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EENEE and NESET II Conference - Brussels, 23 November 2017



Education
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Education as a tool for the economic integration of migrants

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Human capital investments and immigrants' integration

- Empirical evidence shows that - on average - immigrants in Europe are less educated than non-immigrants.
- Large heterogeneity across countries, explained by a number of factors:
 - historical reasons
 - immigration policies
 - labour market characteristics
- Children with an immigrant background display worse results than natives in international tests.
- While in some countries, this gap is almost entirely explained by differences in socio-economic background, in others the factors driving the gap are more complex and have roots also outside socioeconomic conditions.



Proficiency in the host country language

Factors explaining differences in the educational outcome of immigrants and non-immigrants include the proficiency in the host country language.

Many studies show that a positive correlation exists between proficiency in the host country language and educational outcomes.

Dustmann et al. (2010) find that, just before school entry age, ethnic minority children significantly under-perform in early cognitive tests with respect to other children.

Nevertheless, they catch up during their school career, with proficiency in the English language being the single most important contributor to their progress (accounting for up to two thirds of their relative progress).



Proficiency in the host country language. Policies

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- a) Provision of extra-funds to schools;
- b) Train teachers to deal with children who lack competence in the language of instruction;
- c) Support out of-school activities and the engagement of parents.



Impact of these policies.

Nusche, 2009, the inclusion of immigrant children who lack competencies in the language of instruction in mainstream classrooms gives better results than preparatory teaching in separate classes.

Clair et al. (2012) show that training programs involving parents have positive effects on student performance.

Additional work is needed to better understand the costs and benefits of different policies.



School organization

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School organization has an important role to play in bridging the gap in educational attainment between natives and immigrants.

Pre-school attendance

Recruitment of teachers with an immigrant background

School tracking

Share of immigrant peers



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Pre-school attendance

Few studies have investigated the impact of pre-school attendance on children with an immigrant background or belonging to minority groups.

In the US context, a number of papers show that participation in pre-school programs is associated with larger gains for children of immigrant families with low education.

In the European context, evidence exists only for few countries and shows positive effects.

European Commission report (2015).



School tracking

Education systems in Europe differ in the age at which students are tracked into different types of education.

Early selection into tracks might also affect the educational attainment of children with an immigrant background.



The effect of early selection on immigrant students has been investigated only rarely and with mixed results.

Lüdemann and Schwerdt (2013) find that inequalities among children of native parents and children with an immigrant background are due to socio-economic background rather to a negative penalty associated with migratory status.

Ruhose and Schwerdt (2013) shows no significant effects of early tracking



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Combination of teacher and student demographic characteristics

A number of papers show that that teachers assess ethnic minority students in ways that deviate from what would be expected from national standardized tests.

It might be beneficial to change stereotyped attitudes held by teachers, for instance using targeted training programs.

Positive effects from same-ethnicity teachers: evidence mainly from studies focusing on tertiary education.

Same-ethnicity teachers might improve performance by serving as a role model for minority students.



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The effects of the share of immigrants in classes

A key question is whether the increased share of immigrants in schools and classes has a negative effect on the school performance of immigrants and natives.

The influence of immigrant students on their native classmates is a particular type of peer effect: immigrants are peers with a different culture, a different way to interact with others and, most often, limited language proficiency.

Equality considerations suggest that appropriate policies should be designed to reduce segregation and improve equality of opportunity. But are desegregation policies also justified on efficiency grounds?



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The effects of the share of immigrants in classes

Focus on school performance to measure efficiency because of the widespread belief that human capital affects productivity and is a key engine of economic growth.



School stratification can have additional personal and social costs, including xenophobia, social exclusion, radicalisation, insecurity and violence.

Since it is often very difficult to measure these costs, looking at school performance provides a useful starting point for policy analysis.



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The effects of the share of immigrants in classes

Under what conditions policies that reallocate students from schools with a high share of immigrants to schools with a low share can improve efficiency?



These conditions require that immigrant peer effects are not only negative but also non-linear and concave.

