

A Comparative Analysis of Equity in Public and Private Schools in the United States and the Global South

Meher Irani, Dr. Wajeeha Bajwa



ABSTRACT

The goal of this project was to conduct a comparative analysis of equity in public and private schools in the United States and the Global South. Understanding these effects is needed for shaping education policies that promote equitable opportunities for all students in the United States and the Global South. The database I used elicited articles on the themes of student performance variations in private schools compared to public schools. I also found articles on different policies framing student performance and different policies. By analyzing this data, the research aims to identify a pattern in educational equity and the implications of privatization. In the Global South, privatization provides few chances for certain underprivileged groups while also escalating systemic injustices, but in the United States, it tends to deepen socioeconomic divides. These results highlight the necessity of well-rounded educational policies making sure that privatization enhances rather than detracts from public education systems.

BACKGROUND

Education systems vary globally, with public schools dominant in the U.S., while private schools play a significant role in the Global South due to public sector limitations. Private education offers alternatives but raises equity concerns, often benefiting wealthier families while low-fee schools serve marginalized groups, highlighting disparities in access and quality.

METHODS

- This study employs qualitative secondary data analysis through a systematic literature review to examine equity in public and private schools in the United States and the Global South.
- Over 3,500 search results were elicited in the EBSCO database. I then selected peer-reviewed articles on student performance, education policies, and privatization's impact on the educational sector of schools.
- The reviewed articles utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys, data analysis, and participatory research.
- A thematic analysis was used to categorize findings and compare trends across regions. The research identifies patterns in educational equity and policy implications.
- While this method ensures a broad analysis, limitations include publication bias and regional policy differences, requiring careful interpretation of findings.



Image showing a classroom inside a United States charter school
<https://nextstepsblog.org/2023/06/classical-charter-school-enrollment-skyrockets-in-texas/>



Image showing a classroom inside a private school in India.
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/private-school-teachers-india-grapple-low-salaries-mounting-saini-y0nue/>

RESULTS

The findings suggest that privatization often increases educational inequality. In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, low-fee private schools widen access gaps, favoring wealthier students. In the U.S., results are mixed, with some benefits but also segregation. A balanced approach is needed to ensure equitable education for all students.

Place	Category	Finding	Article
United States	Negative	Achievement disparities by race, gender, and socioeconomic status emerge at graduation.	Harris, M.Marcucci, 2021
Sub-Saharan Africa	Negative	Gender inequality harms education: public spending helps lower, hurts higher levels.	Mbodji, 2024
Sub-Saharan Africa	Mixed/Neutral	Public education spending improves gender equality, while remittances and population growth hinder it.	Mbodji, 2023
Sub-Saharan Africa	Negative	Nigerian parents prefer private schools due to government school while also highlighting concerns about equity and financial strain.	Harma, 2013
South Asia	Mixed/Neutral	The article highlights the rise of private schools, noting regional disparities and implications for equity and inclusion.	R. Sethunath, 2021
South Asia	Positive	Private school growth in India hasn't improved rural enrollment equity.	Chudgar, Creed, 2016
South Asia	Mixed/Neutral	India's RTE Act enables inclusion but reinforces stigmatizing student labels.	Lafleur, Srivastava, 2019
South Asia	Negative	Private schooling grows but equity gaps persist, requiring regulation and reforms.	Woodhead, Frost, James, 2013
South Asia	Mixed/Neutral	Private funding improves efficiency but raises concerns about financial equity.	Sakamoto, 2022

REFERENCES

