Questions approfondies d’économie du travail

Thème : La productivité du travail
Professeur : François Rycx (http://homepages.ulb.ac.be/~frycx/)
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✓ Contenu du séminaire :

Trois objectifs (cf. aussi ci-dessous) :
   i) Synthèse critique d’un article scientifique.
   ii) Mise en perspective / Comparaison avec la littérature économique.
   iii) Défense orale.
Starting point:

a) Very large and persistent productivity differences across firms, even in narrowly defined sectors

Examples:

- US manufacturing industry: the plant at the 90th percentile of the productivity distribution produces ceteris paribus (i.e. with the same observed inputs) almost twice the output of the 10th percentile plant (Syverson, 2004).

- Danish manufacturing and services industries: for the same inputs, a firm at the 90th percentile of the productivity distribution makes 3.27 as much output as the 10th percentile firm (Fox and Smeets, 2011).

- Productivity differences among plants appear to be even more pronounced in developing countries, e.g. average 90-10 productivity ratios estimated above 5 in China and India (Hsieh and Klenow, 2009).
b) Other robust findings (almost invariant across countries, industries and time):

- High-productivity firms are more likely to survive than their less efficient counterparts.

⇒ “Productivity is quite literally a matter of survival for businesses” (Syverson, 2011)

“Productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run it’s almost everything” (Krugman, 2008)

“While the contribution of productivity to economic growth in the short term may seem relatively small, the cumulative effects of changes in productivity are the sole sustainable source of long-term growth” (Dhyne and Fuss, 2014)

c) International context:

Productivity growth has been decreasing in most advanced economies since the year 2000, and especially since the Great Recession.

This is a major source of concern as it affects the current situation of economies but also their future growth potential.
Europe vs US:

- Decrease in productivity growth has been more pronounced in the EU than in the US.

  Productivity growth in the US has returned to its pre-crisis level since 2010.

- This is not the case in the EU.

EU situation: bad demand forecasts and financial constraints (both in public and private sectors) have a strong detrimental effect on investments which are required to bring productivity and potential GDP growth back to their historical levels.

This situation, in turn, deteriorates public finances and puts some additional pressure on social protection systems.

Overall, slow productivity growth associated to weak internal and external demand accentuates the risk that EU countries enter in a so-called ‘secular stagnation phase’ (Dhyne and Fuss, 2014).
These observations have stimulated a substantial amount of research aiming to get a better understanding of ‘What determines (labour) productivity?’

Research output should notably help to design better policies to enable EU countries to return faster to their pre-crisis situation and, more generally, to increase future GDP growth potential in advanced (and developing) countries.

Correlated issue: ‘Misalignment of productivity and wages?’ (in connection to a series of covariates such as e.g. age, education, gender, regions), reflecting discrimination and/or problems of employability.
Objective of the seminar:

Provide a critical analysis of a scientific article devoted to a specific determinant of labour productivity.

This boils down to:

a) Explain policy relevance of research question and added value of paper.
b) Describe competing theoretical models/predictions.
c) Present (briefly) the data and (more extensively) the methodology used in the paper.
d) Describe/comment key regression results (watch out for the functional form!).
e) Discuss main econometric issues that (should) have been tackled (e.g. omitted variables biases, unit roots, time-invariant unobserved heterogeneity, endogeneity) and potential limitations of the paper.

f) Provide in-depth comparison with extant literature (with specific focus on type of data, methodologies/estimators, results).
g) Suggest some avenues for future research.
References:


✓ Research questions / papers

1. The productivity effects of human capital:

   a) Education:

   b) Over-education:

   c) Training:
2. The productivity effects of demographics:

a) Age:

b) Gender:

c) Origin:
3. The productivity effects of industrial relations:

a) Incentive pay:

b) HRM practices:

c) Trade unions:
4. The productivity effects of labour contracts, promotions and absenteeism:

a) Working time:

b) Temporary employment:

c) Promotions:

d) Absenteeism:
5. The productivity effects of sleep quality, personality, trust and diversity:

a) Sleep quality:

b) Personality:

c) Trust:

d) Diversity
6. The productivity effects of IT, R&D, outsourcing and job flows:

a) IT:

b) R&D:

c) Outsourcing:
✓ **Fonds et forme du séminaire :**

a) **20 pages maximum** (hors bibliographie et annexes).

b) Essayez d’avoir une **vision d’ensemble** de la problématique.

c) **Prenez du recul** par rapport à vos sources. Le plagiat est une faute grave.

e) L’**introduction** et la **conclusion** sont essentielles.

d) **Soignez** la mise en page et faites relire **votre travail** pour améliorer le style et l’orthographe.

f) **Numérotez** les **pages** et les **tableaux & graphiques**. Pas de « *copy & paste* ».

e) **Indiquez** toujours clairement **votre source** (aussi sous les tableaux & graphiques).

g) **Incluez** les **tableaux principaux dans le texte**.

h) Les **annexes** doivent être soignées et uniquement contenir des documents utiles.

i) **Références bibliographiques** (cf. document sur ma page internet):

   - Dans le texte, indiquez le nom de l’auteur suivi de l’année de publication entre parenthèses, par exemple Abowd (2000).
   - Donnez la liste **complète**, par ordre alphabétique, en fin de séminaire.
     - Pour les monographies (livres, rapports, …) :
     - Pour des articles de périodiques:
✓ Où trouver des sources ?

a) Bibliothèque électronique de la SBS-EM: http://www.bibeco.ulb.ac.be/

Vous y trouverez notamment :

- Des bases de données : ECONLIT, OCDE, EUROSTAT, FMI, etc.

  ECONLIT est une base de données bibliographiques produite par l'American Economic Association. Elle fournit des références avec résumés de livres et d'articles extraits d'environ 400 périodiques économiques

- Plus de 5000 périodiques électroniques en économie et gestion.


✓ **Permanences :**
  Guillaume Perilleux
  Bureau & horaire : (à préciser) ou sur RDV (gperille@ulb.ac.be).

✓ **Remise du séminaire :**
  2 exemplaires papiers & 1 version électronique à remettre à Guillaume Perilleux
  (bureau : à préciser).

  Deadline : vendredi 27 novembre à 12h.

✓ **Présentation et défense:**
  La semaine du 15 décembre (à confirmer - l’ordre de passage sera communiqué
  ultérieurement) :
  • **10 minutes** maximum de présentation.
  • **20 minutes** de discussion.
Récapitulatif des sujets:

1. Education, over-education, training.
2. Age, gender, origin.
3. Incentive pay, HRM practices, trade unions.
4. Working time, temporary employment, promotions, absenteeism.
5. Sleeping hours, personality, trust, diversity.
6. IT, R&D, outsourcing.