FEWER SCHOOL DAYS, MORE INEQUALITY

Daiji Kawaguchi
Hitotsubashi University, RIETI, TCER, and IZA

Abstract
This paper examines how the intensity of compulsory education affects the time use and academic achievement of children with different socioeconomic backgrounds. The impact is identified off the school-day reduction of Japan in 2002 that resulted when all Saturdays were set as public-school holidays. An analysis of time diaries and test scores reveals that the socioeconomic gradient of 9th graders’ study time becomes 80% steeper and the socioeconomic gradient of academic achievements of 8th and 10th graders becomes 20-30% steeper after the school-day reduction. Intensive compulsory education contributes to equalizing the academic performances of children with different socioeconomic backgrounds.

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