The marginal gain from reducing the share of immigrants in a school with many immigrants dominates the marginal loss from increasing the share in a school with few immigrants.



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The effects of the share of immigrants in classes. Empirical Evidence

The impact of immigrant concentration on the academic achievement of European students has been analysed by several studies.

Available evidence suggests that students with an immigrant background are negatively affected by other immigrant students in the class or school.

Students with a native background are also negatively affected, but the size of the estimated effect is controversial, ranging from very small to considerable.



The effects of the share of immigrants in classes. Non-linear peer effects

Only a few studies have investigated whether the relationship between test scores and the share of immigrants is non-linear.

The evidence on non-linear peer effect shows that there are thresholds in the share above which the negative effect on school performance increases in absolute value.

The presence of tipping points justify policies that introduce caps to the share of immigrants in school.

At what percentage should these caps be set?

Unfortunately, the estimated values of tipping points vary too broadly across studies.





Policies Addressing the School Segregation of Immigrants

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Lotteries

Bussing

Improving the quality of concentrated schools

Parental information

Ceilings to the share of immigrants



Lotteries

With school choice, selection of students into the best schools is often based on ability and parental background. Since immigrants often have a disadvantaged background, they tend to concentrate in less attractive institutions.

A more diverse student intake can be promoted by using lotteries.

Several papers have evaluated the impact of these programs, with fairly mixed results.

In Europe, an example of lotteries is the major school admission reform in Brighton and Hove, a UK school district. The new system incorporated a lottery for over-subscribed places and new catchment areas. Allen et al, 2010, examine the post-reform changes in school composition and find no significant change in student sorting.



Bussing

Free transportation of students to schools in different areas.

In some Danish municipalities, for example, schools with predominantly native Danish students are receiving migrant students from other schools. Some municipalities report positive results.

US de-segregation policies. Guryan, 2004, finds that de-segregation plans led to two to three percentage points decline in the school dropout rate of blacks, without having any significant effect on the dropout rate of whites.



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Improving the quality of concentrated schools

One way to encourage native students to choose schools with diverse student populations is to place attractive schools with special curricula in relatively disadvantaged areas.

In the US, such "magnet schools", offering special math, science or art curricula exist since the 1970s.

In Switzerland, for example, the QUIIMS (Quality in Multi-Ethnic Schools) programme offers extra resources and professional support to schools with 40% or more students from migrant backgrounds.

Adding extra financial resources to schools with a high share of immigrants may be more effective than increased exposure to natives. Guryan, 2004.



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Parental information

Some policies attempt to influence the preferences of native and / or migrant parents.



Most of these initiatives are too recent to determine the effectiveness of such actions.



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Ceilings to the share of immigrants

In 2010 the Italian government introduced a 30 percent ceiling to the share of immigrants in the first grade classes of primary and secondary schools, with the purpose of limiting school segregation.

To date, there is no empirical research evaluating the impact of a ceiling to the share of immigrants on school stratification and school outcomes.



Conclusions

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The evidence on the effects of the share of immigrants suggests that these effects are likely to be negative (and often sizeable) for immigrants and negative but probably small for natives.

Overall, the message seems clear: desegregation policies are not only equitable – they provide better opportunities to individuals with relatively low parental background – but also efficient.

While the bulk of the evidence of admission lotteries suggest limited or no effects, there is some evidence for the US and Denmark that bussing policies may work in improving the school performance of immigrants. Similarly, there is evidence that providing more resources to schools with a high share of immigrants improves performance.



Conclusions

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Programs providing immigrant children with adequate access to pre-school services might be a sensible policy to improve their short and long-term educational outcomes;

Training programs aimed at changing stereotyped teacher attitudes toward immigrants might also be useful to bust immigrant children educational performance;

Recruiting teachers with an immigrant background can help immigrant children by establishing positive role models;

While in general late tracking does not help to reduce immigrant-native education gaps, it might be useful for children from less integrated families, who lack proficiency in the national language.





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