

Sir,

Your briefing on for-profit education in poor countries presents a rather rose-tinted view of the benefits of private schooling. There are both good state schools and bad private schools in these countries. Any approach that claims to put children first has to take a hard look at how the entire system meets the challenge of ensuring equal access to an inclusive quality education for all. Consider the impact of privatizing schools on girls. Already more boys than girls are enrolled in schools globally—adding even the lowest fees to the costs of sending a girl to school means more girls will be kept at home, and the family's meager income spent on the education of sons.

Private sector participants have the same obligation as the state to uphold the right to education, particularly when they receive public money. The same studies you cherry-pick your facts from will show that even where low-fee private schools outperform a local state school, the quality of education they provide is only marginally better. This is no policy solution for poor children.

Yours,

Hugh McLean, director of the Open Society Foundations Education Support Program.