

# When does a specific field of study pay off? The interplay between educational specificity, level and cyclical sensitivity

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9 March 2021

This paper investigates how the specificity of the field of study determines the quality of school-to-work transitions. In doing so, we contribute to the literature in two major ways. First, we study whether the role of specificity in the school-to-work transition is moderated by the level of education and the cyclical sensitivity of the field of study. Second, we apply a processual approach in the study of the school-to-work transition. Specifically, we produce a typology of school-to-work transitions based on labor market position and income. This is done with multichannel sequence analysis on unique Dutch register data on school-leavers from the 2009-2010 cohort (N=182,057). The results confirm that specificity positively influences the quality of school-to-work transitions in terms of employment and income security. This however mostly holds for the highest levels of upper-secondary education (ISCED 354), while much less for the lower levels of upper-secondary education and almost not at all for tertiary education. Surprisingly, the positive effects of specificity were furthermore often stronger for more cyclically sensitive fields of study.