

Discussion: The Legacy of Covid-19 in Education

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XXIII European fRDB Conference

October 9, 2021

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The effects of Covid-19: the role of schools

- ▶ Very relevant topic
- ▶ Specificity of the Covid-19 crisis (relative to other recessions): schools remained closed
 - ▶ At their peak around 1.6 billion school children affected by these closures (World Bank)
- ▶ This is one of the reasons why the legacy of this crisis on the economy could be **particularly long lasting**
- ▶ **We are in need of evidence on the anatomy of these losses, so to target effective policy interventions**
- ▶ This report fills this gap

This report

- ▶ Simple conceptual framework based on a HC production function, discussing effects of single inputs and cross-elasticities
- ▶ Comprehensive review of existing literature
- ▶ Results from German survey to parents during school closures
 - ▶ Time use and assessment of variations in kids cognitive and socio-emotional skills
- ▶ Results of structural models that quantify long-term impact on students and estimates that quantify aggregate macro effects

Some comments:

1. Type of remote teaching

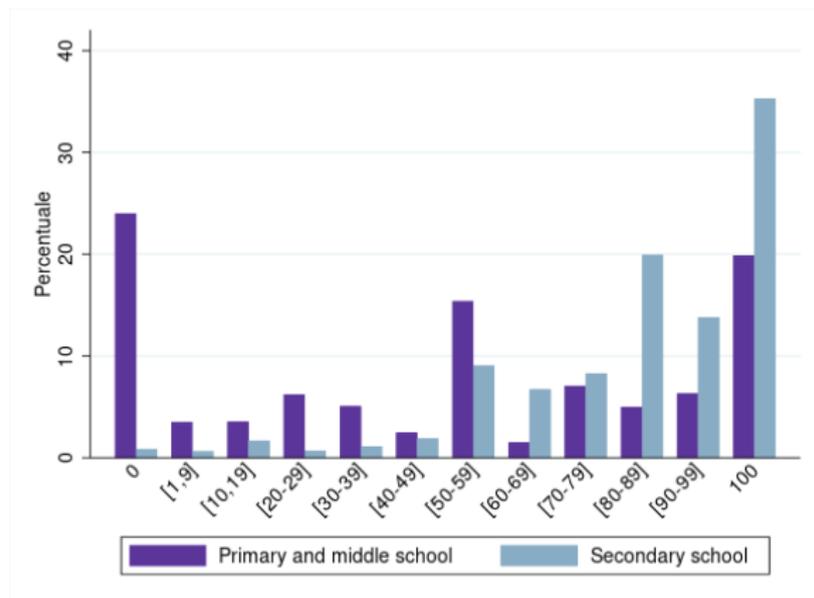
I liked the focus on how remote teaching was implemented

- ▶ What we knew about school closures: literature on teachers' strikes, shorter school years, etc.
- ▶ **During Covid: substitution between in-presence and remote teaching** → crucial to understand how remote teaching was implemented (teachers, schools)
- ▶ German survey: during II wave of school closure intensity of daily online lectures increased markedly (from 7 to 25%) but **the dominant way of teaching remotely was assignment of individual homework**
- ▶ Parents of low SES and low achieving students report less school engagement
- ▶ Similar evidence for the UK (IFS 2021)

We asked a similar question for Italy

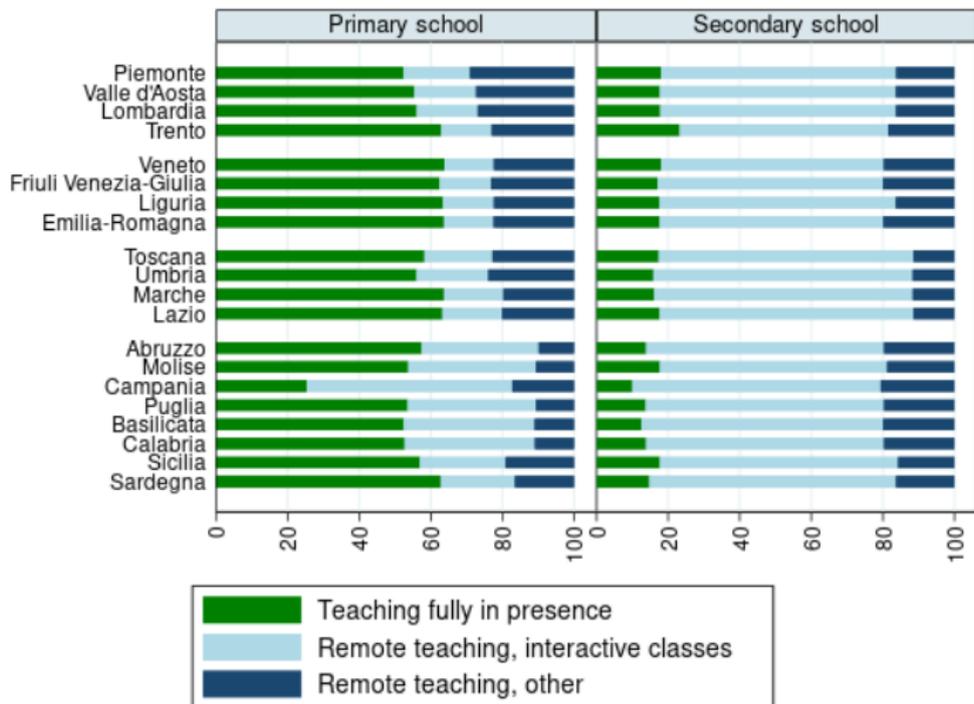
- ▶ More hours of joint lectures during second wave of school closures, more in secondary schools

Figure: % of schooling hours covered by face-to-face online lessons (joint lectures), March 20-Feb 21



Heterogeneity related to length of school closures in Italy

Figure: % of teaching hours covered by face-to-face lessons, rather than individual assignments, March 20-Feb 21



2. Time investment by parents

Complex phenomenon: there is still much to understand

- ▶ Nice evidence in the survey on how much parents increased time spent with children (homework, TV, games, reading...)

