

Efficiency and equity of early interventions: The case of “Ecole Maternelle” some comments

- Equity in education
- Possible interventions
- How to evaluate

Equity in education

- According to paper, the ultimate aim is “equality of outcomes”
- This deviates from more common objective of “equality of opportunity”
- Question: to what extent should governments compensate for differences in ability and tastes?
- Not an economist’s task to choose!

Ecole maternelle

- “Ecole Maternelle” is an intervention on its own; allows pupils to attend (pre)school at the age of 2½
- Nobel prize laureate Heckman argues that early schooling is the best intervention. This is mainly due to his belief in dynamic spillovers.
- Others are skeptical.

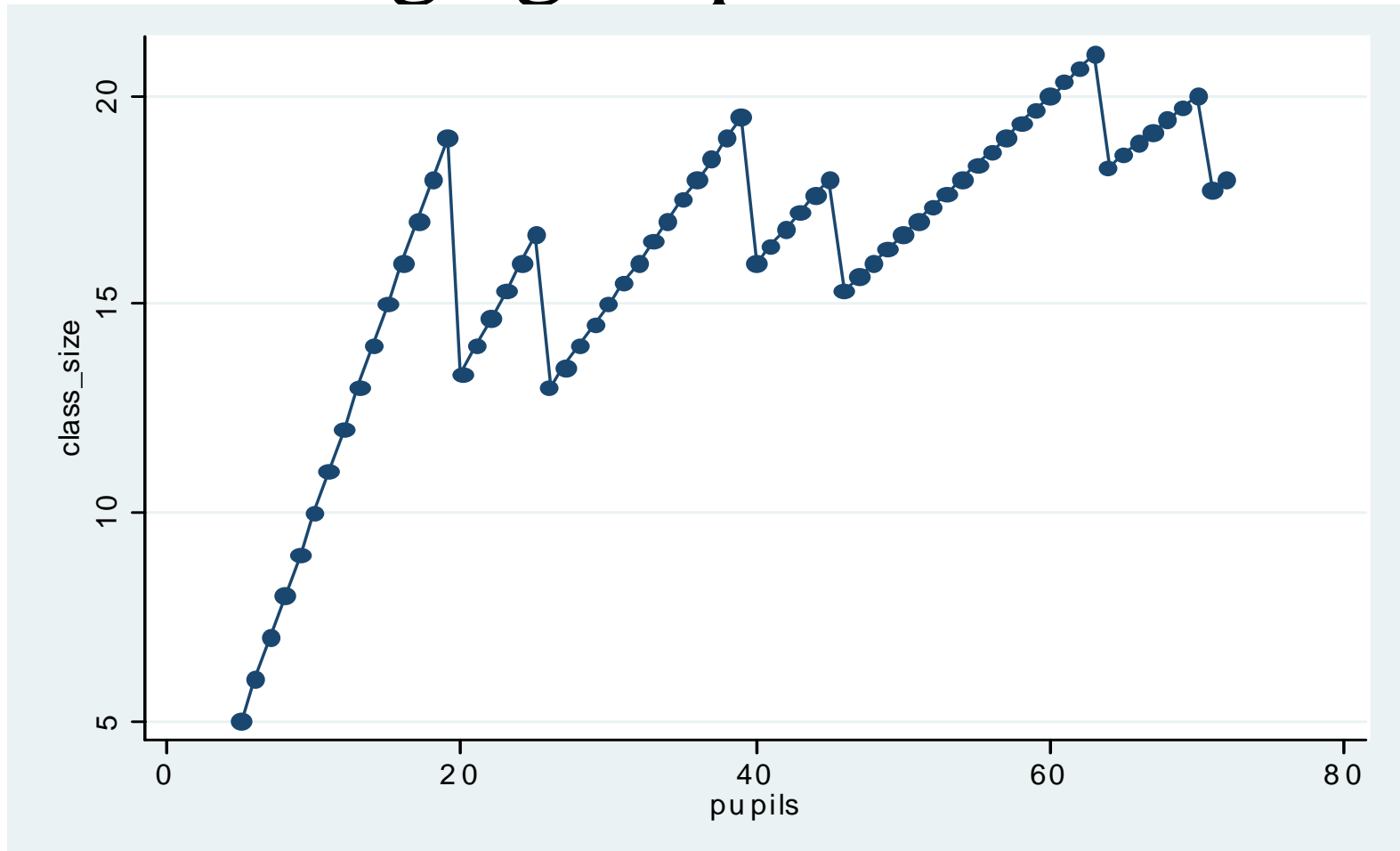
Skepticism

- A number of recent papers (from Norway, Sweden, ...) estimate the effect of school starting age on achievement.
- Finding: pupils who enroll at an older age perform better.
- Remark: these papers have problems to disentangle effect of enrolling at an older age from effect of being older at test day.

