

More class time, better achievement?

Marcenaro–Gutierrez, Oscar¹

Lopez–Agudo, Luis Alejandro²

Abstract

Spanish press has widely criticized the fact that students spend almost their whole day at school, a practice rooted in the common belief that higher instruction time enhances students' learning. However, in spite of this high amount of instruction time that Spanish students are receiving, their results do not seem to outstand in comparison with other countries with similar or lower instruction time.

In this context, this research intends to accomplish two main objectives: the first one is to check if the amount of instruction time received by 15 year-old Spanish students actually affects their academic achievement. The second one intends to analyse if this potential influence of instruction time may be affecting Spanish Autonomous Communities in different ways, as each one is responsible for setting instruction time in its own region. In order to accomplish these objectives, the methodology employed let us isolate the effect of instruction time from other covariates by using students' fixed effects by subject, using PISA 2009 and 2012 data. Results have shown that there is not any effect of instruction time on academic achievement, being this conclusion extended to every Autonomous Community in Spain. Further checks have corroborated the robustness of these results and have also highlighted that the effect of instruction time is a question of quality more than quantity, as students' engagement and the classroom climate during lessons may be causing differences in academic achievement, rather than the amount of instruction time *per se*.

Keywords instruction time; student fixed effects; secondary education; Autonomous Communities; Spain.

JEL Codes I20; I21; I28

Acknowledgements

This work has been partly supported by the *Consejería de Innovación, Ciencia y Empresa de la Junta de Andalucía* (PAI group SEJ-532 and Excellence research group SEJ-2727); by the *Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad* (Research Project ECO2014-56397-P) and scholarship FPU2014 04518 of the *Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte*. We also acknowledge the training received from the University of Malaga PhD Programme in Economy and Business [*Programa de Doctorado en Economía y Empresa de la Universidad de Malaga*].

¹ Corresponding author. Universidad de Málaga. Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales. Departamento de Economía Aplicada (Estadística y Econometría, 15). Plaza de El Ejido s/n, 29013, Málaga (España); e-mail: odmarcenaro@uma.es. Tel: +34 952137003, Fax: +34 952137262.

² Universidad de Málaga. Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales. Departamento de Economía Aplicada (Estadística y Econometría, 15) y Programa de doctorado en Economía y Empresa. Plaza de El Ejido s/n, 29013, Málaga (España); e-mail: lopezagudo@uma.es. Tel: +34 952137003, Fax: +34 952137262.