

Quantitative Analysis: Is There a Real Decline? (Encouraging Student Interest in Science and Technology Studies)

Absolute numbers of science and technology (S&T) students have been rising in line with access to higher education. However, their relative share has been falling in tertiary education and upper secondary levels in several OECD countries. Coupled with unfavourable demographics and a stabilisation of the number of students accessing tertiary education, several OECD countries may see the absolute number of S&T students declining in future years. In other countries, a demographic recovery would mitigate this trend. Aggregate numbers hide important differences among disciplines. For physical sciences and mathematics, the absolute number of students often shows a decline. Life sciences' share has mostly remained stable due primarily to an increasing number of female students. Engineering benefits from the perception that job prospects are good and shows a stable or positive trend. The number of computer science students has increased dramatically, perhaps reflecting a shift away from physics.

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