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The implications of education privatization on teachers in lower-income countries

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Report submitted to the 13th Session of the Joint ILO–UNESCO Committee of Experts
on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART)

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The implications of education privatization on teachers in lower-income countries, by
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Introduction

The role of the private sector has become a central theme in the Education 2030 Agenda, particularly in relation to southern countries, where this phenomenon is increasing rapidly. Policies promoting the involvement of the private sector include charter schools, voucher schemes, the contracting out of private schools, or the promotion of low-fee private schools. These policy solutions advance under different rationales. They are usually presented as a way to expand access to education efficiently, but also as a way to increase the quality of the education system, foster innovation and/or promote education diversification.

Nonetheless concerns have been raised, including by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, about the possible negative effects of privatized education on access, quality, equality and equity with regard to the right to education. In spite of this debate between advocates and critics, the fact is that the enrolment in private schools has experienced a significant and constant growth in recent years, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.¹ Another concern that has been raised is the effect of privatization, especially in low-income settings, on working conditions of teachers. Some critics have concluded that it has contributed to the deprofessionalization and loss of status. Private schoolteachers are generally not unionized, can be fired at will, and receive lower pay and benefits.

Drawing on recent scholarly sources and covering, as far as possible, the five geographic regions of the ILO, the paper will examine trends in privatization of primary and secondary education and its impact on teachers. The paper will not focus on high-end private education (elite schools) but on the growing trend of low- and middle-income settings.

¹ A. Verger, C. Fontdevila and A. Zancajo: *The Privatisation of Education: A Global Phenomenon with Multiple Faces*, NORRAG, 2016.

1. Setting the stage

Privatization has gained wide circulation since the late 1970s and early 1980s. In particular, the trend towards the privatization of education, understood “as the process of transferring activities, assets, management, functions and responsibilities relating to education from the state or public institutions to private individuals and agencies” (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 73), has been increasing worldwide and has gained increasing attention in education development discourse and research. The private sector has always been involved in education, with family, religious institutions and philanthropic organizations playing an important role in its funding and provision. Over the last few decades, however, despite growing levels of public funding, “education has been increasingly funded by the private sector, often by citizens themselves” (Rizvi, 2016). The focus on the role of private actors has further intensified within the context of the move towards achieving Education for All (EFA). States have used privatization both to address the challenges resulting from the expansion of education at all levels and as a way to respond to the failure of governments to provide quality education. Moreover, privatization has been attached to neoliberal approaches which assumes the private sector is able to provide better quality education and, when functioning as a corporate or business organization, is also more efficient in the management of the education system.

It is important not to confuse the process of privatization with the provision of private schooling or the generic involvement of private actors in education. Indeed, international human rights law guarantees the possibility to establish private educational institutions, as a means to ensure the freedom of parents to choose the education for their children according to their beliefs.¹ Privatization, on the other hand, implies that the State progressively diminishes its role and responsibilities with the aim of introducing higher levels of private sector participation in all domains of education, from policy-making to delivery and funding, whereas the mere establishment of a private school does not necessarily mean that there is an ongoing process of privatization.

Education privatization may occur in different forms and may be referred, sometimes simultaneously, to: (a) the increase in the number and proportion of private providers; (b) the rise in the amount of funding contributed by non-state actors; (c) the enhancement of private regulation, decision-making and accountability (Belfield and Levin, 2002). Privatization also refers to the outsourcing of specific state activities to private providers and to the introduction of market-based or other self-regulatory governance instruments sometimes involving forms of deregulation of the education sector (Pedró et al., 2015). Ball and Youdell distinguish between two main types of privatization trends and related policies: (a) privatization *of* public education, or “exogenous” privatization, which involves “the opening up of public education services to private sector participation on a for-profit basis and using the private sector to design, manage or deliver aspects of public education”; and (b) privatization *in* public education, or “endogenous” privatization, which involves the “importing of ideas, techniques and practices from the private sector in order to make the public sector more like businesses and more business-like” (Ball and Youdell, 2008, p. 9). Here, factors related to the influence of neoliberal ideology and of market mechanisms are taken into consideration. Indeed, although processes of privatization and marketization are not inextricably linked, it is acknowledged that privatization “creates a potentially favourable environment for market activity” (Marginson, 1993).

The process of privatization involves a diverse variety of private stakeholders ranging from parents and community-based groups to religious institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and philanthropic foundations, businesses conducting non-profit, for-

¹ Article 13(4) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.

profit and/or low-fee schools such as: enterprises, corporations, non-philanthropic foundations and private owners (Moumné and Saudemont, 2015). The private sector therefore appears as an extremely varied and evolving sector where generic considerations cannot be made and where processes and dynamics need to be examined according to different contexts. Moreover, it has also proven difficult at times to define what is considered private. In the broadest sense, private education refers to any type of school outside the government education system. Private schools however can be partially funded and regulated by the government, which often blurs the boundaries between what can be considered public and private in education (UNESCO, 2015a).

Table 1. Overview of private institutions
(adapted from: Moumné and Saudemont, 2015)

Types of non-governmental entities	State dependent or independent?	Some examples
■ Parents ■ Community-based groups	Usually privately managed and privately funded	Homeschooling, community schools, parents' associations, Mom-And-Pop schools
■ Religious institutions	These institutions can have many different structural organizations. They can be: ■ Privately managed and publicly funded (which can take the form of public funds put into the private institution) ■ Privately managed and publicly funded with additional fees (in some cases asking for fees from parents and guardians in addition to the public funds) ■ Publicly managed and privately funded (which can take the form of private funds put into the public system) ■ Privately managed and funded (in some cases asking for fees from parents and guardians)	■ Catholic schools under "simple contract", "association contract" or non-contractual in France ■ Muslim schools under contract with the State or not ■ Jewish schools under contract with the State or not ■ Any other kind of religion or faith-based institution
■ NGOs and philanthropic foundations		■ BuildOn (NGO provides direct services, indirect services in the US and abroad) ■ CARE Education ■ Escuela Nueva
Businesses conducting non-profit, for-profit or/and low-fee schools such as: ■ Enterprises ■ Corporations ■ Non-philanthropic foundations ■ Private owners		Examples of for-profit institutions: ■ Omega Schools (Ghana) ■ Bridge International Academies (Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, India, Pakistan); in Liberia and India under the form of public-private partnerships. ■ Sparks Schools (South Africa) ■ APEC Schools (Philippines) ■ IDP Rising Schools Program (Ghana)

While privatization takes many forms and involves a diverse variety of actors, what emerges as a new phenomenon is the growing provision of education by non-state actors, especially for-profit ones, in low and lower-middle income countries. Along with other forms of private schools, developing countries are witnessing the spread of the phenomenon

