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Does family background affect students' academic performance in Macau? Evidence from PISA 2012

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Abstract

Abstract of thesis entitled “Does family background affect students’ academic performance in Macau? Evidence from PISA 2012”, submitted by Wong Wai Keong (M-B3-5615-3) for the degree of Master of Social Sciences of Economics in the University of Macau in July 2016.

Macau has been reported as one of the top performing countries/economies in the OECD Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 study, which is a study designed to investigate how individual, family and school characteristics affect 15 years old students’ academic performance in Macau. Students’ performance in mathematics, reading and science literacy are all well above the OECD averages.¹ However, there are variations of performance between students in Macau. We are curious about whether this variation of performance is associated with students’ family background, because the quality of education system plays a major role in determining the extent to which intergenerational transmission of economic status occurred within a society.

We find out that students’ family background does affect students’ academic performance, specifically family income has positive effect on students’ academic performance, though with a rather mild effect; on the other hand, parents’ educational attainment has no significant effect on students’ academic performance. Furthermore, students who were not born in Macau perform better than those who were born there. Students studied in private schools achieve higher literacy scores compared to students studied in public schools. Schools having more educated teachers also have positive impact on students’ academic performance.

Keywords: family background, schools, academic performance, intergenerational mobility

¹ OECD (2014), PISA 2012 Results in Focus: What 15-year-olds know and what they can do with what they know, p.10-11.

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