

Student performance in primary school
A comparative study of Francophone and Anglophone Cameroon

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Abstract

Can the influence of colonial origins on education systems explain differences in learning outcomes across Africa? To investigate this question, we study Cameroon, a country where a Francophone education system coexists with an Anglophone one. Cameroon was divided between the British and the French after World War I, before being reunited in 1961. Using 2004-2005 school survey data, we undertake discontinuity analysis at the historical border to estimate the comparative effects of different education systems on schooling achievements. In maths, students perform better in the Anglophone system in the second year of primary school, but they perform better in the Francophone system in year 5. Those differences are not explained by commonly used inputs of an education production function. We conclude that system-specific teaching practices play an important role in the formation of cognitive skills.

JEL Classification: I25, , I28, N37.

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