

The Education-Occupation Mismatch of International Emigrants and Return Migrants in Mexico, 2005-2012

Abstract

In this study I examine the mismatch between Mexican migrants' level of education and their occupation both prior to migrating and upon their return. Data for the analysis are obtained from the Mexican National Occupation and Employment Survey (ENOE), a nationally-representative panel survey of Mexican households that has been carried out since 2005. In contrast to recent research indicating that Mexican migrants are negatively selected by education overall, I find that Mexican men who migrate abroad have significantly higher levels of education than non-migrants in the same occupation. Because men who are overeducated for their occupation tend to receive lower wages than those employed in occupations commensurate with their education, and are also more dissatisfied with their jobs, over-education may provide an incentive to emigrate in search of better opportunities. Return migrants also have higher education levels compared to non-migrants in the same occupation according to the most complete models that take into account differential selectivity into employment. Finally, I examine changes in migrants' education over time. I find evidence that the education-occupation mismatch has increased among Mexican emigrants in the years following the U.S. recession.