

“The causal effect of class size on scholastic achievement: distinguishing the pure class size effect from the effect of changes in class composition”

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Abstract: As in many countries the causal effect of class size on pupils' school performance is an important issue in the ongoing educational debate in the Netherlands. In 1997 the Dutch government committed to undertake a major investment to reduce average class size in primary schools. Although opinion leaders and politicians were easily persuaded that this is a good investment, this measure is not backed by convincing empirical evidence pertaining to the Dutch situation. In the process of policy preparation one study was published supporting the reduction of class size, but as we will show in this paper the results of this study should be questioned.