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Privatisation of Secondary Education:
Issues and Policy Implications

by

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Executive Summary

The world has seen a general shift in the centre of gravity towards greater private ownership, financing and control of schools. This transition has not occurred uniformly, and in some countries a shift in the opposite direction has been more evident. Nevertheless, the privatisation movement is sufficiently widespread to be called a global phenomenon.

Goals of Privatisation, and Benefits from Comparative Analysis

In most settings, privatisation has been advocated for one or more of the following reasons:

- to reduce the burden on government expenditures,
- to improve efficiency in operation of schools,
- to increase diversity and choice in the forms of educational provision, and
- to make institutions more accountable to their clients.

In some countries, particular goals are given stronger emphasis than in other countries. No single model for privatisation can be recommended universally, firstly because each society is different, and secondly because the choice of education system must depend on the nature of priority objectives. Nevertheless, policy-makers in particular countries can learn much from the experiences of other countries. Comparison may help identify paths to avoid as well as paths to follow.

School Types, and Policy Contexts

One major complication for policy analysis is that both public and private schools may be of many different types. Most schools follow mainstream curricula, but some follow alternative curricula with particular religious, cultural, political or other orientations. And within each curriculum group, schools may be elite, standard, second-chance or supplementary institutions.

Recognition of this diversity helps policy-makers to see that private schools are not necessarily qualitatively superior to public ones. Indeed in many countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, the majority of private schools are qualitatively inferior. This is particularly evident in second-chance private institutions, which mainly cater for students who were unable to gain places in public schools, and which in many settings operate with minimal facilities and under-qualified teachers.

Also emerging from disaggregation of types of private school are differences in the dominant emphases of private-sector operation in industrialised societies compared with less developed ones. Second-chance private schooling is most common in less developed countries, because it is in those contexts that government resources, and therefore the size of the public sector, are most limited. In industrialised countries, by contrast, the dominant forms of private education are elite and/or alternative-curriculum schools. Because of this difference in the composition of the private sector, the literatures and recommended policies for industrialised countries may be significantly different from those for less developed societies.

Strategies for Privatisation

With these points forming a conceptual framework, the study focuses on four major strategies for privatisation. They are:

- transfer of ownership of public schools,
- shifting sectoral balance without redesignating existing institutions,
- increased government funding and support for private schools, and
- increased private financing and/or control of government schools.

Examples are provided from different parts of the world of each form of privatisation.

At the same time, it is recognised that much privatisation occurs by default rather than as a deliberate strategy. Indeed in some countries, privatisation happens despite rather than because of government intentions. This is especially common where there is excess demand for secondary education, but may also occur where minorities exert strong pressure for curricula with religious, cultural or other emphases. Supplementary private schools, which in many countries provide tutoring for pupils who are also enrolled in public schools, are perhaps the most obvious category with mainly unplanned provision.

Outcomes and Issues Arising from Privatisation

Following the presentation of different strategies (or default evolution) of privatisation, the study turns to major outcomes and issues arising from privatisation. It does so under five headings, namely efficiency, accountability, diversity, access, and equity.

Some studies have indicated that private schools tend to be more efficient than public ones. This is partly because people who operate private schools have stronger incentives to be efficient. Also, private schools commonly employ part-time and other less-costly teachers. However, these points do not necessarily imply that full privatisation will achieve the degree of efficiency displayed when only small proportions of education systems are operated privately. Moreover considerably more research is needed on the topic before firm conclusions can be reached on the circumstances in which, and the extent to which, private schools are more efficient than public schools.

Matters of accountability to parents and communities can also be complex. Schools attached to churches and community organisations may give parents and others a stronger voice in policy matters, and private entrepreneurs may be willing to listen to parents and communities if they consider it essential to the maintenance of demand. However, it is not always the case that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'.

By contrast, diversity in forms of provision is more readily self-evident. Diversity can also of course exist in the public sector. However, the private sector is perhaps more likely to promote diversity, through both elite and alternative-curriculum institutions. Second-chance private schools, however, are less likely to promote diversity since in many cases their main goal is to shadow the public sector.

On the matter of access, where private schooling merely substitutes for public schooling and leaves the total number of places constant, at least in macro terms the private sector cannot be said to expand access. However, in many settings the private sector has expanded the total number of places. This is particularly obvious in the case of second-chance private institutions. The catch, however, is that these schools are often of such poor quality that expanded access is of questionable benefit.

Issues of access are related to issues of equity. The fact that privatisation may create or exacerbate inequities is among the strongest reasons why governments should tread cautiously in this sphere. Privatisation of existing public institutions is likely to reduce access to those institutions by the poor. Also, the private sector usually has an urban bias, which means that rural populations suffer relative disadvantage. On the gender dimension, privatisation may provide more opportunities for females. However it does not necessarily do so, and this topic needs further research. At the same time, during discussion of inequities in the private sector it must be recalled that public provision of education is not necessarily equitable either.

Policy Implications

Initial tasks to be undertaken, the study suggests, are careful classification of existing schools, definition of terms, and identification of goals. Only with these preconditions can there be hope of identifying appropriate policies to match specific circumstances and objectives.

Having made this point, the study turns to three specific strategies, namely:

- privatisation of existing public schools,
- encouragement parallel private schools, and
- promotion of privatisation within public schools.

A document of this length cannot explore in detail the mechanics and implications of each strategy, and in any case the circumstances of individual governments and societies diverge widely. Nevertheless, it is possible to highlight some major considerations under each heading.

Concerning privatisation of existing schools, governments must consider whether institutions may themselves decide to change their status, or whether decisions on which schools will be privatised will be made by central authorities. Governments must also consider the implications for access to education by children who cannot or do not wish to attend the newly-privatised schools. Even denationalisation of schools which had previously been nationalised is not necessarily an easy task.

To encourage parallel private schools, governments can give grants, loans and technical advice to fledgling institutions. Some governments have also used voucher schemes with some success. In addition, governments can help the private sector by providing information to potential clients about the locations and characteristics of individual schools. Monitoring and regulation of the private sector may also be important. While regulation might seem to be against the spirit of free enterprise, in some circumstances it might benefit the private sector by enhancing public confidence.

Concerning privatisation within the public sector, important experiments were launched in several industrialised countries during the 1980s. Under these schemes, schools have been given much greater autonomy, and are required to compete with each other for pupils and funds. The initiatives have provoked considerable controversy, in part because the demands of the market place overshadow educational and social goals. However, the experiments may hold some useful lessons for policy-makers in other countries.

Conclusions

Privatisation is undoubtedly a global trend, not only in the economic sphere but also in education. Movements are not solely in one direction, but the overall centre of gravity has shifted in the direction of increased private ownership, financing and control of schools.

However, privatisation is not a panacea. Governments need to balance many factors, and some goals can be met by making changes within public education rather than embarking on full-scale privatisation. Moreover, some circumstances require more rather than less public financing and control of schools.

Given the complexity of the topic, the recency of most major attempts at privatisation, and the paucity of evaluative studies of these attempts, governments in most settings would be wise to move cautiously. Nevertheless, a great deal can be learned from comparative study. Through such investigation, policy-makers can learn what pitfalls to avoid as well as what types of policy are likely to be most successful. The most important need is for policy-makers to devise specific strategies for their own circumstances. This will require careful identification of overall goals, and assessment of the alternative ways to achieve those goals.

Introduction

Recent years have brought a global upsurge of interest in privatisation. The interest has been evident in all sectors of the economy and society, including education. Privatisation has been widely advocated as a mechanism to improve efficiency, cater for pluralistic preferences, make institutions more accountable to their clients, and reduce government expenditures.

However, some aspects of privatisation are controversial. In many cases, policies have been based more on ideology and aspiration than on empirical demonstration of their benefits; and even advocates of privatisation differ in their views on how it may best be achieved.

This study summarises evidence on issues associated with privatisation of secondary education, and presents policy implications for governments in settings of various types. The work has a broad geographic focus, and takes examples from all parts of the world. It is mainly based on written materials, which are referenced where appropriate, but also draws on oral information from educators and policy-makers in some of the countries concerned. Examples are taken from countries which have always had capitalist regimes, countries which have recently converted from socialism to capitalism, and countries which remain officially socialist.

