



Learning the Value of Education

GOVERNMENT OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC · IDEICE · J-PAL LAC

Executive Summary¹

Learning the Value of Education (AVE, by its acronym in Spanish) is a project that evaluates the implementation at scale of an information intervention in middle school that highlights the benefits and feasibility of human capital investment in the Dominican Republic. This project is a three-year joint collaboration between the Government of the Dominican Republic and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab and is an ongoing evaluation that has found positive preliminary results and is currently scheduled to be implemented to the entire country in 2017.

The AVE campaign targeted students attending 7th and 8th grade and aimed to deliver information regarding the returns of education. The information was delivered as a *soap opera* of 4 episodes showing the dilemmas of 2 students who are faced with decisions on their future educational path. The purpose of the videos is to encourage students to complete more levels of education and lower the dropout rates.

The Intervention

Previous research had suggested a potential importance of information about the monetary returns to education, information on the feasibility of these options as well as information regarding different higher education options. Given this, a potential scalable intervention was developed that incorporated these insights contextualized to local realities in the Dominican Republic. A more focused set of interventions were developed to be implemented at a small scale to better understand the different mechanism behind the potential change in behavior.

The intervention process lasted two years. In the first year, the sample consisted of 599 public schools, representative of the whole country regarding the students from 7th and 8th grade of the public sector. From these 599 schools, 200 received the “informative video” treatment, 198 received the “persuasive video” treatment and 201 were left as the control group.

In the second year of the experiment, this was re-applied to students from 7th and 8th grade and to a sample from the high school cycle. This sample consisted in 2,469 schools, including the schools from the former years which were kept as treatment.

In order to measure the impact of the treatments, a first survey (Baseline) was implemented in 599 schools and then a follow-up survey was conducted in order to keep track of the students. Finally, an end-line survey was implemented in 1,550 schools after the second year of the experiment.

Additionally, AVE achieved to include survey questions in the nationwide standardized test called *Pruebas Nacionales*. The addition of these questions allowed AVE to assess the impact of the treatments in the score of the students and on their self-reported personal beliefs regarding education, income expectations and youth labor.

The Evaluation

AVE has been design and implemented in an experimental way. From the scope of the design, AVE is a randomized control trial, where there is a control group and two treatment groups who received different versions of the video. From the perspective of implementation, AVE is a strategic

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scale up of public policy. In the first year it was implemented to 19% of the students of 7th and 8th grade; in the second year, 61% of the former year students and 52% of the High school cycle students in the Dominican Republic received the videos.

Results

In this stage of the evaluation process, there are only results from *Pruebas Nacionales*. Indeed, the most interesting results summarize in 2 main topics: (1) in self-reported beliefs regarding educational plans, youth labor and income expectations; and (2) scores in the *Pruebas Nacionales*.

1.1. Educational plans

Those students who have watched the videos reported intention for achieving greater education levels than the students in the control group. Specifically, there are 3.5% more students that plan to complete a college-level education in the two years treatment group in comparison to the control students.

1.2. Change in the time dedicated to youth labor

The results indicate an effect on the number of hours that students dedicate to labor. Indeed, there is a shift in the working hour distribution from students that worked more than 8 hours to working between 1 to 8 hours.

1.3. Income expectations

Those students who watched the videos updated their income expectations in case of not finishing high school to values closer to the one reported in the videos. This supports the hypothesis that students lack information about the relation between human capital and income.

1.4. Increase in the interest towards science-related careers

There was a difference in the portion of students that reported interest in studying a science-related

career of 1.4% in the two years treatment group in comparison to the control students.

2. Increase in the performance of the students in *Pruebas Nacionales*

Students treated one or two years show higher scores in *Pruebas Nacionales*. There is a larger effect in the students treated two years than those who were treated one year. This effect is especially strong in social sciences and Spanish language.

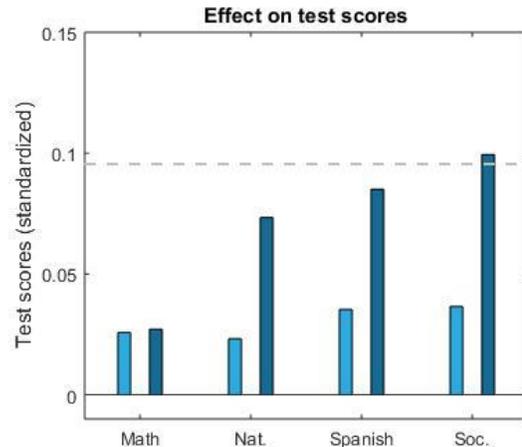


Chart 1. Regression Coefficient for 1-year treatment (light blue) and 2-year treatment (blue). “Soc.” refers to Social Sciences and “Nat.” refers to Natural Sciences. Dotted line indicates 1 point in the test score level.

Conclusions and further work

The presented results show significant effects on *Pruebas Nacionales* scores, suggesting a behavioral change due to the treatment. These effects increase coherently when the treatment is applied two consecutive years. These results align with the main purpose of this project which is to increase the investment in human capital. Moreover, school dropout is an important outcome in the scope of investment in human capital and we will be able to assess the effect on this outcome with the final in-depth survey which is currently ongoing.