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Private Migrant Schools or Rural/Urban Public Schools: Where Should China Educate Its Migrant Children?

Journal Article

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This paper examines the academic performance of migrant students in migrant schools in China and explores determinants of their performance. The paper compares academic performance, student backgrounds and measures of school quality between Beijing migrant schools and rural public schools in Shaanxi province. Furthermore, we employ multivariate regression to examine how individual characteristics and school quality affect migrant student performance and the achievement gap between students in migrant schools and those in rural public schools. We find that although students in Beijing migrant schools outperform students in Shaanxi's rural public schools when they initially arrive in Beijing, they gradually lose ground to rural students due to the poorer school resources teachers in migrant schools. Additional analysis comparing migrant students in migrant schools to migrant students in Beijing public schools demonstrates that given access to better educational resources, migrant school students may be able to significantly improve their performance.

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