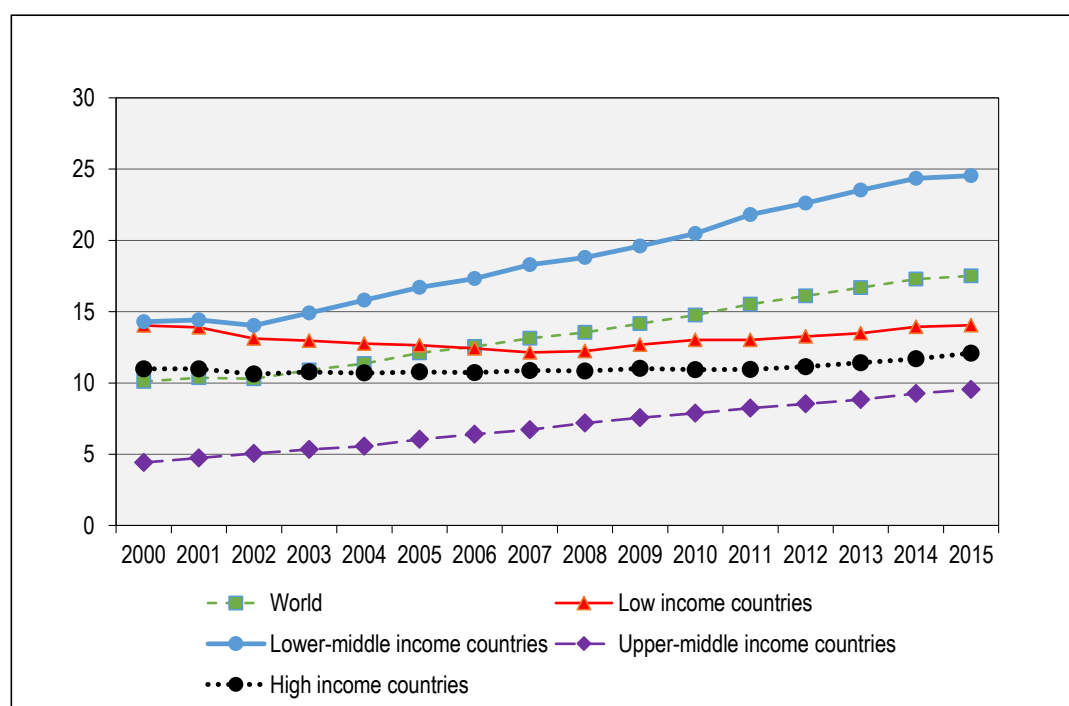
of the so-called low-fee private schools (LFPS) aimed at some of the poorest families in these countries. These are defined as those established mainly for profit motivations and “different from traditional private schools in the sense that the latter are selective by definition and generally do not target the poor” (Verger et al., 2016).

In general, it could be argued that the current trend of privatization can be associated with the expansion of LFPS in many countries of the Global South, seen as a solution addressed to poor people in areas where public education is either absent or of low quality. This often results in the withdrawing of the State from its traditional responsibilities.

Trends

The trend towards privatization is constantly growing at all levels of education across the world. It is worth noting how the proportion of children going to private institutions at the primary level has increased worldwide in the last few decades, rising from around 10 per cent to more than 17 per cent between 2000 and 2016 (UIS database). In general, the most significant increase of enrolment in private schools has occurred in lower-middle income countries whereby 2015 the share was approximately one third higher than the world average. This can be related to significant demographic and social changes and to the inability of the State to respond to growing demands for education.

Figure 1. Percentage of enrolment in primary education in private institutions



Source: UIS database.

Between 2000 and 2015, South Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean are the regions where this proportion increased the most, rising from around 18 per cent to 33 per cent, and from 13 per cent to 19 per cent, respectively (UIS database). In South Asia, by 2015 countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan far outpaced the average regional share, and Nepal increased more than threefold, from 6 per cent to more than 15 per cent at primary level (Bhatta and Pherali, 2017). As for Latin America, the share of private primary enrolment in this period doubled from 8 per cent to 16 per cent in Brazil and from 13 per cent to 27 per cent in Peru but was constant at about 8 per cent in Mexico and about 9 per cent in the Plurinational State of Bolivia (UIS database; UNESCO, 2016). In contrast, in

countries like Chile and Belize the share is much higher, standing at about 62 per cent and 82 per cent respectively.

While in sub-Saharan Africa the share of enrolment in private primary schools did not increase significantly during the same period (rising from around 10 per cent to 13 per cent), it is important to note that there are considerable differences also within this region. For instance, there are countries in sub-Saharan Africa where the numbers of enrolments in primary education in private institutions are particularly impressive. While in some countries the share of enrolment in private primary institutions has remained constant, between 2000 and 2015, countries such as Uganda, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Congo, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana have seen this share increasing twofold or more, and the trend is continuing to grow.²

Moreover, it should also be noted that information is missing in many countries and, even when available, administrative data tend to underestimate the share of private school enrolment, especially in countries where the private sector is expanding and some schools operate without official recognition (Wodon, 2014). For instance, in Nigeria, private schools accounted for 5 per cent of primary enrolment in 2005 and 8 per cent in 2010, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Yet survey data indicate the share was already 13 per cent in 2004 and reached 24 per cent by 2015 (Nigeria National Population Commission and RTI International, 2016).

The share of private enrolment in primary schools, however, not only varies within regions but also within countries themselves. It is noticeable that the predominant growth of low-fee private schools has been occurring mainly in urban contexts (Kingdon 2017; CfBT, 2011). For instance, in Peru, the greater offer of private education is particularly accentuated in Metropolitan Lima where between 2004 and 2014 private participation in basic education increased from 29 per cent to 50 per cent (Fontdevila et al., 2018). The same pattern can be observed in Nepal where private schools are concentrated in urban areas and geographically more accessible regions (Bhatta and Pherali, 2017). LFPs have also snowballed in urban slums in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia owing to the rapid migration of poor people from rural areas to the urban informal settlements and to the absence of adequate government policy and planning (UNESCO, 2015b). For instance, while the share of enrolment in primary schools in Nigeria stood at about 24 per cent in 2015 (according to survey data as above), in the Lagos state over 60 per cent of primary students were enrolled in private schools (Härmä, 2011). A recent study conducted in Kenya also concluded that the majority of private schools are concentrated in relatively richer parts, to show that economic viability is often a stronger criterion for the choice of the location to establish a new school than the desire to reach the poorest communities (EI and KNUT, 2016).

At the same time, while private schools continue to cluster mainly in urban areas, it has been argued that they are increasingly prevalent in rural areas, although this does not mean that they are necessarily accessible to the poor (Ashley et al., 2014). Many LFPs are therefore emerging both in remote rural areas and in new (and usually unofficial) urban settlements where public schools do not even exist (Verger et al., 2016). Thus, the choice for these schools is not always due to preference over public schools, but is often a consequence of the complete absence of the latter.

Growth of the involvement of private actors has also occurred in countries and locations affected by natural disasters or conflict, where relief and reconstruction interventions have favoured privatization. It has been argued that these episodes have provided grounding for

² It has risen in Uganda from around 10 per cent to 17 per cent, in Burkina Faso from 11 per cent to 19 per cent, in Nigeria from 6 per cent to 15 per cent, in Senegal from 10 per cent to 15 per cent, Congo from 0.35 per cent to 31.07 per cent, Kenya from 4 per cent to more than 16 per cent, and in Ghana from 10 per cent to 25 per cent (data retrieved from the UIS database).

the advancement of market-oriented policies in education (Verger et al., 2016). In Haiti, for instance, after the earthquake devastation in 2010, and given the Government's limited capacity to respond to the emergency, a range of international organizations promoted the "consolidation of an education system with a heavy dependence on the private sector" (Verger et al., 2016). Moreover, privatization has also been occurring in post-conflict contexts such as those in El Salvador and Iraq. The devastation on education infrastructure caused by several years of conflict has left space for growing private corporate participation, often supported by international organizations or aid agencies (Verger et al., 2016).

