

Non-technical summary of the project

Student employment and higher education in Latvia: Part time work or part time study?

Abstract:

This project considers at the relationship between student employment and academic achievement in contemporary Latvia. The research was prompted by the dramatic change in Latvia's higher education system since it regained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Indeed, the most striking feature, and the focus of this study, has been the increase in the number of students who are working part- or full-time while studying full-time in a higher educational institution.

There have been two major theoretical models of the impact of employment on academic achievement in education literature. The *zero-sum* and *development* models. While the former argues that work has a generally negative effect of student academic attainment, the latter argues that limited and specialized employment can actually have a positive impact.

The study is based on the results of a field questionnaire of law and social science students undertaken in spring 2005. It employed a survey of nearly 1000 students studying in 14 public and private higher education institutions across the major regions of Latvia.

This major findings include:

- Nearly 44 percent of the students sample is employed.
- Working students tend to be older, more advanced in their studies, and are far less likely to be receiving direct government stipends.
- Women make up a large majority of the overall sample, but they are relatively underrepresented in the working sample.
- Employment has a strong and significant negative impact on university performance.
- The negative impact of employment on academic achievement increases as weekly hours worked increases.
- The negative effect of work on academic attainment manifests itself through reduced class attendance and reduced time spent in independent study.
- The probability of student employment is most significantly affected by the availability of financial aid, gender, ethnicity, age, and area of study.
- Married students are most likely to work full-time, but they are also more likely to put more emphasis on academic achievement than unmarried working students.

Merit-based scholarships tend to reduce the likelihood of work and reduce time worked if a student is working. Thus financial aid protects the best students from the need to work. Therefore the present system of merit-based scholarships in Latvia should be maintained to prevent the best students from working during their studies.

Keywords: educational finance; human capital; student financial aid, student employment.