

**Economics
Seminar
Series
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**SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS**

Seminar

**Measuring the Dynamics of the Achievement Gap Between
Public and Private School Students in India**

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Date: April 12, 2019
(Friday)

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Venue: FSI Hall, Akbar Bhawan,
Satya Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi

All are Welcome

ABSTRACT

The academic achievement gap between students attending public and private schools in India is widely studied. Almost all studies so far have found evidence of private school students outperforming public school students. However, researchers have only focused on the achievement gap in levels without considering the underlying dynamics of how students move through the distribution of achievement over time. This lack of completeness is important since the extent to which policymakers and researchers should concern themselves with the public-private achievement gap should depend how mobile the students are through the test score distribution. This study aims to explore the dynamics of the public-private achievement gap in India by applying nonparametric measures of distributional mobility to panel data on math and Peabody Picture Vocabulary test scores from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. We find that during early childhood, public school students are at least as mobile as private school students in both upward and downward directions. However, during preadolescence, relative to private school students, public school students are significantly less upwardly mobile and more downwardly mobile. Overall, thus, our results present a rather alarming picture of the inequality in academic performance between public and private school students. Taken together with the existence of a level gap in test scores, the mobility patterns observed in the data during the preadolescence stage suggests that one would expect to see very little convergence in the distribution of test scores as public and private school students make their way through middle and high school. The widening of the test score gap is a natural result of such mobility patterns and understanding how to augment upward mobility while at the same time reducing downward mobility for public school students is critical for creating interventions aimed at closing the academic achievement gap between public and private school students.