Rationales driving education privatization

There are several driving forces behind the process of privatization in the field of education, which are highly interconnected and differ in intensity and in nature between countries. The growing trend of privatization may be the result of both an "excess demand" and a "diversified demand" of education (Belfield and Levin, 2002). Education is often considered by parents as a key instrument for social and economic improvement as they seek to provide the best opportunity for their children. Moreover, the growth in living standards, as well as the structure of economies and societies becoming more specialized, has fuelled a differentiated demand for education. These factors may cater for needs not met by public schools, increasingly perceived as providing standardized, uniform education (Belfield and Levin, 2002). Significant growth in private enrolment is also the result of significant demographic changes which have occurred worldwide (UNESCO, 2015a). The resulting expansion of access to education at all levels has generated greater pressures on public schooling systems in terms of both funding and delivery. Especially in a period of economic recession or crisis, private funding has been increasingly considered as a necessary complement to the already constrained public budgets.

Moreover, it is argued that dissatisfaction towards public education systems and a potential "government failure" that may result from financial constraints, excessive bureaucracy and inefficiency, could also help to illustrate the reasons for private education development (Kitaev, 1999). Indeed, despite substantial efforts made by many countries worldwide, the high number of out-of-school children, incomplete schooling and poor quality education, are factors that have led to determine the greater involvement of non-state actors. This phenomenon has also been referred to as privatization "by default" to explain that the growth of the private sector can be determined by the passivity or limited capacity of the State towards a growing education demand (Verger et al., 2016). The private sector is often perceived to be more efficient in the management of the education system and to provide higher quality education where class overcrowding, which is often a feature of public schools, is avoided. Although these issues are highly debatable (Ashley et al., 2014), private schools are also perceived to be more accountable than government ones, enhancing greater transparency of the education process.

At the same time, globalization and the expansion of the neoliberal ideology are considered the main factors shaping current forms of education privatization worldwide. This phenomenon has been leading to a greater market involvement in the education sector. Indeed, despite the fact that the use of private sector in education has a long history, "what is new about these manifestations is their *scale*, *scope* and *penetration* into almost all aspects of the education endeavour" (Macpherson et al., 2014) – education is increasingly conceptualized as a commodity and the learner as a consumer (Robertson and Verger, 2012; Labaree, 2011). The term "Global Education Industry" has recently been adopted to describe a growing economic sector which involves the production, exchange and use of educational goods at a global level (Verger et al., 2016). This field embraces a wide range of economic actors which include chains of for-profit private schools, big education corporations and conglomerates, consultancy firms, philanthropic foundations, and advocacy networks (Verger et al., 2016).

For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to highlight the potential implications of current trends towards education privatization and marketization for the teaching profession. Indeed, as stated by the CEART “Declining conditions in the public sector and growth of private sector schooling has resulted in many teachers in developing countries being drawn into private schools. But conditions and salaries are not necessarily better than those in the public sector” (CEART, 2012, paragraph 50).

2. Implications of privatization for teachers

Concerns have been expressed regarding the growing involvement of private actors and market arrangements in the education sector. Some have deemed it as being in conflict with the recognition of education as a human right and a public good which implies that the State maintains the primary responsibility for education financing, delivery, monitoring and regulation (Locatelli, 2018). Moreover, critical issues regarding the influence of for-profit actors have been identified since schools are increasingly compelled to act as businesses and students as consumers (Robertson and Verger, 2012; Labaree, 2011; Lubienski, 2003). It is argued that this consumer orientation also has implications for the educational process where the focus appears to have shifted from the teacher–student relationship to a number of factors related more narrowly to the measurement and comparison of student performance in easily quantifiable academic features (Keddie et al., 2011).

With regard to recent trends of involvement of for-profit actors, questions have been raised as to whether private schools are competing with or are complementary to the public sector, “filling the gaps where the supply of government schools is low, and also where government schools are performing poorly” (Andrabi et al., 2013). With particular attention to issues of *quality*, advocates of low-fee private schools argue that they can deliver better quality education than government schools and that they can help deal with the quality crisis which is affecting public schools. The relative malfunctioning of the state sector in many countries, where expanding access to schooling since the 1990s has not resulted in quality education, has been widely noted and generally accepted as the impetus for the growth of these schools. This has given rise to increasing concerns as to whether private actors are, perhaps, exploiting this uncertain situation. In fact, “the question of whether the low-fee private sector is uniformly of superior quality in absolute terms as a whole is fraught with debate” (Srivastava, 2013). One of the aspects that needs to be taken into consideration regarding this question is the quality of teaching.

Teachers represent a fundamental if not the most fundamental factor that most influences the quality of education. As stated in the Communiqué from the 12th Session of the ILO–UNESCO Joint CEART, *Empowering teachers: Teaching in the post-2015 education agenda*, “quality teachers are increasingly recognized as the single most important factor in providing effective learning”. The Education 2030 Framework for Action also considers teachers as a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education. Indeed, qualified teachers are one of the three main means of implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, as outlined in Target 4.c.¹

Many studies have raised the issue of the impact of privatization on teachers’ conditions of employment. Advocates of low-fee private schools argue that they can deliver better quality education than government schools also thanks to greater teacher accountability, commitment, motivation and performance. The decline in teachers’ status and working conditions, under qualification and lack of participation has been a concern of the international community, and specifically of the ILO–UNESCO CEART, for many years. Current trends of education privatization appear to exacerbate these issues even further, especially in a context of growing involvement of for-profit actors and of the spread of particular types of private schools in developing countries. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education also cautioned against the “need for safeguarding education from

¹ “By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.”

privatization, especially its negative repercussions on the teaching profession”.² In particular, special attention was given to the employment of teachers lacking training and/or qualifications within public–private partnership arrangements.³ It has also been argued that innovations implicated in this model for profitably schooling the poor also involve serious deprivations for teachers and learners (Riep and Machacek, 2016).

It is important therefore to understand the potential implications of growing privatization on the teaching profession, and to identify the challenges and main issues that may arise in these circumstances. Based on the review of the main studies, articles and reports addressing the growing involvement of non-state actors in the field of education, and considering its multiple yet interrelated implications on the teaching profession, the following section analyses privatization in relation to these four major categories, each of them related to specific dimensions:

1. Working conditions: types of contract; wages and salary; working hours.
2. Quality of teaching: pupil–teacher ratio; absenteeism; accountability; qualifications; professional development.
3. Social dialogue: collective bargaining; participation; unionization.
4. Professionalization: status; autonomy; professional freedom.

1. Working conditions

The issue relating to the difference in salaries between private and public schoolteachers was explicitly addressed during the 11th Session of the CEART. It was affirmed that “[t]he differences in salaries between private and public schoolteachers should constitute an indicator on working conditions, as these differences may affect teacher satisfaction in either public or private sectors, and contribute to teachers leaving the profession or performing inadequately” (paragraph 52).

