK movers in further study also needs to be seen in the context of the prestige of foreign HEIs. Van Mol and Timmerman (2013) found that the prestige of foreign HEIs is rated less by UK students in comparison with their European counterparts. However, considering that more UK movers enter further study compared to UK stayers, this seems to contradict Van Mols and Timmermans findings. Many UK graduates moved to a different European country particularly because they wanted to study at a foreign HEI.

It would be a valid theme for future research to compare the higher participation rate of UK-educated other European graduates in post-graduate courses with that from those who were educated in their home country. It is, however, problematic to find valid figures about the proportion of undergraduates entering further study. For example, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research in Germany published in their Bildungsbericht (Report of Education) a wide range of transition rates between 18 to 60 per cent of Fachhochschule (= polytechnic colleges) graduates and 41 to 90 per cent of graduates from universities entering further Masters' studies, depending on various previous studies and different subjects studied (BMBF 2014).

Previous research specifically on the situation of returning students found prolonged periods of unemployment. Our research could not replicate these findings; on average UK stayers were more likely to be unemployed than UK-educated mobile graduates.

These findings can feed into the current discussion about the *Brexit*, a potential British exit of the EU. Findings show that Intra-European mobility is a possibility open to all types of UK-

educated graduates. It could be seen that a high proportion of UK movers use other European countries to extend their geographical options, and many of them will find work in skill-appropriate employment. If the UK were to leave the joint labour market of the EU, this option would not be automatically open to UK movers; and thus, they would have to find employment within the UK.

Research with regards to the functions of different higher education degrees as entry position in different European countries will create a valuable area of further research, and the presented research neglects mobility within the UK and adds therefor to the research divide between internal and international migration, as stated by King and Conti (2013). It would be of specific interest for UK policy makers to address questions about the pathways of UK internal mobility of graduates, especially in the context of the new tuition fee regime in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Additionally, as seen earlier, it would be valuable to include the European countries mobile graduates had moved to in order to account for country-specific educational and employment regimes. For this paper, however, the destinations had to be excluded due to the sample size of the survey. Other valuable research would look at mobile graduates for a longer period of time to cover entry into employment after further study and to capture possible further mobility.

Appendix:

Table 1: Social composition of the three groups of UK-educated mobile graduates and of UK stayers

| | | UK stayer | UK movers | Returners | Other mobile graduates |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 44% | 47% | 53% | 48% |
| | Female | 56% | 53% | 47% | 52% |
| Ethnicity | White | 85% | 92% | 96% | 89% |
| | Other | 15% | 8% | 4% | 11% |
| socio-economic background | Managerial and professional occupations | 57% | 70% | 73% | 83% |
| | Intermediate occupations | 20% | 15% | 16% | 11% |
| | Routine and manual occupations | 24% | 15% | 11% | 6% |
| | | | | | |
| | Most frequently studied subjects | 12 % Interdisciplinary study; 11 % Creative Arts & Design; 11 % Biology, Vet Sci, Agricultural; 10 % Subjects allied to Medicine | 17 % Interdisciplinary study; 10 % Creative Arts & Design; 9 % Languages; 9 % Biology, Vet Sci, Agricultural; | 15 % Interdisciplinary study; 15 % Business & Admin studies; 14 % Social Studies; 13 % Creative Arts & Design | 19 % Interdisciplinary study; 15 % Business & Admin studies; 10 % Biology, Vet Sci, Agricultural; 9 % Social Studies; |
| Type of HEI | Highest tariff university | 28% | 43% | 36% | 45% |
| | High tariff university | 26% | 25% | 25% | 34% |
| | other | 46% | 32% | 39% | 20% |
| Class of degree | First Class Honours | 22% | 24% | 26% | 44% |
| | Upper Second Class Honours | 49% | 55% | 44% | 45% |
| | Unclassified Second Class Honours | 3% | 1% | 5% | 5% |
| | Lower Second Class Honours | 17% | 12% | 18% | 5% |
| | Third Class Honours | 3% | 3% | 3% | 1% |
| | Ordinary Degree (unclassified) | 3% | 3% | 3% | 1% |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | Other | 3% | 2% | 1% | 0% |
| Length of cours | 3-year course | 48% | 33% | 56% | 38% |
| | other | 52% | 67% | 46% | 62% |
| | n | 13368 | 322 | 230 | 92 |

Source: Futuretrack2006, weighted, wave 4 respondents only, graduated leavers living in the UK or in a different European country only.

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