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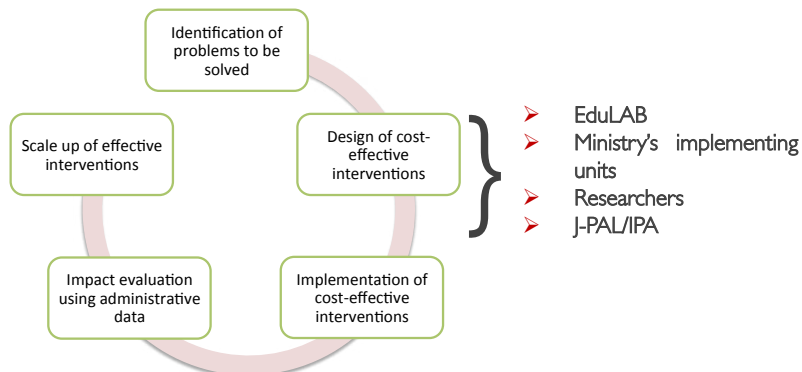
Bringing Innovation to Education Policy in Peru

Incorporating the use and generation of evidence into public policy enables governments to identify the interventions that could yield the greatest impacts at the lowest cost. Moreover, it triggers innovation, which has the potential to dramatically improve the effectiveness of government interventions.

Within the Peruvian public sector, the Ministry of Education of Peru has been a leading advocate in promoting evidence-based policy and results-based management. In this context, the Ministry is implementing a scheme to design innovative, evidence-based policies, aimed at improving student performances and overcoming implementation challenges. Furthermore, such scheme incorporates systematic measurements of the impact of these interventions through rigorous evaluations, in order to allow the Ministry to make an informed decision on how to best deliver the education policies needed.

The Strategic Planning Secretariat of the Ministry of Education, with technical assistance from the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), is implementing an Education Lab for innovations. **This Lab is an innovative approach to policymaking, which creates a learning space to design low cost interventions that have the potential to trigger big impacts in learning and implementation outcomes.** The proposed interventions will be rigorously tested using the Ministry's administrative data systems when available, with the aim of scaling those innovations that prove to be effective. The Lab's combination of low-cost interventions with the use of administrative data offers a highly efficient scheme for innovation and design of public policies based on evidence, both in terms of resources and availability of timely results without interfering with the implementation of the Ministry's interventions.

EduLAB policy cycle



Ongoing Proposals

The Lab is part of the Strategic Planning Secretariat of the Ministry and is composed of a team that works in constant interaction with the Ministry units in charge of implementing the interventions and a team of researchers. The Lab's team, along with the researchers and the Ministry units, identify problems and potential innovations to be implemented and tested under this low cost scheme. Therefore, this collaborative process allows

to combine the researchers' expertise with the political and operational experience of policy makers. The Research Advisory Board is composed by: Francisco Gallego (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile), Sebastián Galiani (University of Maryland) and Christopher Neilson (Princeton University). Additionally, depending on the project, the Lab allows to incorporate lead researchers that have experience in the design, implementation and evaluation of similar innovations on other parts of the world.

Three projects have been prioritized for the 2014-2015 period. Described below is the nature of the problem and the pilot innovations to be tested:

Delivery of information on the returns of secondary education

MOTIVATION: Although Peru has made great improvements in the provision of schooling, not all children complete secondary school. 20% of the children are not currently enrolled in any school and there is a high rate of students that drop out before finishing (ENAH0 2013).

Research conducted in other countries has found that, for a portion of students, the lack of accurate information on the benefits or returns of education plays an important role in households' decisions related to education. Providing information on the returns of education to students has proven to be an effective mechanism to prevent school

dropouts and can have positive impacts in learning (Jensen 2010, Nguyen, 2008).

COST-EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION: The intervention will use a series of four different videos that combines information and marketing strategies aiming to change students' perceptions and decisions related to education. The evaluation will measure how this impacts student's perceived returns to education, dropout rates and the student's time allocation.

RESEARCHERS: Christopher Neilson (Princeton University), Francisco Gallego (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile) y Oswaldo Molina (Universidad del Pacífico)

Delivery of comparative information on school performance

MOTIVATION: The 2014 national standardized test showed that 66% children in second grade are below the expected level in reading skills and 74% are below the expected level in math skills.

Providing information about school performance is considered a powerful and cost-effective way to improve quality of education services. Similar interventions in other countries have led to changes in schools that in return produced an increase of child test scores (Andrabi, 2015).

COST-EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION: The intervention proposes to provide parents, teachers and principals with an informative handout, additional to the report they annually receive on the results obtained in the national standardized test, which

compares the performance of their schools in the test relative to similar schools. Comparison schools were chosen according to whether schools are located in rural or urban areas, belong to the same local educational administration, and have the same organizational structure, in terms of number of grades and allocation of teachers. In urban areas, physical distance was used as an additional criteria. The evaluation will measure how the intervention impacts school performance through next year's national standardized test. In order to understand the mechanisms driving impact, the evaluation will measure changes in the school through surveys to principals, teachers and parents.

RESEARCHERS: Francisco Gallego (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile), Christopher Neilson (Princeton University)

SMS to improve management of school maintenance resources

MOTIVATION: In order to effectively reform an education system, successful implementation is key. It has been shown that creating the right incentives for school personnel who are the primary implementer can boost service provider's performance and ensure that the quality of the service improves. Using carefully framed SMS messages has proven to be an effective way to supervise and motivate providers to achieve their implementation goals in the private sector.

COST-EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION: The Ministry has devised a maintenance program to guarantee that schools provide the minimum standards of safety, hygiene and comfort.

Cash transfers are made to the school principals' accounts for maintenance activities. This intervention will test whether SMS can become a powerful tool for the Ministry to guarantee that processes are implemented with quality and in a timely manner. The impact of this intervention will be measured through the Ministry's administrative data on school maintenance budget execution.

RESEARCHERS: Dina Pomeranz (Harvard University), Francisco Gallego (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile), Christopher Neilson (Princeton University)

Next Steps

In the course of 2015, the Lab, along with the Ministry units and the team of researchers will advance in the design, implementation and evaluation of the innovations described. While the pilots developed during 2014-2015 complete the policy cycle, the Lab is currently working with the others Ministry units identifying new spaces for innovation and proposing low cost solutions to be implemented and evaluated during 2015-2016. The Lab aims to become a strategic unit for Ministry's decision-making, as well as a learning space for researchers and policymakers to produce lessons that will inform education policy nationally and globally.

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