Chapter 4

The Value of Dutch Degrees: Testing ISLED with Data from the International Social Survey Programme in the Netherlands [ISSP-NL]

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Recently Schröder & Ganzeboom (2013) have presented quantifications of the country-specific education categories distinguished in the European Social Survey [ESS] rounds 1-4. These quantifications, labelled the International Standard Level of Education [ISLED], were generated by way of optimally scaling all country-specific education categories in the ESS in an intergenerational status attainment model and have been shown to be a better representation of education level than the comparative education measures available in ESS. In this article we validate the Dutch part of the ISLED scale on fresh data, in particular, the International Social Survey Programme data collected in the Netherlands (ISSP-NL, 2003-2008) using latent variable modelling. Latent variable modelling makes it possible to diagnose and correct random measurement error. As ISSP-NL contains two independent education measures for both respondent and partner, this dataset allows us to apply latent variable modelling twice. While this improves the measurement, it also introduces correlated error. We can estimate and correct both the random and correlated error in a Multiple-Trait Multiple-Method (MTMM) model. We find that ISLED contains less random and less correlated error than indigenous ISSP measures. The amount of error is reflected in the measurement coefficient (factor loading), which we finally decompose into a validity and a reliability part by introducing latent true score variables. We find that ISLED excels as the measure with both the highest validity and the highest reliability. Our overall conclusion is that ISLED is a valid and strong measurement of education level in the Netherlands, also when applied to fresh data.

[27] This chapter is co-authored by Harry Ganzeboom. Earlier versions were presented at the ESRA conference in Lausanne (Switzerland) in 2011. An earlier Dutch version of this analysis is published as Schröder & Ganzeboom (2012a).