



SUMMARY NOTE

Research Partnerships

Reaching Year 12: Student and School Influences

This research sets out to investigate the factors that facilitate students reaching Year 12.

Key Findings and Conclusions

- This research indicates the strongest predictor of school completion is prior student performance (in this case, Year 9 NAPLAN performance in reading and numeracy) with socioeconomic background showing a substantially weaker impact.
- Male students are less likely to reach Year 12 than females and school retention rates among females in 2012 were 8.5 percentage points higher than that for males.
- School completion rates of students from language background other than English (LBOTE) is higher than that for students from English speaking backgrounds, even when taking into account socioeconomic background and prior achievement.
- Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) students are the most disadvantaged in completing school, despite the small increases in the last few years documented elsewhere.
- This research highlights the need for further examination of how school differences attribute to students reaching Year 12. Most of the variation between schools can be credited to the differences in the social, socioeconomic and especially the academic profiles of their students. Between one quarter and one fifth of schools have an independent effect on their students reaching Year 12 and it is these factors (e.g. leadership qualities and or teacher or student morale etc.) that need further inquiry.

Project Background

- According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics the school retention rate in Australia has risen from approximately 33% in 1980 to about 80% in 2012 with Victoria slightly higher at 82%.
- There has been a strong commitment from federal and state governments to increase school completion. These policies have included broadening the curriculum, restricting unemployment assistance for early school leavers, expanding vocational education in secondary schools and increasing the minimum school leaving age.
- This policy direction has also been contested and some research has demonstrated that the extra years of schooling have delivered no benefit to labour market outcomes and sometimes on other measures worse off.

Project Methodology

- This paper contributes to the knowledge of school completion in Australia in the following way:
 - This research is the first that examines the effects of performance in Year 9 NAPLAN on reaching Year 12.
 - The data used is from all students allowing more accurate estimates of the effects of various influences on school completion.
 - The average number of students per school was 97. This provides a more accurate effect of schools specifically when taking into account the gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic and academic mixes of schools.
- The concept of 'reaching Year 12' is used rather than school completion since it is not known if students completed the requirements of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or the vocational equivalent.
- Data used was from Victorian students in year 9 in 2008 and with typical grade progression they would reach Year 12 in 2011. The measure of reaching Year 12 is the percentage of students in Year 12 in 2011.
- The education data includes NAPLAN Year 9 numeracy and reading scores, ATAR aggregate and ATAR. The demographic information includes gender, parental occupation and education, language background, Indigenous status, school type (government or non-government) and school attended.

Acknowledgments

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