

Article**IS THERE A GOOD MORAL OBJECTION TO PRIVATE EDUCATION? A REVIEW OF LITERATURE****Rida Atta Awan***

Deputy Registrar, Mirpur University of Science & Technology, Mirpur, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan

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Abstract: Participation of the private sector in education plays a vital role in improving service delivery and contributes to public access to education. In addition, some features of the private sector such as better service delivery and efficiency can improve the performance of education service and its quality in general. However, in the last few decades, a growing body of research debated on the implicit and underlying effects of the marketization of education and identifies elitism, inequality, and the stratification in society as by-products of the application of marketing approaches as used in education sector. This review of education literature on the marketing approaches of education overviews the moral implication of the market's involvement in education through private schools which can create individualism and limits the vision and scope of education. This paper is based on the analysis and discussion of the already available literature on education mainly related to implicit and moral consequences of market involvement in education sector. It argues that a basic narrative is required to balance commercialization and public welfare in education practices around the world. The market cannot have uncontrolled access to education because of tangible and intangible outcomes associated with education. Public expenditure on education requires a more holistic and wider perspective compared to the focused and competitive approach of private education. The argument is that education is a social good, which can have a number of impacts on society such as providing a competitive advantage for an elite class and can widen the gap between those who have and those who have not. Therefore, a cautious adaptation of the private-sector approach in public education is required to improve efficiency.

**INTRODUCTION**

The role of private schools in the development of education has been a topic of heated debate among academia, policymakers, the public, and governments. Private schools are criticized for creating elitism and class differences and researchers see their elimination results in the betterment of state/public schools (Reay, 2012). These are also objected for their price tag approach as not all parents purchase competitive advantage for the children through these which generate segregation, social hierarchy, and elitism in society. Private school blamed when 'a social class, one aspect of social difference, marginalized diversity' which raises moral objection to their existence (Reay, 2012). This can be associated with that when some affluent parents can purchase a competitive advantage through buying a better education to those who cannot buy it. The market creates profit motives in education through private schools.

*Corresponding Author: Rida Atta Awan. Email: rida.atta@gmail.com

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These are legitimate and obvious moral questions about commercialization of education. However, some of the market features are critically important for the improvement of education systems in general (James, 1984; Helgø & Homme, 2006) as there are features of the private sector that can help improve the performance and quality of education. The private sector style can be applied in the development of education, in general. Market features have been adopted for the improvement of the public sector to improve the service delivery of government education policy by applying markets in the government schools; for the improvement of features such as elitism, inequality, and stratification of society. The market approach to competition can develop concerns for human development through education. However, the private sector approach carries some limitations as well.

This review explores implicit, inherent and far-reaching concerns about the participation of the private sector in education. The adoption of large-scale private sector approaches in comparison to a small number of private schools misbalances tangible and intangible benefits of education. In this study, it is argued that the propensity of the profit-making approach in public education may hinder the actualization of human potential and constrain the development of human moral wisdom which can be associated with the collective good. In view of this, there should be a cautious applicability of a performance-oriented approach of the private sector to improve public education without losing its common good for the masses.

Education promotes and enhances the true potential of the human capital of any society. The objective of education should therefore be to help people flourish in their lives through social structures (Brighouse, 2013). To do this, the education process should realize the natural potential of individuals and to prepare them for life challenges. Economic well-being is just one part of preparing an individual for a successful life – by focusing solely on privatization for economic gains, the intention to promote efficiency may ignore the intangible benefits. Private schools benefit some but their large-scale application and commercialization disturbs the balance and development benefits of education (Halliday, 2016). However, where governments have limited capacity, educational institutions in private sector create a more marginalized class or benefit at least a few to reach their potential.

Role of Markets' Involvement through Businesses in Education Sector

The education system in England encourages elitist and liberal values. Generally, in public and independent schools, students are financing schools by their tuition fees either partially or entirely (Helgø & Homme, 2006). Private education for a privileged social class has raised many questions regarding promotion of elitism for a few with the assistance of a small group of private schools that are left out of the mainstream education system and provide special privileges. This develops a concern if private schools have peculiar characteristics which are associated with better performance then why are these characteristics limited to a few people? If we evaluate, then it seems correct that the business market is more receptive to demand and needs in contrast to centralized subsidized systems (Coulson, 1996).

