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School academic quality key for vulnerable students completing Year 12

The academic quality of a school has a major impact on individuals from a lower socioeconomic status (SES) background completing Year 12, compared to those from a higher SES environment, according to a recent study by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

Using data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), the report – *The impact of school academic quality on low socioeconomic students* – investigates the impact of academic school quality on student outcomes.

“The essence of the research is that a school’s academic quality may ‘make or break’ the chances of completing school, particularly for those individuals who have low academic achievement at age 15 and come from a low SES background,” said Sue Fergusson, NCVER’s General Manager, Research.

In contrast, coming from an affluent background can insulate students from early school leaving, even if they are weak performers and attend a non-academic school.

“There is a 30 per cent chance of completing secondary school for those from a low SES background, who have low academic achievement and attended a low academic quality school.

“However, the number rises to 80 per cent for those from a low SES background who attended a high academic quality school,” said Ms Fergusson.

Ms Fergusson said the results show that academic school quality has a considerable differential effect on school completion for the most vulnerable students: those who come from the lowest SES band and are in the bottom 10 per cent of academic achievement.

“The differential effect is that school academic quality is more important for the most vulnerable students,” she said.

This is a companion paper to the recently released research report titled *The impact of schools on young people’s transition to university*.

Copies of *The impact of school academic quality on low socioeconomic students*, authored by Patrick Lim, Sinan Gemici and Tom Karmel, are available from www.lsay.edu.au/publications/2640.html

Copies of *The impact of schools on young people’s transition to university*, authored by Sinan Gemici, Patrick Lim and Tom Karmel, are available from www.lsay.edu.au/publications/2541.html

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