Meanings, Dimensions and Types of Privatisation

Privatisation, by definition, is a process — an ‘-isation’ — rather than a state. It is the process of moving from less public ownership, financing and/or control to more private ownership, financing and/or control. Although the term indicates the direction of change, it says nothing about the starting point. Thus this study is concerned as much with systems which were already largely private but became even more private, as with systems that at the outset were largely or fully public.

However, privatisation is a complex and ambiguous concept. A clue to this is given by the reference to three dimensions of change: ownership, financing and control. A change in one of these dimensions does not necessarily demand a change in the other two; and indeed it is possible for changes to involve simultaneous movements in opposite directions. Thus an increase in non-government financing, for example, does not necessarily require any change in the formal ownership of schools, and does not necessarily give the non-government providers of finance any more control than they had before. Likewise, reforms to give non-government actors stronger control can be achieved without changes in either ownership or financing.

Box 1: When is a Private School not a Private School?

Classification of schools as private or public is not always straightforward. Among the indicators that are commonly examined during classification are ownership and financing. However, these two indicators do not always point in consistent directions. This observation may be exemplified by the cases of Hong Kong and Myanmar.

In Hong Kong, like many parts of the world with British colonial legacies, most schools in the public system are formally owned by non-government bodies. These bodies include churches and various other not-for-profit agencies. However, the government provides almost all the funding for these schools, and closely controls admission of pupils, curriculum, class size and most other matters of importance. In 1994/95, 6.4% of secondary schools were classified as government, 67.8% as aided, and 25.8% as private. Some analysts (e.g. Cummings & Riddell 1994, p.775; James 1988, p.96) have been misled by the fact that the aided schools are formally owned by non-government bodies, and have classified them as private schools. In fact, they are part of the public system of education.

In Myanmar, the situation is rather different. Because of resource constraints, the government is unable to provide secondary school places for everyone who wants them. To meet excess demand, some communities have established self-help institutions, each of which is owned and run by the community but gains an institutional anchor through affiliation to a government school. In 1989/90 Myanmar had 968 affiliated middle schools and 220 affiliated high schools. The question is whether they should be called private or public institutions. They were private in funding, and basic decisions on size, facilities and recruitment of teachers and pupils were made by the communities. However, the government viewed them as an extension of the public system of education. Indeed by official policy, 'real' private education was prohibited in Myanmar.

These examples illustrate the major conceptual questions that confront classification of schools. Institutions cannot be classified as private merely because they are owned by non-government bodies; but sometimes they are called public when they are not even funded by the government.

As might be expected, diversity in patterns of ownership, financing and control also creates major difficulties in identifying the starting point, i.e. deciding whether in the first place individual schools and whole education systems are either private or public. Some school systems rely heavily on institutions which are nominally owned by voluntary agencies but which receive substantial government grants, are subject to far-reaching government controls, and are generally considered part of public provision of education. Conversely, in many countries schools which are nominally owned and controlled by governments receive substantial non-government funds and are subject to partial non-government direction. And some schools which are totally funded as private institutions may do their best to imitate public schools and be seen by the government as part of public provision (Box 1).

Further complexities arise from the fact that the term private, which is commonly used interchangeably with non-government, encompasses a very wide range of operators. Of particular importance is the distinction between commercial entrepreneurs and not-for-profit organisations such as churches and communities. The motives of the non-

government organisations in charge of particular schools are likely to have major implications for the ways in which those schools are run.

Bearing in mind all these complexities and the different ways in which the term privatisation is used, subsequent sections of this monograph explore four major models. They are not mutually exclusive, and indeed could all be introduced together in a single country. Some models require deliberate action by the government authorities, but others can occur more or less by default. Thus privatisation should not be taken only as a planned activity, and indeed privatisation sometimes occurs despite rather than because of government intentions. The four types of privatisation are as follows:

- a) *Transfer of Ownership of Public Schools.* Deliberate transfer of ownership (and, by implication, control) of existing public schools to private hands is perhaps the most striking form of privatisation. Such a move is especially radical when it involves a shift from not-for-profit to commercial operation, though this type of change is rare.
- b) *Shifting Sectoral Balance without Redesignating Existing Institutions.* This form of privatisation occurs through a more evolutionary shift in the balance of types of institution. Thus, the number and size of government schools might be held constant, but the number and size of parallel private schools might be permitted or encouraged to increase. Alternatively, the government sector might expand, but the private sector might expand more. Or the government sector might contract, but the private sector might not contract so much, might remain constant, or might expand.
- c) *Increased Government Funding and Support for Private Schools.* Governments may strengthen the private sector by giving financial and other support to private schools. Some governments are experimenting with systems of vouchers, in which families can choose to send children to private schools but meet some or all the costs from a financial allocation earmarked by the government.
- d) *Increased Private Financing and/or Control of Government Schools.* In this form of privatisation, schools remain nominally under government ownership but the proportion of finance and/or control by non-government sources is increased. Governments in some countries have experienced severe fiscal crisis, and parents and communities have had to increase financial contributions to their schools in order to bridge gaps. In other countries, governments' financial health has remained strong but for ideological and other reasons the authorities have required school principals to be more responsive to the market place. These are forms of privatisation within the government system.

Box 2: Privatising Schools, or Privatising Systems?

The word privatisation can apply both to changes in specific *schools*, and to changes in whole *systems*. In the former, the ownership, financing or control of particular institutions changes; but in the latter, existing schools could remain unchanged if the balance in the system as a whole is changed, e.g. by opening more private schools while holding the number of public schools constant. Policy-makers need to be clear about what they have in mind, because the nature of appropriate strategies is very different.

Historical Context, Evolving Patterns and Contemporary Diversity

Historically, almost all schooling used to be private. The view that governments have responsibility for the education of their citizens has only been widely held since the 19th century in Europe, and since the early or mid-20th century in most other parts of the world (Green 1990; Jimenez & Lockheed 1995; Roth 1987). Before that, almost all schooling was conducted by churches and other religious bodies, or by tutors employed on an individual basis by families with sufficient means. The present widespread ideological shift towards privatisation may thus be perceived as a return towards an earlier centre of gravity rather than a completely new phenomenon.

Despite the existence of this ideological swing, moreover, developments in some countries have been in the opposite direction. For example, after a policy review in 1988, the government of Kenya extended its public school system by taking over large numbers of unaided secondary schools; and in 1994 the government of Malawi adopted a comparable policy at the primary level. These moves may be described as publicisation rather than privatisation.

Figure 1: Different Types of School and Curriculum (Both Public and Private)

| | | | Nature of School | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | | | <i>Elite</i> | <i>Standard</i> | <i>Second-chance</i> | <i>Supplementary</i> |
| Nature of Curriculum | <i>Mainstream</i> | Public | | | | |
| | | Private | | | | |
| | <i>Alternative</i> | Public | | | | |
| | | Private | | | | |

To help explain these contrasting patterns, it is necessary to distinguish between four different types of school. Figure 1 presents a classification of both public and private schools. It notes that schools may follow either mainstream or alternative curricula. The latter includes curricula with religious, linguistic, cultural and other emphases. Also, schools may be elite, standard, second-chance or supplementary institutions. The differences between these may be explained as follows:

- *Elite schools* generally provide better quality education, have superior facilities, and recruit pupils mainly from the middle and upper classes. Some parents who cannot get their children into elite public schools are willing to pay high fees to elite private schools. Pupils in elite private schools could have gone to public institutions had their families wished; but they attend the private schools instead. This is a form of differentiated demand.
- *Standard schools* cater for the bulk of the population. Great variation of course exists within the group (and some are in a sense *substandard*, i.e. of poor quality). However, the schools are here described as standard to distinguish them from elite

institutions. In most countries, almost all standard schools are in the public sector since, by definition, there is nothing special to attract parents to pay for private education. However, some societies do have non-elite alternative-curriculum private schools; and it is possible to conceive even of non-elite mainstream-curriculum private schools attracting pupils e.g. because of their location, a reputation for good discipline, or other factors. In most cases, pupils in standard private schools could have gained places in public schools had they wished.

