

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20066]

Proposed title of the session

Numeracy, Human Capital and its Determinants

Abstract

Numeracy and human capital have received a substantial attention by researchers in individual countries, but a general view of these crucial variables for economic growth has not been achieved yet.

This session brings together a number of researchers from different countries, including various studies from developing countries during the 18th to 20th centuries as well as ancient and medieval economies. Exciting country studies will be presented on Senegal, Algeria, Uganda, South Africa, Burma and many others. It will be the aim of the session to assess the relative importance of a number of factors:

Such factors are, for example, (1) the curse of natural resources. A number of studies have identified the problems arising from the discovery of natural resources in a country, because apart from currency effects and changes in relative prices, the political economy of resource rich countries might also lead to under-investments in human capital. (2) Similarly, land inequality can be a factor that puts an obstacle to human capital development. Galor et al. (2009) developed a theory in which large landowners normally decided to invest less in the schooling of their day laborers, partly because they tried to avoid additional taxes, partly because they wanted to keep their day laborers on their estates. (3) There are important events in history in which lost wars motivated direct schooling investments, such as the Russian situation after the Crimean war or the French situation after 1871. (4) In addition, religion could play a role. For the Jewish as well as Protestant religion, theories have been formulated which hypothesize that there was exogenous investment into human capital caused by the fact that religious rules prescribed additional human capital investments. (5) Nutrition could be a very important factor as well. Beyond a certain threshold of malnutrition in particular, Baten, Crayen and Voth (2014) recently argued that the Napoleonic blockade in England could have delayed numerical development and this could have played a role in other contexts as well. (6) Additional determinants are demographic behaviour, the relative status of women, contact with immigrants from other countries and a number of other factors.

While a number of studies focus on other measures of human capital (for example, in the separate section on school enrolment and school finance), in this session we broaden the knowledge by focusing primarily on numeracy. In addition, one of the value item components is to trace early developments in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We consider the crucial formative phase of economic development and gain insights into a period before other statistical sources became available. By putting together the determinants of numeracy and human capital in a number of countries, this session will be able to assess the relative importance of all these factors for long-run development.

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Prof. Joerg Baten (University of Tuebingen [Germany])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Dr. Dacil T. Juif (University of Wageningen [Netherlands])

III. Expected Participant(s)

1. same as correspondent.
2. Sascha O. Becker (University of Warwick [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
3. Se Yan (Guanghua School of Management Peking University [China])
4. Jaime Reis (University of Lisbon [Portugal])
5. David Mitch (University of Maryland [United States of America])
6. Jean-Pascal Bassino (ENS de Lyon [France])
7. Leticia Arroyo Abad (Middlebury College [United States of America])
8. Laurent Heyberger (Université de Technologie de Belfort-Montbéliard [France])
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