Beyond Beliefs: Experimental Evidence on Follow-Through Frictions at School Transitions*

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Abstract

A key puzzle in economics is why households underinvest in education despite high returns. While standard explanations focus on information, this paper highlights the role of follow-through frictions in a school-level RCT in 231 primary schools in Quiché, Guatemala. We document a substantive intention-action gap: 65% of students plan to enroll in secondary school yet 34% of those fail to follow-through on their plans. To causally isolate the effect of follow-through frictions, we randomly assign schools to a pure control, an information treatment, and a mentoring treatment that delivers identical informational content, along with follow-through support comprising classroom based socio-emotional skill-building and personalized educational counseling. Information provision has no effect on enrollment. Mentoring increases enrollment by 8.4 percentage points (18%) relative to information, with larger effects among students who already planned to enroll. The evidence points to socio-emotional skills as the operative channel in how mentoring helped improve follow-through.

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