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PAPER

Youth transition from school-to-work: Empirical evidence from five transition countries

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Abstract The purpose of this paper is to analyze the impact of different factors in the transition of young people aged 15 to 29 years from the school to work in five transition countries from the region of South East and Eastern Europe, with similar institutional and economic framework. Through the use of probit model, authors analyze the importance of each of the factors and what is their influence in the transition of young man and women and what determines the probability of being employed or unemployed after finishing the school. The authors found that that factors such as age, sex, financial situation of household, mother's education and having working experience while studying have significance on the probability of a person being employed whereas other factors such as field of education, living area and marital status does not influence.

Keywords: school-to-work transition; youth unemployment; education level; transition countries.

JEL Classification: J64; E24.

1. Introduction

The issue of youth unemployment has gained a lot of attention by researchers **(**Barone and Schizzerotto, 2011; Schmelzer, 2011; Wolbers, 2007**).** Most of the young people, whether in developed or developing countries, go through a difficult transition period from school to entering in the labor market. Different factors and forces influence the process of finding a job. For example, the transition period from school to work has extended and has become more uncertain (Cuervo and Wyn, 2011). Thus, the aim of this study is twofold: to analyze one of the biggest challenges that these countries face, that is unemployment among youth and their transition process from school

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to work. Secondly, to add on the scarce literature that exists on the issues of youth transition from school to work in the transition countries. The primary objective of this paper, consequently, is to analyze the problems that youth (aged 15-29) face in their transition from their education to the labor market in some selected transition countries known for a relatively high level of unemployment of youth. Hence, the authors aim at answering these research question: (i) Which factors influence most the youth transition from school to work; (ii) Does having prior work experience (while studying) help young people find a job easier? To address these questions, we employ probit model with its marginal effect. Moreover, we use data from the School-to-work Transition Survey (SWTS) administered by the ILO, for five countries from the region of South East and Eastern Europe (Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Armenia, and Moldova), for a single year (2015). The main reason why these countries are chosen is the fact that they have similar institutional framework and similar characteristics of the economy.

The contribution of this paper is to fulfill the gap in the existing literature that deals with the issue of youth transition from school to work. The relevance of this research stands in the treatment of the transition to work of youth in countries known for their long transition period. Another contribution of this study is that it takes into consideration some additional factors that other papers have not mentioned, such as work experience during school years, the financial situation of household, mother education.

To summarize, the results of our analysis through the use of probit regression analysis indicate that factors such as age, gender, household financial situation, working experience prior to completing the education have a significant impact on whether a young person will be employed or not. Interestingly though, education as a factor resulted not to have an impact on the probability of a young person being employed which is contrary to other research done in this field.

The rest of paper is organized as follows: Section II reviews the existing contemporary literature on the transition of youth from the education system to the labor market, Section III describes the data used for preparing this paper, Section IV presents the econometric model and gained results, and Section V gives the conclusions of the paper.

2. Literature Review

The unemployment among youth and their transition from the education process to labor market has been a topic of interest for different authors (Audas et. al, 2005;Lassibille et al, 2001; Ryan, 2001). It is an issue that concerns both developed and developing countries. The unemployment of young men and women is a worrying factor. Over the past decades, the process of transition from school to work has become longer and riskier even though the level of education of young men and women has increased significantly. The study by Kolev and Saget (2005) provide evidence from countries in South East Europe (SEE) that even after a decade from the start of the transition period and the economic recovery, in most countries in the region the employment prospects for young workers still remains dismal. Authors like O'Higgins (2004) notice that the rate of long-term unemployment among youth in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia is higher, but not as

much as the long-term rate of unemployment among adults. The youth labor market is characterized by high transition rates between jobs as individuals engage in 'job-shopping' (Miller, 1984) and movements into and out of employment are also common. According to Fares and Tiongson (2007), young men and women encounter different barriers to work in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some of them include the high rate of unemployment and long duration of the transition from school to finding a job**.** In addition, they conclude that the initial period of unemployment has some adverse effects such as reducing the ability of young women and man to integrate into the labor market.

