

Career development after graduation: The case of the University of Akureyri

Ingi Runar Edvardsson and Gudmundur Kristjan Oskarsson
University of Akureyri

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present a study on career development among graduates in nursing, teaching, and business administration from the University of Akureyri (UNAK), Iceland. The focus will be on the early career, i.e. the first years of employment after graduation. The paper will, moreover, analyze the following topics: 1) selection of career after graduation, 2) change of employment after graduation, 3) the occupation of the graduates (manager, teacher, etc.), and 4) salary increases after graduation.

To further assist the analysis, the following research questions are put forward:

- How does gender affect career development? Do women's careers differ from those of men?
- How does marital status affect career development? Do the careers of married graduates differ from those of single graduates?
- How does age affect career development? Do the careers of graduates under 30 years of age differ from those of older graduates?
- How does location of study affect career development? Do the careers of campus graduates differ from those of distance learning graduates?
- How does the study subject affect career development? Do the careers of nurses differ from those of graduates from other study lines?

The next section of the paper presents previous research on career development, followed by a section on research methodology. The findings of the study are presented in the results section, and the paper finishes with a section on conclusions.

Career development

A career can be defined as “the pattern or sequence of work roles of an individual” (Torrington, Hall and Tylor, 2005, p. 410), “the occupational positions a person has had over many years” (Dessler, 2009, p. 236), or “the sequence of work-related experiences one has over the course of one's working life-time” (Adamson et al. 1998, p. 251). Until recently, employees could join an organisation fully expecting to stay with it for their entire career (Stone, 2005). That has been the traditional career perception of an upward movement or advancement in work roles within a single organisation. As a consequence of globalization, increasing competition, rapid technological changes, downsizing, flatter structures or de-layering, virtualisation and outsourcing of activities as well as a growing tendency towards part-time jobs, we have seen an increase in short-term contracts, and self-employment (Adamson et al., 1999; Mayrhofer et al., 2005; Stone, 2005; Torrington, Hall and Tylor, 2005). According to many commentators, a new form of career patterns is arising, such as frequent lateral moves and employment changes, assigning a high priority to external employability and self-responsibility for outcomes (King,

2003). Such careers have been termed portfolio careers, post-organisational or boundaryless careers. Gold (2007, p. 229) explains such boundaryless careers by stating:

Over the course of a person's working life, an individual might expect to work for a variety of different organizations in a variety of positions, so each person will need a range of skills, learning new ones as required. This can provide individuals with a chance to gain control over their work and lives, and engage in more meaningful activities.

The new career pattern implies, first, that people's careers will increasingly take place outside organisations in, for instance, free-floating professionalism, self-employment and continued flexibility, and second, individual careers will become even more diverse in the future (Mayrhofer et al., 2005).

Career developmental stages have been mapped out by many authors in order to match successful career against age range. The number of stages varies, but many authors suggest five stages. These often involve occupational choice and preparation of work; organisational entry; early career; mid career and late career. This paper focuses on early career, so only that stage will be explained here. The early career usually starts between age 25 to 40 years. The early career involves fitting into the organisation and understanding the basic practice of the work. It also involves demonstrating competence and gaining greater responsibility and authority (Torrington, Hall and Tylor, 2005).

Graduates and career

Two recent studies on graduates' career aspirations, one from the UK, and the other from Austria, show that graduates' endorsement of the "new career" is limited. In her study of UK graduates' preferences for careers, King (2003, p. 10) concludes that employability (the importance of doing a variety of jobs to gain a range of experience) is a key concern. Graduates, however, expect to be able to develop that employability within the context of a traditional career. The conclusion of the study by Mayrhofer et al. (2005) is that 42% of Austrian business school graduates prefer a traditional career pattern, quite closely tied to the world of organisations. The majority of the sample, 53.6%, shows a preference for post-organisational career patterns, especially for continued flexibility or free-floating professionalism.

In a study of early employment of business graduates from Kuwait University in the Arab Gulf Region, respondents were asked to rank-order the top three reasons behind their first job shift after graduation. The most important reason behind early career was a desire to work in own area of specialization, followed by a job that matches own interests and capabilities; a job with greater responsibilities; and searching for higher salary (Abel-Halim and Ashour, 1995).

Gender and career

Many of the early works on career development were based on white males, thus lacking satisfactory explanations of career development that embrace the full variety of gender, ethnic backgrounds and occupational variety (Torrington, Hall and Tylor, 2005).

