

Discipline more effective than monetary investment in education: new research

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Credit: Paul Wright

Discipline in schools has a greater impact and is more important to educational performance when compared to monetary investment, a new study from Macquarie University has found.

The study found that school performance was overwhelmingly determined by how schools are run, while in comparison the amount of money spent on schools as a percentage of GDP had a minor influence on educational performance.

"Monetary investment in education is not sufficient to boost educational performance. Discussion on education policy often centres on funding, but this study now establishes that a much more effective 'tool' to improve education performance and ultimately the competitiveness of a nation, is to focus on school discipline," said co-author Associate Professor Chris Baumann of the study, published in the International Journal of Educational Management.

In analysing educational performance, the research assessed data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's

(OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), World Bank data on Government Expenditure, and World Economic Forum (WEF) data on competitiveness.

On three of the five PISA dimensions, Australia ranks below the OECD average and for two it is exactly average. That contrasts with China, Japan and Korea with much better discipline, and also stronger academic performance.

"More disciplined students achieve better educational results, and in undisciplined classrooms with distraction combined with a lack of respect for teachers and education means time is wasted rather than spent on learning. The findings in this study support the argument that how schools and classrooms are 'run' need to be reconsidered, and perhaps the expectations a society places on its students needs to be increased."

The more cost effective approach to improving educational performance is to focus on improving school discipline which is more or less cost-neutral, but is very effective on desirable outcomes such as performance and competitiveness.

Often monetary investment is used for central policy development and other administrative mechanisms, but the study shows this has little direct impact on educational performance in comparison to school discipline.

"Teachers need effective tools to discipline students in order to create an atmosphere where students listen well, noise levels are low, teacher waiting time is also low, students work well, and class starts on time," said Associate Professor Baumann.

For countries with already a high level of discipline in their schools with equally high [educational performance](#) (for example in East Asia), the recommended strategy is to maintain good levels of

discipline in the classroom in order to maintain strong academic performance.

In contrast, countries with low levels of [discipline](#) and low performance may consider changing school policy to a stricter regime in order to lift [academic performance](#) and competitiveness without increasing education investment.

"For a country to succeed, and the extent to which that may occur, depends on how talented its people are and what education they choose to pursue – better disciplined students learn more and perform and ultimately contribute to a more competitive workforce and economy," said Associate Professor Baumann.

More information: School Discipline, Investment, Competitiveness and Mediating Educational Performance. *International Journal of Educational Management*. 2017.
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