Interestingly, Audas, Berde and Dolton (2005) in their paper that deals with the issue of youth transition from school to work in Hungary conclude that those who do the best in school are more likely to be unemployed, which is contrary to the beliefs that higher level of education can guaranty a better probability of finding a job. The same authors find that females are more likely to be unemployed than males do, although this effect reverses over time and that those who attend vocational/technical schools and have some informal job experience are less likely to be unemployed.

Lassibille et al. (2001) argue that the level of education has a strong impact on the length of unemployment of young people in Spain. They conclude that individuals who leave the school system with upper secondary education have a harder time finding a job at the beginning of their working life than others. However, it is pointed out that participating in non-formal programs can reduce remarkably the time being unemployed of the category of individuals in question.

Another study made by Rosso et al. (2012) concludes that different factors affect the entry to labor market of youth such as territorial disparities and weak geographical mobility; lack of relevant work experience; lack of soft skills and skills mismatch; low level of qualifications; and enrolment in technical and vocational education and training.

Ryan (2001) in his analysis of youth unemployment in seven developed countries (United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Japan, Germany, The Netherland, Sweden) points out that the criticism about school-to-work transitions contain inadequate educational, attainments, high joblessness, excessive job turnover, and weak links between schooling and employment. He also concludes that the countries should develop appropriate institutions that will improve this transition among young people.

Quintini et al. (2007) measured the duration of the transition from school to the first job and concluded that for young people in Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Germany it takes 1 to 2 years to get the first job. However, in other countries such as Finland, Italy, and Spain it takes more than 2 years. A number of studies have indicated that the smoother the transition from school to work is, the more likely young men and women will minimize their experience of unemployment and inactivity (Korpi et al., 2003; Eckstein and Wolpin, 1995). Therefore, this study is yet another attempt to answer the question of which factors influence most the youth transition from school to work and does having prior work experience (while studying) help youth find a job easier.

Authors Dolado, Jansen, Felgueroso, Andrés, &Wölfl (2013), in their research of youth transition in Spain and EU countries, highlight that having a higher level of education in closely related to the length of transition, where individuals that have higher level of

education completed (in this case university education), in average face shorter length of transition in comparison with individual with lower level of education. On the other hand Wolbers(2007), aslo investigated the lenght of transition of youth but his focus was on those individuals that have finished their education. He concluded that in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Luxemburg, and Finland, young people find work quicker. In contrary in countries such as Spain, Italy and Greece, youth faces difficult challenge in finding a job. Even after a year of finishing the education, only a quarter of them managed to find a job place. This partly is due to the fact that these Southern Europe countries were hit very hard by the recent financial crisis.

Bergin, Kelly and McGuiness (2015), in their study of the transition of youth in Ireland point out that the transition rate from unemployment to employment has fallen over time and the rate of transition from employment to unemployment has increased. According to them education has become a new important factor in getting out from unemployment and preventing the transition to unemployment. But beside education, the gender also determines the transition and that the females are in disadvantage against men. In the analysis that included the 27 EU countries,Hadjivassiliou, Kirchner Sala&Speckesser (2015), managed to identify the factors and barriers that affect youth transition. According to them factors such as young age, gender (being a women), education (having lower level of education), are the main barriers that hinder youth transition toward labor market. But the authors found that youth that have higher level of education and have parents with higher level of education improves the transition and helps youth find job quicker than those whose parents have lower level of education.Riphahn(2002) conclusions are in line with Hadjivassiliou et. al. According to her, youth transition towards labor market is influenced by both the level of education of youth and their parents. Youth people, whose parents have better education, have better probability of having a shorter length of transition and finding a job quicker. The research done by Bartlett el. al (2016), point out also that that individuals with higher levels of education have a lower probability of being unemployed or have an easier transition.

