Transition to the Labour Market of Women Teachers at the University of Extremadura (Spain)

Spanish graduates spend an average of a year before finding a job, whereas the European average is around six months. We are talking about a country, which together with other Mediterranean countries, is below the European average. In addition, Spain reports the highest quota of youth unemployment (García-Aracil 2007), because among other reasons, the transition of young people to the labour market takes longer. In the case of our region, Extremadura, the situation is even worse, because the unemployment rates for young people and women are fifteen points above the national average. In fact, the traditional tendency persists; graduate females need more time to find their first job, an average rate of 25.9 months for women and 24.4 months for men, according to regional statistical data. Furthermore, Spain has the highest proportion of temporary contracts in Europe and is also ranked amongst European countries with higher levels of part-time employment among university graduates. According to this, Spanish graduates face harder labour market conditions than graduates from other European countries (Theodossiou / Zangelidis 2009).

On setting out reasons for the differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in the workplace, surveys on the transition of graduates from higher education to the labour market, have traditionally not taken into account gender inequalities. Although in recent years the number of those that do have increased, we will show that it is necessary to focus our work on a gender perspective.

Although women reach a higher average in academic results than men, they have a higher unemployment rate and spend more time in their transitions, as Salas-Velasco’s (2007: 336) study demonstrates: „Females are less likely to find their first job in less than 18 months compared with men“. This has produced „extra qualified“ women, that is, a disparity between posts in jobs and qualifications, so that qualified training and labour activity are not connected (González Suárez-Bustamante 2003), while as García-Aracil (2007) shows occupational titles have little explanatory power in getting jobs or posts by females graduates despite this extra qualification. Moreover, it is found, mainly in the case of women, that graduates with children have longer transitions than those who have none, whereas just the opposite occurs with men. The same occurs with having a partner or being married; these graduates experience shorter durations in relation to single ones, according to Salas-Velasco (2007), although the marital status specifically benefits male graduates more than female (García-Aracil 2007).
As García-Aracil (2007) pointed out with data from the CHEERS project (1999), in all countries studied (the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the Czech Republic and Spain) women earned less than men. Also, the number of temporary contracts and part-time working days is higher among female graduates in contrast with their male counterparts. Nevertheless, results from other studies specify that the wage gap in Education graduates is smaller than in other professional fields (García-Aracil 2007; García-Aracil and Winter 2006; Filippin and Ichino 2005; Graham and Smith 2005; Holt-Baines 2005). This situation can be explained by a higher employment rate in the public sector in Education, whereas female workers are paid less in the private sector.

Our main hypothesis is that there are gender differences between male and female graduates of the Faculty of Education in their transition to the labour market. The paper aims to analyse dynamics and itineraries taken by graduates to enter the job market and to explain their needs in labour transition, paying special attention to gender differences.

In order to collect data and information on the transition into the labour market of university graduates and to formulate quality indicators in syllabuses, we used the following methods: graduate surveys (Teichler / Kelo / Wätcher 2006), as well as collecting information for employment promotion at universities, and from the opinions of employers and employees through discussion groups, and we complemented these with open questions related to the questionnaire topics.

The sample for the survey was composed of 1442 graduates of the Faculty of Education (44, 51%) of the graduates. The sample is proportionally stratified by studies speciality (within teacher training degree), graduation year (1995 – 2002) and sex (women-men). The study focuses on the transition from higher education to the labour market of graduate students from Teacher Training and Psychopedagogy degrees. It must be said that although there are some variations in some variables across the two degrees, there is a broad similarity insofar as the situation of working women is based on the harmonisation between professional and personal spheres. For this reason we talk about both degrees in general terms, only specifying relevant data differences.

**Drawing university graduates’ pathways**

Firstly graduate students start the itinerary with the additional training graduates received after Higher Education, which is higher for women than for men. They usually choose to continue their training with another Diploma (*Diplomatura,*

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1 Teacher-training and Psychopedagogy Degrees (taught at the Faculty of Education) are very similar, regarding the formative character of their syllabuses, as both are feminized and related to teaching (Rodríguez et. al., 2006). For these reasons, they are eminently and traditionally regarded as „typical for girls“ (Richardson and Watt, 2005).
three year degree), 11.2% for women and 7.1% for men or a Bachelor degree (*Licenciatura*, five year degree), 55.3% of women versus the 66.7% of men, while doctorate courses were studied by 20% of women and 17.7% of men. Occupational training also takes up the time of 49.6% of women versus 45.4% of men. The opposite tendency is observed in postgraduate specialization courses and masters studies taken by 53.2% of men and 46.7% of women. Actually, there are no gender differences in other aspects of training such as knowledge of languages and computer skills. After graduation, the main activity is looking for a job, especially in the case of female graduates, studying for an entrance examination. In addition, they have had temporary jobs while 38% of men have had regular jobs. Around 60% of women and men declare themselves to be unemployed. Self-employment is another option but scarce. Finally we notice that family duties are given as a reason by 2.8% of women but no men.

