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*Mitigating the educational gap
between private and public
institutions*

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RESEARCH
REPORT



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Introduction

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “ [to] ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” is a goal that needs to be reached on the road to sustainable development (*Goal 4*). Thus, Member States have a responsibility to ensure that their population, including kids and adults, has proper access to quality education. However, the resources one has determine the quality of education they receive and their educational institution. Aside from public schooling, private schooling has emerged as a model of education that entails more resources, smaller classrooms, and thus more attention to the quality of education. It is the government’s responsibility to close the gap between public and private schooling to make quality education accessible to all regardless of socioeconomic background.

Definition of Key Terms

Achievement gap: A significant difference between the achievements and academic performance of students from different backgrounds, mostly due to unequal opportunities (*Achievement Gap*). For example, the achievement gap can exist between students with different socioeconomic situations.

Public school: A free school system funded by the government and maintained by public taxes (*Public school*).

Private school: A school that is not supported financially by the government and has to pay for their children to go to (*Private school*).

Tuition: Money charged by a school for a child’s education (*Tuition*). Public schools generally do not charge tuition fees. Private schools do charge tuition fees that are paid by a child’s parents.

Grant funding: Any money or assistance given by a government or institution for the intended use. Some governments provide grant funding to help families send their kids to private schools.

Low-cost private schools: Private schools that charge low fees so that a broader range of society can afford to send their kids to private schools (*Low-cost private schools*).

General Overview

Even though the idea of education was planted in different areas of the world at close time frames, the earliest record of education can be dated back to the Middle East. In Egypt, royal scribes were trained.

Sons of the royal family were trained in the sciences and trading. In ancient Israel, the Torah commanded us to read and write. Likewise, the Quran promotes reading and writing in Islamic civilizations. Earliest historical records of formal education date back to 500-1500 AD European church-based schools that emphasized literacy in Latin and comprehension of religious text.

With the industrial revolution, schools shifted their mission from religious scripture to teaching labor skills. As centuries passed and political views around education evolved, education was specialized. This meant that compulsory education was stripped of labor skills. Instead, fundamental theoretical education on the sciences, the social sciences, mathematics, and language took over—resembling what we know as schooling and education today.

Most countries' current education systems embrace a K-12 model that suggests that Kindergarten to Grade 12 education is mandatory for all school-aged children. Governments are responsible for making sure that education is accessible to school-aged children. That is why public schools are widespread in countries where governments value providing education to their population.

However, the fact that a government provides public schooling does not automatically mean that the education is of quality. Although quality education is a subjective measure, specific measures like the availability of teachers, coursebooks, classrooms, facilities, and staff are important factors affecting education quality.

Compared to a public school, a private school is likely to have more teachers, fewer students, textbooks, advanced facilities, and adequate staff because they are funded by tuition money that most likely exceeds government funding to a public school. With fewer students per teacher, students of private schools receive more attention to their schooling, which translates to better opportunities following their K-12 mandatory schooling.

Governments that want to develop their education systems sustainably need to make sure that public school kids are not falling behind their private school counterparts. Thus, government action is necessary to uplift public schools and regulate the education provided in private schools to make education fair for everyone.

Especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, the difference between public and private schools in accessing resources severely deepened. While most private schools could resume distance education within weeks of the pandemic declaration, public schools were far slower to catch up. Stemming from a budget powered by tuition, private schools can employ more technological equipment into their educational experience, which was helpful during distance education due to pandemic restrictions (*Implications of COVID-19 for low-cost private schools*).

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Germany

With great investment into public schooling, Germany has far fewer private schools in its education system. The public schooling system, although it varies between states, is comprehensive in Germany, so families do not feel the need to spend additional money on private schooling. Given that even federal universities are free of charge in Germany, the country is said to employ an efficient public education model.

India

Over the last twenty years, the Indian education system has seen a shift favoring private schools, with the enrollment of private schools surpassing that of government schools. To counter this issue, more local governments in India realize the positive impact of partnering with civil society organizations and nonprofits to improve the curriculum and delivery of education, both public and private (Desk).

Japan

The Japanese system majorly depends on private schooling, so access to quality education through public schooling is harder. Unlike most countries, public schools in Japan do have tuition even though it is significantly less than private school tuition fees. Unlike private schools, Japanese public schools do not teach any class in English (*Japanese education system - public, private and International Schools*).

Turkey

With the closure of cram schools, most cram school institutions turned their facilities into a Low-Cost Private School. Thus, there has been a major over-dependence on Low-Cost Private Schools in the Turkish education system in recent years. Government schools are mostly underfunded, with funds not being equitably divided between different types of high schools. Public schools with religious affiliations tend to receive the most portion of government spending than other public schools (such as science high schools). Thus, the Turkish education system suffers from an unjust distribution of funds and reliance on private schools.

Past Treaties and Events

- [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(1948\)](#)

This declaration is the first international legal instrument that recognises education as a human right (see Article 26), setting precedent for future documents and government policies to make education free for all, accessible to all communities, and with regards to a government-regulated curriculum.

- [The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education \(1960\)](#)

Building onto the ideals set forth by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this convention is the first international document that comprehensively covers the right to education and has international legal effect.

- [The No Child Left Behind Act \(2001\)](#)

This United States Act attempts to close the student achievement gaps through providing a high-quality education with equal opportunities to children. Along with other initiatives, the Act requires each state in the United States of America to set state academic standards and a state testing system.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Organizations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNDP are actively gathering data from member states on their educational systems. However, without governments being convinced to increase their spending on the educational system, data collection is unable to tackle the issue of the quality education between public and private schooling.

While The US's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 attempted to decrease the achievement gap between richer and poorer children, a great achievement gap still exists in American adolescents. The NCLB expired in 2015 and was replaced by another, more flexible act called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Since ESSA is relatively new, it is hard to speculate the effects it had. On the other hand, the NCLB was implemented for 13 years, so it is easier to observe its effects. The state standardized tests provided information to the government about the average test scores of students from different regions, however, standardized tests may have also had a negative impact on the students' stress levels. Additionally, a study found that a significant number of school districts stated that they focused on math and reading comprehension (the subjects of standardized tests) and cut time from other classes that the students may have had an interest in. Thus, the curriculum narrowed (*The Effects of No Child Left Behind on Children's Socioemotional Outcomes*).

Possible Solutions

It is important to note that the issue explained in this report is mostly internal; countries can address the issue with internal policy. Thus, government action is necessary. Governments may be asked to increase their spending on public schools and the budget given to each public school to provide further resources for public school students, mitigating the gap between them and their private school counterparts. Suppose the number of kids enrolled in the public school system dominates the education system; in that case, the government may promote Low-Cost Private Schools to decrease the public schooling population. The government may give grants for channeling some students to private schooling to increase public school quality. Since both public and private schools must teach a given curriculum by a country's ministry of education, recommending governments to regulate that both school systems follow the same curriculum in their studies can be useful. Lastly, international organizations like UNESCO and Education International can be consulted to regulate and help lessen the gap between private and public schools collaborating with willing member states.

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