

Arkādijs Zvaigzne

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DOCTORAL CANDIDATE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Higher Education, Inequality, Workforce Development

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Ph.D. in Education, Education Policy and Program Evaluation

2020 - 2026 (*expected*)

Advisor: Peter Q. Blair

Training in quantitative and qualitative policy and program evaluation. Courses in econometrics, microeconomic theory, machine learning, and big data analysis.

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

Master of Science in Education, Higher Education

2019 - 2020

Training in quantitative analysis and international higher education. Courses in network analysis and quasi-experimental design.

RTU Riga Business School, Riga, Latvia

Master of Business Administration, Finance Specialization

2016 - 2019 Training in

management, accounting, financial investing, and statistics.

Riga Stradins University, Riga, Latvia

Bachelor's Degree, European Economics and Business

2013 - 2016

Training in statistics, microeconomic theory, economic research methodology, macroeconomics, and European Union law

CURRENT PROJECTS

Dynamics of Financial Aid Tournaments

Job Market Paper

Financial aid programs in higher education vary widely in design, including how aid is structured and the timing of provision. This paper studies the impact of financial aid provided as a repeated tournament and its dynamic treatment effects. I exploit a relative GPA-based eligibility rule in a regression discontinuity design to estimate the causal impacts of two types of aid - a tuition waiver and a stipend on top. Waivers have powerful effects on student persistence, increasing graduation rates by 12pp, and GPA by 0.4σ . Stipends affect student effort by increasing student GPA in the next semester by 0.3σ and persistence by increasing graduation rates by 8.8pp. I find a powerful crowding-in effect, where receiving aid in one semester significantly increases the probability of receiving it in the future. Decomposing the impact reveals that a substantial portion of the total long-term benefit of aid comes from the crowding-in of future resources, suggesting that static analyses may underestimate the full value of financial aid programs.

The Race Between Brain Drain and Brain Gain: EU Accession and Human Capital Formation in Newly Joined Member States

Work In Progress

A key determinant of investment in human capital is the expected returns to such investment. The removal of barriers to the free movement of labor permits individuals to access a broader range of labor markets, increasing their expected returns to human capital. However, as the opportunities for free movement of individuals have increased, so has the risk of brain drain. Using individual and national-level data from Latvia, I estimate the impact of joining the EU on the quality and stock of human capital in Latvia. What I find is that joining the EU has had a positive impact on both the quality and stock of human capital in Latvia. The process of joining the EU increased tertiary enrolment by 22.9 percentage points, and access to the free movement of labor within the EU increased tertiary attainment by 9.6pp after 10 years. Furthermore, the process of joining the EU had no statistically significant impact on net migration rates, and a positive impact on the total number of individuals with tertiary education.

The Returns to High School Graduation and College Access

Work In Progress

This paper evaluates the impact of acquiring a high school diploma for individuals who successfully pass the high school exit exam in Latvia. The especially low threshold for passing the high school exit exam sets the threshold at the 4th percentile of all high school students. This allows me to contribute new estimates to the returns to acquiring a secondary education and the opportunities for additional schooling in an effectively open enrolment system for exceptionally marginal students. What I find is that marginally passing the high school exit exam increases the probability of enrolment into 2-year institutions, but with no impact on graduation rates.

The Dynamic Treatment Effects of HAIL with S. Dynarski, E. Burland, and J. Hayes *Work In Progress*

Returns to Federally Funded Job Training with J. Hayes

Work in Progress

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The Project on Workforce at Harvard

Doctoral Researcher

2021 - Ongoing

Conducting data analysis using administrative data on workforce training and preparation programs and their participants. Writing a report detailing and analyzing public jobs training in the US. Working on analyzing the match of college degree growth to changes in the labor market.

Harvard University

Researcher, BE-Lab

2020 - Ongoing

University of Pennsylvania

Research Assistant, Institute for Research on Higher Education

2019 - 2020

Researching the performance of Californian higher education, using federal- and state-level education data sets to review the performance of the system and institutions.

AFFILIATIONS

Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

Graduate Student Affiliate

Institute for Quantitative Social Science, Harvard University

Graduate Student Affiliate

Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University

Graduate Student Associate

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia

Senior Expert

2021, 2022 - 2025

Conducting analysis of educational and labor market outcome data for postsecondary education. Drafting and validating with stakeholders a conceptual report on the reformation of Latvia's higher education funding system.

RTU Riga Business School Education Innovation Lab

Research Director

2022 - Ongoing

Supporting evidence-based educational development and conducting process and impact evaluations of programs designed for supporting innovation development and training digital skills.

REPORTS

Navigating Public Job Training

with David Deming, Alexis Gable, and Rachel Lipson

2023

Report on Estonian and Nordic Experience in Implementing Free Higher Education

with Sandis Kārkliņš, funded by the Latvian Parliament

2020

PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS	University of California Summer School on the Economics of Migration	
	<i>The Race Between Brain Drain and Brain Gain</i>	2025
	World Latvian Economics and Innovations Forum	
	<i>Overview of Human Capital in Latvia</i>	2025
	Stockholm School of Economics in Riga Open Workshop	
	<i>The Impact of the Removal of Barriers to Labor Mobility on Investment in Human Capital</i>	2024
	<i>The Effectiveness of Tuition Waivers and Further Stipends to Students</i>	2023
	Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Fall Conference	
	<i>Returns to Federally Funded Job Training, with Julian Hayes</i>	2023
	Association for Education Finance and Policy Annual Conference	
AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS	<i>Returns to Federally Funded Job Training, with Julian Hayes</i>	2023
	<i>Waiving Tuition vs Providing Direct Aid to Students During Their Studies</i>	2023
	Jens Aubrey Wenstegard Scholarship	2025
	Harvard University, Jens Aubrey Westengard Fund for Study in Europe, Britain, or South America	
	Frederick Sheldon Travel Fellowship	2024
	Harvard University, Frederick Sheldon Travel Fellowship to research College Access and Its Labor Market and Civic Consequences for Low-Achieving High-School Graduates in Latvia.	
	Merit Scholarship	2019
	University of Pennsylvania	
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SKILLS	Programming Languages: R, L ^A T _E X	
	Statistical and Data Analysis Software: Stata, PowerBI, Tableau, Shiny	
	Languages: Latvian, English, Russian	
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