

Reasons and directions of emigration of students of chosen faculties at Polish medical universities

Przyczyny i kierunki emigracji studentów wybranych uczelni medycznych w Polsce

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SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, the problem of emigration of young people has considerably increased, resulting in shortages in the domestic labour market. Aim of the survey was assessment of career plans and reasons for emigration of students of chosen faculties at Polish universities.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The survey was conducted at 5 Polish universities at 4 faculties (medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy and cosmetology) with the use of an anonymous author's questionnaire.

RESULTS

40.4% out of the surveyed 1812 individuals are planning to emigrate to other countries after graduation. Their destinations include mainly Great Britain and Scandinavian countries. The students do not specify duration of emigration. In majority of cases they choose the answers "for some time" and "for several years". No significant differences between the faculties were found as far as the reason of emigration, its duration and country of destination are concerned. The majority of students are well informed about relevant conditions and are actively preparing themselves to emigration.

CONCLUSIONS

Over 40% students are planning to emigrate after graduation. The reasons why they emigrate include: salaries, difficulties in professional education, work organization and professional prestige. Based on the aforementioned reasons for emigration proper solutions, both economic and organization-

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al ones, should be put in place urgently in order to encourage the young to stay in the country or return from emigration.

KEY WORDS

migration, career plans, student, medical universities

STRESZCZENIE**WSTĘP**

Problem emigracji młodych ludzi w ostatnich latach znacznie się nasilił, doprowadzając do nie-doborów na krajowym rynku pracy. Celem pracy była ocena planów zawodowych i przyczyn planowanej emigracji studentów wybranych kierunków studiów wyższych w Polsce.

MATERIAŁ I METODY

Badanie przeprowadzono w 5 polskich uczelniach wyższych na 4 kierunkach (medycyna, stomatologia, fizjoterapia, kosmetologia) przy użyciu anonimowego, autorskiego kwestionariusza.

WYNIKI

Z przebadanych 1812 studentów 40,4% planuje emigrację po studiach. Kraje docelowe to głównie Wielka Brytania i kraje skandynawskie. Studenci nie precyzują dokładnie czasu trwania emigracji, dominują odpowiedzi „na jakiś czas”, „kilka lat”. Nie stwierdzono istotnych różnic między kierunkami co do przyczyn emigracji, czasu jej trwania i kraju docelowego. Większość studentów jest dobrze poinformowana o warunkach i czynnie przygotowuje się do wyjazdu.

WNIOSKI

Ponad 40% studentów planuje po ukończeniu studiów emigrację. Przyczyny emigracji to: zarobki, trudności w kształceniu zawodowym, organizacja pracy, prestiż zawodu. Opierając się na wymienionych przyczynach emigracji, należałoby pilnie wdrożyć odpowiednie rozwiązania, zarówno ekonomiczne, jak i organizacyjne w celu zachęcenia młodych ludzi do pozostania w kraju lub powrotu z emigracji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

emigracja, plany zawodowe, studenci, uczelnie medyczne

INTRODUCTION

System transformations, border opening and finally Poland's accession to the European Union have resulted in increased international mobility of Polish citizens [1,2]. Both for demographic and economic reasons, exodus of people entering the productive period is a very disadvantageous phenomenon resulting, on the one hand, in increased aging of the society, and on the other hand – it increases shortages in the labour market [3,4,5,6]. High costs need also to be taken into account – emigration

concerns people in whom Poland has invested, frequently considerable amounts of money (e.g. education of a doctor has been estimated to cost PLN 1 million) and this amount is most often irreversibly lost once the graduate leaves the country [1,2,3].

In most of domestic literature authors focus on the demographic aspects of emigration, frequently neglecting emigrants' education and shortages in qualified staff in our labour market [7]. Poland is left by professionally active and dynamic people who know how to be successful in the labour market, the so-called pioneers. Their leave results in stagnation and

torpor in the country left. Unfortunately such emigration does not reduce the unemployment problem as emigrants usually do have work in their country [1,2].

Data on emigration are fragmented, as although in 2002 the Central Statistical Office calculated it at the level of 786,000, the data for the subsequent years are only estimated ones as citizens do not notify their intentions in registration offices (only 88,000 people met this formal requirement in 2008). The estimated assessment made by the Central Statistical Office shows that there are 1.8–2.2 million people abroad (2001–2008), although there is no information on the demographic profile of that group [2,6]. It is also hard to find forecasts concerning the plans of people studying at Polish universities and, most importantly – what makes them decide to leave Poland. Such information could probably solve the most urgent needs and encourage people to stay in Poland or make those who have already left return to Poland.

