

JUNE 2021

PERU

Improving the Principal-Appointment Process Using a Results-Based Approach

Introduction

Peru has achieved near-universal access to schooling, but learning outcomes are generally poor and vary widely between rural and urban schools. Rural schools tend to be small, with one teacher overseeing multiple grades, and students typically score lower on national exams than their urban counterparts. Principals can play a vital role in determining the performance of a school, but in Peru, local authorities have traditionally picked these leaders from the ranks of teachers, without clear criteria from the central government.

The government sought to change this as part of broader education reforms following Peru's poor performance in the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). *The Programa de Educación para los Logros de Aprendizaje* or PELA aimed to improve learning outcomes by introducing more results-based elements into education financing. One measure involved implementing competitive, merit-based evaluations and appointments for school principals. REACH supported an evaluation of the specific impact of the principal-focused reform across the whole school system.

Intervention

Peru's reform required the principals of all 14,000 public preprimary, primary, and secondary schools to undergo a performance examination. Those who did well retained their position, while those who did poorly were reassigned as teachers. Only 3,000 principals passed the evaluation. Eligible, qualified teachers took a national examination to compete for a school managerial position, with the inaugural exam testing 43,000 teachers. The highest scorers were offered principal or vice principal jobs. Both the newly appointed principals and existing principals who were allowed to remain in their posts based on their examination results received higher salaries than principals who were temporarily appointed to fill a vacancy or those who had been appointed under earlier regimes.



The Results in Education for All Children (REACH) Trust Fund under the World Bank Group seeks to help countries strengthen their education services by focusing initiatives on results. The IMPACT series describes how results-based projects funded by REACH influence learning, education systems, and policy making.

The team used econometric analysis that compared the performance of schools that got a new principal (treated group) and those that retained their original principal (nontreated group) over time by observing standardized student test scores before and after the reform and the differences between rural and urban schools in terms of these scores. The team also conducted surveys to find out how the reform affected first-time principals and what constraints they faced in managing their schools.

Findings from the analysis showed that the introduction of this merit-based selection and compensation system for principals had a negative impact on learning in rural schools in the short term and no impact on learning in urban schools. The results were not totally unexpected, as schools with different principals likely experienced adjustment issues as the new leaders learned the ropes. However, the results also underscored existing challenges in Peru's education system, including a paucity of qualified candidates available for principal positions and a lack of preparedness among first-time principals to head rural schools. In many schools, the new principal had not performed significantly better than the outgoing one on the performance evaluation.

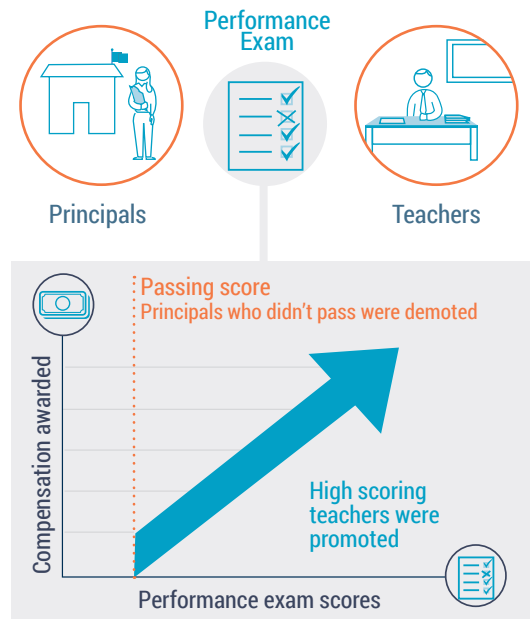
Impact

Peru's government is tackling the challenges highlighted by the evaluation. The previous incentives offered to those working in rural schools were too low, which led to a lack of interest among potential candidates in taking up these positions. Rural school principals typically have teaching responsibilities as well as their managerial duties, which reduces the amount of time that they can dedicate to leadership.

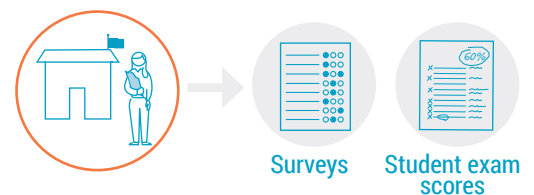
To address these problems and attract quality talent, the Ministry of Education is experimenting with establishing two new categories of school managers: (i) network principals and (ii) network vice principals. Under this model, each pair of network principal and vice principal oversees five to 10 schools with a combined student body of fewer than 140 students. Network principals and vice principals receive higher compensation than regular school principals and vice principals, respectively. They also receive more staff support with the addition of school life and administrative coordinators who facilitate their interaction with teachers and students and help them to overcome the isolation felt by many rural school leaders. A pilot in 2018–19 bundled 678 rural schools into 50 networks, and the final plan is to establish 5,400 networks, which will create a total of 10,800 new school management jobs.

Principal Reform in All Schools

EVALUATION FOR MANAGERIAL ROLES



EVALUATION OF SUCCESS OF NEW ROLES



RESULTS IN EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN (REACH) RESOURCES

For more information on the REACH Cameroon intervention please refer to the RBF Education EVIDENCE note, "Can School Grants and Teacher Incentives be Used to Increase School Access and Improve Quality?" on the REACH web page.

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