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Information Provision and Post-Secondary Education: Does information help decreasing the education gap?

Although access to university education has increased, students from non-academic family backgrounds are still underrepresented at universities. This contribution sheds light on whether a lack of information prevents students from enrolling in university. We investigate the causal relationship between information and post-secondary education using data from a German randomized controlled trial with more than 1.000 students. One year prior to the Abitur exams, we treated randomly selected schools in Berlin by giving an in-class presentation on the benefits of university education as well as on possible funding options for university enrollment. This information workshop was conducted within the school context during school hours to mimic a potential policy measure aiming at reducing inequality at the transition to university education. We surveyed students prior to the information intervention and followed up on them three months, one year, two years and three years after treatment. Thus, we are able to investigate short- and medium-term effects of information provision. We examine how students' intention to enroll in university, their application behavior as well as their actual transition behavior change as a result of improving their information set and how this actually affects the education gap. Results indicate that providing students with information alters their intentions as well as their behavior.