

Mentoring and Incentives

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Abstract

On the job training is one of the most effective ways of improving productivity especially in the public sector. Using data of the bureaucrats from the elite India Civil Services, I provide evidence that the human capital gained by the bureaucrats during their initial career varies significantly with the incentives of their mentor. I show that junior bureaucrats show better performance in the district training courses when their mentors are imperfectly observed by their supervisors. My findings can be rationalized in a framework where the mentor is a multi-tasking agent allocating time between mentoring and public service delivery. Mentors devote more effort to mentoring when their effort in district related tasks is imperfectly observed by their own supervisors. Finally, I show that a reform that was introduced to bring greater transparency in the performance evaluation system reduces the differences in visibility of performance of the mentors, thereby reducing the differences in mentoring.

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