The question of salaries and of qualifications is addressed in the 1966 Recommendation concerning the status of teachers, where it is stated that “[t]eachers’ salaries should: (a) reflect the importance to society of the teaching function and hence the importance of teachers as well as the responsibilities of all kinds which fall upon them from the time of their entry into service ... (d) take account of the fact that certain posts require higher qualifications and experience and carry greater responsibilities.” (paragraph 115). Moreover, with regard to working hours, the Recommendation further stipulates that “In fixing hours of teaching, account should be taken of all factors which are relevant to the teacher’s work load, such as: (a) the number of pupils with whom the teacher is required to work per day and per week ...; (e) the desirability of providing time in which the teacher may report to and consult with parents regarding pupil progress.” (paragraph 90(a) and (e)).

However, these basic regulations are not always followed. For instance, while the recruitment of *contract teachers*⁴ has been increasing dramatically in many regions

² UN Special Rapporteur, 2015a.

³ *ibid.*, 2015b.

⁴ Contract teachers are usually hired directly by the community or by schools and are paid considerably less than civil service teachers. They often do not have civil service status (UNESCO, 2014).

worldwide as a measure to alleviate teacher shortages (UNESCO, 2014), the situation seems to have been made worse by the current trends of privatization, especially in the context of expansion of low-fee private schools. The CEART has also expressed concern regarding this issue (CEART 2012; 2015).⁵ As a recent study conducted in Nepal shows, most of the teachers in a low-fee private school have temporary contracts whereby they receive only a 12-month salary and are not entitled to benefit from pension funds, gratuity, insurance, leave or other allowances (Bhatta and Pherali, 2017). In Peru as well, the LFPS sector is characterized by the use of contractual forms that are highly precarious where teachers are paid by the hour in order to reduce costs. Since salaries in the public sector are also very low, teachers are often obliged to work in both sectors (Fontdevila et al., 2018).

Since teacher salaries represent the main cost incurred by any education system, many low-fee private schools have succeeded in drastically reducing operating costs by paying employees very low wages. Indeed, lower teacher salaries are the main factor that contributes to a significant reduction in the cost of producing education in private schools compared with government and aided schools where salaries should generally respect minimum standards. To keep wages at a minimum, low-fee private schools tend to hire unlicensed and unregistered teachers, which enables private owners not only to keep fees low but also to hire a large number of teachers. According to critical scholars, as well as teachers' unions and civil society organizations, this practice represents the main challenge of these private schools from a quality perspective (Verger et al., 2016). Lower fees and higher number of teachers are key parameters that set low-fee private schools apart from other types of schools and provide the conditions for expansion and higher profit, allowing corporations to remain financially sustainable and profitable.

Moreover, salaries in many low-fee private schools have been found to be between one eighth and half of government teacher salaries, and in some cases below the minimum wage established by national laws (GCE, 2016). We can see this in the following examples. In Uganda, monthly salaries provided to teachers of the Bridge International Academies chain have been found to be less than half of the wages received by public primary schoolteachers who are on the lowest end of the pay scale (Riep and Machacek, 2016). In Kenya, salaries of Bridge International Academies (BIA) teachers range between approximately US\$88.80–118.50 per month. The cost of renting a “reasonable but small room” can be more than half of the salary paid (EI and KNUT, 2016). Teachers in low-fee private schools in a slum area of Lagos, Nigeria, receive an average wage that is below the state minimum wage and less than half of the starting salary for a government teacher (Härmä, 2011). Teachers of the Omega Schools Franchise in Ghana earn only 15–20 per cent of teachers in the public sector (Riep, 2014). In India, the difference between teachers' salaries in low-fee and public schools is even greater, less than one quarter of public school salaries (Kamat et al., 2016). In the Philippines, the Affordable Private Education Center (APEC) chain has also drastically reduced its operational costs by hiring college graduates who are paid low wages, nearly 50 per cent lower than what regular public schoolteachers make (Riep, 2015). The same pattern can be found in Nepal, where the majority of teachers in a surveyed LFPS do not have a teaching licence and are paid very low salaries (Bhatta and Pherali, 2017).

Besides having lower salaries, teachers in private schools also go through higher turnover. For instance, a number of academy managers who participated in a research conducted in Uganda pointed out that the turnover rate for teachers at BIA schools is very high (Riep and Machacek, 2016). These features are affecting the very livelihoods of teachers, since they struggle to provide for themselves and their families on a daily basis.

⁵ The 12th Session of the CEART addressed this issue by stating that “in many countries, the increasing privatization of education has also led to disparities in teaching qualification requirements and working conditions, and loss of job security, especially among contract teachers” (CEART, 2015, para. 14).

Moreover, teachers in private school chains such as BIA have no form of job security and lack basic benefits such as health care (Riep and Machacek, 2016; EI and KNUT, 2016). Findings of a study conducted in Kenya show that the teachers' and academy managers' contracts can be terminated at any time with 90 per cent of respondents expressing fears over their job security. Three-quarters (76 per cent) of the teachers interviewed were aware of a teacher who had been dismissed either in their school or other BIA schools (EI and KNUT, 2016).

Teachers have also reported difficult working conditions with regard to dealing with extremely large classes, and even when there are smaller classes, dealing with very long working hours (Unterhalter et al., 2018). Indeed, low-fee private schools tend to be more intensive when it comes to teaching hours, with some having classes on Saturdays (Riep, 2014; Verger et al., 2016). In Kenya, teacher contracts demand 59–65 hours of work per week (EI and KNUT, 2016).

2. Quality of teaching

Better quality teaching, or *apparently* better quality teaching, is considered to be one of the main factors, if not the most important, which determines the choice of private schools over public ones. Although the notion of *quality* can be interpreted in different ways, in the context of teaching it is often associated with a set of important factors related to the qualification and preparation of teachers, to class size, teaching methods and curriculum, teachers' attitudes and accountability, and academic autonomy.

A recent report found that parents consider teaching quality as the most important contributor to a quality school (R4D, 2016). Data from this study, which assessed the needs and impact of the IDP Rising Schools Program,⁶ suggest that parents who send their children to these schools are generally satisfied with the level of teaching. Teacher quality ranked highest in satisfaction among parents, suggesting a prioritization of teacher quality on the part of Rising Schools proprietors. Nearly 91 per cent of these schools report having guidelines for teachers and 82 per cent provide in-service teacher training. The report emphasizes that parents consider high-quality teaching as a key determinant of their willingness to pay for education and for the choice of the school (R4D, 2016). As this example shows, experiences can be very diverse, even within the LFPS sector. Indeed, contrary to most LFPS chains, Rising Schools appear to be investing to improve teaching quality and to be more sustainable by empowering local individually owned social enterprises thanks to the use of microloans. Moreover, while still representing an example of LFPS, the study shows that proprietors of these schools are not ruthless business owners, for whom profit margins are more important than academic achievement. In fact, they “are either breaking even or suffering a small loss, and for those that are making profits, they are often quite modest” (R4D, 2016).

