

DOES COMMUNITY MONITORING IMPROVE PERFORMANCE?

Most countries have in place systems to monitor the quality of education. Despite heavy investment over the last two decades, Uganda continues to suffer low quality primary education. New research carried out in Uganda by the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) in partnership with the Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), suggests that giving local committees control over the criteria by which their school's performance is judged offers significant improvements to educational quality at little cost.

The EPRC and the CSAE implemented two different programmes, involving community monitoring, to improve schooling in Uganda.

In both programmes, School Management Committees (SMCs), the organisations that allow parents, teachers and other community members to express their opinion about school performance, were trained how to use scorecards to help them monitor schools. In one programme these scorecards were designed by central organisations including NGOs and education authorities, whilst in the other they were designed by SMC participants themselves.

A hundred schools across Uganda were assigned randomly either to one of these two community monitoring programmes, or to a control group where no additional monitoring programme was implemented.

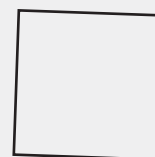
The criteria emphasised by SMCs for inclusion in scorecards were substantially different from those decided upon centrally. In particular, the SMC-designed scorecards paid little explicit attention to teacher absence, although underlying issues such as staff housing were frequently monitored. Also, the importance of parent contributions to learning appeared high on the list of criteria in the SMC-designed scorecards, further reflecting the need for parent-teacher participation and co-ordination.

We found that monitoring using community-designed scorecards made students and teachers significantly less likely to be absent from the classroom – by nine percent and 13 percent respectively – at the time of surprise visits by survey teams. There was also a significant increase in children's literacy and numeracy test scores. Pupil scores on National Assessment of Progress in Education exams, administered by Uganda National Examinations Board officials, improved by 19 percent of a standard deviation – enough to move the median student from the 50th to the 57.5th percentile.

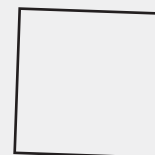
These improvements were achieved at relatively low cost and were not detected in schools that used centrally-designed scorecards. These results highlight the importance of participatory approaches when formulating community monitoring schemes and suggest that governments could achieve significant results by allowing school priorities to be chosen locally by consensus.

This article is based on a briefing paper for Improving Institutions for Pro-Poor Growth, University of Oxford. For further information please contact: iig.enquiries@economics.ox.ac.uk

YES



NO



Further reading

Andrew Zeitlin, Lawrence Bategeka, Madina Guloba, Ibrahim Kasirye and Frederick Mugisha (2011). 'Management and motivation in Ugandan primary schools: Impact evaluation final report'. <http://www.iig.ox.ac.uk/>

Abigail Barr and Andrew Zeitlin (2011). 'Conflict of interest as a barrier to local accountability'. CSAE Working Paper Series, No. 2011-13