Gutenberg School of Management and Economics
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Gutenberg School of Management and Economics

Chair of Applied Statistics and Econometrics

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Bachelor - Modul (SS 2016)

in Empirical Labour Economics

The bachelor seminar serves as a preparation for the bachelor thesis which is written directly after the seminar. During the processing period, students are expected to write an exposé of their bachelor thesis and to present it at the seminar. The aim of the seminar and of the bachelor thesis is to enable students to conduct an empirical analysis applying the statistical and econometric skills obtained throughout the bachelor program.

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I. Requirements

While knowledge from the obligatory lectures *Statistik I, Statistic II* and *Empirische Wirtschaftsforschung* is required, further statistical skills are not necessary. Instead, general interest in statistics and empirical economics and the willingness to conduct an own empirical analysis as well as basic knowledge of Stata (or a related package) are essential. **Please note that the seminar will be held in English.**

II. Topics

Students are expected to replicate studies with real world datasets provided by the chair. The following issues will be examined:

1. Specificity of occupational training and occupational mobility

According to standard human capital theory, firm-financed training cannot be explained if the skills obtained are general in nature rather than specific to the pro-

duction process of firms. Nevertheless, in German-speaking countries, firms invest heavily in apprenticeship training although the skills are assumed to be general. Using survey data from the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB – Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung), the bachelor thesis examines to which extent apprenticeship training is general. Furthermore the association of skill specificity and occupational mobility is examined.

Literature:

Geel, R., Mure, J., Backes-Gellner, U. (2011): Specificity of occupational training and occupational mobility: an empirical study based on Lazear's skill-weights approach. Education Economics, Vol. 19, No. 5, 519-535.

2. Returns to pencil use revisited

It is often empirically observed that employees working with computers earn more than thosewho do not use computers. It is an open question, however, whether this association reflects higher (unobserved) ability of workers using computers or if higher wages may be explained by alternative mechanisms. Using BIBB data the study investigates if computer use increases the marginal product and hence the wages of workers.

Literature:

Spitz-Oener, A. (2008): Returns to pensil use revisited. Industrial Labor Relations Review. Vol. 61, No. 4, 502-517.

3. Are the self-employed really jacks-of-all-trades?

Self-employment and entrepreneurship are regarded as an important source of economic development and job creation. However, the number of self-employed compared to paid-employed workers is relatively low. One explanation was given by Lazear (2004) who argues that entrepreneurs must have more different skills than paid employees (that is they have to be jacks-of-all-trades). The BIBB-dataset contains information about skills required by self-employed and paid-employed workers and about tasks which are performed at work. The study uses this data and tests if self-employed workers use more different skills than paid-employed workers.

Literature:

Lechmann, S. J., Schnabel, C. (2014): Are the self-employed really jacks-of-all-trades? Testing the assumptions and imlications of Lazear's theory of entrepreneurship with German data, Small Business Economics, Vol. 42, 59-76.

4. Absence from work of the self-employed – A comparison with paid employees

Absence from work is associated with the problem of moral hazard since employers cannot observe completely if workers who are absent are sick. Therefore, it is worthwile to compare absenteeism of self-employed and paid-employed workers. Self-employed workers do not get any payment during the first days of absence which should result in lower problems of moral hazard. Using BIBB data and controlling for health status and job satisfaction, this study tests if paid employees are more often absent from work than self-employed workers.

Literature:

Lechmann, D. S., Schnabel, C. (2013): Absence from work oft he self-employed: A comparison with paid employees, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, Lehrstuhl für VWL, insbesondere Arbeitsmarkt- und Regionalpolitik, Diskussionspapier No. 87

5. Intergenerational transmission of educational attainment in Germany – The last five decades

Over the last decades the German education system underwent numerous reforms in order to improve „equality of opportunity", i.e. to guarantee all pupils – independent of parental background – equal access to higher education. At the same time, internationally comparative evidence shows that Germany features particularly low intergenerational mobility with respect to educational attainment. The study uses SOEP data and investigates the development in intergenerational education mobility in Germany for the birth cohorts 1929 through 1978 with respect to secondary school attainment.

Literature:

Heineck, G., Riphahn, R. T. (2009): Intergenerational transmission of educational attainment in Germany – The last five decades, Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik, Vol. 229, No. 1, 36-60.

6. Which individuals are tall or overweighted?

Silventoinen (2003) concludes that about 20 % of the variation in height is explained by environmental factors like nutrition and diseases (and 80 % by genetic variation). Hence, socioeconomic variables like parental education, income of the parents, smoking behavior during adolescence may have an impact on whether individuals are tall or overweighted. This study uses SOEP data from 2002 to explore the association of socioeconomic variables with height and weight in Germany.

Literature:

Heineck, G. (2002): Height and weight in Germany, evidence from the German Socio-Economic Panel, Economics and biology, Vol. 4, 359-382.

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III. Organistion of the Seminar

Events	Date	Time	Room
Introduction of the topics, topic assignment and beginning of the processing period	Tuesday, May 3rd 2016	16:00 – 18:00	HS V
Submission of the exposés	Friday, June 3rd 2016	until 12:00	Via E-Mail to: sekretariat.schank@uni-mainz.de. Printet version at the Pedelloge.
Presentation of the exposés	Thursday, June 9th 2016	09:00 – 19:00	Softwar Labor (01-115, ReWi Altbau)
Beginning of processing time of the bachelor thesis	Friday, June 10th 2016		
Submission of the bachelor thesis	Friday, August 5th 2016	until 12:00	Two printed versions and an electronic version at the Studienbüro. Via e-mail to sekretariat.schank@uni-mainz.de.

Attendance of the introductory session (first session) and of the presentation of the exposés is mandatory. In case of non-attendance (without presenting valid reasons to the Exam Office) the seminar will not be passed.

It is possible to apply for the seminar between April 18th and April 21th via *Jogustine*. Seminars will be assigned to the students by the *Studienbüro*.

The first meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 3rd in the room HS V (16.00 – 18.00). During or directly after the first meeting you will be able to indicate your desired topics sorted by preferences. **Please bring a current transcript of records (from *Jogustine*) to this meeting or – even better – sent an electronic version beforehand to sekretariat.schank@uni-mainz.de.**

All topics will be assigned to groups of two students directly after the first meeting. Group members should present their results jointly on Thursday, June 9th. However, note that each student writes her / his exposé independently (until June 3rd). The bachelor thesis will be written in the eight weeks following the seminar (until August 5th).