

Self-Confidence of a Class and Competition of the Classmates for Eight-Year Gymnasium²

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Summary

- The Czech Republic belongs to a small group of European countries with an educational system that leads to a very early differentiation of pupils in schools according to their academic performance and socio-economic background. In the Czech Republic, 18% of pupils in the 5th grade apply for 8-year grammar schools (*gymnasia* in Czech) and go through the challenging process of preparing for entrance exams. Thus, on average 3 pupils in each classroom apply to these gymnasia, of which almost 2 pupils are admitted.
- Our analysis on data from a unique survey of schools shows that a presence of an extra classmate who is applying for gymnasia affects one's self-confidence. The biggest negative impact we noted was in case of self-confidence of girls in mathematics. Decline in confidence (from the level in the fourth grade, that is before preparing for entrance exams) is about 7% of the student with at least two classmates who applied. As a control group, we use the class where no one has applied.
- The negative impact is more pronounced in those classes where candidates are in the admissions process ultimately successful.
- Moreover, this negative effect is also slightly stronger when parents do not want their children to apply, which reflects the crucial role of parental background and decision-making in the application process.
- The decline in self-confidence of pupils who do not apply to the gymnasium and who had excellent results, also relate to the fact that at least half of them are at math as good as pupils from their classes who applied to eight-year gymnasium. The estimated negative impact on the self-confidence lasts further into sixth class.

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