Research on women's careers also shows that these tend to be embedded in their larger life contexts, such as relational orientations, family concerns and multiple roles. Women's careers are more diversified than men's, suggesting more snake-like careers for women (upward mobility, stability, downward mobility, and fluctuations), versus ladder-like career paths for men (O'Neil, Hopkins and Bilimoria, 2008).

In her study of gender pay gap for UK graduates, Chevalier (2007) discovered that women care about the usefulness of their job (altruistic) and are less career-oriented than men. Men are more selfish, career-driven and financially motivated. These differences typically “affect occupational choice and may explain the high feminization of jobs such as teaching and nursing (2007, p. 827)”. Former studies have shown that women tend to work in the public sector and in occupations associated with lower wages. Chevalier also shows that career break expectations, explained 10% of the gender wage gap, and women with traditional views concerning childrearing were found to have less intensive job search behaviour.

Research methods

It was decided to carry out the research by means of questionnaires. RHA - The Research Centre of the University of Akureyri undertook the implementation of the research. A questionnaire was posted to 599 graduates from the UNAK, 292 of whom had been distance students and 307 in campus study programmes. The research population consisted of students who graduated during the period 2004–2007, a total of 1,247 individuals.

The reason for selecting graduates from this period relates to the fact that this was when significant numbers of distance students began to graduate from the university and that a study had already been made of students graduating earlier. This study was conducted by RHA - The Research Centre of the University of Akureyri (Sigursteinsdóttir, 2005). Information was gathered from Stefania, the university’s information system.

The organisers of the research project decided to limit their study to students in basic academic programmes in faculties offering distance education. This was done to be able to create a better statistical base for comparing campus and distance students. A total of 630 students were selected from those faculties. It was not possible, however, to find the addresses of 31 individuals so the final sample consisted of 599 graduates; 292 of which had been distance students and 307 campus students. The gender and degree distribution is presented in Table 1. Graduates from Fisheries Science will not be included in this article, since they only constitute a small number, particularly with regard to distance education. Answers were received from 350 individuals, constituting a response rate of 58.4%, for males the ratio was 47.7%, slightly below the female response ratio of 60.6% (see Table 1).

Table 1. Study sample.

	All			Campus students			Distance students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Business Administration	71	144	215	31	57	88	40	87	127
Nursing	2	135	137	2	78	80	0	57	57
Fisheries Science	28	8	36	24	6	30	4	2	6
Pre-school teacher	0	119	119	0	39	39	0	80	80
Primary school teacher	8	84	92	8	62	70	0	22	22
Total	109	490	599	65	242	307	44	248	292

The questionnaire contained 40 closed questions. It was, for the most part, created by the organisers of the research, although supported by an earlier questionnaire from RHA- The Research Centre of the University of Akureyri (Hjördís Sigursteinsdóttir, 2005) and previous research at the University of Akureyri (Edvardsson et al 2000). This questionnaire (Edvardsson et

al., 2000) was based on interviews with 20 business administration and nursing graduates relating to their choice of further study and career after obtaining a university degree.

The questionnaire on which this research is based was proofread by a number of graduates and subsequently slightly altered. The questionnaire was divided into background information; choice of study, school, domicile and work; study-related information; other items and distance education. Response options to each question varied from one (register one's age), three (yes/no/don't know) up to 14 options (e.g. in what occupation are you currently engaged?) In some questions, ticking more than one option was allowed. Most of the questions were of nominal and ordinal scale characteristics, which only permit the calculation of number, frequency and the use of cross tables. In questions regarding age, number of dependents and income, use was made of ratio scales since these allow more complex mathematical processing. A 5-point Likert scale was used in questions with regard to choice of subject and university after completion of first degree. Statistical processing mostly focused on numbers, frequency and averages.

Results

In this section, the findings of the study will be presented. Here, information will be given on marital status, the choice of career, change of employment after graduation, the occupation of the graduates, and salary increases after graduation.

Marital status

One of the research questions presented in the introduction states whether marital status of graduates affects career development. Of the respondents in the study, 82.2% were married or in cohabitation relationships, while 17.8% were single. Also, 80.1% of the graduates had children. No statistical difference was found between the groups of married and singles, and graduates with children or not. Marital status did not, therefore, affect career development in the study.

