Comment on
Does Teacher Certification Program Lead to Better Quality

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Center for Finance and Development

EUDN, 22 November 2013

Overview

The paper

Setting: A programme increasing teacher competence and salary

Method: RDD for students with teacher just below/above **estimated** cutoff **s**

Result: No effect! (at the margin!)

Strengths

- Interesting and policy-relevant topic, well motivated
- Great attention to detail
- Honesty of results

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- **Well done!**

Structure

- Put data description in (online) appendix?
- Literature review:
  - More from education field?
  - Bermutu used in other studies? Which results?
- Policy recommendations?

Unknown threshold

- **Estimation method correct, but for test uses results for structural break**

- Here: threshold model, use instead Hansen (2000)

- Nice result from this literature: $(\widehat{\bar{R}_k} - \bar{R}_k) = O_p(n^{-1})$, so:

  - $\widehat{\bar{R}_k}$ converges faster than γ_0, so can pretend use true value $\bar{R}_k$
  - This is asymptotic result, small sample estimation of $\bar{R}_k$ likely to affect γ_0 !

- Potential references (although quite technical)

  - Problems for thresholds at boundary? See Greb (2013)
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Misc

Open questions

- So if test asseses performance one year earlier, do you take current year professor? Why?
- Discussion of decay vs. gain-score: mention briefly what your estimates suggest?
- Teachers can re-take exam: manipulation?
- If even with (likely positive?) selection-bias, no effect... why would there be effect without?
- Ordinal vs. cardinal: economists do it all the time, why care?

Suggestions for further steps

- Investigate quantile effects? Cf literature on which students targeted by teachers?
- Investigate heterogeneity of the cutoffs instead of pooling?

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