The perception of greater quality of teaching in private schools often depends on the lower pupil–teacher ratio, which is made possible thanks to the greater availability of teachers, and to the greater amount of time teachers spend actually teaching in school (UNESCO, 2014). Indeed, class size has been shown to be important with regard to choice: as the pupil–teacher ratio increased in government schools, there was an increased likelihood of children transferring to private schools (Nishimura and Yamano, 2013). A study conducted in Kenya showed that in private schools there were 15 students per teacher,

⁶ The IDP [Rising Schools Program](#) was created in 2009 by the IDP Foundation, along with its partner organization Sinapi Aba Trust (Ghana). This programme “seeks to strengthen LFPS by providing their proprietors with microloans in addition to training in basic accounting, financial literacy, and school and human resource management” (R4D, 2016).

compared with 80 in government schools (Stern and Heyneman, 2013). Moreover, in India a study found that private school pupils received three to four times as much teacher contact time as pupils in government schools (UNESCO, 2014). In these private schools, teachers spent 90 per cent of their time at school teaching, compared with 75 per cent for government schoolteachers (Kingdon and Banerji, 2009).

There are other factors that foster the apparently better quality teaching in private schools. Teacher absenteeism is generally lower in private schools than in public ones, partly because private schoolteachers tend to have closer links with the community (UNESCO, 2014). As claimed by Tooley (2009), low-fee private schools are likely to provide lower teacher absenteeism – due to increased accountability to parents and school owners; more involved teachers – due to more local recruitment, smaller class sizes, and more individualized attention. According to a World Bank report, private schoolteachers are a third less likely to be absent from classroom than public schoolteachers (Caerus Capital, 2016). Of course, due attention should be paid to the root causes behind teacher absenteeism in public schools, as this trend often hides serious problems relating to salaries, distance to and from school, workload, work environment and professional development (UNESCO, 2014). As reported by UNESCO (2017), for example, nearly half of teacher absenteeism in Indonesia in 2013–14 was due to excused time for study for which replacements should have been provided. Similarly, in Senegal, only 12 of the 80 missed school days in 2014 were due to teachers avoiding their responsibilities (UNESCO, 2017). Having said this, absenteeism remains a serious concern as underlined in many studies carried out worldwide (UNESCO, 2014). This factor is deemed as crucial in contributing to the perception of greater quality in private schools compared with their public counterparts.

Much of the argument for the promotion and expansion of low-fee private schools has also been made on the basis of relatively higher learning outcomes in these schools for both girls and boys (Tooley and Dixon, 2003). A rigorous review of the evidence of the impact of private schools conducted by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has sought to clarify this issue concluding that there is “moderate evidence” of perceived better quality education in private schools than in public ones (Ashley et al., 2014). This issue should be treated with caution and more attention should be paid to the different socio-economic backgrounds of pupils, as well as to the multifaceted dimensions of quality which should not be limited to learning outcomes in a small range of curriculum areas (Unterhalter et al., 2018). Despite the fact that the evidence of the superiority of the private sector in terms of learning outcomes remains inconclusive, it has been argued that in these schools, there seems to be a stronger degree of “pastoral care” displayed by LFPS teachers and principals, coming to students’ houses when homework is missing or students display difficulties in classes (Macpherson, 2014). Indeed, some studies show that parents are satisfied with the level of individual care and attention provided in private schools where there is greater interest in pupils’ attendance and behaviour (Rolleston and Adefeso-Olateju, 2014). Evaluations of the relationships between teachers and parents, the responsibility and accountability of schools to parents and pupils, and the availability of extracurricular and enrichment activities are all considerations that refer to the so-called “calculus of care” which often replaces mere economic considerations in the choice of schools (Rolleston and Adefeso-Olateju, 2014). Teaching in private schools appears to be better in terms of more teacher presence, commitment and teaching activity that are more likely to lead to improved learning outcomes than in state schools. Some evidence suggests that this may be due to increased accountability of teachers to employers in private schools (Ashley et al., 2014). In public schools teacher accountability was considered lacking, also because of the absence of incentives and monitoring mechanisms (Rolleston and Adefeso-Olateju, 2014).

Having said this, teachers in low-fee private schools are less formally qualified, have less teaching experience and are less trained than government schools (UNESCO, 2014). Although parents may underestimate the importance of this aspect, which may be counteracted by the attitude and behaviours adopted by teachers (Fontdevila et al., 2018;

Rolleston and Adefeso-Olateju, 2014), this is something that deserves greater attention from the perspective of the quality of teaching.

In most low-fee school chains at both the primary and secondary level, teachers are often not qualified for teaching. In Kenya, over 70 per cent of teachers hired in BIA schools are unqualified to teach (EI and KNUT, 2016). In BIA schools in Uganda, licensed teachers make up only 10–20 per cent of all teachers, in clear contrast to national educational and legal standards ⁷ (Riep and Machacek, 2016). The same pattern characterizes the situation in BIA schools in India where schools are mostly staffed with unqualified teachers (Kamat et al., 2016). The Omega School Franchise in Ghana also hires very low-paid high school graduates to reduce costs (Riep, 2014). In APEC schools in the Philippines, approximately 70 per cent of teachers do not have the proper professional requisites to teach in secondary school (Riep, 2015). In the Peruvian context, the issue is not very much related to the lack of qualifications in general but rather to the lack of standards relating to entry requirements and teacher qualifications, resulting in high heterogeneity of the LFPS sector (Fontdevila et al., 2018).

Moreover, in most of the cases teachers only receive a basic two to five-week training course when hired, depending on their qualifications at the time of employment. These courses mainly focus on pedagogy, instructional methods and classroom management rather than on lesson content, and do not comply with educational standards which indicate that any teacher should have attained at least the minimal requirements acceptable in any teacher training college for their teaching level (EI and KNUT, 2016; Riep, 2015). Teachers sometimes receive in-service training sessions which, however, are not considered as being exhaustive or sufficient (EI and KNUT, 2016). Low-fee private schools also often have fewer trained teachers. In Ghana, less than 10 per cent of teachers in private schools in economically disadvantaged districts were trained, while nearly half the government teachers in schools serving the same area were trained (Akaguri, 2011).

As well as being less qualified and poorly trained, teachers in low-fee private schools also have less teaching experience. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh, India, teachers in government schools have more than seven years of experience, on average, while those in private schools have fewer than five years (Singh and Sarkar, 2012). In Punjab, Pakistan, the proportion of teachers who reported having more than 20 years of experience was 43 per cent in government schools but 5 per cent in private schools (Aslam and Kingdon, 2011).

From this overview, it appears that the model of low-fee private schools, based on broadband technology used to support instructors has eliminated the need for professionally trained and qualified teachers. Indeed, teaching approaches in these schools are based on strict automation and mechanization of all curricula and methods, involving scripted instructions from tablets (Riep and Machacek, 2016). These schools use a scripted curriculum with content, curriculum instruction, lesson plans, teacher guidelines and training programme which is not always approved by the national Ministry of Education (EI and KNUT, 2016). Moreover, the curriculum is uniform and teachers are monitored in an attempt to ensure that they follow the instructions accurately. The term “teacher–computers” has been adopted to illustrate this phenomenon. In both BIA primary schools and APEC secondary schools, teachers are referred to as “learning facilitators”, requiring only the equivalent of a certain degree of education, or a high school diploma, and fluency in English (Riep and Machacek, 2016; Riep, 2015).

⁷ The Education Act (2008) of Uganda states that: “No person shall teach in any public or private school of any description unless he or she is registered as a teacher or licensed to teach under this Act” (Government of Uganda, 2008, p. 17).

