Improving Task Completion by School Principals During the COVID-19 Crisis

1. Authors and affiliations and contact emails
   Daniel Morales, IDEICE and PUCMM, daniel.morales@ideice.gob.do, dr.morales@ce.pucmm.edu.do
   Catherine Rodríguez, Universidad de los Andes, cathrodr@uniandes.edu.co
   Carlos Schmidt-Padilla, The University of California at Berkeley, cschmidtpadilla@gmail.com

2. Abstract
   We study whether neutral, positive, or negative reinforcement messages given to schools’ principals can improve their bureaucratic efficiency in times of crisis. Under the COVID-19 health emergency urgency, the Ministry of Education asked all school principals in the Dominican Republic to send a detailed file with detailed information on curricular completion prior to the crisis before May 8th, 2020. Focusing on the group of school principals who did not complete the task on time, we randomize reinforcement mechanisms via e-mail to get them to comply with the task before a second due date. Three distinct groups are created for all those school principals who did not comply with the initial due date and for whom the Minister had a valid e-mail contact. All school principals in the control group received an e-mail reminding them of the importance of the task completion and informing them of a new due date for May 15th, 2020. School principals in treatment group 1, further received information on the percentage of school principals in her district that had complied with the initial due date and the importance that they themselves complete it too. School principals in treatment group 2, further received information on the percentage of school principals in her district that had not complied with the initial due date and how this is hindering the Ministry to get the information needed.

3. Data description
   Our primary outcome measure is schools' completion of a status report on their curricular offering prior to the start of the COVID-19 health emergency. Focusing on the group of 2,092 school principals who did not complete the task on time, we randomize these school principals into three groups. The control group (697 school principals) received an email reminding them of the importance of complying with the task and a new second due date to do so: May 15th, 2020. Treatment group 1 (698 school principals) received the same e-mail, with additional information on the percentage of school principals in her district who sent the information required on time. Treatment group 2 (697 school principals) received the same e-mail as the control group with the additional information on the percentage of school principals in her district who did not comply with the task.

4. JEL codes for the project
   O31, O38, D90

5. Key-words
   School Principals, Task Completion, COVID-19

6. AEA RCT Registry
   AEARCTR-0005854: https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/trials/5854