
NEWSLETTER

An Empirical Study of the Relation between Rural School Size and Student Academic Achievement in the Context of Rural Revitalization

By Zeng, S., Lei, J., Su, S., & Zeng, P.

Correspondence to: Pingfei Zeng, Zhejiang Normal University, China. E-mail:

zpf@zjnu.cn

THIS article is an empirical study of academic achievement of rural students in X County, based on the analysis of how their senior secondary entrance examination results related to baseline performance (represented by terminal exam results of the first semester in grade 7) and academic progress (represented by student academic growth between grades 7 and 9). The rural schools included in the study were divided into two groups: small-size and medium-large-size schools. Fully investigated were the gaps in student senior secondary entrance examination results and academic progress among rural schools of distinct sizes as well as the impact of school sizes on different student groups. Research findings include that:

- Student baseline performance and academic progress had positive correlations with their senior secondary entrance examination results. The impact of student baseline performance was greater than that of academic progress.
- Medium-large-size rural schools performed better in the senior secondary entrance examination than small-size ones. The former had advantages over the latter regarding teacher resources, reputation, and school management and thus, had better student sources, which explained the disparities in senior secondary entrance examination results between the two groups of schools.
- Students from small-size rural schools made greater academic progress than their peers from medium-large-size rural schools. This is because they received more attention from their teachers despite their relatively lower baseline performance. Moreover, the instructional methods of their teachers were more suitable to their needs.
- The overall academic progress made by high-, moderately-, and low-performing student groups from small-size rural schools was significantly greater than their counterparts from medium-large-size schools. Comparatively, moderately- and low- performing

students from small-size schools made bigger strides than the high-performing group.

The study proposes suggestions as follows:

- In rural school evaluation, considerations should include both student baseline performance and academic progress. A reasonable combination of formative and summative assessment will contribute to the betterment of the quality of rural education.
- There should be more incentives for small-size rural schools to improve their teaching quality in that they are more academically value-added. They have the potential to be better recognized and accepted by students and student parents.

Source: Journal of Shanghai Educational Research, 2023; 2023(11):29-34.