The choice of career after graduation

It should be pointed out at the outset that nursing and pre- and primary school teaching are female dominated occupations in Iceland (with more than 75% of positions held by women). The occupations that business administration graduates tend to choose are more divided by gender. Also, it should be noted that the health care system is primarily operated by the state and the municipalities, and the same goes for pre- and primary schools in Iceland.

Table 2. The choice of career after graduation. Main impact factors. Percentages.

	All	Business administration graduates	Nurses	Primary school teachers	Pre-school teachers
Able to go on living in the same municipality	38.2%	32.7%	52.3%	36.8%	41.2%
Solid company/establishment	10.7%	20.9%	1.5%	3.5%	7.4%
Provided the opportunity for useful experience	13.6%	13.6%	16.9%	14.0%	4.4%
An interesting job relevant to my specialisation	16.7%	10.9%	20.0%	26.3%	13.2%
Potential for promotion	2.8%	3.6%	0.0%	1.8%	5.9%

Potential for ongoing education	0.9%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
Salary and terms of employment	2.2%	3.6%	1.5%	0.0%	2.9%
Workplace facilities	1.3%	0.9%	1.5%	3.5%	0.0%
Professional morale	4.7%	3.6%	1.5%	3.5%	11.8%
Supply of work	2.5%	1.8%	1.5%	3.5%	4.4%
Was undergoing professional training at the department/establishment in question (Faculty of Health Sciences)	0.6%	0.0%	1.5%	1.8%	0.0%
Worked on a project for/at the company in question (for others)	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My final project was relevant to the job	0.0%	5.5%	1.5%	1.8%	7.4%
Other (what?)	1.3%	0.9%	0.0%	3.5%	0.0%

Table 2 shows what the respondents felt to be of highest importance with regard to career choice after completing their studies. The table also indicates that there is considerable variation in the way professions choose a career. In all professions, most people placed highest emphasis on being able to live in the same municipality, 38.2%. Different professions, however, respond differently in this regard. Thus only 32.7% of business administration graduates select this option as compared to 52.3% of nurses. An interesting job ranked second in career choice, or 16.7%. Here also, the business administration graduates represent the lowest percentage, or 10.9% compared to 26.3% of primary school teachers. Looking at each profession separately, it is interesting to note how many business administration graduates place a high value on a solid company/establishment compared to the other professions, with 20.9% giving priority to this aspect while only 7.4% of pre-school graduates, who occupy second place, place this option in highest rank. It might be an influential factor here that nurses and teachers work in the public sector. Pre-school teachers occupy a unique position with regard to the large proportion granting first place to professional morale, or 11.8% while business graduates, who are next in line, yield the figure of 3.6%

Able to go on living in the same municipality would be categorised as balance between work and family (spouse's occupation, children's school). Under the "new career" pattern we can classify the option "provided the opportunity for useful experience and ongoing education". Only 14.5% of the respondents voted for those factors. For comparison, 55.2% of the respondents mentioned factors related to balance between work and family or traditional career. This might relate to the fact that the majority of the respondents were women working in the public sector.

Table 3. What was the deciding factor in your career choice after completion of first university degree?

	Male	Female	Campus students	Distance students	Aged 30 or less	Above 30 years of age
Able to go on living in the same municipality	28.9%	39.7%	32.6%	43.3%	32.0%	40.9%
Solid company/establishment	20.0%	9.2%	11.8%	9.4%	14.8%	7.6%
Provided the opportunity for useful experience	24.4%	11.8%	16.7%	11.1%	15.6%	11.1%

An interesting job relevant to my specialisation	13.3%	17.3%	20.1%	13.5%	18.0%	17.5%
Potential for promotion	2.2%	2.9%	2.1%	3.5%	2.5%	3.5%
Potential for ongoing education	2.2%	0.7%	0.7%	1.2%	0.0%	1.2%
Salary and terms of employment	2.2%	2.2%	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%	2.3%
Workplace facilities	2.2%	1.1%	0.7%	1.8%	0.8%	1.8%
Professional morale	2.2%	5.1%	2.1%	7.0%	3.3%	5.3%
Supply of work	0.0%	2.9%	3.5%	1.8%	2.5%	2.9%
Was undergoing professional training at the department/establishment in question (Faculty of Health Sciences)	0.0%	0.7%	1.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.6%
Worked on a project for/at the company in question (for others)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My final project was relevant to the job	2.2%	4.8%	4.9%	4.1%	5.7%	4.1%
Other (what?)	0.0%	1.5%	1.4%	1.2%	1.6%	1.2%