Aim of the survey

1. Learning about plans for the future of students of selected faculties.
2. Specification of the reasons influencing decisions taken.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The survey was conducted in 2007–2009 in 5 universities in Poland with the use of an anonymous questionnaire among 1812 students (table I). The questionnaire included 18 questions: demographic data (3 questions), course of the studies (4 questions), career plans (7 questions), students' families and their attitude towards emigration (4 questions).

Table I. The number of surveyed students at each university and faculty

Tabela I. Liczebność przebadanych studentów na poszczególnych uczelniach i wydziałach

University	Faculty of Medicine	Faculty of Dentistry	Faculty of Cosmetology	Faculty of Physiotherapy	Total
Medical University of Gdansk	503	129	–	–	632
Medical University of Lublin	204	95	–	–	299
Medical University of Silesia	182	84	–	–	266
Medical University of Łódź	353	100	–	–	453
Wroclaw University College of Physiotherapy	–	–	72	90	162
Total	1242	408	72	90	1812

Statistical analysis

The average age of those surveyed was 22.5 ±1.93 and there were no significant differences between the faculties. Women predominated at all the universities: 68.7%; men accounted for 31.3%.

The data were analyzed with the use of Statistica 8.0 programme. Intergroup comparisons were made with the use of a Chi² test and a t test or covariance analysis with *post hoc* tests. In all the analyses $p < 0.05$ was adopted as a significance level.

RESULTS

As many as 40.4% of the surveyed students of all the universities are planning to work abroad after graduation, no significant differences among the faculties ($p = 0.253$, table II).

Table II. The faculty vs. the decision to emigrate

Tabela II. Kierunek studiów a decyzja o emigracji

Faculty	Work in Poland	Emigration
Faculty of Medicine	738 59,4%	504 40,6%
Faculty of Dentistry	239 58,5%	169 41,5%
Faculty of Cosmetology	51 70,4%	21 29,6%
Faculty of Physiotherapy	51 56,7%	39 43,3%
Total	1079 59,5%	733 40,5%

Emigration is planned by slightly more men than women, (globally 44.7% men vs. 38.6% women, $p = 0.024$). In a breakdown into faculties it turns out that the decision to emigrate is taken significantly more frequently by men studying dentistry (50.5% men vs. 37.4% women, $p = 0.029$). No similar differences were

found at other faculties (faculties of medicine $p = 0.214$; physiotherapy $p = 0.900$, fig. 1).

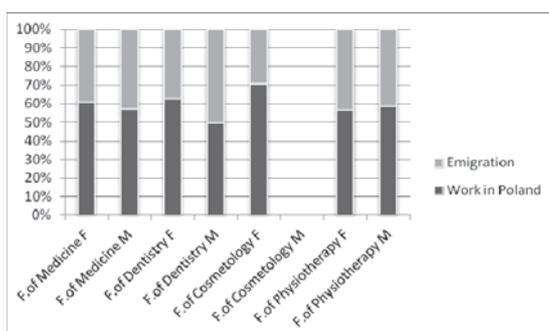


Fig. 1. Emigration versus sex at particular faculties.

Ryc. 1. Emigracja a płeć na poszczególnych kierunkach studiów.

REASONS FOR LEAVING

Among reasons to emigrate the students would point to (a multiple choice): better salaries (74.2% of answers), better professional development prospects (53.7%), better working model (42.2%), greater professional prestige abroad (36.5%), acquaintances or family abroad (20.0%). The reasons for leaving show slight differences depending on the faculty, for all faculties salary is the fundamental reason for leaving, nevertheless professional prestige and a better working model abroad are equally important for students of medicine and dentistry, while having acquaintances or family abroad is important to students of cosmetology and physiotherapy (table III).

