

About the research

The impact of school academic quality on low socioeconomic status students

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This paper uses data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) to investigate the impact of academic school quality on student outcomes. A companion paper by Gemici, Lim and Karmel (2013) describes the measure of school quality used in this paper.

In particular, this paper examines the interactions between students' individual socioeconomic status (SES), their academic achievement at age 15 years and the academic quality of the school they attend and school completion, tertiary entrance rank (TER) and university participation. This paper explores whether students from low socioeconomic backgrounds benefit to a greater or lesser extent from attending high-quality schools when compared with their more advantaged peers.

Key messages

- Academic school quality has a considerable differential effect on school completion for those who come from the lowest socioeconomic band. It also has a differential effect for those with low academic achievement at age 15 years.
- A differential effect is also seen in relation to the impact of academic school quality on tertiary entrance rank and the probability of going to university.
- Coming from a high socioeconomic background insulates students from early school leaving, even if they are weak performers and attend a non-academic school.

The conclusion is that the quality of the school matters and that students from a low socioeconomic background benefit even more from attending a school of high academic quality.

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