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Educational Systems as a Resource or Hindrance for Immigrants? The effects of educational system characteristics of both countries of origin and destination on the scientific literacy of immigrant children in Western countries

Prof. Jaap Dronkers, European University Institute

Monday, February 9, 2009
16:00 – 18:00, Room A 310/A 300



The educational system is one of the core institutions that fosters the integration of not only the native, but also the immigrant youth. To what degree do educational systems influence the educational achievement of various immigrant groups? Using data from the 2006 PISA survey, Manon de Heus (University of Tilburg), Jaap Dronkers (European University Institute) and Mark Levels (Radboud University Nijmegen) performed cross-classified multilevel analysis on the science performance of 9414 15-year- old immigrant children, originating from 46 different countries, living in 16 countries of destination. In this multilevel analysis, the researchers take, next to individual characteristics, into account a wide range of educational system characteristics of the countries of destination and origin, in order to measure the importance of features such as differentiation, standardization and the availability of resources. The results show that differences in educational achievement between immigrants are not only affected by educational system characteristics of countries of destination, but also by educational system characteristics of their countries of origin. At origin, the number of years of compulsory education positively affects the educational achievement of first generation immigrant children. At the destination, the tracking of pupils' achievement data over time has a positive influence on immigrants' educational achievement. Other widely discussed features such as teacher shortage and the number of tracks in secondary education on the other hand are not able to explain immigrants' educational achievement differences. These effects of educational systems remain significant after taking into account other macro-characteristics of the destination and origin countries. The dominant religion of the origin countries is strongly related with educational achievement of the immigrants, irrespective of their individual socio-economic characteristics and their countries of destination.

Jaap Dronkers is professor for Social Stratification and Inequality at the European University Institute in San Domenico di Fiesole (FI) in Italy. Between 1990 and 2001 he had successively a chair in the educational sciences (especially for questions on stratification and mobility) and in empirical sociology at the University of Amsterdam.

He published mostly in research-articles on the causes and consequences of unequal educational and occupational attainment, on several issues in stratification and mobility research, on changes in educational opportunities, on effect-differences between public and religious schools, on education of Dutch elites, on relations between school and labour, on causes and consequences of growth of educational participation and on the effect of parental divorce on their children.

Registration: Please respond by February 6, 2009 to Susanne Grasow (grasow@wzb.eu).