It has been argued that the attitudes and preparation of teachers influence the extent to which children feel included in school, and whether or not they can experience quality education (Unterhalter et al., 2018). In this respect, the strategies implemented in many LFPS do not translate into the adoption of differentiated education styles and do not lead to greater levels of reflection and pedagogical innovation (Fontdevila et al., 2018). The teaching methods adopted in many LFPS appear to obstruct the very teacher–pupil relations that are conducive to learning and child development (Riep and Machacek, 2016). The standardization of curricula, leading to a narrowing of the purposes of education towards easily measureable learning outcomes, is in contradiction with the guiding principles of the 1966 Recommendation on the status of teachers. As outlined in paragraph 3 of the Recommendation, the broader purpose of education should be rather “directed to the all-round development of the human personality and to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and economic progress of the community, as well as to the inculcation of deep respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms ...”.

This situation has also serious repercussions on teacher autonomy, which is an area that should be well supported to improve education. However, findings show that in these schools a significant part of the lesson is planned externally. This is in obvious contradiction with the guiding principle on *Professional Freedom* as expressed in the 1966 Recommendation, which states that “[t]he teaching profession should enjoy academic freedom in the discharge of professional duties. Since teachers are particularly qualified to judge the teaching aids and methods most suitable for their pupils, they should be given the essential role in the choice and adaptation of teaching material, the selection of textbooks, and the application of teaching methods, within the framework of approved programmes, and with the assistance of the educational authorities” (paragraph 61). This is strictly linked to the principle of professional autonomy, “to choose the most appropriate methods and approaches that enable more effective, inclusive and equitable education”, that was also reaffirmed in the Joint Message on the occasion of World Teachers’ Day 2017 (UNESCO et al., 2017).

The case of Bridge International Academies (BIA) schools

In April 2018, the Kenyan East Africa Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights) submitted a [complaint](#) to the World Bank International Finance Corporation (IFC) accusing BIA of violating IFC’s performance standards, and asking the IFC to divest from BIA. These violations were inherent to BIA’s operational model and included some specific concerns relating to teachers’ working conditions and quality of teaching.

In particular, the EACHRights condemned BIA for violations of teachers’ working hours and payment below the legal minimum wage. In the text of the complaint it is stated that “BIA employment contracts stipulate working hours that surpass national law stipulations with no mention of overtime compensation” (p. 12). Moreover, teachers’ salaries stipulated in BIA’s contracts constitute a questionable labour practice. The salaries are below the country-specific national guidelines on minimum wage. This is in contradiction with the dispositions of the Kenyan Constitution which provides for the right to fair labour practices including “fair remuneration” (p. 13). Employees in BIA schools also complained about the pressure put on them by the company to perform marketing outreach activities (p. 14). Moreover, discrimination and unfair treatment was documented in relation to access to training, job assignment, promotion, termination of employment or retirement and disciplinary practices.

The EACHRights also accused BIA schools of adopting a curriculum which was never approved by the Kenyan Institute of Curriculum Development, also raising questions on the core of the BIA methodology: the scripted curriculum. A number of reasons were listed to prove the inappropriateness of BIA curriculum and teaching methods, including the following: the content taught was found not to be relevant to the Kenyan curriculum objectives; teachers were not allowed to flexibly attend to individual learner needs to adapt lessons to different learning environments; lessons were not prepared by the teachers but downloaded a few hours prior to each lesson and used as such; teachers lacked access to previous lessons for reference and continuity and did not prepare schemes of work to plan for their teaching activities.

After receiving the request from EACHRights, the World Bank’s Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) examined and accepted the complaint. Assessment of BIA operations will therefore be conducted.¹

The operations conducted by BIA in both Kenya and Uganda have indeed been at the centre of critical discussions on education privatization for many years. BIA’s operations in Kenya are being threatened due to an alleged lack of compliance with government regulations. Concerns have also been raised about the higher cost

of fees in BIA schools. In Uganda, BIA schools have also been [threatened with closure](#) by the Ugandan Education Minister after inspectors reported that children were being taught in substandard facilities and unsanitary conditions. Following a ruling of the Ugandan court stating that BIA “set out to operate schools in Uganda illegally”, [letters were sent by Education International](#) to the World Bank, DFID and Pearson plc challenging their ongoing support for an illegal operator.²

In examining the work on education of the DFID, the House of Commons of the UK Parliament also raised serious concerns regarding the opportunity to support BIA schools. Among the many points of discussion, members expressed reservations about the quality of teaching provided through preloaded tablet lessons and the appropriateness of their salaries. The UK Parliament concluded by pointing out the need for greater debate on these specific issues, and referring to BIA as a “contentious” partner in achieving the aims of SDG4 (House of Commons, 2017).

¹ EACHRights’ press release on the acceptance of the complaint: <https://bit.ly/2HrN1kx>.

² List of documents related to the situation of BIA schools in Kenya, Uganda and Liberia: <http://globalinitiative-escri.org/advocacy/privatization-in-education-research-initiative/commercial-schools-and-the-right-to-education/#2>.

3. Participation and social dialogue

The CEART has been emphasizing the importance of social dialogue as a factor in determining sustainable reforms and progress in education for more than a decade (Ratteree, 2012). Social dialogue was defined by the CEART (2003) in its Eighth Session report as “all forms of information sharing, consultation and negotiation between educational authorities, public and private, and teachers and their democratically elected representatives in teachers’ organizations” (p. 6). While the importance of social dialogue has been widely acknowledged and some progress has been made, “the social dialogue ‘gap’ represents one of the biggest holes in ILO ‘Decent Work’ and other international agendas for teachers and education” (Ratteree, 2012). In some countries, social dialogue has been put aside as a result of economic austerity policies, fiscal constraints and government underinvestment in education (Ratteree, 2012; CEART, 2012).

Privatization may have adverse consequences not only on the working conditions and quality of teaching, but also with regard to the capacity of teachers to actively take part in the social dialogue in education. Indeed, social dialogue and collective bargaining, which is one of the strongest forms of social dialogue and a key means for determining terms and conditions of employment, have been judged to be particularly low in private schools. This concern was addressed during the 12th Session of the CEART in 2015 with regard to teachers employed in privately managed schools. As well as reaffirming the concern that these teachers may incur worse working conditions than teachers in public schools, it was also stated that they “are usually not able to engage in collective bargaining” (CEART, 2015, paragraph 13).

This appears to be in contrast with several provisions concerning social dialogue included in the 1966 Recommendation.⁸ In particular, the *Relations between teachers and the education service as a whole* as outlined in paragraphs 75–76 recall the need for open consultations with teacher organizations and recognition of the importance of the participation of teachers to improve the quality of the education service. With regard to the principle of cooperation in policy issues, the Recommendation also highlights the need for “co-operation between the competent authorities, organizations of teachers, of employers and workers, and of parents as well as cultural organizations and institutions of learning and research, for the purpose of defining educational policy and its precise objectives” (paragraph 10(k)).

⁸ A complete list of provisions relevant to education social dialogue is available in: Ratteree, 2012, pp. 19–20, Appendix I.

