



Note
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What the Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8 has to say on non-governmental schools

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The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report is an assessment of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal on education (SDG4) and it enables to observe the main global trends and challenges concerning the right to education. On this short note we'll focus on the parts of the report concerning the involvement of non-governmental sector on the realization of the right to education.

The report recognizes that school competition and school choice policies have gained popularity, and the trend is positive (Plank and Sykes, 2003; Verger et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the report warns that the increasing involvement of new actors has not easily translated into more effective and equitable schools. To solve this challenge the GEM points mainly to the importance of a good legal framework in order school competition benefits the whole population.

According to the GEM not all the States have the same level of regulation, and neither the regulation of public and private schools is always equivalent (91.5% of systems had regulations for public schools, 84.5% for private schools). On certain cases, the lack of regulation has a negative impact of the enjoyment of the right to education. For instance, less than the 50% of education systems regulate the maximum pupil/teacher ratio, which in certain cases can have problematic consequences.

On this very line, the second problem that educational systems are facing is the school inspection, whose success depends on the objectives, the capacity and

the resources of the State. The document warns about the importance of properly design the inspection processes. A poor design can lead to unintended consequences, such us discouraging new teaching methods and narrowing curriculum and instructional strategies. One of the problems of inspections, especially in developing countries concerns the lack of resources and capacity constraints. Inspectorates in poorer countries tend to focus on inspecting material inputs instead of process of learning or quality of teaching, do not leading to any school improvement. Another new challenge of school inspections is the rapidly expanding and diversifying systems. On this regard the report warns about the growth of the low-fee private schools, which in addition are even unregistered.

One of the challenges of school competition is the availability of information for ensuring that all the citizens can benefit from school choice and that no kid is left behind. Nevertheless, even when information is not enough, it can help families to choose the school. On this regard, the GEM points to a good practice of North Carolina (USA) where the provision of test score information proved to help low income parents to make informed choices and improve their scores (Hastings and Weinstein, 2008). The provision of information has two challenges. One concerns that in many countries the schools that do not disseminate their information do not have any consequences. Secondly, that in many cases, certain parents do not know how to use information.

Another challenge pointed by the GEM is that school choice systems are not always accompanied by the provision of public funding to avoid school fees, which causes that only wealthy families can benefit. *“When education is not free, financial constraints can affect the ability to choose schools. School vouchers offer funds to families to help them overcome these constraints to choose schools more freely and therefore foster competition among schools”*. Although the voucher system can have adverse effects, there are also good experiences. For instance, the GEM indicates that in New York City among low income recipients vouchers have had a significant positive impact on college enrolment and degree attainment by minority students (Chingos and Peterson, 2015).

Concerning school choice the document makes reference to the test-based accountability to motivate schools as something that is highly debated. One of the reasons of the dispute is that the results of these schools depend on factors outside the school control, such as natural ability, socio-economic background, parental involvement and after school tutoring. Nevertheless, these tests can be a good instrument to know which schools require more funding to properly realize the right to education.

Later, in chapter 7, the report mentions how the private sector spending and investment is increasing. On this regard spending on both private tutoring and education technology is expected to exceed US\$200 billion in the next time. The report warns about the importance to have a stricter regulation of private sector to ensure that profitability does not trump equity and quality. For instance, private tutoring paid out of pocket widens the education advantage gap between haves and have-nots. Also, there can be conflict of interests when a teacher serves as a private tutor to his students after school. Another two areas that need to be more regulated are the use of educational technology and the daily school meals to ensure equal access.

One lesson we can draw from the GEM report is that school choice policies require three condition to guarantee that the whole population can benefit from it: it must be framed in a good legal framework where the obligations of both the state and the non-governmental schools are clear, it requires of public funding and the provision of well selected information in order parents can make a good choice.

*This document can be downloaded in UNESCO website, in publications section.