

Career aspirations of economics students on the example of UMCS Faculty of Economics

Magdalena Panasiuk¹

Introduction

In order to stay competitive contemporary organizations and companies existing in societies based on knowledge and new technologies have to look for new ways that would help them gain competitive advantage. Employers report demands regarding new professions and skills. Classical labor market models are applied less frequently since they are limited by tight regulations [Wiśniewski 2004: 287]. The literature of the subject draws attention to the necessity to enhance labor market flexibility. Companies need to react rapidly to environmental changes in order to gain competitiveness, and thus adjust employment in company in regard to scale and possessed skills. Therefore, employees have to be prepared to diverse forms of employment and ready to change place of residence, develop their skills or re-qualify [Kryńska 2007: 6–7].

Ongoing changes and need to adjust employees to the job market creates special situation for students and university graduates. They represent the Z generation. Unfortunately, according to the report carried out by Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy in Lublin (Province Employment Office in Lublin) young people tend to show interest in the job market after they graduate from universities [*Perspektywy ludzi młodych na rynku pracy* 2011]. Most students would like to take up a job; however, they remain passive. Therefore, this issue is often discussed research, both in terms of theory and practice.

The aim of this article is to analyze and evaluate the preferences of students studying economics for future employers. The research method used in the study is critical analysis of literature and survey research. Selected methods arise from the specific research. The study was conducted among the students of the Faculty of Economics of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, which gives a narrower picture of the analyzed issue. Results can not be transposed into the entire population of students or students of economics studies in other parts of Poland.

Labor market – characteristics

labor market is a set of economic elements that shape labor supply dimension and labor demand. Labor supply is created by people looking for a job. Employers are respon-

¹ Mgr Magdalena Panasiuk, Zakład Statystyki i Ekonometrii, Wydział Ekonomiczny, Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie e-mail: m.panasiuk@poczta.umcs.lublin.pl

sible for creation of labor demand [Karpowicz 2007: 281]. The most important factors impacting labor demand are: demand for goods and services as well as costs and labor efficiency. Thus, labor demand is a secondary demand – resulting from demand for services or products which creation requires work. The exchange products are: availability, physical strength, qualifications, education, skills etc.

According to Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Central Statistical Office, GUS) the number of people with higher education has been increasing for many years. Based on schooling index (index of education prevalence) it may be assumed that educational boom is coming to an end. After its systematical growth until the 2011–2012 academic year, this index decreased by 3.3% in the 2015–2016 academic year. The reason for it is the mismatch between labor supply and employers' needs.

Present rapid decrease in the number of students is a result of spreading a new studies system in all Polish universities, which is based on three cycles. Since the 2012–2013 academic year the number of people undergoing uniform master's studies has started to increase and by the 2015–2016 academic year it was increased by 1.2%. Within the analyzed period of time a significant decrease in the number of students undergoing undergraduate studies was reported by 1.8%.

In 2015, the most over-populated professions demanding higher education included: economists (18.3 thousand more unemployed comparing to job offers), educators (17.2 thousand) and public administration specialists (14.2 thousand), which is certainly related to the mismatch in education structure against labor market needs. According to the report of Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy (MRPiPS) regarding scarce, sustainable and surplus occupations there are 4 groups of occupations in Poland. The most numerous one comprises scarce occupations. Students of economic studies that are willing to change their place of residence should particularly draw their attention to such scarce occupations as: employment agents, sales specialists, financial and investment advisers, finance managers, industrial production managers, managers at financial and insurance institutions, financial assets dealers and brokers as well as human resources specialists. The situation regarding scarce occupations is presented differently in lubelskie voivodeship, where the survey was carried out among students. Scarce occupations that could arouse interest among students of economic studies are only sales specialists. The rest of groups are either sustainable or surplus [<http://www.mpips.gov.pl/analizy-i-raporty>].

Students of economic studies are aware of the difficult situation related to finding a job after graduation. Most of them declare to start their own business [Central Statistical Office and Statistical Office in Gdańsk 2016]. Young people in Poland are in a relatively difficult position in the job market compared to older people. According to data collected by MRPIPS only 33.2% of young people are professionally active. At the age of 15–24 only a little but over every fourth person works, whereas in the age group of 25–34 78.7% people work [*Informacja sygnałna na temat zawodów deficytowych...* 2017]. According to data provided by Eurostat harmonized unemployment rate of youth in November 2015 added up to 20.5% in Poland, thus it was 2.5 times higher than harmonized unemployment rate in total (7.2%). Unemployment rate of youth in Poland was also slightly higher than the average in the European Union (20%). A difficult position of youth on the job market is a phenomenon observed almost in the whole European Union, which justifies the necessity to take actions in order to improve the situation. During the crisis in 2009,

where total unemployment increased by over 28%, the number of young unemployed people increase by almost 40% as well as the number of unemployed registered people increased to 22.5%. However, next year, when the situation started to stabilize itself, the number of young unemployed people was significantly smaller than the total number, and while in 2011 total unemployment increased by 1.4%, the number of unemployed people by 25 years decreased by 2.9% [<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>].