- *Second-chance schools*, even with mainstream curricula, may be of two types. The public institutions are likely to cater for pupils who are repeating grades, while the private institutions enrol pupils who were unable to secure places in public institutions. In the latter case, the schools cater for excess rather than differentiated demand, i.e. the public sector is too small to provide places for all pupils who would like them. The quality of intake to such schools is usually inferior; and in many cases the quality of educational process is also inferior.
- *Supplementary schools* provide extra tuition for pupils who are already enrolled elsewhere. Most supplementary schools are private, and some students attend public schools during normal hours and then private schools in the evenings, at week-ends or during vacations. Many supplementary schools provide extra tuition in academic subjects, to help candidates to score highly in examinations. Other supplementary schools teach subjects or skills that are not taught elsewhere, such as religion, music and foreign languages.

The point that private schools are not necessarily high quality institutions is important. Much discussion on privatisation fails to recognise that private schools may be of very poor quality as well as very good quality. This is partly because much of the debate has been led by researchers and policy analysts in industrialised countries (e.g. Anderson 1994; Coleman et al. 1982; Walford 1989), in which private schools meet only differentiated and not excess demand. Desirable policies are very different for the different types of private school, and it is unfortunate that many people group them all together under a single umbrella labelled private. The private schools taken over by the governments of Kenya and Malawi were chiefly of the low-quality, second-chance type. The decision in those countries to provide government assistance was based on desires both to improve standards in the institutions and to reduce inequalities in the distribution of government resources. The authorities in those countries had rather different attitudes towards the high-quality private schools, which were permitted not only to maintain their operations but also to expand and multiply.

Another point emerging from Figure 1 is that even the public sector may have much diversity. Alternative curricula can be provided in public as well as private schools; and the public sector may have both elite and second-class schools. These observations underline the complexity of the topic, and the danger of simplistic categorisation.

The Scale of the Private Sector

To give an idea of the scale of the private sector in different settings, Table 1 reproduces statistics from James (1993). The statistics show that proportions of private schooling were generally higher both in secondary than in primary schools, and in less developed than in industrialised countries. The higher proportions in secondary than primary chiefly reflect the fact that governments have made primary education a stronger priority in allocation of resources, with the result that demand for private primary education is mainly of the differentiated rather than excess variety. The greater proportions of private

schools in less developed than in industrialised countries partly reflect stronger excess demand in the former, because government supply is more limited. The variations between countries in the different groups can partly be explained by variations in government supply of education, but also reflect different degrees of diversity in religious, ethnic and other factors, and therefore variations in the extent of differentiated demand.

Table 1: Relative Role of the Private Sector in Education

| | % Private Primary | % Private Secondary | | % Private Primary | % Private Secondary |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| <i>12 Advanced Industrial Societies</i> | | | | | |
| Australia | 20 | 26 | Iran | 8 | 17 |
| Belgium | 51 | 62 | Jordan | 30 | 7 |
| Denmark | 7 | 6 | Morocco | 5 | 8 |
| United Kingdom | 22 | 16 | Saudi Arabia | 3 | 2 |
| France | 15 | 21 | Syria | 5 | 6 |
| Germany | 2 | 9 | Argentina | 17 | 45 |
| Italy | 8 | 7 | Bolivia | 9 | 24 |
| Japan | 1 | 15 | Brazil | 13 | 25 |
| Netherlands | 69 | 72 | Chile | 18 | 23 |
| New Zealand | 10 | 12 | Colombia | 15 | 38 |
| Sweden | 1 | 2 | Costa Rica | 4 | 6 |
| United States | 10 | 9 | Ecuador | 17 | 30 |
| Median | 10 | 13.5 | El Salvador | 6 | 47 |
| Mean | 18.0 | 21.4 | Guatemala | 14 | 43 |
| | | | Haiti | 42 | 76 |
| <i>38 Less Developed Countries</i> | | | | | |
| Kenya | 1 | 49 | Honduras | 5 | 51 |
| Lesotho | 100 | 89 | Jamaica | 5 | 76 |
| Sudan | 2 | 13 | Mexico | 6 | 25 |
| Cameroon | 43 | 57 | Panama | 5 | 14 |
| Chad | 10 | 6 | Paraguay | 13 | 37 |
| Liberia | 35 | 43 | Peru | 13 | 37 |
| Niger | 5 | 14 | Venezuela | 13 | 17 |
| Nigeria | 26 | 41 | India | 25 | 52 |
| Togo | 29 | 16 | Indonesia | 13 | 60 |
| Burkina Faso | 7 | 43 | Philippines | 5 | 38 |
| Algeria | 1 | 1 | Singapore | 35 | 1 |
| Thailand | 11 | 32 | Median | 11 | 27.5 |
| | | | Mean | 16.1 | 31.3 |

Notes: Data are for proportions of enrolments, not proportions of schools. The figures are for a range of years, mostly in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Definitions of public and private are not consistent across all countries.

Source: James (1993), p.27.

However, comparison of proportions in particular countries should be undertaken with considerable caution, especially because categories may be defined in very different ways in individual settings. For example, it is questionable whether Table 1 should show Lesotho as having 100 per cent private provision at the primary level. It is true that in nominal terms Lesotho's primary schools are all owned by churches and other voluntary agencies. As in Hong Kong, however (see Box 1), they are almost totally funded and controlled by the government; and in Lesotho itself they are considered part of the public

system of education (Seitlheko 1994). Further inconsistency arises from treatment of supplementary schools. In some countries these institutions are included in official statistics, but in most cases they are excluded. Such factors emphasise the need for great care in presentation and interpretation of cross-national comparisons.

Four Strategies for Privatisation

Transfer of Ownership of Public Schools

While deliberate transfer of ownership of state enterprises has been common in industry and in other economic sectors, it has been rare in education. Governments are still expected to play a major role in education, and schools are usually treated differently from steel mills, railways and telephone companies. However, it is possible to identify some examples of this form of privatisation.

Singapore provides one of the clearest examples. The government has embarked on two initiatives, namely the Independent Schools Scheme launched in 1987 and the Autonomous Schools project launched in 1993. Under the former, existing government and aided (public sector) schools have been permitted to become private institutions while still receiving government grants. As private institutions, the schools are allowed to charge fees up to a government-determined maximum. The schools can also control their own curricula, staffing and pupil recruitment, though the government retains restrictions on minimum teacher qualifications. The Autonomous Schools initiative has some similarities, though the government has determined a lower ceiling on fees. In 1995, Singapore had approximately 150 secondary schools, of which eight were Independent Schools and 12 were Autonomous Schools (Tan 1993a, 1995). Two of the eight Independent Schools had been government institutions, and the other six had been aided. Among the Autonomous Schools, eight had been government and four had been aided.

A parallel initiative has been embarked upon in South Africa. In this case, elite schools which were formerly exclusive whites-only institutions have been permitted to become private institutions. The move allows the schools to charge fees and determine admissions policies, and therefore to remain exclusive institutions. It also permits the government to concentrate the focus of its efforts on schooling for the majority in less-elite institutions.

A rather different type of example may be taken from Mozambique. At the close of the colonial period, three quarters of the secondary schools in Mozambique were owned by the private sector, one third of them by the Catholic church. In 1975, however, a newly-independent socialist government nationalised all schools. The nationalisation decree was revoked in 1990, and private schools were again permitted to operate. Within two years, 32 private institutions were operating at all levels. These institutions included some which prior to nationalisation had been owned by the Roman Catholic church and which had been handed back. In one sense, therefore, this was a case of government schools being privatised; but the longer historical perspective shows that it was the partial restoration of a previous situation.

Box 3: Privatising State Schools – Unresolved Questions in Russia

Government authorities in Russia have considered the possibility of privatising state schools along the lines of privatisation of productive enterprises. This possibility was foreseen but not described or regulated by a 1992 Education Law.

The notion of privatising state schools raised many vexing questions. For example, from whom could a school be privatised? The school buildings, chairs and tables 'belonged' to the local Committees on State Property. Could these government agencies simply turn the property over to the highest bidders? If a school was a teaching collective, from whom then should it be privatised? The Ministry of Education? The local government committee on education? The school collective itself? Nor was it clear by whom a school should be privatised: an individual, school collective, or local officials. Can a school be privatised only for educational purposes? What will happen to the teachers who have worked there for many years? Who can give permission for privatisation?