On the other hand, Pastore (2009), concludes although in other countries having better education (including professional education) gives you better changes of having smother transition, that in not the case in Mongolia, where youth people that have professional education face difficulties in finding a job.

In another research done by Kelly et. al(2014), where they analyse the youth transition in and out of unemployment in Ireland, highlight that different factors impact the youth transition and these factor are such as: gender, age, nationality, the level of education, geographic location and previous unemployment. According to them education level is one of the most important factors that influence in finding a job by youth. That is, having higher level of education increases the possibility of transition towards employment and reduces the waiting time.Berloffa, Modena & Villa (2015), also highlight that different factor influence the transition of youth and those factors are: gender, enticity, disability, regional inequality and family financial situation, initial disparities in skills and education, the rigidity of institutions such as schools, universities, training systems, employment agencies and labor market legislation, that do not provide the skills needed for the young

in facing the labor market.The research done by Marelli & Vakulenko (2016), where they study youth unemployment in Italy and Russia, it focuses on individual and family determinants. According to them factors that impact youth unemployment in Italy are as such: age (the probability of being unemployed decreases with age), gender (women are more likely to be unemployed), marital status (singles are more likely to be unemployed), region (living in rural area, youth are likely to be unemployed), household income (higher income is related to a better probability of being employed). Regarding the education variable it is concluded that having only secondary education increases the likelihood of being unemployed whereas the tertiary education was insignificant. On the other hand in Russia these factors influence on youth unemployment: age (same as Italy's case the probability of being unemployed decreases with age), marital status (same as in the case of Italy singles are more likely to be unemployed) and household income (same as Italy higher income is related to a better probability of being employed). However, other factors differ. Education level contrary to Italy is insignificant and region (rural/urban) where the probability of being unemployed is higher in urban areas.

According to Quintini & Manfredi (2009), young people in USA have a shorter transition that their peers in Europe. The period of transition in USA is less than 6 months, whereas in Europe, only in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Ireland and UK, the length is less than a year. In other countries in can go up to 2 years or more. They highlight that in those countries where the apprenticeship programme is well managed, helps youth have a shorter transition period. It is also concluded that individual factors such as qualifications, gender, nationality and maternity, affect the probability of labor market detachment and transition period.

The study of Chung, Bekker & Houwing (2012), which analyzes the impact of the recent crisis, highlights that the recent financial crisis has hit the youth more than anybody else. Even after finishing the education and/or training, youth population faces bigger risk of being unemployed. But the education can have a positive impact, especially those that have lower level of education or qualifications. But in this regard there should have in mind the so called 'educational inflation', which can have negative impact and can result in increased unemployment. Bruno et. al (2016), point out that the recent financial crises has had a huge impact on the unemployment rate of young people. According to them factors such as GDP growth and active labor market policies are significant in dealing with unemployment and have impact on youth unemployment rate, and incite employment. Boot et al. (2016) claim that the financial crisis has hit more the category of young people that are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and that this group has seen a sharp rise. But beside this a lot of countries have faced with increased rate of youth unemployment, which can impact significantly the productivity and potential growth.

Caroleo & Pastore (2007), in their study conclude that the experience gap effect impacts the process of getting employed of youth. According to them, there are two factors that minimize the impact of youth experience gap, labor market flexibility and low entry wages. Their conclusion about the approach of the problem of school to work transition is different European countries that were study, is that countries that have dual educational systems, active labor market policies target the groups that are in need, the combination of

labor market flexibility with high education attainment, and the spread of the cost of youth unemployment, face lower level of youth unemployment.

3. Data description

The data used in this paper are from the School-to-work Transition Survey (SWTS) administered by the ILO, for the following countries: Armenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Moldova. Data used are in this paper are cross-sectional (surveys conducted in 2014), obtained from School-to-work Transition Survey (SWTS), administered by ILO. The survey included 11.313 persons, aged 15-29 years. Given that our interest is more towards the youth that has already finished their studies and analyzing their transition, we removed the youth that is still studying and those that are not participating in the labor force (not employed and not seeking for a job). Consequently, our total sample number went down to 2610 persons.

