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Private schools fail test

SUSIE O'BRIEN

EXPENSIVE private schools deliver students no advantages over a free public education when it comes to getting good jobs and higher salaries.

A new study suggests parents paying almost \$40,000 a year for elite private schools may be wasting their money, judging on post-school employment outcomes.

Researchers found students at private schools don't get any long-term boost in the job market or improved salary prospects. University of Melbourne academic Dr Jenny Chesters examined the salaries and jobs of more than 3800 private school students at age 24 who finished year 10 in 2003.

She found students achievement levels reflected the social-economic status of their parents, not the type of school they attended.

"Attendance of a non-government school was not associated with an increased likelihood of being employed on a full-time basis, being employed as a manager or professional or with higher earnings at age 24," Dr Chesters said.

She said parents and governments "may be over-investing" in private education.

Education researcher Barbara Preston said Sydney's independent schools put an emphasis on results to the detriment of students.

"I always say put the money aside and spend it on either doing things to support the local school like extra music teachers or overseas trips for your children at a later age."