→ **Covid was a contemporaneous shock to children (school closure) and to parental input (job losses and working from home)**

- ▶ Important to assess how these two shocks interacted (amplify or reduce overall effect):
 - Larger increase in psychological costs
 - Parents who lost job → increased minutes of help with school work (evidence for Italy, and for the UK, Hupkau et al. 2020 only fathers) ▶ Italy
 - Ability to **combine remote working and childcare**? Effect on parents' productivity? Effect on children outcomes?

3. Heterogeneity

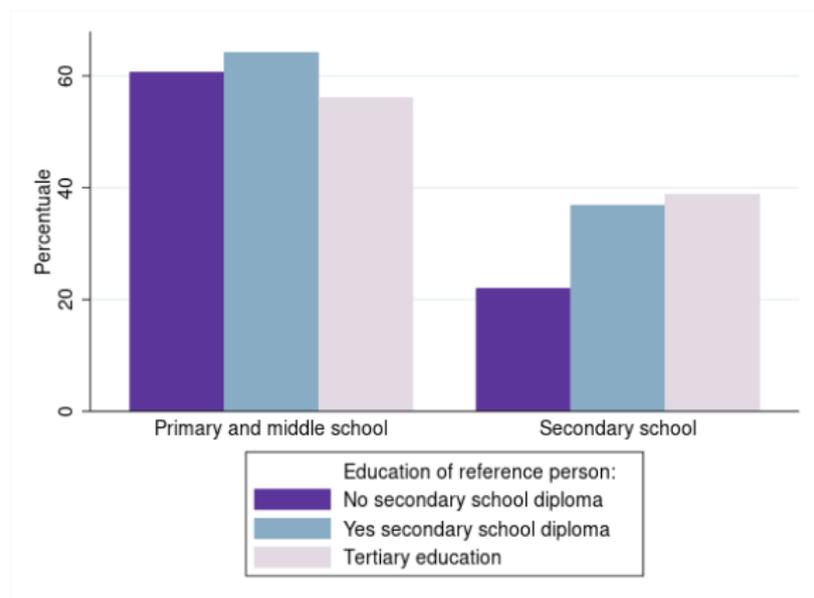
Relevant dimensions of heterogeneity

- ▶ The report discusses heterogeneity by SES and by prior achievement
- ▶ I found surprising that for many outcomes there is no overwhelming evidence supporting heterogeneity by parent SES
 - ▶ parental time investments, students' learning time, socio-emotional well-being
- ▶ Useful to explore its interaction with other dimensions of heterogeneity like **students' age**:
 - ▶ More difficult for low educated parents to assist with homework older children
 - ▶ Availability of digital devices particularly low for younger kids in low SES households

Interaction between age and SES in Italy

- ▶ Parents increased time dedicated to help children, especially those of younger children
- ▶ Strong gradient by SES, for older children only

Figure: % of hh increasing the time helping children with studying



4. Concluding: on the long run effects

Dynamic complementarities

- ▶ In structural models estimating long run effects: **gaps are amplified over time** (Fuchs-Schündeln et al. 2021)
 - ▶ ↓ Marginal productivity of investing on lower achieving kids
 - ▶ More younger children

→ Schools have important role after reopening: need to act and make up for these losses

- ▶ Critical ages: being hit by school closure at particular stages may be more detrimental (high school drop out)

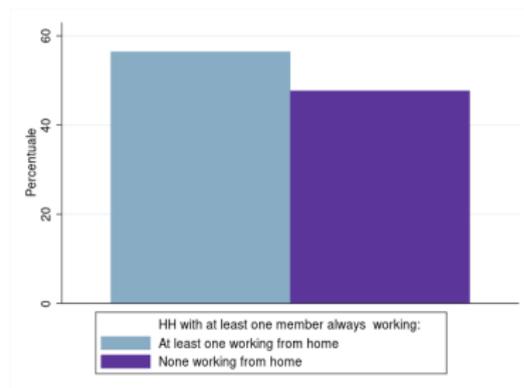
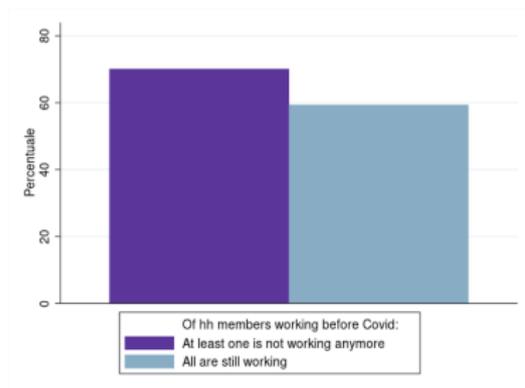
→ **Need long panel micro data so to timely follow children over time**, monitor how losses accumulate over time and act on more vulnerable students

Thank you

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Some evidence also for Italy: parents in remote working and not working spend more time helping children

Figure: % of hh who increased the time dedicated to helping children with studying



Still to understand effects on parents' productivity at work, prob. of finding another job and well-being

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