Private schooling characteristics, roles and grievances

Priyadarshani Joshi
Private schooling characteristics, roles and grievances

Private sector perspectives from Nepal

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March 7, 2016
CIES
Motivation for the study

• Private schools in developing countries a huge phenomenon, inspiring growing debate on the roles, responsibilities and regulations of the systems

• In dissertation research on school choice and competition, discovered diversity of private provision and private sector challenges

• In public-private debate discussions, found little attempt to understand the state of affairs from the perspective of the private sector actors
Research Questions

• What is the extent and nature of private sector growth?

• What are the basic characteristics of private schools?

• What do private school principals view as their role in the education system?

• What do private school principals think the government role should be in private schooling?
Data and methods

Data collection, 2011-12 (mostly in two districts)

• Principal Survey
• District records on private schools
• Interviews (private school principals, private association members, some at national level/other districts)

Descriptive and qualitative analysis

• Description of private schools by year of establishment and fees; principal perceptions
• In-depth analysis of private sector perspectives to understand school characteristics, opinions on private and government roles/issues
• Nepal: low-income, landlocked/difficult topography, high ethno-linguistic diversity, politically unstable, migration-dependent economy; earthquake, oil crisis/power cuts

• Private sector growth context
  • Part of education access story: private sector growth just a “choice” story; not financially supported by the government
  • Most private seen as better than public
  • Most relevant for lower income South Asian and sub-Saharan African countries
Private schooling trends

is there expansion?

Private schools are growing in number.

Sources: Private school district records, Principal Survey
Private schooling trends

Kathmandu schools – fee-based diversity

Private expansion seems to be more “market-like” in Kathmandu
Private schooling trends

Chitwan schools – fee-based diversity

Estimated monthly and annual fees (in US $), grade 1, 2011-12

Public schools = $3.6 avg. (0 to $92); \( n = 67 \)

Private school fees lower, more controlled in Chitwan

\( N = 113 \)
Why was the school started?

• To secure longer term employment
• One of the few investment opportunities
• Social motivation/district development intentions
• Competition with other private schools in locations with sparse populations
• A retired public school principal started a private school
Private school characteristics

How?

• Most were school teachers in other schools
• Group got together to operate a school; wide range of founders (from 2 to 53 shareholders in the sample)
• Takeover administrative control from other team
• Turnover high in Kathmandu — 150 requests for ownership changes in two year period (2010 and 2011).
## Private school role

Survey responses reflecting public-private differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status: Public schools are equated with poor or low status schooling</th>
<th>Private school principals (% agree) N= 81</th>
<th>Public school principals (% agree) N = 212</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sorting: Compared to public schools, private schools can select the students they take in</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>88.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political: There is more political influence among teachers in public schools compared to private schools</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy: Principal has limited influence in appointing teachers</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: principal survey
Who attends private schools?

- **Serving all strata**
  - Street children, laborers, vegetable vendors, farmers, rickshaw pullers; “Just need whoever can pay”
  - “Some parents with very little income come here; those who don’t know where their next meal will come from, they send to public school”

- **Most do not have the option to sort students**
  - Parents attracted by word of mouth
  - “Not in a position to filter — too much competition in city centers, too few children outside city centers”

- **Some provide scholarships to the poor, orphans, marginalized communities**
Private school role

What do private schools provide?

- Sole provider of quality education (care, teacher effort, high stakes exam performance) — combination of factors are better
- “it’s not that private schools are very good; it’s just that public schools are bad”
- Have autonomy, better management, less politicized environment allows them to provide quality education with effort
- Retaining children and investment in the districts or country
# Private school demands

## Survey responses on private system issues

<table>
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<td></td>
<td>N = 81</td>
<td>N = 212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number:</strong> Private schools have been very successful and newer ones need to be encouraged to open</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finance:</strong> Private schools should receive financial support from the government</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity:</strong> Poor students should have a choice to attend public or private schools through subsidies and vouchers provided by the government</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regulation:</strong> Private schools should have separate rules, acts, and boards</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: principal survey
Private school grievances

Existing government role in private schooling

• Give approval/permission to run the schools; categorize schools
• No interactions with the district education office, no policy exchange
• No call for exchanges between public and private schools; some informal exchanges
• No monitoring of private schools
• Treat private sector with animosity
• Dynamic can be different at the school level (system-level issue): “our old teachers are public school headmasters, they observe us with a certain degree of affection, and we also respect them”
Private school grievances

Needed government role in private schooling

- Need to view private schools positively, and recognize their contributions
- Government needs to support private schools
  - Resources: Financial support, teacher training opportunities
  - Monitor: quality, exploitation by certain private schools
  - Bigger private role: encourage education industry, takeover failing public schools
- Need to develop a separate private education act
  - To provide stability and security to the sector; have separate modes of operation from government schools
  - To clarify private role and issues better to parents
  - Will be viewed more appropriately as education institutions (not companies)
Conclusions

• Private provision substantial in key urban areas of Nepal
• Opened by former teachers looking for employment, in groups
• Private growth viewed as resulting from public school failures
• Lack of facilitating private education regulation/ government contribution causes challenges

• State of public-private relations hostile — questions ability to implement existing or new regulations on private schooling
• Government needs to increase communication, consider relevance of existing regulations, needed new supports
Thank you!