Using bridging courses to make better use of migrants skills

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Issues

- Foreign qualifications are much less rewarded on the labour market than the qualifications of natives.

- Why?

- What can be done?
Obstacles

- Language
- Country specific human capital
- Insufficient information among employers
- Lack of networks
- Discrimination
What can be done?

- Country specific human capital
  \( \rightarrow \) bridging courses.

- Insufficient information among employers
  \( \rightarrow \) recognition, assessment, bridging courses.

- Lack of networks
  \( \rightarrow \) Intensified counselling, mentorship.
  Subsidized work practice which could be included in bridging courses.

- Discrimination
  \( \rightarrow \) legislation, bridging courses might counteract stereotyping
What can be done?

- Language courses rather widespread.
- Recognition and assessment of foreign qualifications and bridging courses are less common.
- When in place, there is a lack of transparency of existing programmes and procedures.
- Positive but slow development as countries are increasingly interested in making better use of immigrants’ skills.
What works?

- Several follow-up studies.
- But they say very little on the real outcome of the programme or the procedure.
- The programme might have attracted immigrants who would have succeeded better in the labour market than immigrants that did not participate in the programme.

- One evaluation of bridging courses in Sweden.
Bridging courses in Sweden

• Since c. 2005 bridging courses at the universities are financed by the Government on a regular basis, beginning with lawyers, teachers and courses in advanced administration, later on to be followed by physicians, nurses, dentists and veterinarians.

• The courses complement education acquired abroad with what is missing for acquiring a Swedish degree. They are thus named complementary courses.

• Usually between one and two years of study.
The evaluation

- 941 participants in teacher courses
- 224 participants in higher administrative courses
- Less than 1 per cent of the eligible population.
Data

- From administrative registers on the Swedish population aged 16-65 during 1995–2010

- Detailed annual information on labour market, demographic and educational characteristics
  For example:
  - own income, family income, days of unemployment
  - region of birth, marital status, number of children
  - highest completed level and type of education, complementary education (from 2005)
Dataset construction

- Participants began their education in different years.
- Constructed a dataset where all relevant activities are chronologically ordered according to the year they began complementary education.

\[
\text{year } t-1 \quad \text{year } t \quad \text{year } t+1 \quad \text{year } t+2 \quad \text{year } t+3
\]

- For example
  - **Year t= 2007**: start the complementary education
  - **Year t-1 = 2006**: information on labour market, demographical and educational characteristics
  - **Years t+1, t+2, t+3 = 2008, 2009 and 2010**: information on labour market outcomes
The effect of complementary education on labour market outcome

What is the individual's labour market outcome three years after starting complementary education compared to what the outcome would have been if he or she did not start the program?
The effect of complementary education on labour market outcome

• Matching strategy
• participants are matched to eligible non-participants that are similar to the participants in a lot of observable characteristics and experiences:
  – Demography (gender, age, region or residence, region of origin, years since migration, etc.)
  – Labour market (days of unemployment, employment, profession, family income, own income)
  – Education
The effect of complementary education on labour market outcome

We want to know whether complementary education has a positive effect on:

– Gross labour income
– Employment
– Profession
The effect of complementary education on labour market outcome

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income development. Hundreds of SEK.</td>
<td>445,4* [39 %]</td>
<td>388,8* [71 %]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment in %-points</td>
<td>17,5* [27 %]</td>
<td>15,4* [44 %]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession according to education in %-points</td>
<td>13,1* [35 %]</td>
<td>11,3 [47 %]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Propensity score matching (1:1 matching with replacement) was performed in Stata 12.1 using the psmatch2 command (Leuven and Sianesi, 2003). Bootstrapped standard errors based on 50 replications *= statistically significant on at least the 10 % level.
The effect of complementary education on labour market outcome

Results

Income development for participants and non-participants in complementary teacher education

- The Y-axis pictures income in hundreds of SEK, adjusted for inflation.
- The X-axis pictures time, where t is the year complementary education started.
The effect of complementary education on labour market outcome

Results

Income development for participants and non-participants in complementary higher administrative education

- The Y-axis pictures income in hundreds of SEK, adjusted for inflation.
- The X-axis pictures time, where t is the year complementary education started.
Conclusions

• The Swedish evaluation indicates that bridging courses positively affect labour market outcomes.

• More evaluation studies needed, preferably combining how the policy is implemented as well as the labour market outcomes of programme participants.