

Joint submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

(95th pre-sessional working group)

Privatisation and commercialisation of education in Senegal

April 2023

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) and the Coalition des Organisations en SYnergie pour la Défense de l'Éducation Publique (COSYDEP) welcome the opportunity to contribute with inputs to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the drafting of the list of issues for the review of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Senegal (CRC/C/SEN/6-7).

This submission is based on the findings of the [report](#) on the privatisation and commercialisation of education in Senegal. The research included, among other things, a field study conducted in 2020 that covered primary and middle schools in five (5) regions: Dakar and its suburbs, Ziguinchor, Diourbel, Thiès and Kaolack.

Introduction

Economic and social rights are enshrined in Article 8 of the Senegalese Constitution. More specifically, Article 21 of the Constitution states that: "The State has the duty and responsibility for the education and training of youth through public schools. All children, boys and girls, in all parts of the national territory, have the right of access to school (...)".

However, the education sector in Senegal faces many challenges, including those related to adequate educational provision and effective regulation of private education, which affect the access of all children to quality public education as revealed by the COSYDEP research report.

1. A choice of private education due to a lack of public schools

At almost all levels, private schools have a higher average annual growth rate (AAGR) than public schools. The proportion of private schools is all the more significant as 52% of pre-schools are private (secular and community). At the Elementary level, while the majority of schools are public, the public sector recorded an average annual growth rate of 1.7% between 2013 and 2018, while the private sector had an AAGR of 6.4%. These proportions are in line with the average where the public sector recorded AAGR of 1.46% between 2013 and 2018, while the private sector recorded AAGR of 2.30%. This growth of the private sector and the low development of public education have the effect of limiting parents' choice of quality public schools. 74% of the parents interviewed during the study stated that they send their children to private schools not by choice but by obligation, as private education is the only educational option available to them. In terms of the determinants of parents' choice of private schools, confirmed by data from the literature review, the expansion of private schools is linked to the deterioration of teaching conditions in public schools and/or the absence of public primary schools in certain localities.

2. A high cost of education that fosters discrimination

The annual costs (tuition and other opportunistic fees) observed in the private schools in the study vary between 50 and 400 thousand FCFA per year. The diversity of costs suggests that the schools do not offer the same services, and shows that they cater for different socio-economic groups. It is clear that this situation does not promote inclusion or equity, but rather increases inequality and leads to a classification of families according to their socio-economic status. Furthermore, the data from the field survey highlights that the most common financial costs are between 100 and 150 thousand CFA francs per year. 30% of the parents interviewed fall into this bracket. 17% pay between 50 and 100 thousand CFA francs. When compared to household incomes in Senegal, where the gross income per capita is about 780,000 CFA per year, this represents a considerable burden. In addition to enrolment fees and monthly instalments, parents are subject to various charges, the annual amount of which is distributed as follows: 24% for supplies, 22% for uniforms, 18% for textbooks, 17% for support courses, 16% for field trips and 3% for the school canteen. Add to this the registration fees and monthly payments, and the costs become out of reach for low-income households. All in all, the absence of state mechanisms to regulate the costs of private education is particularly problematic in that it accentuates socio-economic inequalities in society.

3. Inadequate regulation of private education

Despite the legislative and regulatory framework governing private education institutions, implementation remains weak. In fact, some private schools operate without any control from the national authorities regarding the quality of their teaching, the working conditions and rights of educational staff, safety and the learning environment, or the content taught.

This situation is due more to the inadequacy of inspections (47% of respondents said they were inspected at least once a year and 26% preferred not to answer) and the human and logistical resources made available. Most of these teachers (54%) have fixed-term contracts, and 44% are part-time. From the point of view of teacher management, 39% of the schools surveyed were not up to date with their social security contributions. Less than 20% of schools have 10-15% of qualified staff with professional diplomas. As a result, some public schools do not comply with the norms and standards set by the legislator. These findings explain the massive use of public teachers by the private sector. The low proportion of recognised schools is confirmed by the field survey sample, which indicates that of the schools surveyed, 26% are recognised, 69% are authorised and 5% are not authorised.

In view of the above, we suggest the following questions to the Committee that could be included in the list of issues for the review of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Senegal:

- I. What measures is the State taking towards sufficient, accessible and quality public education provision to guarantee that parents are not forced to opt for private education, which is even expensive?

- II. What measures is the State taking to ensure that costs are regulated in private schools in order to avoid reinforcing inequalities due to socioeconomic status?
- III. What measures does the State have in place to ensure effective regulation of private schools, particularly at the level of Education and Training Inspections?

For more information kindly read the report (in French): [Privatisation et Marchandisation de l'Education au Sénégal](#) (2021) developed by COSYDEP with GI-ESCR's support.

Submitted by: Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) and Coalition des Organisations en SYnergie pour la Défense de l'Education Publique (COSYDEP).

Contacts:

Aya Douabou, Programme Officer, Human Rights and Public Services, West Africa and Francophone Countries, aya@gi-escr.org

Cheikh Mbow, Executive Director, Coalition des Organisations en SYnergie pour la Défense de l'Education Publique, cosydep@gmail.com