

Do Classroom Teachers Matter for Academic Achievement of Students? Random Assignment Evidence from China

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Abstract

Do classroom teachers play a distinctive role in teaching students of their own class? Using the random assignment of students and teachers to classes in middle schools of China, we examine the effect of classroom teacher on academic achievement of students. We find a positive and significant classroom teacher effect even incorporating the teacher fixed effects, the student's test score of a subject taught by his or her classroom teacher will increase by 0.163 standard deviation compared with a subject taught by other teachers. Moreover, we find that classroom teacher effect varies by subject, grade, and quantile of test score. We further investigate possible mechanisms that drive the classroom teacher effect. We find that classroom teachers perform differently toward students of their own class, and that students behave differently when they were taught by their own classroom teachers. These results suggest that teachers can improve students' academic performance not only by teaching behaviors but also by non-academic interaction with students such as knowing more information of students outside the teaching class.

Keywords: Classroom teacher effect; Academic achievement; Teacher behavior; Student response

JEL Classification Numbers: I21, J24.

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