



Behavioral Economics of Education

Discussion by Robert Dur (Erasmus School of Economics)

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Paper



Impressive paper, must-read: IZA paper 8853.

Many interesting insights and important lessons for both policy makers, teachers, and parents.

Perhaps one thing I disagree



Abstract:

“While the field has been successfully applied to many areas, education has, so far, received less attention”



Structure of my discussion

General observations on the field.

A few Dutch examples.

Some ideas to make behavioral economics of education even more useful.



Many success stories...

but learning about 'failures' at least as important.

Example:

Study by Roel van Elk, Marc van der Steeg, Dinand Webbink on 'wijkschool' in Rotterdam.

Intervention: services and coaching to increase school enrolment and employment among youth at risk.

Do not assume generalizability



But test it!

Results oftentimes are context-dependent in surprising ways.

When testing, do broad measurement

We should go beyond standard set of outcomes!

Examples:

Ludwig et al. study: 'Becoming a Man'-intervention, including character or values education, such as 'fist-exercise'.

Study in UK, using day out with class as incentive to perform well.

When testing, consider long-term effects

Many studies restricted to test scores and drop out.

Longer-term success sometimes much smaller:

- teaching to the test
- intertemporal substitution





Example

Lavy's recent study on performance pay for teachers.

Short-run: higher test scores.

But how about the long-run?

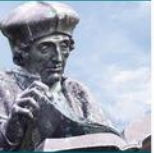


Long-run effects quite spectacular

4%-points higher enrolment in university.

15 years later: on average 7% higher earnings.

Lower unemployment, smaller incidence of disability.



Behavioral interventions may backfire

Should one always try and help to temporarily overcome behavioral biases while in school/university?

Example: Midterms and short blocks in university education.

Need to work on one's biases is taken away.

Signaling value of the study decreases.



Future of behavioral economics of education

Future is bright, both internationally as well as in NL.

Many active scholars (Maastricht, Amsterdam, CPB, Rotterdam).

Ministry is open to experimentation and willing to take a coordinating role.