Which difficulties did female graduates face? The list includes lack of demand for this degree, lack of studying or training, belonging to a particular sex, lack of knowledge of the labour market, lack of abilities, knowledge and skills in looking for a job and others not specified. Men, however, highlighted lack of demand for this degree, lack of studying or training and lack of knowledge of the labour market and other reasons as major difficulties when looking for a job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Difficulties found in looking for a job</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of professional practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of the labour market</td>
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<td>Lack of abilities, knowledge or skills in looking for a job</td>
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<td>Lack of studying or training</td>
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<td>Personal activities which do not allow working</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of demand for this degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supply exceeds demand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belonging to a particular sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</table>

(respondent could choose more than one possibility)

With regard to the time they have been looking for a job, the most frequent response is „More than two years“, however differences by gender were not found. The time spent between finishing their studies and signing their first contract is different by sex, the highest percentage among women being the option relating to „Between 6 months and a year“ (32.1%) followed by „More than two years“ for
25%. Among men the most frequent is „Less than six months“ for 29.8% of the cases, followed by 26% of male teacher graduates who spent „Between six months and a year“. 35.4% of women graduate and 30.5% of men worked as teachers. In their first job, 53.8% of women worked in a public institution and 48.8% of men, but we cannot say that this difference is due to gender reasons according to statistical tests. Moreover, 3% of men and 2% of women were self-employed.

Which means did they use to get their first job? For getting the first job graduate students used personal and family contacts (men 26.7% versus 18.9% of women) together with public entrance examinations, which helped 40% of men versus 27.4% of women to obtain their first job. The same happens with official announcements, used by the 26.7% of men and only 13.2% of women, who considerably are more respecting men in sending a letter or CV for getting a job. A higher number of women than men in first jobs were in public sector institutions. However, a Chi-Squared test shows there is no significant relation between kind of institution of first job and sex (0.717).

In their current job, means used were family and personal contacts for men (30% versus 8% of women), sending a letter or CV (20% of men and 12% of women) and other means not specified. However, it should be noted that women principally used all the means available for them (university services, public employment offices, employment exchange). No men chose these options. Finally, public entrance examinations are twice as much the preferred means for women (61.3%) than for men (30%).

**Graduate Women towards Education field: a path of obstacles**

Concerning their situation in the labour market, it is necessary to emphasise gender differences; in fact, women graduates reported that work conditions are precarious; especially in terms of salaries. Sometimes, they said they needed more than one job to be able to cover their expenses (illustrated mainly in focus groups). In addition, there seems to be divergences in the wage average of their current job, where U Mann-Whitney test shows this average varies by sex. For Psycho-pedagogy graduates, men earn more than women with a difference of 17% in the section „More than 1.250 Euros“, thus women are mainly located in the section „From 1.203 to 1.502 Euros“ (48.6% versus 40% of men). In the case of Teacher Training graduates, men are in the earnings top sections, whereas for women the most frequent sections fluctuate between „From 1.203 to 1.502 Euros“ and „From 300 to 600 Euros“. 
Table 2: Salaries by sex. Teacher training degree graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 300 Euros</th>
<th>From 300 to 600 Euros</th>
<th>From 601 to 900 Euros</th>
<th>From 901 to 1.202 Euros</th>
<th>From 1.203 to 1.502 Euros</th>
<th>More than 1.502 Euros</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These gender differences are due not only to the gender gap, but also in terms of contractual instability (part time working days – 29% women versus 18% men – and temporary jobs – 71% women and 57,9% men – statistically significant), the more frequent modalities of contracts among women. In the tasks they carry out within the same posts (according to the questionnaire – 50,3% of women and 46,35% of men claim this situation, with significant differences by sex Chi-Square test (0,036) – and open questions).

Despite the fact that some women report not to have been discriminated especially in the field of education, in the open questions and discussion groups, it emerged that they are acquainted with these inequalities for gender reasons. They believe that whereas there are no gender inequalities in access to a job or work conditions in the public sector, there are in the private sector. So much so that they participated equally in entrance examinations in private institutions (73,3% of women and 69,6% of men, being statistically significant). Actually, this is shown in their opinions about how enterprises and institutions foster equality of opportunities (significant 0,042, U Mann-Whitney’s test) and difficulties founded by women teachers in their transition towards labour market (significant 0,018, Spearman’ R). In fact, more men (32,1%) than women (18,7%) (being statistically significant) hold head posts in educational institutions. Graduates are in charge of coordinating a section or a team, are women (25%) and men (19%), whereas men lead educational centres in a higher percentage (17,4%–7,3% women), although according to a Chi-Squared test this does not depend on sex as much as to have held a post (0,508) or working in a private or public institution (0,894).

