Educational Mobility in Kyrgyzstan

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Educated individuals, especially with a university and doctoral degrees, are respected members of the Kyrgyz society. A university degree, along with its direct function of preparing students to the labor market, serves also an important social signaling function. As a number of higher educational institutions rapidly increased, a larger proportion of high school graduates pursue them. This explains in a great extent why a low level of association of educational level between parents and their offspring remained unchanged in the last 15 years. Yet, this high educational mobility tells nothing about employment status of the recent university graduates, as there is clearly excessive supply. Appropriate employers prefer selecting graduates from the best universities, while the transformed structure of the Kyrgyz economy demands them less.

This paper presents initial estimates of educational mobility in Kyrgyzstan and labor market outcomes on basis of two cohorts. The first cohort represent individuals who obtained post-secondary level education in period around 1990, and thus faced limited educational choice and more competitive environment. The second cohort (of the same age as the first one in year 2010), represents a group, which faced much diverse educational opportunities. A hypothesis we examine is that participation in the labor market and return to education of the second cohort is worse compared to the first group, as a result of tighter labor market and declined quality of education. For the analysis, we use 1997 Kyrgyz Multipurpose Household Survey, conducted by the World Bank, and 2010 Life in Kyrgyzstan Panel Survey, conducted by DIW Berlin. Both surveys comprise around 7,000 individuals and 3,000 households. We exploit a range of econometric tools, including OLS, discrete models, and quintile regression analysis. Along with refreshed estimates of the intergenerational mobility in Kyrgyzstan, the findings have implications for educational and labor market policies.