

The Kuznets Curve of Education:
A Global Perspective on Education Inequalities
1870-2010_
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Abstract

This paper describes global trends in average educational attainment and in education inequality since 1870, improving the database released by Morrisson-Murtin (2009). Inequality in years of schooling is found to be rapidly decreasing, a direct consequence of the decline in illiteracy. Then, we turn to human capital inequality, and focus, among several other alternatives, on a Mincerian production function of human capital that accounts for diminishing returns to schooling. Within countries, we find evidence of an inverted U-shape curve for human capital inequality, namely a Kuznets curve of education. At the world level, human capital inequality has followed a similar pattern, first increasing from 1870 to 1970, then decreasing.