

Ethnic concentration and diversity in the classroom: consequences for children's wellbeing, social integration and academic competencies

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In this paper, we are interested in studying the consequences of the increased presence of students with a migration background on a variety of student outcomes in Italy. We contribute to the literature in several ways: 1) we do not only analyse students' competencies, but also their wellbeing and social integration; 2) we investigate the joint effects of two dimensions of migrants' presence in the classroom, namely ethnic concentration and diversity, while previous studies mostly focused on ethnic share measured at the school level; 3) we develop an analytical design with the aim of making exposure to a certain level of ethnic share and diversity conditionally random. We use data collected by the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Italian School System on the whole population of students enrolled in the 5th grade (primary education) in 2014–15 (INVALSI 2015). Our final analytical sample comprises 220,178 students across 4,609 schools. Our findings suggest that ethnic concentration and diversity have limited detrimental effects on students' outcomes, which are widely independent from each other and approximately linear. There is some weak evidence of heterogeneous impacts across students with different migration backgrounds, but the little penalization appears to be concentrated on first generation students. Implications for the theoretical debate and educational policies are discussed in relation to the main findings.