

Double the Number: High School Crowding and Schooling Outcomes*

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Abstract

Significant, yearly changes in relative cohort size in education markets are rare, and this has limited evidence of its impact on schooling outcomes. This paper shows the impact of an increased high school cohort size on performance and the college market by examining two reforms in Ghana that changed high school duration between 2007 and 2010. Using data on all high school graduates and application data from a large public university, I combine a cohort analysis and a regression discontinuity design leveraging a compulsory schooling law to isolate causal effects. I find a notable fall in performance at the end of high school, for students in the increased cohort. Graduates are less likely to obtain a college degree because they choose to forgo it by not applying, and even when they do, colleges face supply constraints and cannot absorb the increased total demand. High school graduates also respond by reducing the selectivity of their application choices. Outcomes for females and economically vulnerable students are not significantly different.

*Abstract of Job Market Paper

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