Table III. The faculty versus reasons to emigrate

Tabela III. Kierunek studiów a powód emigracji

Reasons to emigrate	Total	Faculty of Medicine	Faculty of Dentistry	Faculty of Cosmetology	Faculty of Physiotherapy
Greater professional prestige	36,5%	40,9%	32,1%	4,8%	20,5%
Higher salaries	74,2%	73,6%	75,6%	61,9%	82,1%
Better professional development prospects abroad	53,7%	59,2%	42,7%	28,6%	41,0%
Better working model	42,2%	45,9%	42,7%	4,8%	20,5%
Family/friends abroad	20,0%	19,3%	14,5%	33,3%	38,5%
Other reasons	11,5%	13,6%	8,4%	9,5%	0,0%

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION

Students chose those countries which had something in common, e.g. the language, geographical location, culture; still the majority of respondents would point to one particular

country. Great Britain was chosen most frequently (22.1% of answers), Sweden, Norway, Ireland and Germany came next (5–9% of answers). The responses of students of particular faculties are much similar and they did not show significant differences: Great Britain and Scandinavian countries were those chosen most frequently (table IV).

Table IV. The country of destination versus the faculty

Tabela IV. Kraj emigracji a kierunek studiów

Total	Faculty			
	Faculty of Medicine	Faculty of Dentistry	Faculty of Cosmetology	Faculty of Physiotherapy
Great Britain 22,1%	Great Britain 19,8%	Great Britain 30,6%	Great Britain 28,0%	Great Britain 18,0%
Sweden 9,9%	Sweden 8,9%	Sweden 9,4%	Ireland 16,0%	France 10,0%
Norway 7,8%	Norway 7,0%	Norway 5,6%	Netherlands 12,0%	Ireland 6,0%
Ireland 5,3%	Spain 6,2%	Germany 5,0%	France 8,0%	Germany 6,0%
Germany 5,1%	Ireland 5,5%	Ireland 2,5%	Spain 4,0%	USA 6,0%
Other 31,1%	Other 35,7%	Other 25,0%	Other 8,0%	Other 26,0%
Don't know 18,7%	Don't know 16,8%	Don't know 21,9%	Don't know 24,0%	Don't know 28,0%

DURATION OF LEAVE

Students of the examined faculties show significant differences ($p < 0.0001$) as far as the aim and duration of leave are concerned. Students

of medical faculties want to leave for good or for a certain period without specifying the aim of their leave (approximately 30% in both cases), while the other students want to earn money or learn their professions and return

to Poland (approximately 17% in both cases), students of dentistry are planning a temporary leave (40.5%) or stay abroad until they have earned enough to start independent life in Poland (34.4%). The reason why students of cos-

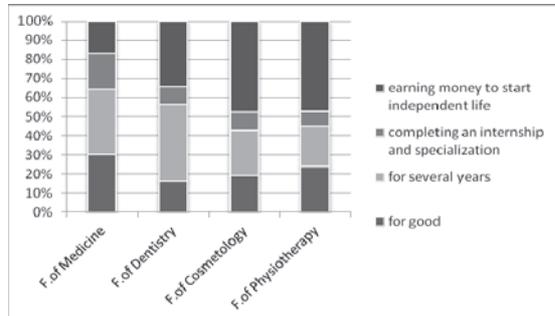


Fig. 2. The planned duration and aim of leave versus the faculty.
Ryc. 2. Planowany czas i cel wyjazdu a kierunek studiów.

metology want to emigrate is mainly earning money for starting life on their own in Poland (over 47%, fig. 2).

Nearly 80% of students of faculties of medicine and dentistry are planning to work exclusively in their acquired profession. Also the majority of prospective physiotherapists would prefer working in their acquired profession or a related one. Students of cosmetology are the most flexible as far as their plans are concerned – although they would like to work in their acquired profession, they are ready to

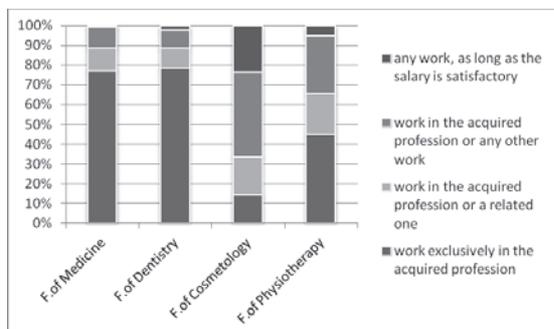


Fig. 3. The planned type of work versus the faculty.
Ryc. 3. Planowany rodzaj pracy a kierunek studiów.

take up any other job as long as the salary is satisfactory. Differences in responses are significant ($p < 0.0001$, fig. 3).

PREPARATIONS FOR EMIGRATION

The majority (as many as 82%) of students planning to emigrate are well informed about working conditions abroad. The university, acquaintances working abroad, the media and

companies dealing with recruitment abroad were specified as the main sources of knowledge. No significant differences among the faculties were found in that regard.