Young people have been a dominant group among activated unemployed people for years. In 2005-2009 around 265 thousand young people were activated every year. The most were activated in 2010 – 294.6 thousand. This group of unemployed people has been invariably dominating among unemployed people that begin job seniority – over half of internship participants are not 25 years old. During first 11 months of 2015 internships were taken up by 95.6 thousand of young unemployed people, trainings were taken up by 17.9 thousand and subsidized employment were taken up by 32.1 thousand. From January to November 2015 147.6 thousand young people used active anti-unemployment forms; they comprised 30.6% of total unemployed people that used this kind of help. According to the Central Statistical Office, the unemployment rate of Poles aged 15-24 was 14.6% in the second quarter of 2017. Compared to the first quarter of 2017, it decreased by 0.7 percentage points. Compared to the second quarter of 2016, it decreased by 2.4 percentage points. The annual growth rate is negative since the fourth quarter of 2013, which means that since 15 quarters there has been a drop in the youth unemployment rate [<http://www.mpips.gov.pl/analizy-i-raporty>; <http://www.rynek.pracy.pl>; <http://www.stat.gov.pl>].

The difficult situation of youth on the job market is often related to lack of professional experience as well as mismatch of qualifications to the needs of the labor market. An increasing part of young people decides to improve their professional qualifications by obtaining higher education in order to increase their possibilities to find a suitable job. While obtaining higher education they take part in internships, trainings or take up employments. A dynamic development of education, especially higher education fosters that situation, which results in over fourfold increase of the number of students within last 20 years.

Young people on the labor market

social order regarding employment is currently undergoing major transformations. Institutions and organizations have a stabilizing effect on it and they also shape human's actions. This system is variable. Human and his actions are the catalyst responsible for that change [Chmielewski, 2011: 212–217]. Undoubtedly, young people are participants involved in that change. They hold a special position on the job market in regard to their modernization potential, which is understood as a greater than among other groups mobility, readiness to change and risk take. Accentuating young people as a separate group is caused by its special position on the job market.

People born in 1980–2000 are called the Millennials generation. They are often characterized as a claiming generation. They are leading in their lives completely different priorities than their parents [Bara 2014]. The Polish generation of Millennials is not homogeneous. You can distinguish two groups of this generation. The 1980-1989 season

is referred to as the Y generation and the 1990–2000 generation is the Z generation. The characteristics of Generation Y are, first and foremost, optimism, the ability to live on and off the grid, and rapid adaptation of technological innovations. Friends, family, health, fame and money are important values in their daily lives. Moreover, they are convinced that pugnacity and hard work will help in achieving the objectives. In turn, the Z generation is also determined optimists, but do not know the world without the Internet or mobile phone. Technology is the main tool for them to expand their knowledge. Unlike the previous generations, it was raised among modern technologies and did not create them. Current students of the first year of studies are included to Generation Z [*OMG! Czyli jak mówić do polskich Milenialsów* 2014].

Young people actively look for their place on the job market as well as define their professional career path. Social studies distinguish various thresholds used to enter a discussed social group, e.g. by setting up an independent household. In order to achieve it, taking up a stable job and providing income are required. Dynamic changes undergoing in economies have triggered the change in the criteria of adulthood. Young people with no professional experience more often face problems related to taking up a stable employment and entering the job market. Transition from industrial society to the economy based on knowledge influenced the job market transformation. It impacted prolongation of the youth period and its diversity. These changes result from a few permeating processes:

- Prolongation of the youth education period,
- Youths' belief in a worse employment and earning situation in comparison to older people,
- Youths' use of various paths related to entering adult life, withdrawal from a traditional family model and professional career [Giermanowska 2013: 200–202].