While considering the better performance of private schools, some countries have adopted some factors of the market-based approach of private schools in the public education system. The purpose was to promote performance and improve efficiency of the public sector through competition and these programs are inclusive programs. Some governments claim to improve school performance through profit and competition for which tax credits and vouchers can work (Coulson, 1996). These are useful in public schools for a larger portion of society. The private sector is involved in education primarily to resolve the allegation of inefficiency and improvement of the performance of public schools. For instance, few countries' education systems, such as of Norway and Sweden, which propagate social-democratic standards have included the private sector. In Norway, sanctioned private schools receive a state grant of about 85% of their cost, while in Sweden, both private and public schools are free of payment by the students (Helgø & Homme, 2006). While considering about Dutch education, schools' budgets are associated with the public budget and private sources are limited which in turn limits market influences in their contributing to elitism, social class stratification, and weak public schools (James, 1984). There are certain examples where governments experimented with new public management in the public schools in which the governments externalized service delivery through the private sector. Such experiences brought performance improvement in public education. In a study of Reay (2012), the Finnish educational system was reported to have only 2% private sector expenditure and while the rest was majorly financed by the government. Application of commercialization in educational institutes argues for "performance management and motivation technique" to improve output (Box et al., 2001). However, such an intervention has not been providing with such straightforward results. Markets are inherent to their own type of shortcomings and these carry implicit and underlying effects. Markets are competitive in nature and thus promote competition among individuals. Businesses regard users as "customers" and inspire the system with signs of "better running" and "cost-effective". Irrespectively, they avoid real underlying social concerns such as racism, poverty, and disability (Box et al., 2001). Furthermore, it not only places pressure on children but

also offers opportunities to gain competitive advantages over each other. In turn, this causes tension between individuals to compete against each other, more than to achieve the real goal of education. Markets tend to disturb the balance of society by tempting some areas which can be associated with the indicators of performance. With an ideology of winning the race and being among the prosperous, few can increase their performance but may ignore other required parameters. There are many competitive parameters, such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) rating which measures performance in mathematics, science, numeracy, and literacy skills (OECD, 2015). Thus, the market application model overlooks specific human potentials that are not required in a large economy. In general, traditional education processes have fewer commercial and rewarding benefits associated with arts, philanthropy, music, and skill-based work subjects. By associating education with the world of large consumer markets, the less-commercial arenas of human knowledge are less focused. When some schools are categorized on the parameters of market-defined skills, then fewer commercial market skills are neglected. It can be associated with another kind of segregation that is carried out on the basis of performance.

The economic view of education argues for the production of a set percentage of workers to run a country's economy. While approaching human capital as a workforce and countries as markets, the diversity of human intellect is compromised. This area of knowledge cannot be attractive at present, but it has implications in a longer span of time. China's example of population control brings an interesting insight to this debate. China one-child policy was based on economic grounds and argued for limited resources compared to the population to share these resources. This paved the way for controlling the birth rate in China for future economic advantages. This policy, combined with better living and medical conditions, resulted in an acute imbalance between aging and young generations. This policy overlooked the need for balance between two generations to drive the economy. China withdrew the policy for its unweighted consequences in recent years. In fact, a negative growth rate of the human population resulted in an aging population in a few countries such as China, Japan, and Italy (Bloom et al., 2011). Policy-making institutions of education thus require a more comprehensive approach compared to market-economic rigorous motive and must involve public choice, justice, and promotion as a common good (Box et al., 2001). Market involvement in education has some disguised effects, which are futuristic and complex. The positional aspect of marketing strategies is another reason for the implied consequences of private education. The positional aspect is driven by more demand and less supply (Ben-Shahar, 2016). When the demand for something is greater than its supply, it can cause stratification in users or buyers based on their purchasing power. Therefore, those who have a better position in a queue can achieve it, and those who are left behind in the queue cannot achieve it. The position characteristic of education can be addressed through social design; researchers believe that access to certain goods is not a reward for competition, but a citizen's right. (Satz, 2007). The positional aspect of market focuses on consumer satisfaction, and that function further enhances the positional nature of education. Customers focus more on the position and tangible benefits than on the intangible and fundamental benefits of the service. In education services, this positional nature has a tendency to manipulate customer requirements, thus misbalancing the proportion of the role of education in development and screening (Halliday, 2016).