Table 3 shows the highest priority in career selection after first degree, classified according to gender, location of study and age. It is found that most respondents place greatest emphasis on being able to live in the same municipality. Women (39.7%), distance students (43.3%) and those above 30 years of age (40.9%) show a significantly higher percentage here than males (28.9%), campus students (32.6%) and those aged 30 or below (32%). An interesting job relevant to my specification came second as the main reason for career choice. Men set themselves apart, in that their second most popular option for main impact on career choice was that the job should provide the opportunity for useful experience (24.4%). It is also noteworthy how many men focus on solid companies/establishments (20%) as opposed to women (9.2%).

Change of employment after graduation

In Iceland, students commonly take on paid work along with their studies. Table 4 shows students' significant employment participation while studying, since 74.2% of all students took on paid work while studying. The highest employment participation was seen among pre-school teachers, whereas the lowest figure was manifested among primary teachers, or 56.9%.

Table 4. Combining paid work with study.

	All	Business administration graduates	Nurses	Primary school teachers	Pre-school teachers
Yes	74.2%	80.3%	70.0%	56.9%	85.1%
No	25.8%	19.7%	30.0%	43.1%	14.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5 indicates that distance students had a considerably higher tendency to combine study with paid work, or 86.5% as compared to 58.7% of campus students. Employment participation among students aged 30 or below was 11.2% less than that of those who were 30 years of age or older. With respect to this category, gender difference is insignificant, both genders sharing the figure of 74% employment participation.

Table 5. Combining paid work with study

	Male	Female	Campus students	Distance students	Aged and below	30 Above 30 years of age
Yes	73.1%	74.4%	58.7%	86.5%	67.9%	79.1%
No	26.9%	25.6%	41.3%	13.5%	32.1%	20.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

This high level of student participation in employment during study means that most continue working for the same employer after completing their degree. Table 6 demonstrates that 51.4% of students remain in the same job. There is considerable difference between professions with regard to the proportion that change their work. The business administration graduates are most likely to take on new work, or 61.5%, as compared to a mere 28.8% of pre-school teachers. The former mainly move from one company to another.

Table 6. Have you changed employment after graduation?

	All	Business administration graduates	Nurses	Primary school teachers	Pre-school teachers
Yes, immediately after graduation	6.9%	7.9%	5.7%	7.0%	5.5%
Yes, within the same company/establishment	11.6%	13.5%	12.9%	8.8%	8.2%
Yes, moved to another company/establishment	30.1%	43.7%	27.1%	19.3%	15.1%
No	51.4%	34.9%	54.3%	64.9%	71.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 7 illustrates that 67.3% of men change their employment after graduation which is a somewhat higher proportion than applies in the case of women where the corresponding figure is 45.2%. There is not much difference, in this respect, between distance and campus students, nor between those aged over and under 30, respectively.

Table 7. Have you changed employment after graduation?

	Male	Female	Campus students	Distance students	Aged and below	30 Above 30 years of age
Yes, immediately after graduation	5.8%	7.1%	3.3%	9.4%	2.3%	10.1%
Yes, within the same company/establishment	17.3%	10.5%	11.8%	11.5%	13.1%	10.6%
Yes, moved to another company/establishment	44.2%	27.6%	30.1%	29.8%	35.4%	23.3%
No	32.7%	54.8%	54.9%	49.2%	49.2%	56.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Respondents were also asked how long it took to find a job after graduation. During the period covered by the survey there was an upswing in the economy and strong demand for labour. Thus

it only took the graduates an average of 0.6 months to obtain work. Men were a little slower to find work than women; needing an average of 1.1 months, compared to just over two weeks for the women. Campus and distance students took about the same time, or just over two weeks on average. The same applied to the younger and older age groups; the time they took to find a job averaged just over two weeks. The most marked difference was between professions, with the business administration graduates taking longest to obtain work, or an average of 1.2 months. The nurses took an average of 0.1 months and the primary teachers found a position in two weeks. The quickest success was achieved by the pre-school teachers who had a job in 0.05 months on average and the slowest person in this category only took a month to find employment.