Prolongation of before-employment period is mostly a result of social-economical changes in economies, namely lack of work, unstable professional situation, the necessity to improve qualifications, low income as well as work beyond the terms of its agreement. These factors cause postponing “adulthood” for later. In literature of the subject this phenomenon functions known as “post-adolescence” or “emerging adulthood”. The characteristic of people belonging to this group is lack of precised life plans as well as having different social partners. Such people are independent only in certain life aspects and remain significantly dependent from their parents. Typical age for this period is 20–29. In Poland this group is comprised by students and people entering the job market. Since the 1990s intensification of these processes is to be watched. Lack of work, continuation of education and maintained life style result in later entering an adult life by young people. This is affected by postponing a decision regarding setting up a family and intensification of diverse life styles [Fatyga 2002: 307–320].

Taking up employment is an element allowing to gain an adult status, income, people's respect, independence from a family as well as develop a network of contacts. Youth life chances are determined by their individual characteristics as well as place of start in life. Family capital plays an important role (social, cultural and economical capital). Well-off families find it easier to provide an appropriate level of education (additional courses, private lessons and trainings). Education helps obtain a better job position, and thus income and prestige. High cultural capital facilitates maintaining a high social position, while social capital is responsible for contacts, acquaintances as well as family and

social connections. Not only is a better “start” in life inherited, but also poverty, poorness and marginalization. Young people may choose from a diverse range of life styles, however, some of them are limited by person’s origin, affiliation to a social group, sex, age, education, situation on the job market and many more individual factors.

Research problems and methodology

the aim of this article is to analyze and evaluate the preferences of students studying economics for future employers. The goal was examined using an online survey research and critical analysis of literature. Selected methods arise from the specific research. The study was conducted among the students of the Faculty of Economics of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin because the study of a larger population would be very expensive. This gives a narrower picture of the analyzed issue. Results can not be transposed into the entire population of students or students of economics studies in other parts of Poland. Survey was composed of respondent specifications and relevant questions. Survey included questions about willingness to work during their studies, space exploration jobs, the preferred type of company and motivations to work.

The student population in the academic year 2016/2017 of the Faculty of Economics of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin was 3076 people. At a fixed confidence level of $\alpha = 0.95$, fraction size 0.5 and a maximum error of 8%, at least 143 people should participate in the study. Research among students was carried out by means of electronic survey. The survey was conducted in February and March 2017. There were 177 responds; after rejecting wrongly answered or incomplete questionnaires 170 completed questionnaires remained. Table 1 presents the structure of respondents.

Table 1. The Structure of Responders (%)

Sex	
Female	81.2%
Male	18.8%
Field of study	
Economics	52.94%
Finances and Accounting	23.53%
Mathematics and Finances	11.76%
Management	7.06%
Other	4.71%
Place of residence	
Village	45.9%
City with up to 10 thousand residents	5.9%
City with 10 to 100 thousand residents	12.9%
City with 100 to 400 thousand residents	30.6%
City with more than 400 thousand residents	4.7%

Source: Self-study based on carried-out survey.

The analysis describing responders showed that over half of them is studying Economics, 23,53% Finances and Accounting, 11.76% Mathematics and Finances and 7.06% Management. In category “other” students are studying Law and Business Studies, Economic Analytics and Logistics. People living in village were dominant (45.9%) as well as people living in city with 100 to 400 thousand residents.

Results

the questionnaire was started with questions regarding the willingness to take up a job during time of studying. Most students (over 80%) declared that they would like to do it, 4.7% decided to focus solely on studies and the rest (15.3%) did not have any opinion about it. Unfortunately, these answers are not reflected in practice. Only 38.8% of responders are looking for a job. There are only 34.8% of all questioned women and 43.8% of all questioned men that are currently in search for a job.

