

Paper Abstracts
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Panel 1: December 5

Using Education to Address Violent Conflict: Discourses at the Global Level

Julia Lerch

In the past two decades, the international development community has stepped up its efforts to develop appropriate educational policies in the context of civil wars. My study investigates how international development organizations in particular have begun to promote education as a way of mitigating violent conflicts within nations. I analyze the evolution of global narratives about education and conflict through content analysis of education documents published by selected bilateral and multilateral organizations over the past half-century. My question is whether there are discernable conceptual shifts over time in how organizations link education sectors to violent conflict that can help us understand the recent global interest in this topic. My findings indicate that this interest is underpinned by an emerging global vision for education as a central ingredient in national development and as a human right that has to be protected in any context. These findings have important implications for our understanding of global pressures on education policies in conflict-ridden nations.

Hierarchy as a Theme in the American College, 1880-1920

Ethan Ris

How did the undergraduate college rapidly position itself as the gateway to middle-class American employment between 1880 and 1920? This theoretical essay attempts to explain one part of that process. Drawing on Weberian organizational theory, it identifies hierarchy as a defining aspect of the modern workplace – one that must be comprehended and mastered by the successful “white collar” worker. The author describes the turn-of-the-century transformation of the American college in the context of its increasingly hierarchical nature, which established it as the preeminent proving ground for hierarchical proficiency in aspiring bureaucratic workers.

Narratives of Inclusion: Definitions of “American” in a Diverse School Setting

Cristina Lash

In this paper I explore how a diverse group of elementary students and their teachers define American identity. A Critical Discourse Analysis of teacher interviews revealed that the teachers viewed American both in terms of ethnoculturalism and cultural pluralism. Though they problematized a definition of American based on nativity, they also defined “American” in terms of Whiteness or as de-identification with one’s ethnic heritage. By contrast, a content analysis of survey data showed that the students defined “American” primarily as English-speaking. Implications for schools serving diverse learners are discussed.

Panel 2: December 12

Using Multiple Dimensions of Teacher Value-added to Improve Student-Teacher Assignments

Lindsay Fox

Current uses of value-added modeling largely ignore or assume away the potential for teachers to be more effective with one type of student than another, despite the fact that research supports this notion of differential effectiveness. At the elementary level, teachers may also be more effective in one subject than another. If teacher quality does vary by student type or subject, schools could raise student achievement through targeted matching of students to teachers best suited to teach them. In this paper, I use administrative data from Miami-Dade County Public Schools and employ value-added models to investigate the degree of heterogeneity of effectiveness within teachers. I then run simulations to estimate the gains in achievement that could be attained from using multiple dimensions of teacher effectiveness when making student-teacher assignments. The findings indicate a very high level of stability of teacher effectiveness across all student subgroups and a lower level of stability across subjects. Accordingly, gains are negligible for the subgroup simulations and modest for subject simulations. Though gains are small, subject specialization is a way to more efficiently use the current labor force and the re-assignment procedure employed here is feasible in any district with administrative data.

The Trade-Off Between Quantity and Price in the Teacher Hiring Process of Brazilian Public Schools

Tassia Cruz

The trade-off between quantity and price is an important factor in governments’ decisions on how to spend public funds on teachers. This paper aims to understand this decision for local governments by examining the reaction of municipal public school systems in Brazil to a funding reform (the FUNDEF) that redistributes the funds to be spent on education within the states and imposes a restriction on the minimum to be spent on teachers at 60% of the redistributed funds. With an external increase or decrease in the funds, due to the redistribution of funds, the

municipalities have only two options of how to increase their expenditures on teachers: to increase the total number of teachers or to increase the wages (price) of their current corps. This study used two empirical strategies to estimate the governments' decisions: a differences-in-differences strategy to estimate the effect of the reform's characteristics on the trade-off options, and a panel regression using the external variation in the FUNDEF transfers (instrumented by a simulated value of the transfer) to analyze the effect of more funds to the municipalities. The study finds evidence that the FUNDEF reform increased the expenditures on teachers by both increasing the wages and the number of teachers. While the redistribution aspect led to higher expenditures on wages for those municipalities that gained from the redistribution, the requirement to spend at least 60% on teachers led to an increase in the number of teachers for those municipalities that were bound by the requirement. However, the amount of funds is significantly related to more teachers hired independently of the characteristics of the municipality. These results suggest that wages respond to incentives – municipalities increase/decrease wages when they are benefited/harmed by the redistribution. But when the municipality must increase the expenditure on teachers, due to an increase in funds that must be spent on education or due to a requirement of minimum spending, hiring teachers is the preferred choice.

Community (in) Colleges: The Relationships Between Online Network Involvement and Credit Completion at a Community College

Eliza D. Evans

This study explores the relationship between online social network involvement and credit completion at a community college. Prior theory hypothesizes that as students become increasingly integrated into a school community, they are more likely to stay enrolled in and committed to a particular institution. Community colleges offer a unique setting in which to explore this theory: high attrition rates give the institutions a vested interest in finding ways to keep students committed to their schools, and the absence of dorms and high turnover of the student body makes social integration especially hard to establish. These institutional characteristics make online social networking tools particularly attractive as a means of fostering social engagement. Does involvement with online social networks have a positive association with completing credits at a community college? This study finds that the association between online network involvement and credit completion in a community college is weak to non-existent, even among populations that might be particularly positioned to benefit from online networks. However, there is evidence for peer influence on academic performance within the network. This could indicate that wider-spread use of these kinds of networks within community colleges might help to alleviate the retention problems at community colleges.

Impact of Teachers Implicit Beliefs: Field Experiment with Chilean Teachers

Susana Claro

Previous studies have shown that beliefs that teachers hold about the nature of intelligence influence their actions and the messages they send to students. However, we don't know how these beliefs are formed or furthermore, how can they be trained in the direction that would

benefit students. This study presents a field experiment where teachers were randomly trained to believe that intelligence is malleable. A group of 2,350 teachers voluntarily started a free online professional development program offered by the Chilean Department of Education. An intervention module was added at the beginning of the online course, which randomly assigned each teacher to the neutral condition or the experimental condition. I observe the impact of finishing each condition on outcomes such as completing the whole online course, passing the online course and, later (in 2014) if it will have an impact in increasing student achievement. In addition, I observe whether the amount of peers in the experimental condition that each teacher had influenced the individual outcomes.