The study looked into how long the respondents had been in their current employment. Men averaged 3.1 years in the current job, while the corresponding figure for women was 3.3 years. There was a bigger difference between campus and distance students; the campus students had been in their current occupation for 2.4 years, as compared to 3.9 years in the case of distance students. The same difference manifested itself with regard to the younger and older groups; the younger group had an average of 2.5 years in the current job, while the older students averaged 4 years. When comparing the professions, the pre-school teachers fall into a special category, having remained in their current job for an average of 6 years. The other professions varied but little; the figure for business administration graduates was 2.8 years, nurses 2.1 years and primary teachers 2.7 years as an average period in the same employment.

The graduates' occupations

When it comes to actual jobs the respondents are involved in, it is the business administration graduates that enjoy the greatest diversity, as may be gathered from Table 8 which also presents a comparison of gender, the location of study and in which part of the country they live. Most business administration graduates work as specialists, closely followed by managerial positions (management/head of department).

Table 8. Business administration graduates

	All	Male	Female	Campus students	Distance students	Akureyri	Reykjavik	Other regions
General work as a company employee	8.7%	0.0%	11.8%	15.0%	6.0%	19.2%	5.7%	4.9%
Own business	3.2%	3.0%	3.2%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	2.9%	4.9%
Auditing services	9.5%	3.0%	11.8%	15.0%	7.1%	19.2%	11.4%	4.9%
Postgraduate study	2.4%	0.0%	3.2%	2.5%	2.4%	0.0%	5.7%	1.6%
Primary teaching	1.6%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%
Consultancy	4.8%	3.0%	5.4%	7.5%	3.6%	11.5%	2.9%	3.3%
Company management	15.1%	33.3%	8.6%	10.0%	17.9%	11.5%	8.6%	19.7%
Management/ head of department	15.9%	12.1%	17.2%	10.0%	17.9%	11.5%	17.1%	18.0%
Specialist/Project manager	29.4%	39.4%	25.8%	35.0%	26.2%	19.2%	42.9%	24.6%
Other	9.5%	6.1%	10.8%	5.0%	11.9%	7.7%	2.9%	14.8%

There is some gender distinction, as shown in Table 8; considerably more men than women work as specialists (39.4% versus 25.8%) and in company management (33.3% versus 8.6%). The

female participants, on the other hand, tend to be more involved in general work and auditing; they also occupy middle management positions to a greater extent than the males. When campus and distance students are compared, it is seen that the distance students tend towards company management, while campus students are more likely to be general employees, auditing and working as specialists. Career choices also vary on the basis of location. There is a conspicuously high proportion of specialist positions among those who reside in Reykjavík, or 42.9%. Akureyri residents tend to be in general employment, 19.2% and auditing 19.2% while those living in other regions often fill managerial positions.

Table 9 illustrates the employment distribution of nurses. There is less variety than in the case of business administration graduates and there was no gender comparison due to the paucity of males. 88.6% of the respondents are employed in nursing. When comparing the campus and distance students, it is noted that a slightly higher number of distance students work as nurses, or 90.3% versus 86.5%. When one compares career choices on the basis of residence, it is of particular interest to observe that 97.3% of nursing graduates living in the regions outside Akureyri and Reykjavík are employed in nursing, as compared to 66.7% of those residing in Reykjavík.

Table 9. Nurses

	All	Campus students	Distance students	Akureyri	Reykjavík	Other regions
General work as a company employee	2.9%	2.7%	3.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%
Nursing	88.6%	86.5%	90.9%	85.7%	66.7%	97.3%
Pre-school teaching	1.4%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%
Management/head of department	1.4%	2.7%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Specialist/Project manager	1.4%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%
Other	4.3%	5.4%	3.0%	9.5%	0.0%	2.7%

Table 10 outlines the career choices of primary school teachers. There is no gender comparison, due to the small number of males; only 2 of the primary teachers lived in Reykjavík, which, consequently, is omitted from the comparison. 79.3% of primary teaching graduates are employed in primary school teaching. It is noteworthy that all the distance students teach in primary school and 88.6% of those who work the regions outside Reykjavík and Akureyri are employed in teaching.