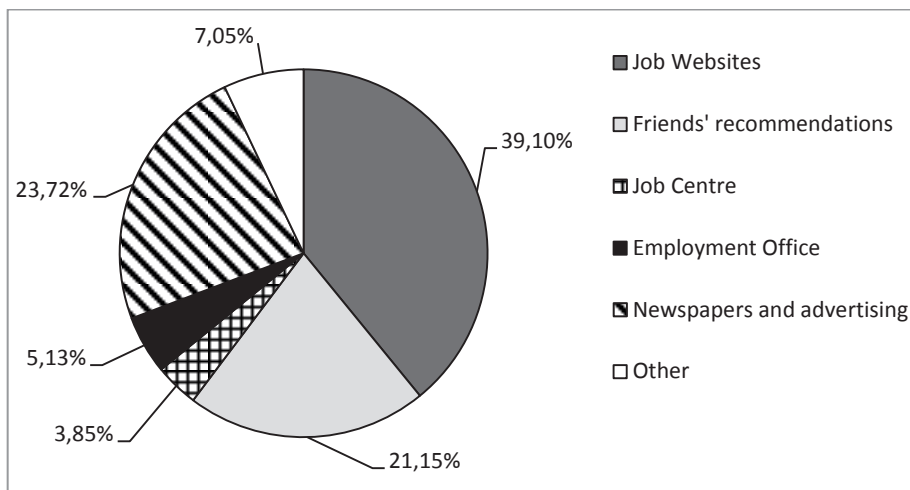


Fig. 1. Job Hunting Sites

Source: Self-study based on carried-out survey.

Students of economic studies are mostly looking for a job on job websites 39.1%, in newspapers 23.72% and via friends’ recommendations 21.15%. The least popular means of job hunting are job centers 3.85%, employment offices 5.13% and other places mentioned by responders, such as: Biuro Karier UMCS (Carrier Services Office at UMCS) and social media networks (Facebook). Thanks to this data it can be assumed that students mostly look at offers posted on the Internet. Job offers provided by employment offices and job centers do not enjoy popularity.

Students declared in the next question what type of company they would like to work in. They could choose maximally two forms. 52.9% chose their own company, 45.9% medium-sized enterprise, 37.6% corporation, 20% small enterprise and 9.4% chose working for a family company. Over half of students of economic studies plan to set up their

own business, which is the most risky form. Data presented above is related to specific character of their chosen fields of study and received education.

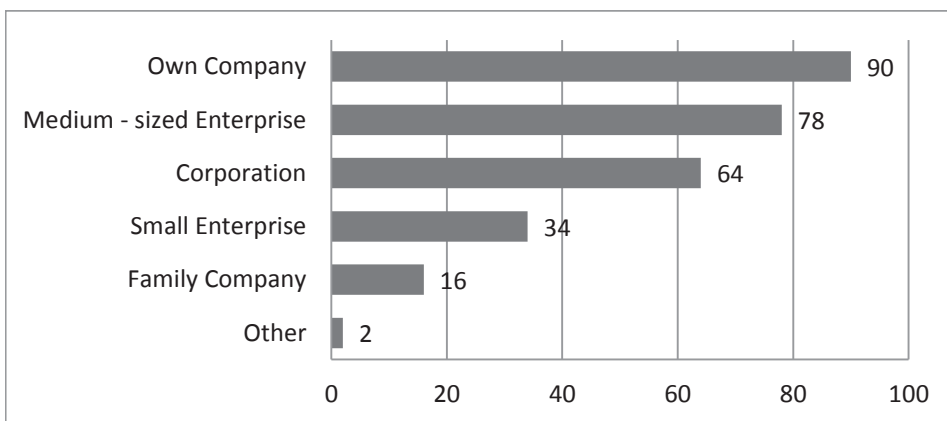


Fig. 2. Types of Companies that You Would Like to Work in (The respondent could choose more than one answer)

Source: Self-study based on carried-out survey

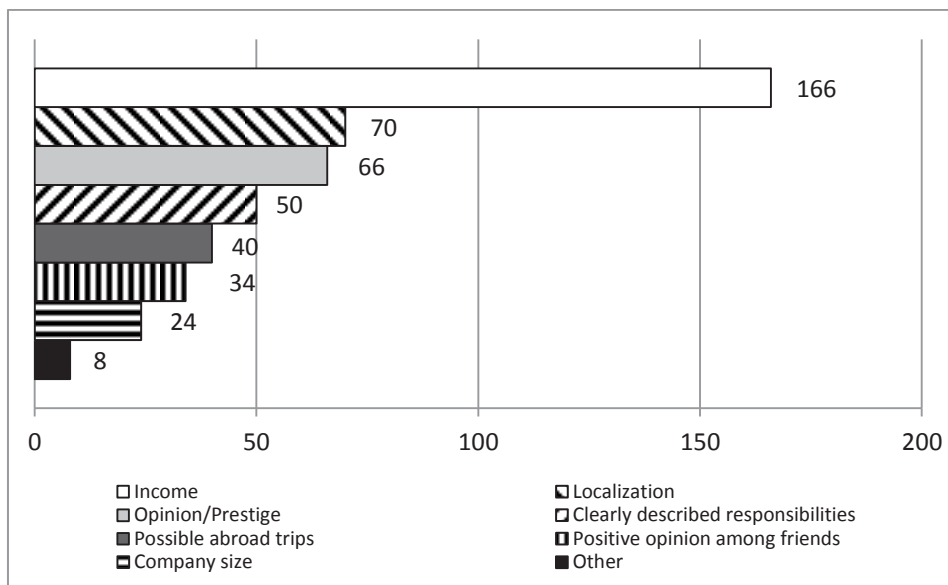


Fig. 3. Factors Motivating to Take up Employment (The respondent could choose more than one answer)

