The Center for Iberian & Latin American Studies

The expansion of education and the evolution of Intergenerational Economic Mobility in Chile

Thursday, January 24, 2013 ● 3-4:30 pm

Deutz Room in the Copley International Conference Center,Institute of the Americas Complex, UCSD

Expanding education is widely believed to be the main means of enhancing social mobility and promoting equality of opportunity in the long term. As the argument goes, policies like compulsory secondary education and expanding tertiary education would open access to the privileged positions in the social ladder, and make people´s socioeconomic status fundamentally determined by individual effort and merit. However, there is limited knowledge about whether such education reforms and expanding education more generally trigger improvements in intergenerational social mobility. This paper examines these issues by analyzing the evolution of intergenerational educational and economic mobility in recent decades in Chile, a country that has experienced substantial education reforms paired with sustained economic growth since the 1980s, and where average years of schooling and access to tertiary education has increased rapidly.

This paper finds that the expansion of education in recent decades is associated with increased intergenerational educational mobility. However, this has failed to transform itself into more intergenerational economic mobility. We argue that other sources of intergenerational socioeconomic persistence such as class-segregation in the Chilean education system, class-discrimination in the labor market and household-level intergenerational effects may have limited the transformation of increased educational mobility into economic mobility. Hence, Chilean society remains highly rigid in comparative perspective in spite of the remarkable expansion of education of recent decades.

.

Javier Núñez received his BA in Economics from the University of Chile, and his Ph.D. from the University of Oxford. He is currently an Associate Professor of the Department of Economics at the University of Chile. His research interests include applied Game Theory, the economics of labor-market discrimination, inequality of opportunity and intergenerational social mobility in Chile. He has received research grants and awards from Conicyt-Chile, the Ford Foundation, the British Council and University of Chile. Núñez was a visiting scholar at the Centre of Latin American Studies in the University of Cambridge in 2009, and was the Director of the School of Economics and Business of Universidad de Chile in 2010-2011. He is currently a Visiting Scholar at CILAS.

●For more information on upcoming events, please go to http://cilas.ucsd.edu/events/index.html