Ask: NUS Economists

How students’ aspirations exacerbate social inequality

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How do differences in students’ aspirations affect social inequality?

A recent study from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to aspire to higher education and professions. This creates a cycle where higher aspirations lead to better educational outcomes, which in turn leads to higher social status and income.

While the study highlights the importance of aspiration in shaping educational outcomes, it also points to the role of social inequality in shaping students’ aspirations.

The study found that students from higher-income families are more likely to have higher aspirations than those from lower-income families. This is due to the widening gap in access to opportunities, resources, and social capital. The study also highlights the role of socio-economic status in shaping students’ aspirations and career choices.

The study recommends that policymakers need to take action to reduce social inequality in order to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to aspire to higher education and careers.

Overall, academic aspirations are not consistent with professional aspirations, suggesting that teenagers view their educational aspirations and professional aspirations quite separately.