Table 10. Primary teachers

	All	Campus students	Distance students	Akureyri	Other regions
General work as a company employee	1.7%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%
Postgraduate study	1.7%	2.3%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%
Primary teaching	79.3%	72.7%	100.0%	63.2%	88.6%
Pre-school teaching	3.4%	4.5%	0.0%	10.5%	0.0%

Management/head of department	1.7%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%
Specialist/Project manager	1.7%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other (what?)	10.3%	13.6%	0.0%	21.1%	5.7%

The pre-school teaching graduates mostly work at pre-school level, or 74% (see Table 11) and a large number also fill managerial positions or are heads of department. This probably involves management in pre-schools. There is no significant difference between campus and distance students. When comparing respondents on the basis of residence, it turns out that those living in Reykjavík are more likely to be working as managers or heads of department than is the case elsewhere in the country.

Table 11. Pre-school teachers

	All	Campus students	Distance students	Akureyri	Reykjavík	Other regions
General work as a company employee	2.7%	5.3%	1.9%	5.6%	5.9%	0.0%
Own business	2.7%	0.0%	3.7%	0.0%	5.9%	2.6%
Primary teaching	4.1%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%
Pre-school teaching	74.0%	73.7%	74.1%	83.3%	64.7%	73.7%
Management/head of department	12.3%	10.5%	13.0%	5.6%	17.6%	13.2%
Management/head of department	4.1%	10.5%	1.9%	5.6%	5.9%	2.6%
Other (what?)						

Salary increases after graduation

The salary increase among the graduates in the study was 41% on average (see table 12). The increase was highest among pre-school teachers, 51%, and women, 42.4%, but lowest among primary school teachers, 23%, and graduates living in the Akureyri area, 34.6%.

This is in accordance with former studies, i.e. the return on education is higher for women than for men and the largest differences apply to arts and education graduates. This indicates that higher education reduces the gender wage gap (Chevalier, 2007).

Table 12. Salary increases after graduation.

	All	Business administration graduates	Nurses	Primary school teachers	Pre-school teachers
All	41.1%	45.8%	37.1%	25.4%	51.6%
Male	35.4%	37.4%	-	-	-
Female	42.4%	49.4%	-	-	-
Campus students	36.8%	47.1%	39.4%	27.4%	46.5%
Distance students	44.2%	45.8%	34.4%	18.8%	52.7%
Aged 30 or less	41.8%	50.2%	46.8%	15.8%	41.3%

Above 30 years of age	42.0%	45.7%	28.7%	29.9%	55.5%
Akureyri	34.6%	44.1%	37.5%	28.7%	37.5%
Reykjavík	48.7%	49.3%	58.1%	-	46.9%
Other regions	41.3%	44.2%	29.2%	24.4%	58.6%

Conclusions

In this paper, a study of career development among graduates in nursing, teaching, and business administration from the University of Akureyri, Iceland, has been presented. In addition, the paper analyzed the following topics: 1) selection of career after graduation, 2) change of employment after graduation, 3) the occupation of the graduates (manager, teacher, etc.), and 4) salary increases after graduation.

According to the main findings of the study, the most important factors that influence the selection of occupation after graduation are: The possibility of remaining in the same municipality (family related issue); the career choice offers interesting work in the graduates' specialist field; and provides useful practical experience. Very few graduates mentioned factors associated with "new career" patterns. This could relate to the fact that the majority of the respondents were women working in the public sector.

Marital status seemed not to affect the career of the graduates, mainly because most of them are married or live in cohabitation relationships.

Distance learning graduates differed from campus graduates in that they chose occupations which tend to enable them to remain in the same municipality; they change occupation more often directly after graduation; are more likely to be in managerial positions in the case of business administration graduates, in nursing in the case of nursing graduates, and in ordinary teaching in the case of teaching graduates; and they enjoy more salary increases after graduation.

Of the graduates, 48.6% had changed employment after graduation, whereof 7% had done so immediately after finishing university studies. Young people, men, and business administration graduates tended to change employment between firms more often than other groups. More than 50% of the women in the study had not changed employment after graduation.

The most common occupations among men in the study were managerial positions (top and middle), professional positions and teaching, while the majority of women were occupied as nurses, teachers, and managers (top and middle). The most common occupations among business administration graduates were managerial positions (top and middle) and professional positions, nursing among nursing graduates and teaching in primary schools among teacher graduates.

The average salary rise after graduation was 41% according to the study; highest among preschool teachers, 51%, and women, 42.4%, but lowest among primary school teachers, 23%, and graduates living in the Akureyri area, 34.6%.

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