Professional freedom and active participation of teachers have also been identified as necessary requirements for social dialogue in education (Ratteree, 2012). These appear, however, to be challenged by current trends of education privatization. Studies on the consequences of privatization for education have highlighted that, in addition to their limited involvement in the content and methodology of education delivery, teachers in private schools also felt that they were not consulted in decision-making on any other aspects of school procedures. According to them, their opinions were only considered regarding basic matters, for example a change to the timetable (EI and KNUT, 2016). While many studies have suggested that teachers should have a positive, active role in education reform at both the national and community level, in reality they often merely carry out instructions, especially in private schools (Kamat et al., 2016).

Teachers in private schools are often not unionized and their professional knowledge is excluded from the construction of policy processes (Olmedo, 2016). This trend is common to many regions worldwide. For instance, in Malaysia and in the Philippines, only a few private sector teachers are organized into unions (Wintour, 2015). Within a research conducted on the Pearson Affordable Learning Fund (a project of the Pearson plc corporation which supports low-fee private schools in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia) it was found that “qualified and unionised teachers are regarded with suspicion ... as ‘part of the problem’ – as unreliable, lazy and often absent” (Olmedo, 2016, p. 19). This biased attitude of corporations and multinationals towards the teaching profession may be detrimental to any possible cooperation among different forces of society for the development of inclusive education policies. Despite the fact that unionization is often discouraged in private schools, an interesting example of unionization of private schoolteachers is represented by the Coalition of Uganda Private School Teachers Association (COUPSTA) which brings together parents, teachers and students in the quest for quality education. It is also interesting to note that the COUPSTA was one of the organizations that in 2016 signed the [campaign](#) to close BIA schools for not respecting basic education standards.

Some issues have been raised as to whether teacher unions at both national and international levels should represent staff employed in LFPS or whether a distinction should be made between those who are officially operating as teachers according to established legal standards and those who are operating illegally. The possibility of representing teachers working in LFPS may actually undermine notions of quality and standards which apply to the teaching profession as a whole.⁹ If this is the case, then the difficulties that LFPS teachers encounter in organizing and unionizing may not represent a case of violation of the 1966 Recommendation, since the majority of them are not officially recognized as teachers. Having said this, considerations should be made regarding how the right of association and representation of LFPS “teachers” could be ensured, if not as teachers, at least as generic employees.

4. Professionalization

The 1966 Recommendation recognizes “Professionalism” as one of the guiding principles for the enhancement and protection of the status of teachers. It is specified that “[t]eaching should be regarded as a profession: it is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it calls also for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge” (paragraph 6). The final Communiqué of the 12th Session of the CEART to the World Education Forum 2015 also stated that the professional status of teachers must be addressed as an essential element

⁹ This consideration synthesizes some of the discussion the author had with Angelo Gavrielatos, director of Education International.

of education goals. In this perspective, it is necessary to ensure that the status of teaching as a profession is publicly recognized and respected.

Having said this, deprofessionalization of teachers was addressed as a serious concern for the application of the 1966 Recommendation by the Joint Committee of the CEART during the 11th Session in 2012: “The Joint Committee notes the trend of disregarding teaching as a profession, which has resulted in the deprofessionalization of teachers. Indicators of this situation are the lowering of entry requirements into teacher education institutions and the massive hiring of unqualified teachers and untrained teachers” (p. 7). The 2015 session of the CEART further identified a number of policy-related factors as contributing to the increased instability in employment relationships in the teaching profession. In particular, “the influence of for-profit educational providers on public policies” was considered as a key factor in contributing to the acceleration of the deprofessionalization of teachers (paragraph 39(c)).

In private schools in “resource-poor countries”, teachers are likely to be employed with different types of temporary contracts which involve little or no job security and substantially fewer benefits (Ratteree, 2015). Recent studies have analysed the growing policy concerns that result from the new developments in education privatization in relation to the professionalism of teachers. For instance, the emergence of LFPS chains has created doubts about the effects of standardization on “the very concept of teachers as professionals with the necessary knowledge to adapt their teaching to different situations and contexts” (Verger et al., 2016). As a result, the work of teachers appears to be valued significantly less by LFPS than most education providers, since the role of the teacher has been effectively replaced by new forms of technology (Riep and Machacek, 2016). Indeed, standardized and replicable lesson plans delivered by underpaid and unlicensed teachers represent a form of “deskilled labour” where pedagogical autonomy is limited and narrowly structured by guidelines that must be followed in class (EI and KNUT, 2016). This is in line with the reflection expressed by Ball (2012) when examining the “school-in-a-box model”. He argued that “neo-liberal technologies work on us to produce ‘docile and productive’ teacher and the student bodies, and responsible and enterprising teacher and the student selves” (p. 29). Some studies have shown that in spite of repeated criticism, supporters of low-fee private schools were unwilling to discuss the issue of teacher professionalization (Kamat et al., 2016).

Another factor contributing to the deprofessionalization of teachers in the context of private schooling in lower-income countries is related to the exploitation of teachers for marketing and commercial purposes. Interviews with teachers working in BIA schools revealed that the company undertook additional measures to cut back on teacher costs. Such measures included a refusal to pay teachers for certain extracurricular responsibilities (Riep and Machacek, 2016). Findings of a research conducted in Kenya also indicate that, in addition to their teaching responsibilities, teachers were unpaid for advertising the company to the community, what BIA refers to as “community outreach”. Although teachers felt this marketing practice was embarrassing, stressful, irritating, tiring and demoralizing, they were nevertheless expected to go door-to-door “talking to parents about their school [and the] fees, with an objective of convincing them to bring their children to BIA” (EI and KNUT, 2016, pp. 33–34). This is also due to the fact that their pay is dependent on the number of children in their class. Using teachers as unpaid advertisers, combined with their remarkably low pay and lack of employee benefits, is a clear case of exploitation of labour in the global South (Riep and Machacek, 2016).

With regard to the perception of their own work, a recent study found that teachers in private schools also expressed different views when compared to those in public schools: “in public schools, there was an ethos of work linked to ideas about quality, often explicitly mentioning aspects of inclusion”. On the other hand, in the private schools, the emphasis was more on how much work teachers can do with relatively limited training and little pay, “linked to a narrower vision of learning outcomes” (Unterhalter et al., 2018). Moreover,

teachers in these schools were more concerned with their own pay, hours of work, and the eventual academic results without formulating a wider vision of education within the classroom. The relationships around teaching and learning appeared to be clearly linked with an exchange of commodities (Unterhalter et al., 2018). This narrower focus on the particular school and its learning outcomes indicate issues that Standing (2014) highlights concerning distinctions between work which is associated with generating value and labour, which is often commodified and exploitative.

A specific concern relating to the condition of the teaching profession in lower-income countries is the overwhelming use of female teachers in the context of private schooling because of their status as the cheapest source of labour (Srivastava, 2013). Low-fee private schools often employ young women who are willing to work for wages that are unlikely to be sufficient to support a family. This situation is particularly noticeable, with most proprietors being men and most of the teaching staff being young women (Kamat et al., 2016). While some see teaching as a possibility for women to get out of house and have a little extra money to supplement their family income, most scholars consider this strategy as posing serious problems in terms of recognizing teaching as a profession deserving of real investment and support (Kamat et al., 2016). This trend is illustrated in the following cases: in Pakistan, private schools are more likely to be present in rural areas where there is a government secondary school nearby, with female graduates becoming teachers at local private schools: 76 per cent of private schoolteachers are women, while they make up only 43 per cent of the government teacher workforce (Andrabi et al., 2007). Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, India, women make up 69 per cent of the mathematics teacher workforce in private schools but only 34 per cent in government schools (Singh and Sarkar, 2012).

