



Trade and Development Seminar

Call Me Educated: Evidence from a Mobile Monitoring Experiment in Niger

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10:30 am – 12:00 pm

119 Ruttan Hall

In rural areas of developing countries, education programs are often implemented through community teachers. While teachers are a crucial part of the education production function, observing their effort remains a challenge for the public sector. This paper tests whether a simple monitoring system, implemented via the mobile phone, can improve student learning as part of an adult education program. Using a randomized control trial in 160 villages in Niger, we randomly assigned villages to a mobile phone monitoring component, whereby teachers, students and the village chief were called on a weekly basis. There was no incentive component to the program. The monitoring intervention dramatically affected student performance: During the first year of the program, reading and math test scores were .15-.30 s.d. higher in monitoring villages than in non-monitoring villages, with relatively stronger effects in the region where monitoring was weakest and for teachers for whom the outside option was lowest. We provide more speculative evidence on the mechanisms behind these effects, namely, teacher and student effort and motivation. (with Christopher Ksoll)