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Attracting Good People into Public Service: Evidence from a Field Experiment in the Philippines*

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Abstract

This paper evaluates a policy intervention designed to attract good political candidates – competent and honest ones – to public service. Inspired by the idea that schooling can act as a screening mechanism, and that non-monetary status awards can be a cost-effective tool to incentivize individuals, we evaluate whether a leadership training workshop with performance-based awards can screen and incentivize good people to serve in public office. In the context of a randomized field experiment among aspirants for the village youth councils in the Philippines, we find that this policy intervention is effective in terms of attracting individuals with above-median measures of public service motivation, intellectual ability, integrity, and aspiration.

Keywords: political selection, public service motivation, incentives, screening, leadership training workshop, political elite behavior

JEL Code: H11

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This paper evaluates a policy intervention designed to attract good political candidates – competent and honest ones – to public service. Inspired by the idea that schooling can act as a screening mechanism, and that non-monetary status awards can be a cost-effective tool to incentivize individuals, we evaluate whether a leadership training workshop with performancebased awards can screen and incentivize good people to serve in public office. In the context of a randomized field experiment among aspirants for the village youth councils in the Philippines, we find that this policy intervention is effective in terms of attracting individuals with abovemedian measures of public service motivation, intellectual ability, integrity, and aspiration.

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