Social class and academic performance: how do they influence expectations and strategies for choosing a degree program?

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Research frame

**Probability of future success:** Based on previous academic performance and skills.

**Cost/benefit evaluation:** Based on social background that makes cost relative.

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**Making a decision**

- Expectations
  - Transition (yes/no)
  - Degree program choice
Design of analysis

1. Expectations of going to university?

Compulsory education:
Lower secondary school.
4 years

Post-compulsory education:
Upper secondary school.
2 years

2. Accessing or not?

Upper vocational training.
2 years

3. Which degree program?

University degrees
4-6 years
Research frame: previous research with Spanish data

Transition to non-compulsory education by previous marks and social background:

Compensation effect (Bernardi & Cebolla)

Inequality by social background is greatest among students with the lowest grades.
## Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Independent variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expectations:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social background:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructed variable from two questions. 1. What do you want to do if you obtain the lower secondary degree? 2. What do you want to do if you fail in obtaining the lower secondary degree? Categories: upper secondary (BAT) + university; other.</td>
<td>Educational background in three levels (the highest of two parents): up to compulsory education; secondary post-compulsory; university level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transition:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Qualifications:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among those who have achieved the appropriate secondary school degrees: who entered university (irrelevant of their final achievement or not).</td>
<td>Marks obtained in an external exam: high=above median, low=up to median.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree choice:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social background:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>Price:</strong> High price: 35,77€ &amp; 39,53€/tuiton fee vs. Low price: 25,27€/tuiton fee.</td>
<td>Id.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>Difficulty:</strong> performance rate. Two groups form median by university.</td>
<td>Qualifications: Answer to a question in a retrospective questionnaire: high=good and very good; low=bad and very bad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>Labor market expectations:</strong> quality of graduated jobs (IQO). Two groups form median by university.</td>
<td>Marks obtained to enter university (average secondary school marks and external exam): high=above median, low=up to median.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Expectations

% Expectative to go to upper secondary + university by performance obtained in the Competències Bàsiques exam and by educational background

- Up to compulsory education
- Secondary post-compulsory
- University level
Results: Transition

% Transition to university by marks and by educational background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of transition to university</th>
<th>Low marks</th>
<th>High marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to compulsory education</td>
<td>45,3</td>
<td>72,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary post-compulsory</td>
<td>55,1</td>
<td>79,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University level</td>
<td>69,3</td>
<td>86,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Degree choice (price)

% of high price degree choices by marks and by educational background
Results: Degree choice (difficulty)

% of high difficulty degree choices by marks and by educational background

![Chart showing the percentage of high difficulty degree choices by marks and educational background.]
Results: Degree choice (return)

% of high return degree choices by marks and by educational background

- Higher education
- Post-compulsory
- Compulsory or lower
Conclusions

• Adaptation of Preferences:
  – On expectations:
    • High: tendency to go to university.
    • Low: tendency to not go to university.
    • Medium: depending on marks.
  – On transition:
    • High: tendency to go to university.
    • Low and Medium: depending on marks.

Is this change of pattern due to preference adaptation? Or a simple consequence of the different sample taken into account?
Conclusions

• Vertical stratification (MMI) vs. Horizontal stratification (EMI)