Education can influence people's choice of market-oriented areas. People can encourage themselves to work on the skills that bring them a competitive advantage, such as engineering, information technology, and science. Schools can influence these marketable skills through mass schooling also, at times, compromise the larger goals of education. This may be a reason that markets have some influence in narrowing down the immensity of human potential to a limited number. In addition to this, markets fulfill the customer desires and not what is required by society in general. It can influence their inner self so that they can achieve targets. It can include personal desires for wealth, power, and authority that can be encouraged through the markets for certain careers, occupations, and directions. With the continuous development of marketization, societies can lose some great philanthropists, artists, and philosophers. K12 education affects the future perspective of personal life.

Education affects other outcomes of life, such as enrolment at highly ranked universities, desired jobs and self-esteem. This establishes a link between K-12 education and better chances for higher education, which then generate a path for a better position in the job market and thus an esteemed position in later stages of life. A person who has access to better educational opportunities in early life can use this in multiple advantages for the later stages of life. A good start in the early preparations of individual life can help to achieve the desired position in the demand-oriented and material world.

Influence of Private Sector on Public Education

Basic education is a comprehensive set of skills that an individual needs for progress in the later years of his life. Research identifies early education as a 'fundamental preparation for flourishing life' (Chen, 2017). Brighouse (2013) proposes four perspectives for valuable life preparation, which are: prepare students for independent

judgment, prepare them for the labor market, teach for personal relationships building, and make them better citizens. The smallest possible educational results should be the defense of themselves against oppression and negative acts, which also includes to prepare one to play an equal role in a society (Anderson, 2007). The educational characteristics, of equipping individuals for self-sufficiency and the ability to act as objective individuals, are of great importance. This is the reason that even some policymakers and academics who are antagonist of equality even persuade with the equality of education (Brighouse, 2013). Ben-Shahar (2016) advocates for 'all-the-way equality' in educational outcomes irrespective of merit, intellect, and even effort. Education is something that should not be justified as less than equal. Talented, gifted, competent, or hard workers, even those who compete for excellence in education and those who make less effort should have equal outcomes in education on the basis of that each individual could not take responsibility for their actions when they are minor. If equal outcomes cannot be managed, then the gap between the outcomes must be very close to equality. There must be the lowest threshold level below, which no one can obtain. Education up to 12 standards must provide an adequate and suitable skill set for all children in society (Anderson, 2007). Pure marketing approaches, when applied in education, an attribute of commercialization is developed, which can affect its diversity and inclusiveness.

Markets and commercialization believe in demand and supply mechanism and takes the advantage of its difference. Education is very high stakes component of society because of its importance in the future well-being of a child. This prospective have an impact on the future economic welfare of a child and parents' role is significant. Halliday (2016) contends that parents' fear is not only about their child's failure, but also about themselves being parent that they may not be able to prevent that failure. These attributes tend to generate an "education arms race" (Halliday, 2016). It puts pressure on children and the education system to work only on marketable skills. Thus overshadowing education's role as a package of commercial and non-commercial commodities. These competing goals imbalance the approaches of educators and policymakers toward commercial aspects and compromises the essential noncommercial essential domains of education in general. The natural growth of an individual is also biased toward certain commercialized aspects. This commercialization of education has a diverse impact on education compared to the small percentage of elite private schools. It is evident from history; the obligation, to educate the poor, has been a relatively small area for public and private schools. (Coulson, 1996). Today, social inequality has reached a new level of fear of being disadvantaged in positional aspects of education, forcing children to carry out more rigorous and better tasks. Parents are pressured to earn and spend more on education, or children may remain underprivileged and underachieving in their lives. Parents fear that their failure in their parental role to provide the child with every skill to stand out and invest in all ways to foster, encourage, and enable for jumping the queue. Otherwise, their children may not secure desirable jobs and, therefore, be left behind in life.

