

Predispositions for social mobility during and after schooling: The effect of school and student attributed

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Abstract

While education is often assessed through academic achievement, it also plays a crucial role in shaping students' social, emotional, and economic trajectories. An important element of this broader role is the development of students' expectations for their own future, which are closely tied to students' dispositions towards social mobility. Although previous secondary analyses of international large-scale studies have extensively examined the impact of socioeconomic status on student achievement, students' expectations have received comparatively less attention. This study addresses that gap by examining the effects of student-level and school-level factors on students' expectations, and thus their dispositions for social mobility, represented by three indicators: (a) expected educational attainment, (b) expected occupational status, and (c) expected socioeconomic position at age 30. Data from the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are used in cross-country analyses, while addressing potential endogeneity issues. The key factors that are found to significantly affect a student's probability of holding high expectations include family economic, social and cultural status; gender; immigration background; and academic achievement. Among students from disadvantaged backgrounds, gender, immigration background, and, to a lesser extent, achievement, are shown to influence the likelihood of mobility dispositions. Specifically, the cross-country analyses reveal that girls and students with an immigrant background are more likely than boys and native students, respectively, to hold high expectations and to demonstrate dispositions for social mobility. Since the PISA dataset includes data for Cyprus, a within-country analysis is conducted to compare the estimated effects with those from the cross-country analyses. Notable departures from the cross-country findings in Cyprus include the absence of a consistently strong effect of parental economic, social and cultural status on the likelihood of high expectations, as well as a disadvantage associated with immigrant background in developing high educational and occupational expectations.

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