

Improving Public Sector Management at Scale?

Experimental Evidence on School Governance in India^{*}

Karthik Muralidharan
UC San Diego and NBER

Abhijeet Singh
Stockholm School of Economics

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Abstract

We present results from a large-scale experimental evaluation of an ambitious attempt to improve school governance at scale in India (implemented in ~1900 schools and randomized over ~5800 schools). The intervention consisted of several global best practices in school governance and included three main components: comprehensive school assessments by external school inspectors leading to customized school improvement plans, regular follow ups on progress with ongoing monitoring and support and leveraging ICT tools to make both assessments and progress visible throughout the education system. We report four main findings. First, the assessments were able to meaningfully evaluate school quality with scores being predictive of *future* student value-added and teacher absence. Second, though initial assessments (overseen by external consultants) were implemented well, subsequent monitoring by government officials was not affected by the intervention. Third, we find no impact on teacher absence, teacher effort in classrooms, student engagement or the engagement of School Management Committees. Finally, consistent with this, the intervention had no impact on student learning outcomes. Our results provide direct evidence of the challenge of improving service delivery at scale in developing countries and show how well-designed plans and programs fail due to poor implementation and state capacity.

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