Such questions raise complicated issues; and hasty actions could have effects which are both far-reaching and irreversible. Most observers have recommended caution, and have highlighted the dangers of rushing too fast into a complex arena. The experience in Russia has been somewhat chaotic. This has created major problems not only for the government and the general public, but also for entrepreneurs who wish to operate private schools.

Source: Vaillant 1994; Dmitriyev 1996.

Patterns in Poland and Hungary have in some respects been similar, for governments have also initiated a partial denationalisation process in those countries (Kozakiewicz 1992, pp.212-3). However, in these settings the denationalisation has been more complex than in Mozambique. Because the period of state control had lasted for over 40 years, it was not easy to identify the people and bodies to whom institutions should be handed back. Considerable complexities have also been evident in privatisation of existing institutions in Russia (Box 3).

Shifting Sectoral Balance without Redesignating Existing Institutions

Privatisation in the whole system, by shifting sectoral balance, is more common than transfer of ownership of particular institutions. Table 2 presents data from Tanzania, where over a period of three decades the private sector emerged from near insignificance to a situation in which private secondary schools outnumbered public ones. The table does show that the number of public schools increased dramatically, particularly after the mid-1980s. However, the number of private schools increased even more dramatically.

*Table 2:
Public and Private Secondary Schools in Tanzania, 1963-93*

| | Public Schools | Private Schools | % Private |
|------|----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1963 | 61 | 1 | 1.6 |
| 1966 | 70 | 17 | 19.5 |
| 1969 | 74 | 37 | 33.3 |
| 1972 | 76 | 40 | 34.5 |
| 1975 | 81 | .. | .. |
| 1978 | 84 | 71 | 45.8 |
| 1981 | 83 | 75 | 47.5 |
| 1984 | 85 | 84 | 49.7 |
| 1987 | 103 | 142 | 58.0 |
| 1990 | 152 | 213 | 58.4 |
| 1993 | 177 | 260 | 59.5 |

.. = data not available

Source: Samoff (1990), p.246; Mfangavo (1995), p.1.

Important factors in the Tanzanian case were the policies of President Julius Nyerere and his ruling socialist party, particularly for the decade from 1967 (Buchert 1994; Samoff 1991). In the late 1960s the expansion of the private sector, which had been rapid earlier in the decade, was brought almost to a halt. Private primary schools were nationalised, and private secondary schools severely restricted because they were considered incompatible with the socialist ideology. Even in the public sector, the bulk of the government's resources were devoted to primary education on the grounds that it was important to achieve universal literacy and minimise social inequalities at that level.

However, the combined result of population growth, rapid expansion of primary education, and restriction on the establishment of both public and private secondary schools, was a sharp decline in transition rates from primary to secondary school. Since this caused considerable frustration, the government decided to relax its earlier restrictions on both public and private secondary education. Only not-for-profit organisations such as churches and communities were permitted to sponsor private schools; but the relaxation of restrictions led to opening of private institutions on an unprecedented scale. Socialism has now been abandoned in Tanzania, with the result that there are even fewer official constraints on the private sector.

Among the countries of the former Soviet Union and its satellites, the post-socialist era has brought different patterns (Kuzma 1994; Laporte & Schweitzer 1994). These countries already had substantial secondary education systems with reasonable quality, and the private institutions which have emerged in those countries generally meet differentiated rather than excess demand, particularly serving the new economic elite. The scale of this demand is nothing like that in Tanzania. Even in the former Soviet countries with the most active private sectors, during the mid-1990s private secondary schools formed less than 5 per cent of the total.

Patterns in China are in some ways similar to those in Eastern Europe, though are especially significant because China officially remains a socialist state. Despite retention of this political ideology, marketisation of the economy has been encouraged in China in much the same way as it has in many countries that have abandoned socialism. Private schools have emerged as part of this marketisation, though the sector has considerable internal diversity. While some private schools serve the new urban economic elite, others serve the rural poor. Pepper (1995, p.18.20) explains that the demands of fees and other contributions for public primary schools have placed public education beyond the reach of some households. While some children from such households have dropped out of school altogether, others have been enrolled in low-cost private tutorial schools which are able to operate at lower cost and in turn to charge lower fees.

Table 3 presents statistics on the total size of the private sector in 1994. Private institutions were most numerous at the kindergarten level, reflecting to a large extent a partial withdrawal of the state at that level. The majority of enrolments in these schools were from middle-level or higher income groups. At the primary level it is difficult to determine the balance between institutions serving the rich and the poor, but it seems likely that the latter were more numerous. At the secondary level, by contrast, it is probable that the majority of private schools were elite institutions. Although they comprised less than 1 per cent of the total number of secondary schools, their mere existence was a significant break with China's egalitarian past (Mok & Chan 1995; Wang 1995).

*Table 3:
Number of Schools in the National Education System and Private Sector, China*

| | National System (1993) | Private (1994) |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Kindergarten | 165,197 | 16,990 |
| Elementary | 696,681 | 4,030 |
| Secondary | 96,744 | 851 |
| Tertiary | 1,065 | 815 |

Note: The original source did not indicate whether the figures on the national system included private schools. They clearly did not at the tertiary level, and presumably did not at the other levels.

Source: Official data cited in Pepper (1995), p.18.21.

Increased Government Funding and Support for Private Schools

Sometimes, increased government funding for private schools brings increased controls, and effectively makes those schools part of the public sector. However, in other cases governments are prepared to give public resources to private schools without exerting extensive controls. In these cases, the move could be described as privatisation.

Box 4: School Vouchers in Chile

Until the late 1970s, control of the education system in Chile was highly centralised. In 1980, the national government launched a major decentralisation reform. It included a system of vouchers, through which public money followed students whether they enrolled in municipal or private schools. The scheme aimed to revitalise the education sector by making it more competitive. Less often stated in official documents was a desire by the military government to reduce the power of the teachers' union by undermining existing conditions of service and cutting the proportion of teachers in the public sector.

The scheme gave a major boost to the private sector. The vouchers were worth 100 per cent of the unit cost in public schools. Although only non-fee-charging private schools could join the scheme, revenues from the vouchers provided healthy surpluses. Despite some restrictions on establishment of private institutions, between 1981 and 1986 the number of private schools increased from 1,674 to 2,643. Expansion of the subsidised private sector was chiefly at the expense of the municipal sector. Between 1980 and 1989 the proportion of pupils in subsidised private schools rose from 19 to 35 per cent, while the proportion in municipal schools contracted from 77 to 59 per cent.

As the 1980s progressed, various aspects of the scheme were altered. In particular, the real value of the voucher was cut by almost 40 per cent. Financial deficits in municipal schools were met by municipal governments, but private schools had lost much of their financial attractiveness. Some private schools converted from subsidised to fully-private status, so that they could charge fees.

In 1989 the military regime was replaced by a civilian government. The new authorities retained the basic system, but further reduced government spending. Since 1993, both municipal and subsidised private secondary schools have been permitted to charge fees. They still receive income from vouchers, but on a sliding scale in proportion to their income from fees.

The voucher scheme permitted reduction of unit costs in the education system, though critics point out that learning outputs also declined and therefore that improvements in cost-effectiveness were less than they appeared at first sight. The reform also increased choice. However, information on the characteristics of different schools did not flow easily to parents. Also, only 234 of the 325 municipalities existing in 1993 had subsidised private schools, only 72 had fully private schools, and both types of private school were concentrated in urban areas.

Key factors in the Chilean reform were (i) a setting which did not permit political opposition, and (ii) capacity at both central and municipal levels to make accurate counts of students and impose effective penalties for inaccurate reporting. These two factors are not present everywhere (and the first is not even desirable!). Further research is needed in Chile, but the model would certainly deserve scrutiny by policy makers elsewhere who are considering introduction of voucher schemes.

Sources: Avalos 1995; Espínola 1994; Winkler & Rounds 1993.

