

## Abstracts

### Studies on Academic Achievements in Japan: Current Situation and Issues

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The purpose of this article is to review the studies on academic achievements in elementary and junior high schools in Japan, mainly from viewpoints of sociology of education. The studies of children's educational attainments in Japan had lacked data on socioeconomic status for a long time. However, those studies have been increasing since many people discussed whether or not the scores of Japanese children had dropped in the 2000s. There are two fields on those studies. One explores the factors of academic achievements' gaps between children. The other is about educational effectiveness, which measures the effects of schools and teachers' instruction methods. The former shows the growth of the achievement gap, the importance of SES, the impacts of pre-school education and the relative age effects. Problems about gender and ethnic minority's achievements still remain not to be fully considered. Although the latter has been increased in number, each study has come into question to be generalized. There are few data available for researchers to argue about academic achievements and gaps. Hard data have to be gathered and opened to all researchers to analyze.

### The Determinants of Students' Academic Performance in Japan

**Masakazu Hojo** (Niigata University)

This paper gives an overview of the empirical studies on the determinants of students' academic performance in Japan. Recent development in the availability of achievement data enabled researchers, including economists, to identify the determinants of education outcomes. Economists have great curiosity about the determinants of a student's academic achievement because achievement gaps among school-age children result in future income inequality. Education production functions are estimated using student-level achievement data for Japanese students, with emphasis on estimating the effect of ability grouping. The empirical results show that students' test scores are strongly affected by family backgrounds, whereas school resource variables have a more limited impact. We cannot reject the hypothesis that the effect of reducing class size is zero. On the other hand, the effects of family backgrounds become small when students are grouped according to their ability, suggesting a possibility that schools can succeed in reducing the gaps in opportunities among students from different family backgrounds.

### Academic Ability of College Students and Job Performance

**Naoyuki Ogata** (Tokyo University)

The academic ability of college students is deteriorating by the expansion of college-going students, and competence requirements from companies are increasing by the economic recession. From both points of view, conceptual level and substantive level, this paper examines the theme on the relationship between the academic ability of college students and job performance. Academic ability consists of disciplinary knowledge, a disciplinary way of thinking and behavior of learning, but the objectivization of such indices is difficult so the analysis of this area is also associated with difficulty. Though it is not easy to overcome this problem, some future directions are proposed. Taking the academic ability of the secondary education level into consideration as the academic ability of college students, considering other components in addition to disciplinary knowledge as important learning outcomes, conducting a comparative analysis with the vocational higher education sector, and the expansion of the concept of job performance from knowledge and skills required by the employer to those desired by the employees themselves.