

MIRA FISCHER

Contact Information

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Research Fields

Primary Fields: Economics of Education, Behavioral Economics

Secondary Fields: Labor Economics, Political Economy

Personal Information

Female, German citizen

Education

10/2013 – 05/2014	University of Zurich	Ph.D. Course Program in Economics of Education
04/2012 – present	University of Cologne	Ph.D. in Economics, expected completion: 03/2018
09/2010 – 12/2010	RGGU, Moscow	Visiting Student
10/2008 – 03/2011	University of Konstanz	M.A. in International Economics
10/2005 – 07/2008	University of Konstanz	B.A. in Philosophy and Political Science
09/2002 – 06/2004	Int'l School Maastricht	International Baccalaureate

References

Professor Dirk Sliwka (Ph.D. supervisor)
University of Cologne
Albertus Magnus Platz
50923 Cologne, Germany

Professor Bernd Irlenbusch
University of Cologne
Albertus Magnus Platz
50923 Cologne, Germany

Professor Alex Bryson
UCL Institute of Education
55-59 Gordon Square
London, WC1H 0NU, United Kingdom

Professor Bertil Tungodden
Norwegian School of Economics
Helleveien 30
5045, Bergen, Norway

Research Experience and Other Employment

12/2017	University of Chicago	Visiting Researcher
11/2017	University College London and NIESR	Visiting Researcher
03/2017 – 04/2017	Norwegian School of Economics	Visiting Researcher
01/2015 – present	University of Cologne	Associated Researcher of the Excellence Center for Social and Economic Behavior
09/2014 – 11/2014	University of Chicago	Visiting Researcher
11/2013	NIESR, London	Visiting Researcher
04/2012 – present	University of Cologne	Research and Teaching Assistant at the Seminars of Personnel Economics and Business Ethics
09/2011 – 09/2012	Cologne Institute for Economic Research	Junior Economist in the Education, Migration and Innovation Group
03/2010 – 04/2010	German Council on Foreign Relations	Intern

Research Papers

“Effects of Timing and Reference Frame of Feedback: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Secondary Schools”, with Valentin Wagner (**job market paper**)

Information about past performance has been found to sometimes improve and sometimes worsen subsequent performance. We hypothesize that two factors in particular might contribute to explaining this puzzle: which aspect of one’s past performance the information refers to and when the information is revealed. In a field experiment in secondary schools, students received information about their absolute rank in the last math exam (level feedback), their change in ranks between the second last and the last math exam (change feedback), or no feedback. Feedback was given either 1-3 days (early) or immediately before the final math exam of the semester (late). We find that level feedback and negative change feedback significantly improve outcomes in the final exam when given early but tend to decrease outcomes when given late. As our results show that feedback has positive effects on students’ belief in the effectiveness of their effort but negative effects on their emotions, we reason that when feedback is given late, negative emotional effects may dominate positive incentive effects of feedback.

“Confidence in Knowledge or Confidence in the Ability to Learn: An Experiment on the Causal Effects of Beliefs on Motivation”, with Dirk Sliwka (conditionally accepted at “Games and Economic Behavior”)

Previous research has shown that feedback about past performance has ambiguous effects on subsequent performance. We argue that feedback affects beliefs in different dimensions – namely beliefs about the level of human capital and beliefs about the ability to learn – and this may explain some of the ambiguous effects. We experimentally study the causal effects of an exogenously administered change in beliefs in both of these dimensions on the motivation to learn. We find that confidence in the ability to learn raises incentives, while confidence in the level of human capital lowers incentives for individuals with high levels of human capital.

“Ability Grouping and Biased Belief Formation”

Recent research in economics has found that a higher ordinal rank within one’s class affects subsequent skill acquisition positively and has linked this finding to the “big-fish-little-pond-effect”, a popular proposition in psychology claiming that assignment to a peer group with lower skills increases one’s confidence in academic ability. Findings from a lab experiment suggest that salience of the group assignment mechanism matters for how ability grouping affects ability beliefs. If the assignment mechanism is non-salient, it does not matter for subjects’ confidence whether they are assigned to the weaker or the stronger group, however, when the group assignment mechanism is salient, weaker group assignment makes people less confident. Subjects are on average less confident when the group assignment mechanism is salient than when it is non-salient. This is found to be the case due to weaker group assignment making people more underconfident than stronger group assignment making people overconfident, indicating that people overweigh negative information as compared to positive information. These findings may help to understand the effects of ability grouping in the field and may inform the design of educational and workplace environments.