Perhaps the most striking example of this form of privatisation has been the system of vouchers through which families can use public resources to pay for places in private schools. Chile is one country in which this model has been adopted (Box 4). Under the system, both municipal (public) and not-for-profit private schools are paid fixed sums for each child enrolled, and parents have considerable choice in the institutions to which they send their children (Castañeda 1986; Espínola 1993). A comparable system operates in the Netherlands, where parents have the right to a free primary and secondary education at any public or religious private school, and where schools are funded by capitation grants on the basis of enrolments. A voucher scheme was also launched in Colombia in 1991 (Montenegro 1995), and various experiments are being conducted in the USA (Hakim et al. 1994).

Increased Private Financing and/or Control of Government Schools

This form of privatisation is probably the most common of all. In many countries, parents and communities have been asked to provide increasing proportions of school finance. In Togo, for example, economic crisis required the government in 1982 to freeze appointments of teachers on civil service terms. Staffing gaps were partly bridged by recruitment of 'auxiliaries', many of whom were locally employed by parents' associations and similar bodies. By 1995, auxiliaries formed 85 per cent of teachers at the lower secondary level, and 55 per cent at the upper secondary level (Togo 1995, p.3). Likewise, in Uganda about 70 per cent of costs of public secondary schools are met by parents and other private sources (Cumming et al. 1995, p.6-1). Comparable developments have been evident in such countries as Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Mongolia, Nigeria and Vietnam (Bray 1994b, 1996). However, a distinction should be made between financial contributions and control over the operation of schools. In many settings, parents and communities simply pay fees and make other contributions as a sort of tax, and have little control over the educational process.

In other settings, governments have given parents and communities stronger control without necessarily demanding increased financial contributions. Reforms in parts of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and the USA come to mind under this heading (Anderson 1994; Bush et al. 1993; Levačić 1993a; Mitchell et al. 1993). Through Boards of Governors and similar bodies, parents and other community members can decide how to spend school budgets. In some systems, Boards of Governors can also control curricula and staffing. School principals and their sponsoring bodies may also be required to compete more actively with other schools for both pupils and financial resources. This is a form of privatisation within the public sector.

Also fitting in this category of privatisation are initiatives in Latin America in which some government schools have been placed under the management of non-government organisations. In parts of Peru, for example, church bodies which have been keen to operate schools have been permitted to take over management of existing government schools rather than construct independent institutions. Parallel initiatives have been undertaken in parts of Bolivia.

Outcomes and Issues Arising from Privatisation

The principal outcomes and issues arising from privatisation will here be considered under five headings. They are efficiency, accountability, diversity, access and equity.

Efficiency

Efficiency has been a focal point of policy debates about privatisation of education in both industrialised and less developed countries. Most of the evidence indicates that private schools are more efficient than public ones, but more research is needed before statements can be completely firm.

In the developing world, important research on this topic has been conducted by Jimenez and colleagues on Colombia, Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Tanzania and Thailand, (Cox & Jimenez 1991; Jimenez et al. 1988; Jimenez et al. 1991; Lockheed & Jimenez 1994). The findings of these studies, which focused on selected core academic subjects in secondary education, are summarised in Table 4. The researchers took care to control for the home background of students and for other effects, though the studies excluded household and other non-institutional inputs, such as supplementary books, additional tutoring, and endowments. These inputs may be particularly high for private schools, and could therefore be important to the comparison. On the data that were available, however, the studies suggested that private schools generally achieved better results at lower costs, and as such were more cost-effective than public schools.

*Table 4:
Cost-Effectiveness of Private Secondary Schools, Selected Countries, Early 1980s*

| | Indicator of achievement | Ratio of private to public cost | Relative advantage* | Ratio of relative cost to effectiveness |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Colombia | average mathematics and verbal | 0.69 | 1.13 | 0.61 |
| Dominican Republic | mathematics O-Type** | 0.65 | 1.31 | 0.50 |
| | mathematics F-Type** | 1.46 | 1.47 | 0.99 |
| Philippines | Mathematics | 0.83 | 1.00 | 0.83 |
| | English | 0.83 | 1.18 | 0.70 |
| | Filipino | 0.83 | 1.02 | 0.81 |
| Tanzania | average mathematics and verbal | 0.69 | 1.16 | 0.59 |
| Thailand | mathematics | 0.39 | 2.63 | 0.17 |

* Proportional gain in achievement score if a randomly selected student, with the characteristics of the average public school student, attends a private rather than public school, holding constant that student's background.

** F-type schools are authorised to give Ministry of Education examinations. O-type schools are not so authorised.

Source: Lockheed & Jimenez (1994), pp.7, 9.

However, one study in India seemed to contradict these findings. It focused on primary school mathematics and reading in Tamil Nadu state, and indicated that fully-private schools were the least cost-effective. Government-aided schools were the most cost-effective, and fully-government schools were intermediate (Bashir 1994, p.264). In contrast, another Indian study, on both primary and secondary schools in Uttar Pradesh state, produced findings more in line with those of Jimenez and colleagues. The magnitude of findings diverged considerably for junior and senior secondary schools; but in both types of institution private unaided schools were shown to be considerably more cost-effective than aided and government schools (Kingdon 1994, p.233).

To explain the differences in effectiveness, most authors highlight the importance of management practices. Lockheed & Jimenez (1994, p.15), for example, showed that headteachers in private schools generally have more control over school-level decisions able to affect student achievement. This includes selection of teachers, adaptation of the curriculum, improvement of instructional practice, and choice of textbooks. To identify cost factors, Lockheed and Jimenez conducted a small follow-up survey to their main research, in which they paired elite and non-elite private and public schools in each of the countries. This survey did not show dramatic differences in the resources and physical facilities in the pairs of schools; but it appeared that the private schools used these inputs more cost-effectively.

Several studies have also observed that private schools are less constrained by the conditions of service and accompanying salaries that are mandatory in the public service. In India, for example, many private schools hire teachers with lower qualifications who are less costly but not necessarily less effective than their counterparts in the public schools (Kingdon 1994, p.175). Cost-saving patterns are also evident in Japan, where many private schools employ (i) teachers who have retired from the public sector, (ii) women who have been unable to secure career-track positions in large companies or the civil service, and (iii) part-time staff (James & Benjamin 1988, p.101).

However, while the research seems on balance to show that private schools are more cost-effective than public ones, most researchers still underline the need for caution. Riddell (1993), following careful review of the work not only by Jimenez and colleagues but also by other researchers, stressed (p.384) that "there is no overwhelming conclusion regarding the [cost-effectiveness] advantages of private schools over public schools, notwithstanding statements to the contrary". A similar comment has been made by Anderson (1994, p.4827) with reference to industrialised countries. More research on this topic is needed before firm statements can be made.

Moreover, as noted by Lockheed & Jimenez (1994, p.18), the fact that particular samples of private schools might appear more efficient than comparable samples of public schools is not necessarily in itself a strong argument for privatisation. First, full-scale privatisation would by definition remove some of the advantages which the private schools currently exploit: for example, there would not be enough retired teachers and people seeking part-time jobs for every school to gain efficiencies to the extent that was previously demonstrated when only a few institutions were seeking such personnel. Second, some management practices can be improved within the public sector: headteachers can be given greater freedom to manage resources and adapt curricula, without their schools necessarily being privatised.

It is also important to address the argument that the existence of private schools helps to improve the efficiency of public institutions. Presenting this argument in one country, a 1993 World Bank report (pp.193-4) has stated that:

A mixed system of government and private schools will not only reduce the financial burden on public resources, thereby freeing up the education budget to address teacher salary shortfalls, maintenance needs, and other operational improvements, but it will also improve the productivity and quality of public education, as government schools compete with private schools.

However, such an outcome is far from generalisable or certain. Much depends on whether private and public schools really do compete, and on the ways in which managers of public schools respond to such competition. In most settings, private and public schools serve different markets. Elite private schools do not compete even with ordinary public schools, because most people cannot afford the fees; alternative-curriculum private schools do not compete with mainstream-curriculum public schools, because most people do not want the alternative curriculum; and second-chance private schools do not compete with the public sector, because the students in those private schools would rather be in public ones. Private and public schools only really compete when they operate in the same market and seek the same types of student. This does occur in Chile, where municipal schools compete with private ones for students and their vouchers, and where the municipal schools close if they do not have enough pupils. It also happens to some extent in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, where schools have been forced to compete even within the public sector. However, these are far from general cases.

