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Title

Evolution of Educational and Vocational Aspirations of Immigrants

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Abstract

Sociological theories understand aspirations as preliminary educational and occupational decisions, that result from a rational evaluation of subjective cost, benefit and success probability, while also representing internalised norms about the kind of future one considers desirable and one's attitude towards work. When other factors are controlled for, children of immigrants are found to have higher aspirations than their native peers. A phenomenon that is typically referred to as immigrant optimism. However, immigrants and their descendants tend to show lower educational outcomes than their peers, this is referred to as the aspiration performance paradox. This contribution addresses the determinants of educational and vocational aspirations by analysing aspiration trajectories from the longitudinal perspective. The main research question focuses on how the high educational aspirations of migrant families can be explained and how, and why, they change throughout early educational transitions and at the transition into the labour market. The empirical analysis is based on Swiss data from the DAB panel study on determinants of educational choice and vocational training opportunities. A growth curve modelling approach is used to estimate and explain latent trajectories of aspirational development. First results show that students with a migration background not only have higher initial aspiration, while still in lower secondary education, they also have a stronger increase of aspiration level over time.