Publications

“Support for Free-market Policies and Reforms: Does the Field of Study Influence Students’ Political Attitudes?” (with B. Kauder, N. Potrafke, and H.W. Ursprung), *European Journal of Political Economy*, 48, (2017):180-197

“Effects of German Universities’ Excellence Initiative on Ability Sorting of Students and Perceptions of Educational Quality” (with P. Kampkötter), *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, 173(4), (2017): 662-687

“Ist sanfter Paternalismus ethisch vertretbar? Eine differenzierende Betrachtung aus Sicht der Freiheit” (with S. Lotz), *German Review of Social Policy*, 63(3), (2014) – *English version: Is Soft Paternalism Ethically Legitimate? - The Relevance of Psychological Processes for the Assessment of Nudge-Based Policies*, *Cologne Graduate School Working Paper*, 5(2), (2014)

Work in Progress

Teacher Ratings and Academic Development (based on the National Pupil Database), with Alex Bryson, Lucy Stokes and David Wilkinson

Increasing Cooperation in Polarized Groups (lab experiment)

Stress and Academic Performance (field experiment), with Lea Cassar and Vanessa Valero

Side-effects of Strategic Information Revelation (lab experiment), with Thomas de Haan

Contributions to Education Policy (in German)

“Bestimmungsgrößen der Bildungsmobilität in Deutschland” [“*Determinants of Educational Mobility in Germany*”] (with W. Geis), *IW-Trends*, 1/13, (2013)

“Gesamtwirtschaftliche Effekte einer Ganztagsbetreuung von Kindern von Alleinerziehenden” [“*Macroeconomic Effects of Day Care for Children of Single Parents*”] (with C. Anger, W. Geis, S. Lotz, A. Plünnecke, and J. Schmidt), Report for the Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth (BMFSFJ) and the German Red Cross, (2012)

Bildungsmonitor 2012. Infrastruktur verbessern – Teilhabe sichern – Wachstumskräfte stärken [“*Education Monitor 2012. Improving the infrastructure - securing participation - strengthening*”]

growth”] (with C. Anger, I. Esselmann, and A. Plünnecke), Report by the Cologne Institute for Economic Research, (2012)

Invited Presentations

- 2017 Norwegian School of Economics, University of Maastricht, University of Chicago, National Institute of Economic and Social Research
- 2016 University of Düsseldorf
- 2014 University of Chicago

Presentations at Conferences and Workshops

- 2017 Equity in Education, University of Leuven
Advances with Field Experiments, University of Chicago
IZA Workshop on Economics of Education, Bonn
Maastricht Behavioral and Experimental Economics Symposium
- 2016 ESA World Meeting, Jerusalem
Incentives and Behavior Change Conference, Tel Aviv University
Cologne Social Cognition Meeting
Workshop on Education, Skills, and Labor Market Outcomes, University of Trondheim
TIER Workshop on Education Economics, University of Maastricht
Ifo Workshop on Labor Economics and Social Policy, Dresden
- 2015 Mini-School by the Research Center for Rationality in the Light of Experimental Economics, Düsseldorf
Colloquium on Personnel Economics, Vienna
LEER Workshop on Education Economics, University of Leuven
Maastricht Behavioral and Experimental Economics Symposium
TIBER Symposium on Psychology and Economics, University of Tilburg
Workshop on the Economics of Education and Self-Regulation, University of Mainz
- 2014 World Congress of the International Economic Association, Dead Sea, Jordan
Workshop on Applied Economics of Education, Catanzaro
- 2013 Workshop on University Management by German Academic Association for Business Research, Duisburg
Colloquium on Personnel Economics, Tübingen
- 2012 TIBER Symposium on Psychology and Economics, University of Tilburg
ESA European Conference, Cologne

Summer Schools

- 2016 HCEO Summer School on Socioeconomic Inequality, University of Bonn
- 2015 Summer School in Economics of Education and Self-Regulation, University of Mainz
- 2012 Cologne Summer School in Philosophy

Teaching

Graduate level classes

- Moral and Social Norms (Seminar): winter 16/17, winter 17/18
- Advanced Business Ethics (Course): summer 16, summer 17
- Business Ethics and Continental Philosophy (Tutorial): winter 15/16, winter 16/17, winter 17/18

Economics of Incentives in Organizations (Tutorial): summer 15

Empirical Studies in Human Resource Management (Seminar): summer 13

Strategic Human Resource Management (Tutorial): winter 12/13, winter 13/14, winter 14/15

Undergraduate level classes

Experimental Studies in Personnel Economics (Seminar): winter 14/15

Experimental Studies in Personnel and Education Economics (Seminar): winter 13/14

Human Resource Management (Tutorial): summer 13, summer 14

Theses supervision: Numerous Master's and Bachelor's theses in personnel, labor, education and behavioral economics, and ethics

– *all teaching at the University of Cologne*

Awards, Scholarships, and Grants

Travel grant for research stay at University of Chicago from University of Chicago and Cologne Center for Social and Economic Behavior, 2017

Research stay at University College London and NIESR sponsored by Nuffield Foundation, 2017

Sponsorship for field experiment on stress and academic performance by Techniker Krankenkasse health insurance (~10,000 euros, primary applicant), 2017

Travel grant for research stay at Norwegian School of Economics from Center for Social and Economic Behavior, 2017

Best paper award (with Patrick Kampkötter) for “Effects of German Universities’ Excellence Initiative on Ability Sorting of Students and perceptions of Educational Quality” from University Management Section of the German Academic Association for Business Research, 2013

Travel grant for semester in Moscow from German Academic Exchange Service, 2010

Tuition fee waivers for being among the top 5 % of graduates of my Bachelor's program in 2008 and my Master's program in 2011

Language Skills

German native language

English fluent (C2)

Dutch upper intermediate (B1/B2)

Italian intermediate (B1)

Polish good basic skills (A2)

Russian good basic skills (A2)

Computer Skills

Stata, z-Tree, L^AT_EX, L^yX