Accountability

The arguments about accountability chiefly rest on the suppositions that (i) when parents pay for schooling, they are more likely to demand satisfactory performance from the principals and teachers, and (ii) in turn the principals and teachers will be more disposed to listen to the views of parents when they know that those parents could withdraw their custom if not satisfied.

This seems a reasonable pair of suppositions, and there is evidence for its validity in various settings. Accountability is particularly visible in elite private schools, the clients of which are generally well-educated and articulate. Schools attached to local churches or community organisations may also give parents and others a strong voice in policy matters. Researching issues in the Netherlands, James (1989, p.231) found that many people believed private schools to be more personal and responsive to consumer wishes, as well as being more careful about how they spent their funds.

However, not all private schools are responsive to parents and communities. Even village self-help schools sometimes suffer from domination by subsections of the population. This has been highlighted in Uganda by Opolot (1994, pp.112-3), and that setting is far from unique. Thus it is not always the case that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. As noted above, parents and communities in many societies simply find that they have to pay fees in lieu of taxation, and have very little control over the functioning of the institutions.

Diversity

Elite schools often attract clients by offering curricula which emphasise sports, music and art as well as academic subjects. This can of course happen in public as well as in private schools, though it is often more obvious in the private sector. Similar comments apply to schools which offer alternative curricula: there is no fundamental reason why such schools cannot exist in the public sector, but they tend to be more common in the private sector. In Malaysia, for example, a group of Chinese Independent Schools offers a curriculum which meets national requirements but which also incorporates

study of the Chinese language, history and culture. Comparable private schools serving ethnic and racial minorities may be found in many countries. Likewise, it is easy to find private schools serving religious groups. In Papua New Guinea, for instance, private schools outside the mainstream system are run by Seventh Day Adventists; in Indonesia, Pakistan and Nigeria, private schools serve various Islamic groups; and schools are operated by various Roman Catholic orders in countries as far apart as Brazil, Tanzania and the Philippines. Yet other private schools serve different language groups. In Hong Kong, for example, private schools have been established to operate in Mandarin-Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German and French.

In these instances, diversity is self-evident. The chief policy questions for the governments concern the extent to which they wish to tolerate and support such diversity. Some governments consider diversity in private schools desirable not only for populations with different cultural and other characteristics but also as a way to identify good pedagogical practices which can later be introduced to state schools. The Polish government, for example, has suggested that private schools can "play the role of the 'social laboratory', finding new didactic, financial and curriculum solutions to problems before they are introduced into the state education system" (Kozakiewicz 1992, p.212). A similar statement was made by the Chilean government when it introduced the voucher scheme (Espínola 1994, p.11). However, other governments have found diversity threatening, and have restricted or prohibited private schools in the name of national unity. At various points in history, private schools have been prohibited in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Zaire, for example, and also in most socialist states. Many governments are now more tolerant of diversity, but this tolerance is not universal.

Compared with elite and alternative-curriculum private schools, second-chance private schools are less likely to promote diversity. Indeed, since in many cases these schools are launched by communities in the hope that the institutions will be taken over by the government, the tendency is for the self-help schools to mirror government ones as closely as possible. Sometimes, governments even make close copying a condition for take-over, and set standards on curriculum, buildings and teacher qualifications which must be followed before take-over will be considered. This has been the case in Nigeria and Botswana, for example (Okoye 1986, Swartland & Taylor 1988). Once again, therefore, the matter of diversity strongly depends on the type of private school under consideration.

Access

Where private schooling merely substitutes for public schooling, leaving the total number of places constant, at least in macro terms the private sector cannot be said to expand access (though of course there may be improved local access if schools are closer to the homes of particular children). However, in many settings the private sector expands the total number of places. This is particularly obvious in the case of second-chance institutions. In Kenya, for example, expansion of self-help secondary schooling raised the probability of children of uneducated parents going to school from 0.21 in 1960 to 0.73 in 1975 (Knight & Sabot 1990, p.34). While the figures may be different, the same sort of picture applies to Myanmar and Nepal (Gibson 1992; World Bank 1994). In Hong Kong, the dramatic increase in private schools during the 1960s and 1970s was through entrepreneurial activity rather than community self-help, but the effects of expanded access were the same (Bray 1995; Tam 1994).

The catch, however, is that second-chance private schools are often of poor quality. They certainly expand access; but it is expanded access to education of a questionable type. Cowan (1990), who is among the ardent advocates of privatisation, is quite wrong to state (p.83) that the scholastic level of Kenya's self-help secondary schools "appears

to be on a par with government-operated secondary schools". On the contrary, the fact that self-help schools have been greatly inferior to government schools has been widely known both from casual observation and more careful empirical demonstration (Knight & Sabot 1990; Wellings 1983). The problems have been both that self-help schools could only recruit pupils rejected by government institutions, and that the self-help schools could not afford comparable facilities and teachers. In 1982, 87.3 per cent of unaided self-help secondary school teachers were untrained, compared with just 15.4 per cent of those in government schools. Furthermore, some self-help schools employed teachers who themselves had only secondary school qualifications. With such deficiencies, it is not surprising that self-help schools performed poorly. In the 1984, only 17 self-help institutions were among the top 300 schools as measured by results of the Kenya Certificate of Education, and 246 of the 337 institutions at the bottom of the ranking were self-help schools (Lillis & Ayot 1988, pp.125-7). For such reasons, the government of Kenya has long been highly ambivalent about the sector. During the 1970s and 1980s it made various attempts to prevent proliferation of self-help schools (Anderson 1973; Ngau 1987), though later decided instead to exercise control by taking over the institutions.

Although the quality issue has been particularly stark in Kenya, it has by no means been unique to that country. In Nepal, for example, only 24.2 per cent of candidates from unaided community secondary schools passed the school leaving examination in 1992. This compared with 29.0 per cent from government-aided secondary schools, and 81.1 per cent from elite private schools (World Bank 1994, p.15). The figure for unaided community secondary schools was particularly striking since presumably a large number of students had been weeded out before they even got as far as the examination.

Finally, where the status of existing institutions is changed from public to private, policy-makers must watch for the impact not only on pupils currently enrolled in the schools but also on children who would have gone to those schools had the schools still been in the public sector but who now will be excluded by the fees, sectarian orientation or other factors. This requires careful attention to school mapping, and commonly raises complex questions not only about geographic access to alternative institutions but also about the quality of those alternatives.

Equity

Issues of equity are perhaps the greatest tension associated with private schooling. The most important dimension is socio-economic, but other important dimensions concern rural/urban and gender disparities.

Commencing with the socio-economic dimension and with elite schools, it is obvious that access to elite private institutions is controlled by ability to pay the fees. Moreover, in so far as elite private schools may 'steal' the best teachers from the public sector, development of such institutions actually depresses the performance of the mainstream. Some elite private schools offer scholarships to students from families who would be unable to pay the fees, but this rarely more than a minor concession (see e.g. World Bank 1994, p.41). It was chiefly for reasons of equity that the majority of socialist regimes prohibited private schooling. Those regimes recognised that private schools perpetuated social inequalities even across generations.

Second-chance private schools may increase access, but also perpetuate inequalities. These schools are mainly populated by children of middle and lower-middle income groups who have not been able to get into government or elite private schools but whose families have enough money to finance a second chance. The ability to pay the fees helps these families to retain a higher socio-economic status than the poorest groups

in society. The most problematic situations are ones in which poor families contribute to private community secondary schools, only to find that those schools are filled by the children of the middle classes and the rich. This problem has been noted in Tanzania by Galabawa (1994, p.31), and has also been a feature in Kenya (Bray 1994b, p.14).

