

PRESENTATION OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

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Additional to this introductory paper, the Special Issue contains 5 interesting papers about different topics on Economics of Education.

The first one is presented by Karsten Albæk, titled “A test of the ‘use it or lose it’ hypothesis in labour markets around the world”. As the author explains, the aim of the paper is to investigate skills and the use of skills at work in 21 OECD countries for people from 35 to 65 years old. The hypothesis is that “the deterioration of skills with age might be more pronounced in occupations with a limited use of skills than in occupations with more intensive use of these skills”. The author obtains that “high-skilled workers have higher measured skills than low-skilled workers and high-skilled workers use skills more at work than low-skilled workers. Measured skills decline from the age of 35 both for high- and low-skilled workers at about the same pace. The use of skills at work also declines from the age of 35 for both high-skilled workers and low-skilled workers at about the same pace, and at about the same rate as measured skills”, independently of the use of cognitive skills at work. So, the evidence obtained does not support the ‘use it or lose it’ hypothesis.

The second paper that analyzes the returns of skills are the one presented by Vicente German-Soto, Edgar J. Sánchez Carrera and Leonardo D. Tenorio Martínez. The title is “On the Skill Premium Hypothesis in Mexico: An Analysis by Scientific Area”. Using a GMM-Dynamic panel this work “estimates the short-run relationship between the ratio of number of college-educated workers and high-school educated workers with the ratio of their respective incomes. The analysis is by scientific area of the Mexican states along 2005-2010”. As they explain, skilled labor is actually more abundant, so the skill premium is declining in most of the scientific areas, in accordance with the skill-biased technological change hypothesis. The results of the paper confirms for the period and the country analyzed that the skill premium hypothesis is fulfilled: increments in the relative supply of skills reduce the skill premium in the assessed scientific areas. This asymmetry of treatment between workers in the functioning of the Mexican labor market seems to be increasing. The low elasticity of substitution among skilled and unskilled workers reinforces the explanation of the persistence of low

salaries. Anyway, the authors suggest the necessity to improve the model including some other determinants (as the technology). The economic policy recommendation claims by a major connection among human capital and labor market, by linking the high education and production systems through most direct stimulus.

The following two papers analyze different issues around acquisition of competencies in the education system. Thus, the paper written by Raul Ramos, Juan Carlos Duque and Sandra Nieto focus on the relevance of geographical location of the students in the subject areas of mathematics, science and reading. The paper is titled "Decomposing the rural-urban differential in student achievement in Colombia using PISA microdata". Using three PISA surveys waves for the period 2006-2012, in Colombia, the paper examines the differences in educational outcomes between students attending schools in rural areas and those enrolled in urban schools. The descriptive analysis of the data shows that "the educational outcomes of rural students are worse than those of urban students" but the estimated results coming from an estimated education production function concludes that most of the differential is attributable to family characteristics as opposed to those of the school. From a policy perspective, the evidence supports the need to complement measures of positive discrimination of rural schools with actions addressed at improving household conditions.

Finally, the last paper of this Special Issue, by Calero and Escardíbul, analyzes the determinants of the gap between the performance of native and immigrant students in Spain, using PISA-2012 data. The paper is entitled 'Educational process and native and immigrant students' results. An analysis based on PISA-2012'. Specifically, the competences on mathematics are analyzed, by means of a series of multilevel regressions, in which special attention is paid to variables related to immigration. Results show that the differences between native and immigrant students are partially explained by the effect of variables related to schools and especially to the students themselves. The authors find significant differences in performance associated to the difference between first and second generation immigrants and no significant effect of the language spoken at home. Additionally, at the school level, results show a special sensitivity of immigrant students in front of variations in the average schooling years of the school parents and a negative effect of the proportion of immigrant students at the school, although such effect is only identified, for native students, starting from a high level of concentration (30%).