Fertility Timing and Education?

Suncica Vujic
University of Antwerp, BE

Co-written with Jonathan James (University of Bath, UK)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effect of two education reforms in England and Wales on the timing of fertility. First, we use an institutional rule that led to women obtaining qualifications due to their month of birth (Easter Leaving Rule). Second, we exploit a large expansion of post-compulsory schooling that occurred from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. This expansion resulted in the proportion of 18 year olds in full time education rising from around 17% in 1985 to over 35% in the late 1990s. We find that neither the exogenous increase in qualifications as a result of the Easter Leaving Rule nor the expansion in post-compulsory schooling led to a reduction in the probability of having a child as a teenager. However, we do find that both sources of variation in education led to delays in having a child. There is no evidence that the mechanism driving these findings are due to an incapacitation effect. Instead the results point to both a direct human capital effect and an improvement in labour market opportunities as a result of holding qualifications.