However, one point made evident by Figure 1, at the beginning of this study, is that public schools are not necessarily more equitable than private ones (see also James 1989, p.229). Although schools in the public sector do not use fees as the principal gatekeeping mechanism, they often have other selection devices. When differentiation and selectivity are permitted in the public schools, families with greater income and taste for education usually have access to the top public schools, and therefore satisfy their preferences within the public system. Barriers to the poor are less obvious, and also perhaps less obstructive; but they are nevertheless there. The irony is that elite private schools only emerge with vigour when the public schools are homogenised.

On the rural/urban dimension, the fact that many elite private schools have boarding facilities means that the location of those schools can be different from the location of pupils' home residences, and the schools do not necessarily have a strong urban bias. Concerning day schools, however, even casual observation indicates that in most countries private schools are more common in urban than in rural areas. This is partly because prosperous families are more likely to reside in urban and peri-urban areas, but even more because private schools, which usually recruit only small proportions out of populations of given sizes, require concentrations of people in order to recruit enough pupils to be viable. Table 5 presents some figures on the rural/urban distribution of schools in India's Madhya Pradesh State. Since private day schools are concentrated in urban areas, residents in those areas have more opportunities than their counterparts in rural ones (see also Winkler & Rounds 1993, p.3; Reddy 1994, p.60; World Bank 1994, p.42).

*Table 5:
Number of Schools by Rural/Urban Location, Madhya Pradesh State, India, 1986*

| | All Schools | Private Aided | Private -Unaided | Total Private | % of Total which are Private |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Primary</i> | | | | | |
| Rural | 57,745 | 769 | 489 | 1,258 | 2.2 |
| Urban | 6,344 | 413 | 1,807 | 2,220 | 35.0 |
| <i>Middle</i> | | | | | |
| Rural | 9,690 | 148 | 300 | 448 | 4.6 |
| Urban | 3,002 | 228 | 1,118 | 1,346 | 44.8 |
| <i>Secondary</i> | | | | | |
| Rural | 1,097 | 63 | 40 | 103 | 9.4 |
| Urban | 508 | 102 | 135 | 237 | 46.6 |
| <i>Higher Secondary</i> | | | | | |
| Rural | 795 | 66 | 40 | 106 | 13.3 |
| Urban | 1,016 | 192 | 112 | 304 | 29.9 |

Source: Mahajan et al. (1994), p. 95.

Gender dimensions of inequality may also be problematic, though have received little attention in the literature and require more research. One hypothesis might be that types of family able to afford the fees for elite private schools, because of their higher socio-economic levels, treat boys and girls evenly when deciding whether to enrol their children in such schools. However, this hypothesis would need to be tested. Concerning second-chance private schools, some data are available from Tanzania. In that country, the public secondary schools have a strong gender bias with an enrolment ratio of approximately 70 males to 30 females. In the private sector, by contrast, enrolments are much more balanced (Galabawa 1994, p.33). This implies that the private schools have greatly helped improve females' access to secondary education. While this seems a positive development, however, girls remain disadvantaged in the education system as a whole, especially since the private schools demand high fees and are generally inferior in quality. Further research on this matter is needed with reference to other countries.

Implications for Government Policies

This review of patterns and strategies has shown that privatisation, and the issues associated with it, is much more complex than is widely assumed. This complexity, together with the fact that the circumstances facing individual governments vary widely, precludes identification of detailed policy implications which are universally recognisable. However, it is possible to set out a few implications which have broad applicability. For example, all policy makers need to classify their existing schools with care, define the precise ways in which they are using terms, and identify specific goals. These points are elaborated upon below, prior to identification of particular strategies that will assist specific types of privatisation.

Classifying Schools, Defining Terms, and Identifying Goals

An earlier section of this study pointed out that systems which at first sight appear to be private on closer scrutiny sometimes seem more like public systems, and vice versa. One of the first tasks for policy makers, therefore, is careful classification of schools in their own systems. Such classification should be based on observation of realities rather than reliance on traditional and potentially misleading labels. Following this, policy-makers will need to define precisely which type of privatisation they have in mind. A helpful starting point for classification could be the matrix presented in Figure 1, which distinguished on the one hand between elite, ordinary, second-chance and supplementary schools, and on the other hand between mainstream and alternative-curriculum institutions. Policy makers must also realise that private schools are not necessarily commercial enterprises; but that in some countries even officially not-for-profit schools may make healthy financial surpluses for their sponsors. Together with these points, it is worth repeating, should come recognition that while many private schools are of superior quality to public schools, this is not necessarily the case. Indeed in many countries the majority of private secondary schools are markedly inferior to public ones.

The next step is to identify priority goals:

- Is the chief goal *to extend access*, even at the expense of quality? If so, then private second-chance schools may be encouraged.
- Is the chief goal *to give parents choice*? If so, then for some settings the answer may lie in encouragement of elite and alternative-curriculum private schools, and for other settings the answer may lie in a system of vouchers.

- Is the chief goal *to reduce the government budget*? If so, it might be desirable to transfer ownership of government schools to private entrepreneurs and voluntary agencies, and/or to demand fees and other contributions in government schools.
- Is the chief goal *to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness*? If so, mechanisms and incentives should be introduced for public schools to save money while maintaining quality, and perhaps for schools to compete with each other for pupils. One major incentive would be permission for schools to retain savings from one financial year for use in subsequent financial years.

This list could be extended. In some contexts goals have little to do with education in itself, but instead arise from broader political rivalries in which education is the arena for battle. Some privatisation schemes, for example, aim to reduce the power to teachers' unions. Others aim to fulfil election pledges that have less to do with rational appraisal of alternative policies than with the promises of individual politicians and desires to undercut rivals.

Also deserving recall is that much privatisation is unplanned. This is particularly true of supplementary private schools, especially where these institutions shadow the public system and provide tuition in the same subjects as mainstream schools. Most governments prefer to leave supplementary private schools to flourish or die without official intervention. If anything, the scale of private tutoring causes official embarrassment in so far as it reflects shortcomings in the public system and can be a heavy burden on household incomes. Thus, few governments are prepared actively to encourage such institutions.

Returning to the domain of more active intervention, the main point is that before the tools for achievement of goals can be selected, the nature of those goals must be made clear. Privatisation is in fact not a single tool: it is a bag of tools, each of which has a slightly different shape to accomplish a slightly different task. In some settings, none of these tools is useful, and privatisation is in fact not desirable at all.

Finally, policy-makers must recognise that multiple goals are not necessarily harmonious. Efficiency may improve, but only at the expense of quality. Choice may increase, but only at the expense of equity. Budgets may be cut, but only at the expense of reduced government control. Rarely is it possible to achieve all goals in a straightforward way.

Privatisation of Existing Institutions

From these contextual comments, it is appropriate to move to discussion of specific tools in the tool bag. The Singaporean model has been cited as a prominent example of privatisation of existing institutions, and deserves further analysis. Under the Independent Schools Scheme, the government of Singapore first set up the framework and then invited applications from existing schools. A vetting body was established within the Ministry of Education, and applications were either granted or denied according to pre-determined criteria.

However, selection following application is not the only possible strategy. The 12 Autonomous Schools created in Singapore in 1994 and 1995 were identified centrally by the Ministry, and were privatised by government directive rather than by the institutions volunteering themselves. Such a strategy has the benefit of greater certainty. In 1988 the Hong Kong government decided to launch a Direct Subsidy Scheme which was similar to

Singapore's Independent Schools Scheme but which, at least in its early years, was unsuccessful as an instrument of privatisation (Box 5).

Denationalisation of schools, as in Mozambique, Poland and Hungary, demands rather different procedures. In this situation, policy-makers have to determine which schools are eligible for denationalisation and on what grounds. Questions of compensation may be involved, and it is necessary to identify the precise bodies and/or individuals to whom the ownership will be transferred.

Box 5: A (So-Far) Unsuccessful Privatisation Initiative – Hong Kong

In 1988, Hong Kong's Education Commission recommended the introduction of a Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS). The concept of the DSS, as set out in the report (Hong Kong 1988, p.55), was "of a scheme under which the Government can subsidize and encourage the growth of a strong private sector, while allowing schools the maximum freedom with regard to curricula, fees and entrance requirements that is consistent with basic educational standards". The DSS was widely publicised as a mechanism for aided (public sector) secondary schools to become private while still receiving substantial government support. The government accepted the recommendation, and the scheme was launched in 1991. Schools were given grants on a sliding scale according to their income from fees.

