

Joint Conference on

Economic Incentives: Do They Work in Education? Insights and Findings from Behavioral Research

Call for Papers

To explore the use of economic incentives in education, **CESifo** Munich and the Program on Education Policy and Governance (**PEPG**) of **Harvard** University are hosting jointly a conference in **Munich** Germany on **16-17 May 2008**. Building on the success of a previous joint conference whose proceedings are just published by MIT Press, the scientific organizers, **Paul E. Peterson** (Harvard) and **Ludger Woessmann** (Munich), hope to again bring scholarly perspectives together from both sides of the Atlantic.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau once claimed that the best education was one that the child discerned for himself. The tutor was to “do nothing and let nothing be done” so that the child would be free to learn whatever he needed to know without external pressure. When it comes to learning, incentives – whether cash or compliments – had perverse consequences. Was Rousseau correct? Do incentives operate differently in education than in other sectors of society? What kinds of incentives prompt learning? Which ones deter it? Do students respond to economic rewards? Do teachers respond to material rewards for meritorious accomplishments? Or do they regard them as demeaning? Are extrinsic incentives preferable to intrinsic ones, monetary incentives to non-monetary ones? If schools face competition for students, do they become more efficient?

Answers to many education policy issues – merit pay, graduation requirements, social promotion policies, school choice options, school accountability provisions, and many others – depend on how incentives work in education. Currently, scholars are exploring these questions in greater depth and with more sophistication than ever before. Major breakthroughs in theoretical understanding, computational capacity, and data availability are rapidly altering the knowledge landscape. Help in advancing the knowledge may also come from recent advances in behavioral economics.

Researchers working in the field are invited to submit one-page abstracts or draft papers electronically by **15 August 2007** to pepg_administrator@ksg.harvard.edu and baier@ifo.de. The papers may be empirical or theoretical. Preference will be given to studies that identify causal relationships by means of experimental or quasi-experimental research designs.

Featured papers will be presented by **Armin Falk** (Bonn), **Caroline Hoxby** (Harvard), **Michael Kremer** (Harvard), and **Victor Lavy** (Jerusalem).

Subject to peer review, a selection of presented papers will be published in a featured section of the **Economic Journal**, to be edited by Steve Machin (London). Submission of papers for the conference implies their submission for publication in the journal. The organizers will provide accommodation and will reimburse economy travel costs for authors of papers accepted for presentation; honoraria will be provided upon receipt of final papers accepted for publication. Further questions regarding the organization and scientific content of the conference should be addressed to the conference organizers at baier@ifo.de.