Source: Self-study based on carried-out survey

Motivation is the fundamental instrument encouraging people to work. People having a low level of motivation may be showing low effectivity at performing occupation. It is worth pointing out that the process of motivating is diverse and should be individualized. Motivators are affected by time factor; time factor determines furthermore that any

factor that stimulates to take action now may not be motivating in the future. Therefore, it is advised to monitor determinants which induce motivation [Czechowska-Bieluga and others 2009: 40–43]. People looking for a job are generally motivated by standard reasons such as income, recognition at work or localization. A very important factor determining whether students take up a job is undoubtedly income. 97.6% of responders find it the key factor that is encouraging to take up employment. Next factor that motivates 41.2% of responders is localization. Due to taken-up studies responders mobility is limited. Most of them use public transport to commute. When it comes to job choices students mobility is limited to the city of Lublin and its vicinity. The analysis shows that students of economic studies are aware of that barrier. Opinion, prestige, respect among friends, neighbors and family is important to 38.8% of responders. Social position related to carried-out work is also a factor stimulating commitment to work for many people. What kind of job is prestigious for students of economic studies? First and foremost, it depends on individual predispositions and general opinion about profession in society.

In the open question, the students spoke about their preferred future profession. Students pointed at such professions as: broker, accountant, financial analyst, tax adviser, manager, estate agent and HR specialist. Many students do not realize that they are motivated by company prestige. Less important are clearly described responsibilities, possible abroad trips, positive opinion among friends or company size.

Conclusions

The results from the sample study confirm that the professional aspirations of students studying economics are related to the characteristics of the generation. This data suggests that students of economic studies are on the one hand aware of market economy realities, whereas on the other hand they are not consequent in striving to accomplish planned professional goals. They declare the willingness to take up a job while most of them are not looking for it. Most of the students in the UMCS Faculty of Economics used job portals to find work. The results have confirmed one of the characteristics of the Z generation, which is the preference of technology. Students of economic studies are aware of the difficult situation on the job market; therefore, over half of them are planning to set up their own business. Students have an entrepreneurial attitude. The analysis shows that factors influencing job satisfaction, and thus willingness to perform it, are diverse. Some students are motivated by high income, whereas others by a good atmosphere in company or its market position. Students consider work from the financial point of view. Making money, being independent and fulfilling plans related to their adult life are main possibilities provided by working.

The presented results do not reflect all the aspects that should be touched upon in analyzing the behavior of the generation Z on the labor market. In addition, due to the small sample of research, these studies can be considered as pilot studies of a local nature. The results show that the answers of the respondents corresponds to the accepted stereotypes for the generation Z. It is important to conduct further research and investigations in the other higher education sector. This is not only a very important scientific problem. It is important in terms of application for employers preparing job offers as

well as for the government in terms of labor market policy. In order to unlock untapped potential, it is necessary to invest in actions supporting setting-up their own businesses.

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Aspiracje zawodowe studentów kierunków ekonomicznych na przykładzie studentów Wydziału Ekonomicznego UMCS

Streszczenie

W artykule podjęto rozważania na temat aspiracji zawodowych studentów studiów ekonomicznych należących do pokolenia Z. Celem artykułu jest określenie aspiracji zawodowych młodych osób dopiero wkraczających na rynek pracy. Czynniki wpływające na przyszłą satysfakcję z pracy, a tym samym chęć jej wykonywania, są zróżnicowane. Dla jednych czynnikiem motywującym będzie wysokie wynagrodzenie, natomiast dla innych będzie to dobra atmosfera w firmie bądź jej pozycja na rynku. W artykule scharakteryzowano również sytuację na polskim rynku pracy. W pracy wykorzystano literaturę przedmiotu, informacje o działaniach Ministerstwa Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, a także zaprezentowano wyniki badań ankietowych przeprowadzonych w 2017 r. wśród 170 studentów Wydziału Ekonomicznego Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie.

Słowa kluczowe: aspiracje zawodowe, pokolenie Z, rynek pracy, studenci kierunków ekonomicznych.