Human intelligence is varied and can excel under conducive circumstances. Natural promotion of talent can or cannot be among market-driven skills. Such skills can be those that one values or has a natural capability to learn. These can be less in demand, less in number, and may not be economically beneficial at times. Awareness and application of social and human rights might come in noneconomic values of education. Women, minorities, and less privileged segments of society that are more empowered and have a voice for themselves are also important functions of education. Societies are more inclusive and citizenship rights are receiving more attention. All these factors developed from the noncommercial side of education. Human societies have designed and developed through a systematic review, freedom, freedom and democracy. Through market participation, the general efficiency has improved, but the inclination toward materialistic goods is also increasing.

Markets are motivating more people towards limited learning disciplines driven by numeracy, literacy, and technology skills. Differences in professional earnings influence more economic benefits. Less economic aspiring benefits may be ignored because they are out of demand due to marketization. Although these can promote societal development in the long run. The non-commercial position of education has been historically low since the beginning of mass education development in the past century. Developed countries generally better utilize their resources and spend on varied aspects of education; even so, economics is the biggest reason to learn and teach in all societies. Examples of countries like South Korea and Singapore that are economically flourishing (Hajkowicz, 2012) for their focus on economic-driven education policies are leading worldwide education policy directions (OECD, 2015). The commercialization of education and its competition are global.

Effects of the Commercialization of Education

No policy is without a price and similar is the case with the commercialization drive of education. Research highlights individualism, limited scope, and vision for education as primary effects of the commercialization of education.

Firstly, it develops individualism and possession. Private sector is inherently competitive, and they inclined toward securing a competitive advantage. However, education comprises both tangible and intangible factors and has an impact on human development at individual and community levels. Human talent development is an inherent good that can be used for personal and collective good (Anderson, 2007). When human intellect is a collective benefit, it requires a feeling of joint efforts for its common use. When a society is making efforts to develop human beings, it can claim a common sense of ownership. Such practices which encourage segregation of a small class in society and encourage a money-driven approach to education create stratification in societies. Private schools are specific to a certain class and strata of society, and this develops a divide between haves and have nots. Governments are generally spending more on education now and schools are receiving more public funds to serve the masses. When the performance values of a few schools go up, it means that these perform better; this encourages the adoption of performance-related measures in schools. This also creates a sense of competition among the institutions. It is also noteworthy that private education has shifted from a small segment to a large segment through the commercialization of education. The private sector feature of competition and service delivery is leading the education policy-making in multiple countries these days. The drive behind the performance is still competitive. Coupled with elites' perception of the masses as underachieving and less responsible for their own growth (Reay, 2012), the problem is also creating tension on the usability of public funds for public education. The criticism is essentially performance-driven here. A performance that is economic goal-driven thus creates a debate for and against the public education and private performance parameters in academia and policymakers. A collective good for overall societal betterment suffers from the competitive spirit of the marketization of education. The market has characterized not only better performance by competition, but also individualism and personalization among the masses. Few fractions of society may still believe in collective good and shared feelings of humanity and welfare. However, when competition is developed, a sense of achievement and deprivation is also developed. Education can use market characteristics such as competition, incentive, and responsibility, but it also limits non-competitive and less necessary aspects of education.

Secondly, education has competing goals, and thus creates segregation in society. This segregation limits the vision of education for the common good of humanity. In order to overcome the competitive advantage of the private sector, public education mainly gets funded through government resources, which is a non-commercial aspect of education. Education is bringing more competitive arenas for Governments and countries that are facing greater competition in this globalized age. They are striving to educate their masses and inculcate competitive advantage. Some examples, such as Singapore, China, and Malaysia, perform very well on international standardized tests for numeracy and literacy (OECD, 2015), and this counts for their development. This development led to a shift in control from north to south, west to east. (Hajkowicz et al., 2012). Contrary to views on expenditure and achievements in education, there are qualitative aspects of education. A collective effort is required to develop an equitable social system that can focus on non-commercialized education options for global development. Reay suggests idealized global parameters in this connection for a "truly comprehensive system where differences between schools are minimized, while diversity within them is maximized" (2012, p. 591). There are many challenges to achieving the common good in education and through education. For example, uniformity is tricky, and governments' control on it is challenging. It may alter different shapes, for example, people can prefer residences in a specific region in countries where school neighborhoods are regulated by laws to secure a competitive advantage for their children of better school education (Freiman, 2017). Secondly, it is influenced by competitive advantages. The present educational structures and philosophy are highly competitive and face internal and external pressures on demand and achievement. Moral impulses are required to develop a social welfare state. The involvement of the market in education increases competition, the selection process and exclusion, which may lead to the exacerbation of existing social inequalities. (Barton, 1997). Markets have a limited role and nature, so their application in education must be specific, and in education, a comprehensive welfare philosophy must be applied. Governments should invest more resources in disadvantaged populations and should not invest equally in education for all. (Anderson, 2007). However, there is a challenge in dealing with the commercialized feeling of spending, which contradicts the welfare aspects of education.