The dependent variable is if a person is employed or unemployed. The independent variables are as follow age, gender, area of living, marital status, father's and mother's level of education, highest level of education completed, the financial situation of household, field of education, working experience while studying. To estimate the probability of a person that would be employed, we employ the Probit Regression analysis and its marginal effect. The dependent variable takes value 1 for being employed and 0 otherwise (unemployed). We define each variable as follow:

Figure 1. Definition of variables

Variable	Description
Dependent variable	
Yemp=1	Youth employment includes all person aged 15-29 during the mention period, without work but ready to work
Yemp=0	Otherwise (unemployed)
Explanatory variables	
Age	Age of the youth between 15-29 years
Sex	Female =1, male = 0
Maritial_status	Not married =1, married = 0
Household financial situation	Good = 1, bad = 0
Father's education	University degree=1, High school or less = 0
Mother's education	University degree=1, High school or less = 0
Education level completed	University degree=1, High school or less = 0
Field of education	Social science = 1, Natural/Technical science = 0
Working while studying	Yes =1, No = 0
Unemployment Spell (transition)	A week to year=0, 1-2 years=1, More than 2 year =2

In the table below we present the descriptive statistics of the variables applied in the econometric model.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Std. Dev.
Emp_unemployed	2610	.4844375
Area	2610	.4959841
Age	2610	3.104311
Sex	2610	.4926736
Maritial_status	2610	.4538667
Household financial situation	2610	.90914
Father's education	2610	.6454263
Mother's education	2610	.715908
Education level completed	2610	.6038758
Field of education	2610	2.646757
Working while studying	2610	.3561983
Unemployment Spell	2610	.5248631

Source: Authors calculation

4. Econometric model and results

As we mentioned above, in this paper we apply the Probit Regression in order to measure the phenomena of youth transition from school to work. The dependent variable is the probability of being employed or unemployed after you finish your studies. The independent variables are area, age, sex, marital status, household financial situation, father's education level, mother's education level, education level of the person, the field of education, work experience while studying.

The specification of the model is as follows:

$$Y(Empl)=B_0+B_1area+B_2(age)+B_3(sex)+B_4(hhsitu)+B_5(fatheredu)+B_6(matheredu)+B_7(edulev)+B_8(fieldedu)+B_9(workstudy)+B_{10}(UnempSpell)$$

The results of the computed model are presented in table 3.

Table 3 - Probit model results of transition from school to work

Variable	Coefficient	Marginal Effect
Area	-.0382843	-.0134848
Age	.0471368**	.0166029
Sex	-.2584263*	-.0910251
Marital_status	-.0110142	-.0038795
Household financial situation	.1938952*	.0682954

Variable		Coefficient	Marginal Effect
Father's education		.0492024	.0173305
Mother's education		.2074117*	.0730563
Education level completed		-.0263642**	-.0092862
Field of education		-.0045952	-.0016186
Working while studying		.7163987***	.2523361
Unemployment spell	A week to a year	.0499121***	-.3114785
	A year to two	.0468478***	-.4980253
	More than two years	.0385714***	-.6358414

Source: Authors calculation
Note: The symbols ***, **, * denote that the coefficient is statistically different from zero at 1, 5 and 10 percent, respectively

After generating the probit model for the dependent variable (being employed or unemployed), we find that coefficients for age, sex, household financial situation, mother education level, working experience while studying have significance. After generating the probit model we also calculated the marginal effects so that we can have a better picture of the effects that above mentioned independent variables have on the dependent variable. Table 3 shows the marginal effects analysis of probit model.

The coefficient of age is positive and statistically significant. This indicates that a change in the age by one year (being one year older) is more likely to increase the probability of a person being employed by 1.6%, which is in line with the conclusions of Kelly et. al(2014).