Although some see LFPS in a favourable light for running community-based schools and for providing some source of income for unemployed young women, it is certainly true that the predominant number of women in teaching has resulted in an undervaluation of the profession. Temporary and low-paid work for a predominantly female teaching force, seen as a “benefit to women in a developmental state”, should instead be read as constituting gender discrimination (Kamat et al., 2016).

3. Conclusions

If education is to contribute to the full realization of the individual and of communities, teachers remain key actors (UNESCO, 2015a). However, although international development discourse insists on the importance of teachers, the trends and issues reported in this paper show a growing process of deprofessionalization within the teaching profession. This is particularly alarming in lower-income countries where the phenomenon of privatization is growing more rapidly with the expansion of low-fee private schooling.

As illustrated in the second section, the trend towards privatization can have a negative impact on teachers' working conditions – greater casualization due to the increasing use of fixed-term contracts, excessive working hours and workload. Moreover, a greater use of unqualified and untrained teachers to address a growing demand for education and teacher shortages may also have adverse consequences on the quality of teaching. While the issue of quality is widely debated, the reduced autonomy of teachers, as a consequence of the growing use of standardized curriculums and high-stake teacher evaluations, has a considerable impact on the quality of teaching. Scripted lessons, enabling the hiring of unqualified and untrained teachers, are undermining academic autonomy and freedom of expression. The use of these practices to keep education costs at a minimum and hence generate greater profit may result in the purposes of education being shifted towards merely private and corporate interests. Moreover, teachers' lack of participation in education policy and decision-making and the barriers imposed to their involvement in teachers' unions are detrimental to the development of more inclusive education systems. As a result, these trends may undermine the idea of teaching as the world's most important foundational profession.

In order to address these risks, it is necessary to better understand the causes behind the privatization process and its impacts on different contexts. The trends towards education privatization highlight the deficiencies and weaknesses of public education systems in terms of capacity to both funding and providing quality education opportunities for all, with potential adverse consequences on principles of inclusion and equity. At the same time, the greater involvement of non-state actors is also the result of a growing demand for voice in the management of public affairs and for greater diversification and relevance of education systems (UNESCO, 2015a).

As outlined in the Education 2030 Agenda, States have the responsibility to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and this requires “a qualified and motivated teaching force” (UNESCO et al., 2016). Indeed, accountability starts with governments, which are responsible for fulfilling the right to education. Having said this, despite increased resources being made available, mismanagement and lack of political willingness have contributed to the failure of governments in achieving free quality education for all and hence to a greater dissatisfaction towards the public sector. Establishing well-functioning and democratic governments should therefore be the priority for any action taken in view of ensuring equity and quality of education opportunities at all socio-economic levels.

At the same time, this essential long-term perspective should be integrated with shorter term and more viable strategies in order not to undermine the fulfilment of the right to education. Indeed, where contexts are disrupted and public education systems practically non-existent, private schooling sometimes remains the only solution. Moreover, the capacity of the State to properly finance universal education, and the subsequent expenditure involved for teacher salaries, is also being challenged by growing demands for other public services such as clean water, health care and security. It is therefore essential to guarantee more effective utilization as well as mobilization of additional financial and human resources. Of course, these conditions should not become a pretext for disinvesting from public education systems. Having said this, it is necessary for appropriate solutions to be found to complement

and reinforce public education systems in order to address the current challenges of ensuring quality education opportunities for all.

It is widely acknowledged that, while remaining the primary responsibility of the State, the fulfilment of the Education 2030 Agenda is a shared responsibility which requires the involvement of all stakeholders, including the private sector.¹ The 1966 Recommendation does not discourage private involvement, but equity and quality issues are paramount. If properly regulated and monitored, the private sector may contribute to strengthening public education systems, while also promoting innovation and a greater acknowledgement of the diversity of contexts. In this respect, a greater integration of public and private resources may help deal with the growing demand for education, and hence for qualified teachers.

According to the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2013/14, “a number of lessons can be drawn from experiences with low-fee private schools. Smaller class size enables greater classroom interaction, for example, and closer engagement with the community means private schoolteachers may be less likely to be absent. However, such benefits do not mean that [these] schools are better per se” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 274). Partnerships between the public and private sector can represent “an exciting laboratory to test new tools and pedagogy, to implement management reform, to diversify the types of education on offer, and to involve new partners. But proper planning, clarity about purpose, ensuring equity, care for cost-benefit and scalability, democratic process, evaluation and sustainability remain the foundation stones of any serious education initiative” (Draxler, 2012, p. 58). When “genuinely based on exchange and mutual benefit” partnerships between the public and private may contribute to the development of new forms of cooperation (Delors et al., 1996). Indeed, the private sector may have an important role to play as long as it is able to work with citizens and public institutions in the development of new ways to achieve shared societal goals.

A sound regulatory framework should provide the conditions for ensuring effective cooperation between private and public sectors. With regard to the teaching profession, this requires setting minimum standards regarding working conditions, quality of teaching and professional development that should be respected by all actors. However, the enforcement of regulations is often too weak especially in countries experiencing a fast growth in private schools. Regulations, accreditation processes, as well as compliance mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure the respect of quality standards (UNESCO, 2017). The ongoing work on the [Human Rights Guiding Principles on the obligations of States regarding private actors in education](#) aims to provide further guidance to improve regulation of education in accordance with human rights law.

It is widely acknowledged that supporting teachers remains fundamental for guaranteeing better education achievements for all (UNESCO, 2015a). Having said this, as a recent report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) illustrates, policy-makers have difficulty allocating resources “where the challenges are greatest and where those resources can have the biggest impact” (OECD, 2018). There are very few countries where the most challenging schools attract the most qualified teachers. Indeed, in most countries these schools attract less-qualified and less-experienced teachers (OECD, 2018). Innovative strategies need to be developed in order to ensure that teachers, irrespectively of the context in which they operate, are qualified and follow a rigorous selection process so that only those who are prepared and motivated can enter the profession. In this regard, the missions and careers of teachers should constantly be revised and

¹ T. Lowenthal: *Drafting guiding principles on state obligations concerning private schools: Lessons and strategic considerations from a rights perspective*, NORRAG, 2018.

reconsidered in the light of new requirements and new challenges to education in a changing world.

In order to support the development of sustainable approaches to teacher policies and practices, it is necessary to acknowledge the positive contributions that private actors may provide within public education systems, while also paying increasing attention to the limitations and challenges of their involvement in the education sector. Even if the ultimate responsibility to adequately fund public education and set the minimum standards and conditions lies with the State, the participation of all actors may help provide adequate solutions to support teachers in their professional and personal life, even those working in the most difficult circumstances. Further research should be encouraged in order to analyse the conditions and identify the domains in which such cooperation can take place. This is essential for developing innovative and equitable education policies and practices where teachers are both valued and trusted, which is an essential condition for the fulfilment of individuals and societies.

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