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Longitudinal Analysis of Post-diploma Orientation among Young People of Bari

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the current status of orientation in the final year of secondary school degree, in order to guide pupils toward well weighted decisions. It is known that students are confused at the end of the secondary education, viewing the opportunities that exist in the academic world or in the work market. This research could give a tool to students to better explore their professional or formative futures, through a gap analysis between what students projected (ex-ante survey) and their effective choice after the end of their secondary education (ex-post choice). An easy indicator was introduced in order to measure the coherence between ex-ante and final choices after first diploma. This indicator was placed at the base of the subsequent multivariate analyses (segmentation analysis and neural network analysis) in order to identify a forecasting model.

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Keywords: orientation; secondary schools; coherence of choices; segmentation analysis; neural networks.

1. Aims and methods of research

The orientation is the process that a person implements in a spontaneous way to manage his own relationship with the training and work experience, as well as the vocational guidance conducted by experts in a positive way to support the ability to cope with this process by the subject.

The research described here aims to provide information and identify elements that could be a "background" reference of the choices of students and trainers. It is based on a sample survey that involved 517 students of the fifth

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class of eight Secondary Institutes second-degree (high schools), located within the town of Bari and chosen with random procedure from a list of institutes that provided their availability.

Data collection took place at two separate times, with different questionnaires that were submitted to the same respondents at different times: in the months of April-May 2010 to students within sampled institutes, and then, after 7-12 months, the available subjects were contacted by phone or e-mail to answer a short questionnaire aiming to know the actual choice (tertiary education or work) they undertook. Almost 480 questionnaires were completed in all their sections.

To investigate the consistence or inconsistency between choices made ex-ante by the respondents (when they were in their school) and ex-post, we developed a simple synthetic indicator, called “consistency of educational choices”. At the level of single interviewee recontacted in following next year, it is expressed as a dummy variable determined in this way:

- **+1 (consistency)** if the interviewee maintained the announced choice, enrolling in a course of tertiary education (University or College), where he planned to go on with his studies, or, on the contrary, not enrolling in any course, if so provided;
- **-1 (inconsistency)** whether the respondent believed to continue his studies and instead gave up, or if he didn't plan to go on with his studies but then continued.

First, an in-depth exploratory analysis was conducted, and its results were very clear in its results in terms of non-homogeneity of the respondents. Particularly, personal characteristics (like gender and type of high school) seem to affect the consistency (Table 1), but in different ways depending on whether respondents planned to enhance their education or if they wanted to find a job just after their high school diploma (Table 2).

Table 1. Percent distribution of the interviewees according to choice's consistency, by some personal characteristics

Personal characteristics	Inconsistency (%)	Consistency (%)	Total (%)	Total number of interviewees
Gender				
Male	28.7	71.3	100.0	247
Female	22.1	77.9	100.0	231
Secondary school type				
High schools	14.4	85.6	100.0	160
Technical schools	34.5	65.5	100.0	203
Professional schools	24.0	76.0	100.0	96
Other schools	31.6	68.4	100.0	19
Overall valid sample	25.5	74.5	100.0	478

Table 2. Percent distribution of the interviewees according to choice's consistency, by some personal characteristics

Personal characteristics	Aspiring workers				Aspiring students			
	Inconsistency (%)	Consistency (%)	Total (%)	Total number	Inconsistency (%)	Consistency (%)	Total (%)	Total number
Gender								
Male	17.4	82.6	100.0	109	37.7	62.3	100.0	138
Female	24.6	75.4	100.0	69	21.0	79.0	100.0	162
Secondary school type								
High schools	50.0	50.0	100.0	22	8.7	91.3	100.0	138
Technical schools	15.6	84.4	100.0	90	49.6	50.4	100.0	113
Professional schools	11.5	88.5	100.0	61	45.7	54.3	100.0	35
Other schools	80.0	20.0	100.0	5	14.3	85.7	100.0	14
Overall valid sample	20.2	79.8	100.0	178	28.7	71.3	100.0	300

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