Thirdly, this segregation further restricts the scope of education. Education is a collective concern; therefore, its policy should consider vocational routes, career paths, and working-class needs (Reay, 2012). The private sector has a dedicated approach to this connection, which is aggressive and profit-oriented, but it also limits its scope. Skill growth and vocational training are the neglected part of public education, specifically in countries such as Pakistan. When describing the boundary of education, the skilled orientation of human talent is generally overlooked. Few human aspects are related to the capacity development and inclination of the human brain. A person having a certain type of skill set cannot survive within the regular education stream. Examples are multiple ability persons, people with special needs, and others. Public education is complex and challenging as it develops generations, which

requires a more inclusive, comprehensive, and deeper approach. As education influences the achievement of a good position in universities, economic well-being, and jobs, it needs to address skill development. Every student should promote and encouraged on the same grounds to realize that ability is wider than the positional quality of education. The objective of education is to make a person capable so that he excels in the job market. (Brighouse, 2013).

Human capacities in the field of specialized training are largely ignored by public education in general. The role of a school is needed to break the stereotype and help the masses through knowledge and skill to become responsible citizens (Chen, 2017). Competencies play a role not only in economic development but also in personal and social development. Development of community wisdom, cohesion, and entertainment develops alongside economic activity. Public expenditure on education requires a more comprehensive and holistic perspective compared to the focused and competitive approach of the private sector in education.

CONCLUSION

Public sector of education can learn a few things from the market-oriented approach of private schools. Non-governmental schools, which are run by elites, are blamed for moral objections such as creating stratification, elite and discrimination in society. A moral concern is that an affluent person can purchase a competitive advantage over the disadvantaged (Halliday, 2016). The enhanced performance of private schools fosters the purpose of identifying the characteristics that facilitate competitive advantage in the private sector. These characteristics can be applied to education to share the benefits of private sector approach in public schools. It will eradicate the moral objection of promoting the specific sector of society that has a pay power and create inequality, stratification, and elitism. Historically, this is true since private sector provides more efficient performance delivery (Coulson, 1996). In public education, commercial sector approaches such as competition, commercialization, and target-oriented approaches are applied. This approach has also brought about enhancement in school performance and the development of public schools as well. Improvement in performance has been utilized through competitive development and encouragement of achievers. However, the private schools' approach has certain limitations in public sector policy, such as markets are competitive, believe in profit motives, and are based on material benefits.

The private sector develops competition and provides incentives for achievers, and discourages the losers. Markets invest in cost-effective arrangements and encourage sectors that are in demand. The market not only aims to satisfy customers, but also attracts customers to another profitable option. This feature encourage the commercialization of education. On the other hand, education in general has a varied, comprehensive and holistic agenda. It can be benefited from the marketization methodology, but in the long run, it can develop few moralistic concerns. These issues relate to individualism and limit the scope of education. Education can be an instrument for the development of human wisdom and can be used for the benefit of the whole. Commercialization is individualistic in nature and inherently possessive. Human intelligence is diverse and in some respects cannot be materially beneficial, but it has intangible benefits and can have a positive impact over a longer period of time. Skills are a component of human capacity building, and their development is also significant, as is targeted in private schools. At the same time, the market approach in public education limits narrows down and also individualizes the education concept, which needs to be comprehensive, holistic, and diverse. Thus public education needs to keep its broader domain with few lessons learned from market-oriented approaches of private education.

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