



The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Dear Sir/Madam,

The question of the role to give to private schools within education systems, in particular in developing countries, is a complex debate that necessarily requires a nuanced reflection.

Yet, your [articles](#) from 1st August on low-cost private schools and for-profit education exactly lack the nuance that would make them useful and credible. The articles – rightly – describe some of the challenges faced by State schools, but ignore the evidence showing equally poor quality or little innovation in private schools – as for instance well summed up in the last [Global Monitoring Report](#) (p. 216). They are full of self-contradictions: just by way of example, on one hand “governments that are too disorganised or corrupt” and “should get out of the way”; while you recommend these same incapable governments “subsidise private schools”, “regulate schools to ensure quality”, and “run public exams” – seemingly ignoring education companies’ own [scandals](#). And so on – with many other oversights revealing a profound conceptual bias of the paper in support of private schools.

In this context, most regrettable perhaps is the claim that those who disagree are “ideological” – I quote: “NGOs tend to be ideologically opposed to the private sector”. This is such a misnomer, whereas together with dozens of international, national, and community-based civil society partners around the world – including teachers’ unions – we have been working hard in the last 12 months gathering [evidence](#) on the ground, engaging in [dialogues](#) with all parties, and [researching](#) what the basic legal human rights requirements within which private schools can and should be allowed to operate are. Far from opposing private schools, far from ignoring the complex reality – which we live every day – of schooling in developing countries, we’re looking for practical solutions which uphold human rights principles. Not misinformed solutions, like the simplistic suggestion to provide vouchers, which “parents top up” when it has been [proven](#) in Chile to create high and unbearable [inequalities](#), but solutions that guarantee human dignity as legally protected under international law, ensuring that education is primarily focused on the best interest of the child.

Are Human Rights Council [resolutions](#), UN expert bodies’ [opinions](#), and international law “ideological”? We will be under no illusion. Your lack of rigour in dealing with such a serious issue is not only highly disappointing, but it also calls us to reflect on which side ideology lies – and on the true influence of the warning you made yourselves: “Pearson, which owns 50% of The Economist, has stakes in both Bridge and Omega”.

Best regards,

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<http://globalinitiative-escr.org/advocacy/privatization-in-education-research-initiative/>