LIFE COURSE DIFFERENCE IN JOB MOBILITY BETWEEN VOCATIONALLY AND GENERALLY TRAINED WORKERS IN GERMANY

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1 THE PUZZLE

How can we explain the late-career penalty for vocationally trained workers?

Differences in job mobility?

2 THEORY

Two opposed perspectives

Mobility potential

Obsolence risk

While vocational education teaches workers occupation-specific skills, general education conveys skills that are applicable across various occupations. Consequently, generally trained workers have a higher relative mobility potential. By changing occupations they can react flexibly to changing labour market demands while vocational graduates remain locked in their occupations. Thus, one would expect lower occupational mobility for vocationally trained workers relative to general ones.

3 RESULTS

Empirical analyses are based on longitudinal data from the German socio-economic panel. Figure 1 shows predicted probabilities to enter a new occupation over age for different birth cohorts from logistic regression. The dependent variable is 1 when a person enters a new occupation and 0 otherwise. Findings are adjusted for differences in gender (binary) and educational level (high/low dummy). For workers born after 1960 we find that vocational graduates are significantly more likely to enter new occupations than general graduates when surpassing a certain age. Differences between educational groups grow from there on. Figure 2 shows predicted ratios to be upwardly vs. downwardly mobile during occupational transitions over age. Vocational trained have an advantage over general graduates in the late career. The majority of these transitions don’t represent career progression as they are more often associated with downward status mobility.

4 CONCLUSIONS

• Results rather support the obsolence risk perspective. Vocational graduates are more likely than general graduates to switch occupations in their mid and late careers. The majority of these transitions don’t represent career progression as they are more often associated with downward status mobility.

• General graduates seem to have an advantage over vocational graduates in the late career; however, not by using their flexible skill set to switch between occupations and adapt to changing labour market demands but by maintaining their current positions.

5 YOUR COMMENTS

Use a post-it to leave a note. Your thoughts are greatly appreciated!

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