It seems that these differences in equality of opportunities for men and women become more noticeable in situations „typical of maternity“ and care duties of other people. However, the majority of people who answered the questionnaire said not to have people to care for (69% women and 15% men), followed by those who only had „One person to care for“ (8,13% women and 1,82% men), „Two persons“ (2,81% women and 0,70% men) and „Three“ (0,98% only women). Surprisingly, when graduates are not entirely satisfied with their current job, women implicitly claim to choose it for reasons related to harmonization with care duties, as in the case of „It allows me to split the shift (working day)“ for 40% of the women and 0% of the men (who are not satisfied with their job,
both). In addition, the 20% of women affirmed to continue in the job because "Allows me to answer family responsibilities" (0% of men) and "It allows me to work close home" (26.7% of women and 0% of men). Men by their own, adduce more professional causes, as "It is according to my training" (50% and 20% of women) and "It offers good prospects" (50% and 6.7% of women).

Regarding the academic and training level of women and men, women are required to do continuous training during their professional career but they must also harmonize their family and home duties. This is true for 9.09% for graduates of Psychopedagogy and 15.37% for the teacher training degree graduates. This is because looking after somebody traditionally falls to women, who have a double working day: taking care of the family and working in and outside the home, as a woman with physical education expresses:

"In this profession it is very difficult to get a permanent job due to its saturation, you need to be studying permanently to pass the examination for the public competition and tests are changing constantly; something which becomes more complex because of the lack of time, when you have a job and a family which depends on you, and what's more, when you travel daily for job requirements far from home 100 or 300 kilometer".

Therefore, we should not wonder when we discovered that those women who have family care duties point out to be less promoted in the company. "Enough" promotion is experienced by 34.7% women and 18.2% of males, even though we found that 45.5% of men and 19.4% of women answered "Some" promotion. Regarding the training the situation changes: 47.2% of the women say, they have difficulties getting training (18.2% of the men), here with significant sex differences (Mann–Whitney U test 0.022). Although it is true that men regarding difficulties that may be influenced by family responsibilities also point these difficulties to a greater extent than women like keeping the workplace, ranging from "Much" 36.4% of males and 18.1% of women to "None" 36.4% of males and 26.4% women. However, for women for keeping the workplace difficulties are "Some" 34.7% compared to 18.2% of men.

As data showed the main obstacles for a career are having dependents as women 74.1% said (although data show below fewer people are having dependents to care for), a view also shared by men (73.3%); having a disability 53.3% as men and 52.8% according to women; being woman for women at 31.5% of cases and 20% of men; other for men 26.7% and 18.5% for women; being married for 13.7% of women and 6.7% of men; being a couple, in this case contrary to the above, more among men 6.7% than among women 3.7% and housework, option just chosen by women 6.5% versus 0% of men.
Consequently, issues related to maternity/paternity leave, the opinion in relation to having a job and looking after somebody, are different for men and women, as a woman who completed nursery education said:

"I think as a woman, when it comes to sitting a public competition examination, we (women) have more difficulties for it if we also have children."

**Conclusion**

Our main conclusion is: there are differences between men and women graduates from the Faculty of Education at the University of Extremadura in their transition to the labour market and there are also some variations in their professional careers.

In relation to their professional careers, they participate in different entrance examinations, for both public and private institutions, the first priority being the educational field, but eventually they try other options. We can confirm gender differences in relation to the participation of graduates in public entrance examinations, the option preferred by women. Besides, there is a fairly consistent under-representation of women in head posts for which they are qualified as much as men. The proportion of women who have a permanent contract in their current employment has grown slightly over the years, but there still remains a gender gap in the first and in the most recent job. In comparison with men, there is a higher percentage of women across the two degrees (*Teacher training and Psycho Pedagogy degrees*), but this does not coincide with having a successful situation in the labour market (for women).

Furthermore, the disparate distribution of all students (men and women) across the posts between first job and current job is evident, although these distinctions do not necessarily reflect differences in the kind of institution (public and private institutions). This leads us to look at gender differences in the first job (for the two degrees), and the current job for women teachers: women hold similar posts than men but carry out different tasks in them (from their point of view), despite of having the same post and training.

We should note, however that in the majority of cases, equality of opportunities is believed to have been achieved, especially in a professional field such as education, mainly feminized, in particular in Primary Education. Women recognize some inequalities at the workplace, especially in private institutions, but not in the public educational field, although some differences in tasks carried out by men and women at the workplace are found. A considerable reduction in the opinion that they have noticed some discrimination is also noticeable, although women report that discrimination still exists.
Given this and their unequal labour conditions, we can deduce that a gender perspective must be included in syllabuses, creating curricular spaces aimed at increasing the equality of opportunities through gender studies as indispensable to avoid the discriminatory situations that we have pointed out, and to teach non-sexist education.

References


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