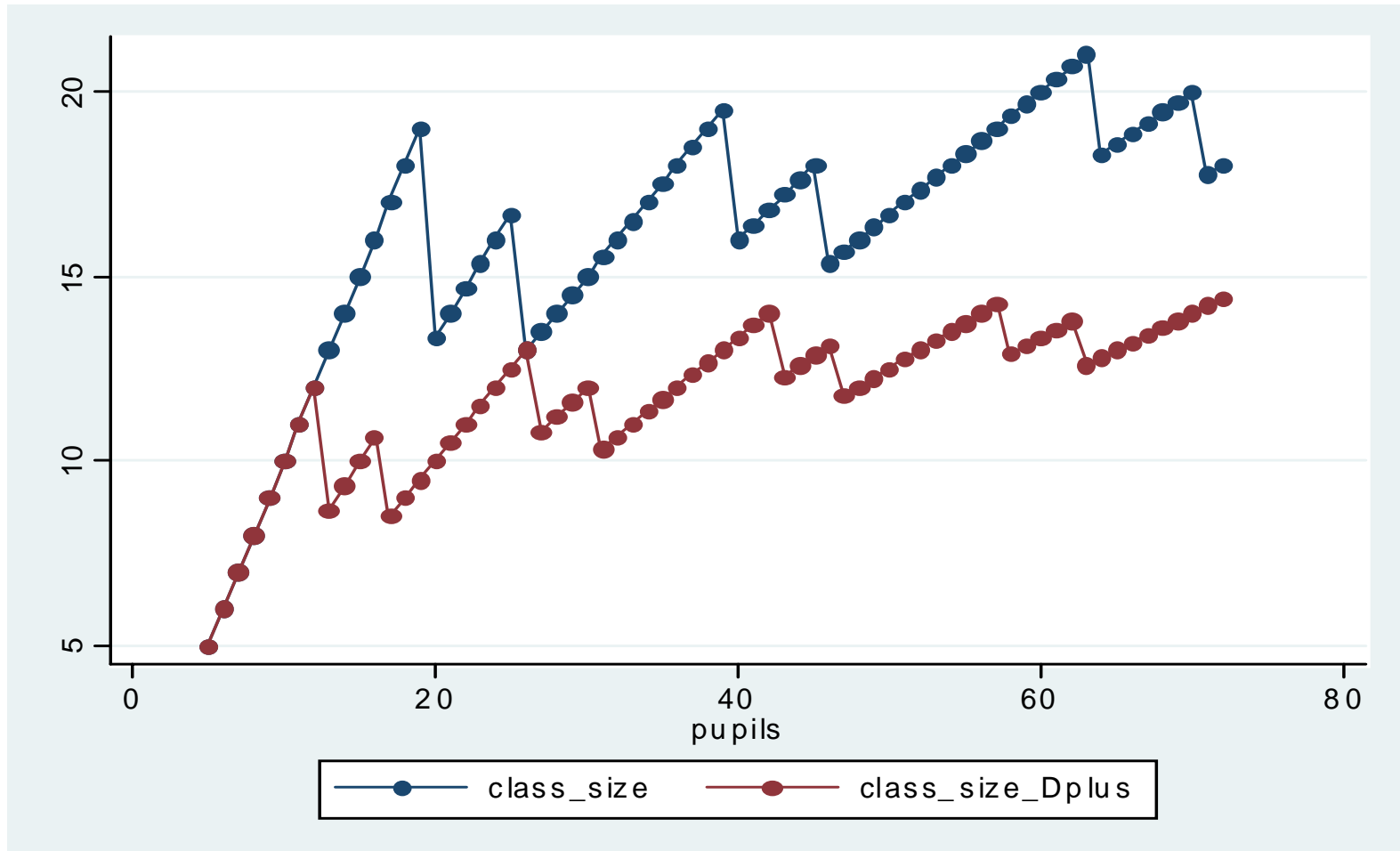
Reduce inequality within EM

- Reduction of group-sizes;
- Favorable funding for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (weight of 1.5);
- Retention (extra year at the end of EM);
- Special treatment of refugees
- Standardized teaching objectives

Relation between enrollment and average group-size in EM



Relations between enrollment and average group-size (two types)



How to evaluate?

- Evaluation is based in personal experience:
 - Best teachers are often in schools in disadvantaged districts;
 - No difference in performance between disadvantaged and other pupils.
- No evidence that supports these observations.
Wishful thinking?
- Sharp contrast with findings in the Netherlands.
- (Is segregation not an issue?)