

Does Schooling Mean Progress? It Depends!

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Abstract

The underlying premise of all educational systems is that schooling leads to learning. A unique opportunity to test this premise from an unusual angle, presented itself, when the Israeli Ministry of Education decided to retest the 8th grade cohort, which participated in the Israeli NAEP at the end of the 9th grade. The primary motivation for this study was to develop a scale for measuring progress which would serve as a “national yardstick” and later be used to assess the effectiveness of various educational interventions.

In this study the same tests (assessing proficiency in Hebrew, Arabic and mathematics) were administered twice, one year apart, to the same schools and classes. This design was adopted in order to minimize sampling error as much as possible and to allow for the calculation of individual gain scores, in addition to class gain scores.

The results of this study indicate that several factors affect progress, as measured by proficiency gain scores: schooling, test subject, school type and school's SES. In addition, it was found that previous exposure to test items also had a differential effect on gain scores.

The effects revealed in this study shed some light on the contribution of schooling to educational progress. The results also indicate that no single yardstick can be used to measure such progress, but that many factors should be taken into account while setting standards for expected learning progress.