

JAN BIETENBECK

Contact Information

CEMFI
Casado del Alisal 5
28014 Madrid, Spain

Web: <http://www.cemfi.es/~bietenbeck/>
Email: bietenbeck@cemfi.es
Phone: +34 644-408-843

Doctoral Studies

2011 – present Ph.D. in Economics, CEMFI, Madrid, Spain (completion expected June 2015)
Dissertation: “Three essays on school organization, student performance, and long-term outcomes”
Spring 2013 Visiting Ph.D. student, MIT, Cambridge, MA

References:

David Dorn (main advisor)
University of Zurich Department of Economics
Schoenberggasse 1
CH-8001 Zurich, Switzerland
+41 44-634-6105
david.dorn@econ.uzh.ch

Manuel Arellano
CEMFI
Casado del Alisal 5
ES-28014 Madrid, Spain
+34 914-290-551
arellano@cemfi.es

David Autor
MIT Department of Economics
40 Ames Street, E17-216
Cambridge, MA 02142, USA
+1 617-258-7698
dautor@mit.edu

Samuel Bentolila
CEMFI
Casado del Alisal 5
ES-28014 Madrid, Spain
+34 914-290-551
bentolila@cemfi.es

Prior Education

2009 – 2011 Master in Economics and Finance, CEMFI, Madrid, Spain
2008 – 2009 M.Sc. in Economics, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom
2006 – 2007 Exchange student, University of Bologna, Italy
2004 – 2007 B.A. in European Studies, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

Research and Teaching Fields

Primary field: Labor Economics
Secondary fields: Economics of Education, Applied Econometrics

Research and Teaching Experience

2010 – 2014 Research Assistant to David Dorn
Spring 2014 Instructor, Programming in Stata workshop (CEMFI)
2011 – 2013 Teaching Assistant, Graduate Labor Economics (instructor: David Dorn)
2007 – 2008 Research Assistant (full time) to Thiess Büttner, ifo Institute, Munich, Germany

Scholarships and Grants

2013 Research grant, Data without Boundaries (European Commission project)
2012 Research grant, Geld und Währung Foundation, Frankfurt (Germany)
2011 – 2015 Predoctoral Research Grant, Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation
2009 – 2011 CEMFI Scholarship for the Master in Economics and Finance program

External Presentations

2014	European Winter Meeting of the Econometric Society (Madrid) Simposio de la Asociación Española de Economía (Palma de Mallorca) University of Zurich European Association of Labour Economists Conference (Ljubljana) Society of Labor Economists Conference (Arlington) IZA Summer School (Buch am Ammersee)
2013	European Association of Labour Economists Conference (Turin) Society of Labor Economists Conference (Boston) MIT Labor Lunch

Other Information

Citizenship:	German
Languages:	German (native); English, Italian, Spanish (fluent); Dutch, French (beginner)

Research Papers

“Learning from Adversity? Short- and Long-Term Spillover Effects from Grade Retention in Kindergarten” (Job Market Paper)

Grade retention rates in kindergarten and the early elementary grades have risen steadily over the past few decades in the United States. While many studies document that retention impedes skill accumulation among retained students, little is known about the impact of retention policies on the outcomes of non-retained students. This study estimates the causal spillover effects from retained students on the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of their non-retained kindergarten peers. It draws on data from the Tennessee STAR experiment, which randomly assigned students to classes, and documents three sets of impacts. First, students exposed to retained classmates score lower on a standardized mathematics test at the end of kindergarten, an effect that fades out in later years. Second, exposed students score higher on a variety of measures of non-cognitive skills that are first observed about three years after kindergarten, and they seem to be able to retain these non-cognitive gains over time. Third, students benefit from kindergarten exposure to retained classmates in the long run, as they are more likely to graduate from high school and to take a college entrance exam. I argue that these favorable long-term effects are driven by greater non-cognitive skills such as improved discipline, which students acquired as they learned to cope with the initially adverse situation of being in class with an underachieving and potentially disruptive retained student.

“Teaching Practices and Cognitive Skills,” *Labour Economics*, 30: 143-153, October 2014.

IEA Bruce H. Choppin Memorial Award 2012 for the best master's thesis using IEA data

UAM-Accenture Award in Economics and Management of Innovation 2011

National Teaching Standards by various educational organizations in the United States call for a decrease in the use of traditional teaching practices (such as learning by rote) and an increase in the use of modern teaching practices (such as working in small groups) in schools. Yet a small literature in economics has consistently found that traditional teaching raises test scores, while the effect of modern teaching appears to be small and sometimes even negative. This paper uses data from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) to show that traditional and modern teaching practices promote different cognitive skills in students. In particular, traditional teaching practices increase students' factual knowledge and their competency in solving routine problems, but have no significant effect on their reasoning skills. The effects of modern teaching practices are exactly the opposite, with modern teaching fostering reasoning skills. I provide evidence that standardized tests do not measure reasoning skills well, which explains the finding of only small or negative effects of modern teaching on test scores in the literature. I discuss the implications of these results for the recommendations made by National Teaching Standards.

“Teacher Quality in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Importance of Subject Knowledge and Absenteeism for Student Achievement” (with Marc Piopiunik and Simon Wiederhold)

We use novel data from a repeated international assessment of students and their teachers to document large differences in student achievement between 13 Sub-Saharan African countries. At the country level, student and teacher test scores are highly correlated both in levels and in changes over time. This raises the question whether differences in teacher knowledge can explain the observed cross-country differences in student achievement. In order to answer this question, we estimate the effects of teacher test scores in mathematics and reading on student achievement in the same two subjects. The empirical model exploits the variation in teacher scores between the two subjects for each student and holds all subject-invariant student characteristics fixed. We find that a one standard deviation increase in teacher knowledge raises student achievement by 3% of an international standard deviation. This impact is considerably larger in schools with lower teacher absenteeism rates and for students taught by a teacher of the same gender. We confirm our results for a subsample of students taught by the same teacher in mathematics and reading, in which we can additionally control for all subject-invariant teacher characteristics.

Research in Progress

“Task Specialization and Cross-Cohort Differences in the College Wage Premium”

“Social Networks and the High School to College Transition” (with Inés Berniell)

Updated November 2014