A statistically significant but negative correlation is found between employment and sex, i.e. females are less likely to be employed in comparison to man by 9.1%, and mainlyfemales' experience a harder transition from school to finding a job than man do. This is in line with the conclusions of other authors (Hadjivassiliou, Kirchner Sala&Speckesser, 2015; Quintini&Manfredi, 2009; Bergin, Kelly and McGuiness, 2015), but in opposite to the findings of Audas et al. (2005), who in their analysis of the youth transition to the labor market in Hungary found that females are less likely than males to be unemployed.

Young women and man that have better "household financial situation" are more likely to get employed than those that have average or bad financial situation. This coefficient is statistically significant. That means that moving from one category of the household financial situation (e.g. from a bad situation to country average) increases the probability of being employed by 6.8%. Another variable that has significance in this model is mother's level of education. If the mother of a young person has a higher level of education, it increases the probability of being employed by 7.3%. This is in line with the conclusion of Hadjivassiliou, Kirchner Sala & Speckesser (2015) and Riphahn (2002), who as mentioned above, conclude that having parents with higher level of

education improves the transition and helps young people find job quicker than the rest. A positive and statistically significant coefficient is "having working experience while studying". The results show that a person that has had a working experience while studying has 25.2% probability of being employed than a person that doesn't have working experience. This is an interesting indicator that should be taken into consideration. The result is consistent with the findings of Rosso et al. (2012). They claim that lack of work experience is one of the factors that impact negatively in the transition process of youth.

Even though we expected that education as a variable to have an impact on the probability of being employed or not, in our case it proved that education doesn't have significance. This is contrary to the findings of Fares & Tiongson (2007) and Riphahn (2002), who conclude that education is more likely to have a positive impact on the possibility of being employed and ease the transition period.

About the unemployment spell or the duration of transition, the result the higher the period of transition to the labor market, the higher is the probability of a young person to stay unemployed. A person with transition period of a week to a year, has a lower probability of 31.1% getting employed than the person with a period less than a week. The same applies to the other two categories of transition period. If a young person stays in transition for a year to two years, her or his probability of employment is lower for 49.8%, and if the young person is in transition for more than 2 years the probability will be lower for 63.5%. It be concluded that the scarring effect has a tendency to grow with the increase of the period of transition to the job place (i.e. the unemployment period), which has a significant effect of youth opportunities for future employment.

Conclusions

The main purpose of this paper was to give an empirical analysis of the factors that have an impact on the process of transition of youth from school to work in transition countries. Applying probit model and their marginal effecton a sample of 2610 individuals, we estimated the factors that influence the probability of a person being employed or unemployed. The data was taken from the survey of ILO (International Labor Organization) for 5 countries in transition. In short, our empirical analysis suggests that males are more likely to be employed than females, which in fact shows that in these transition countries females are not much integrated into the labor market. The probability of being employed increases by the age. The person with a better household financial situation is more likely to be employed. Interestingly, mother's level of education has an impact on the probability of a person being employed. Having a prior working experience (while studying) increases the probability of being employed. We conclude that the level of education and field of education doesn't have significant contribution in the transition process of a young person to be employed although a lot of studies point out the opposite. This might be due to the fact of mismatch between educational institutions (labor market offer) and demand by the labor market, as we witness an increase number of highly educated people, whereas the labor market

demands are toward less skilled and educated persons. The policy recommendation in this regard are that these countries should and must give priority and high importance of vocational/technical education and training, to strength the apprenticeship programmes and the dual (work-study programme) according to some proven models, which were successful for many years. These countries must work on narrowing the mismatch gap between education institutions and the industry.

Unfortunately, this research does not include the time a young person needs to find her/his first job and the length of the process of transition from school to the labor market in transition countries. Future studies should also focus on the importance of vocational/technical studies in the transition of youth.

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