

Accept or Refuse a Job? How Graduates Decide

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Summary. In this paper, we discuss aspects of a behavioural model of new graduates on the labour market. The model regards the search for, possible refusal, and acceptance of a job by graduates of the University of Padua. Some jobs are considered a makeshift with respect to expectations the graduates matured along with degree achievement. We will analyse data collected by the University of Padua through a long-lasting perspective survey on its own graduates. We compare, in particular, the behaviour of graduates who worked before graduation with that of graduates who did not.

Keywords: Job search; Job refusal; Makeshift job; SHOT Model; Survey on graduates; University of Padua,

1. How graduates choose a job

After degree achievement, a graduate has to define his or her own life strategies. The first decision is that of deciding if, and when, either look for a job, or enter higher university courses, or start an internship, or, otherwise, settle down and create a family before deciding about work and further studies.

Whatever the schedule, the graduate has to face the job market. Fabbri *et al.* (2002) represents this hierarchy of decision with a model, named SHOT – *Search for, Hold back Opportunities, Try again*, where the main choices are made explicit and the graduates who worked before graduation are kept apart from the others who look for a non-episodic job after degree achievement.

The application of SHOT model is appropriate to University of Padua graduates because the local economy is florid and labour market is near full

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employment and, so, graduates can really choose. On the other side, they have to be competitive and possess, or be willing to achieve, the required competences.

Regarding those who offer work, the graduates are often faced with more than one occupational opportunity, not to just obtain an income, but also to realise professional roles that exploit his/her formative investments.

In such a social environment, graduates feel they could refuse some job offers and accept the most consistent with his/her strategic expectations. In the following, we will discuss the graduates' choice parameters according to the study curriculum and social and personal characteristics of graduates.

For graduates who worked before degree the decision to maintain the current occupation – often chosen to get an income but often different from their expectations – may proceed along with the search of a new position. The novel position may be either a new role within their company, or a new job in another company. Besides, the change of position will not be an issue in this paper.

In the least favourable situations, if the gap between the offered job and the graduate's expectations cannot be filled, he/she may consider the opportunity to look for further education. Even this issue is left aside in this paper.

In the following, we focus on movements of bachelor and master graduates in the labour market (Section 3), the work roles they accept or deny (Section 4) and the possible makeshift position towards low-competence jobs if they are not able to find one that suits their expectations (Section 5).

We conclude in Section 6 with some issues that may weave the plot of the arguments developed in our analyses and may ground future research hypotheses on graduates' work roles and relationships with their companies.

2. The survey on University of Padua graduates

The University of Padua (Fabbri, 2003) has collected the data we analysed with a perspective survey started in 2000 and ended in 2005. Delayed cohorts selected from the graduates list of five adjacent graduation sessions (Figure 1) form the panel.

Cohort	...2000...	...2001.....	...2002.....	...2003.....	...2004.....	...2005			
1	S	----- 1	----- 2	----- 3	----- 4	----- 5	----- 6		
2		S	----- 1	----- 2	----- 3	----- 4	----- 5	----- 6	
3			S	----- 1	----- 2	----- 3	----- 4	----- 5	---
4				S	----- 1	----- 2	----- 3	----- 4	----
5					S	----- 1	----- 2	----- 3	----- 4

Figure 1. Panel design of the University of Padua CATI survey (S=sampling)