The DSS got off to an uncertain start, and at first no aided school applied to join the scheme. Incentives were then made more attractive, and in 1992 one prestigious aided school did apply. However, political forces having nothing to do with the DSS disrupted the approval of this application (Tan 1993b, p.90), and it was shelved. No other aided schools were willing to take the risks of becoming private in the uncertain political climate as Hong Kong approached reunification with China in 1997.

Other schools did join the scheme; but they were ones which had already been private. As of 1995, the DSS incorporated 13 such schools, which had decided to sacrifice some of their autonomy in order to gain government grants.

The irony, therefore, is that the Direct Subsidy Scheme, at least up to 1995, had become a vehicle for publicisation rather than privatisation. The architects of the scheme had misjudged the impact of the political climate, and even after making the incentives more attractive had been unable to attract public-sector schools to join. More directive tactics could have been tried, as in Singapore's Autonomous Schools initiative; but the Hong Kong government did not wish to take such an authoritarian stance. Of course the future political climate may become more favourable to the DSS. So far, however, it has not been successful as a privatisation initiative.

Encouraging Parallel Private Schools

This type of privatisation is in many respects easier. It can be achieved simply by allowing new private institutions to open or expand alongside existing public ones.

In this domain, different policies are needed for schools which are run as commercial enterprises, and also for alternative-curriculum schools, compared with community self-help initiatives. Most agencies and individuals considering establishment of for-profit and alternative-curriculum schools first ask whether their institutions are likely to be permitted

to operate for the foreseeable future. Where government policy appears unstable, such potential sponsors of private schools are usually very cautious. One basic requirement, therefore, is for the government to demonstrate convincingly that policies which permit operation of private institutions will be sustained.

In contrast, communities and other bodies which operate second-chance private schools, far from wishing to protect their independence, may be more anxious for signs that the government will take over the institutions. In such cases, communities may be encouraged to launch schools and to bear the burden for a few years in the expectation that the government will in due course relieve them of that burden.

Going beyond basic permission to operate private schools, governments can offer more positive incentives to all types of institution. Voucher systems have been mentioned several times in this study, and might deserve serious consideration in some settings. Alternative incentives might include low-interest loans, technical advice, land grants, free or subsidised textbooks, and exemption from taxation. In some settings, private schools are permitted to rent the facilities of government schools, operating either in parallel or at the times when the government schools are not in session. And in many countries, governments provide grants of various kinds for teachers and equipment.

Noting that demand for private schooling is to some extent conditioned by the price of the alternative, governments may also wish to review policies on fees in the public system. Chile, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zimbabwe are among countries in which governments have introduced fees in public secondary schools since the mid-1980s.

Governments may also help private institutions by providing information about them to parents. Such information, for the general public, would include the locations of individual schools, characteristics of curricula, scale of charges, quality of instruction, and nature of facilities.

Also, governments may monitor and regulate private schools. While monitoring and regulation might seem against the spirit of free enterprise, in some circumstances it might benefit the private sector because it could enhance public confidence. Regulation may be on the nature of facilities (e.g. to ensure that there are adequate laboratories, and that buildings meet safety standards), and on aspects of the curriculum (e.g. to ensure that essential subjects are covered).

Finally, governments can encourage growth of parallel private schools by restricting the supply of public schools. This has been the situation in Tanzania, where, as noted, many private schools exist because of excess demand. Such a situation is not always to be recommended; but limitation in the supply of public-sector places is in fact one of the most powerful stimuli to private sector activities.

Privatisation within Public Schools

One of the most dramatic forms of privatisation within the public system has been the scheme for Local Management of Schools (LMS), launched in England in 1988 (Levačić 1993a, 1993b; Wallace 1992). Under the LMS, schools are funded according to their enrolments, and are required to compete with each other for pupils. The scheme was designed to make popular schools rich, and unpopular schools non-viable. The LMS was introduced in a broader climate of financial stringency which had already required many schools to seek forms of private sponsorship and to enter the market place in a way which radically contrasted with existing traditions (Pring 1988).

The full effects of the LMS cannot yet be assessed, but several broad observations may have international relevance. While school authorities have become much more conscious of the ways in which they use money, which has in turn increased efficiency, they are also under greater strain. Headteachers spend considerably more time managing resources, with consequent loss of time for the curriculum and other matters of pedagogy. Also, in the new competitive environment some schools have become less tolerant of disruptive pupils. This is especially problematic in a society which insists on compulsory schooling.

The LMS was introduced by a Conservative government in a climate which sought to reduce the power of teachers' unions. Teachers' workloads have generally increased under the LMS, and one way in which schools have saved money has been by terminating employment of more-experienced staff in order to employ younger teachers who are less expensive. Many schools also employ more part-time staff than used to be the case; and Local Education Authorities have found that they can no longer force schools to take on staff whom they wish to redeploy because of rationalisation in other parts of the system.

Another type of privatisation within the public system, mentioned above, has been the handing over of government schools to be managed by churches and other non-government organisations, as in Peru and Bolivia. This is a rather different type of policy, but also has major political as well as educational implications. While the change might improve the management of the institutions, it could discourage enrolment of pupils who are not members of the churches and other organisations made responsible for the schools. The policy also has broader implications for the role of such bodies in national affairs.

Conclusions

Privatisation is undoubtedly a global trend, not only in the economic sphere but also in social sectors including education. Movements are not solely in one direction, but the overall centre of gravity has shifted in the direction of increased private ownership, financing and control of schools.

The main impetus for privatisation is somewhat different in industrialised and less developed countries. This study has stressed the importance (i) of distinguishing between elite, ordinary, second-chance and supplementary schools, and (ii) of noting that schools may have mainstream or alternative curricula. The second-chance private schools are chiefly found in less developed countries, where government resources are inadequate to meet all demand. However, the other types of private school may be found in both industrialised and less developed countries.

In all types of economy, privatisation may be advocated as a way to alleviate pressure on government budgets. Other factors in the impetus for privatisation include greater emphasis on pluralism and public choice, and a view that private schools may be more cost-effective. However, some advocates of privatisation overstate their case. Cowan, for example, who included education in a multi-sector analysis, has asserted (1990, p.103) that privatisation is central to freeing less developed countries from the economic disasters so many experienced in 1980s, and that:

It can help to rejuvenate the tarnished dream of national development through industrialization that was the goal of so many of the early nationalist leaders of Asia and Africa. At the same time it can help to realize the new dream of individual

independence in a modern society that is becoming the goal of the current generation in the developing world.

Such statements arguably do more harm than good. They oversimplify the subject, and make promises which cannot be reliably delivered. The experiences of the 1990s, both in longstanding capitalist countries and in former socialist ones, have shown that privatisation is much more complex than had been widely assumed in the 1980s, and that it has had some unpredicted outcomes.

Education is perhaps even more complex than other sectors, because schools are not usually seen as enterprises which should aim primarily to make profits, and since, indeed, many operators of private schools do not even aim to make profits. Research does seem to indicate that private schools are generally more cost-effective than public ones; but insufficient evidence has been accumulated to be totally certain of that point. In any case, even if true, it is not necessarily a strong argument for privatisation, first because statements about private schools might not remain valid if all public schools were privatised, second because many of the effective management practices of private schools can be emulated by public schools without actually privatising them, and third because schools have many other roles which may outweigh considerations of cost-effectiveness.

This paper has also highlighted many problems of equity in education systems. These problems arise from the existence and operation not only of elite private schools but also second-chance, supplementary and even alternative-curriculum ones. Partly because of these problems, no government is currently aiming at complete privatisation of every school in the country; and in most schemes for deliberate privatisation, governments still reserve significant powers of control and regulation.

Finally, it must again be stressed that privatisation is not a panacea. Governments need to balance many factors, and in most settings the most appropriate model combines elements of private operation with elements of public operation. Because each society is different, it is impossible to commend a single model which is universally desirable. However, one of the merits of comparative study of education systems is that it highlights some of the advantages and disadvantages of different models, and generates ideas which can be used in the creation of specific models for particular countries.

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