Solid knowledge on the conditions of working abroad may also result from the fact that nearly 30% of the total number of students have worked abroad, most of them, i.e. over 40% were students of cosmetology, the fewest – 28% were students of faculties of medicine, but the differences were not significant. Students planning to emigrate significantly more frequently ($p = 0.00001$) report having worked abroad – nearly 36% of them have such experience as compared to 24.8% of students planning their career in Poland. Those students have worked mainly as seasonal workers in Great Britain, Germany, Ireland and the USA.

Only 9.5% of the total number of students have completed vocational training abroad, prospective doctors studied abroad significantly more frequently ($p < 0.00001$) – 12.3%, dentists – 4.1%, physiotherapists – 3.4%. As in the case of working abroad, people planning to emigrate completed training abroad at the time of studying more frequently than their colleagues who wish to work in Poland (13.6% versus 6.8%). Germany, Great Britain and Spain were the countries chosen most frequently by students wishing to complete vocational training abroad.

People planning to emigrate are encouraged by their acquaintances and families to stay in the country significantly less frequently as compared to those wishing to work in Poland (61.0% versus 68.2%, $p = 0.004$). Parents, especially mother, are the ones who encourage students to stay in Poland. Students planning to emigrate were significantly more frequently encouraged to do so (64.1% as compared to 34.9%; $p < 0.0001$). Such encouragements were directed primarily to prospective doctors (50.5%), physiotherapists (51.1%), cosmetologists (40.6%) – least frequently – to dentists (33.0%). The differences were significant ($p < 0.0001$). Those surveyed were encouraged to emigrate primarily by their acquaintances.

DISCUSSION

The issue of emigration is considered in terms of economy (profit-loss), demography or

the labour market (increase/decrease in the number of employees) [5,7]. In spite of high relevance of the issue, Polish elaborations concerning dramatically increasing emigration, particularly following Poland's accession to the European Union, are scarce. Incomplete data show that our country has been left by nearly 2 million people, 70 thousand of whom are living at present in Great Britain [1,2,6]. These are young, development-driven and well educated people. Locally conducted surveys show that nearly 43% of prospective doctors and dentists, students of the Medical University of Silesia are seriously considering emigration [8]. Other surveys conducted at this university reveal that as many as 85% of students are considering working abroad [3]. This is the first survey conducted on this scale in Poland. Our research confirmed, that over 40% of students are planning to emigrate, irrespectively of the faculty [8].

The main reasons why students emigrate include usually financial considerations and difficulties in finding a job in Poland [3,6,7,8,9,10]. In case of the surveyed group of students, financial aspects were important; however, no student expressed concerns as regards difficulties in finding employment in the acquired profession in Poland. Besides financial aspects, professional development prospect (concerning mainly doctors and dentists, which is most probably due to considerable difficulties in starting specialization in Poland), professional prestige, better work organization, as confirmed also in other reports [3,8,10,11,12] are equally significant problems. These include non-economic aspects the change of which in Poland would be not expensive. Such activities might prevent at least some potential emigrants from leaving Poland and encourage of those who have already emigrated to return. It is difficult to estimate its duration at this stage of emigration planning. Therefore, the

obtained results should be treated as approximate ones. Still a rather longer stay is preferable, and one should suppose that though emigrants may be successful in the labour market, their return to Poland seems little probable.

Choosing the country of destination is determined both by one's own preferences (speaking a given language, familiarity with a given culture), possibilities of finding a job (legal and formal aspects, labour market opening), as well as family aspects (having relatives in the country of destination, distance from the family home) – all these factors make that while deciding to emigrate young people already know which country they want to emigrate to and they are actively preparing themselves to emigration (learning the language, familiarizing themselves with the conditions prevailing in the country of destination as far as holiday training or earnings trips are concerned). Both in the surveys conducted by us and in other publications countries of destination were much similar – Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries [1,3,8].

CONCLUSIONS

1. Over 40% of students of medical universities are planning to emigrate after graduation, which will result in increased demographic and personnel shortages in Poland.
2. The reasons why they emigrate include: salaries, difficulties in professional education, work organization and professional prestige.
3. Based on the aforementioned reasons of emigration proper solutions, both economic and non-economic (organizational) ones, should be put in place urgently in order to encourage the young to stay in the country or return from emigration.

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