

Do Schools Really Divide the Togolese?

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Key messages

- The education system in Togo offers different educational pathways, which has led to certain factors being more important than others in parents' decisions to choose the right type of school for their children's education.
- Those factors are principally related to the parents' status, their area of residence and the region they live in in Togo.



- The same factors are behind the unequal opportunities on the job market after students finish school: those who attended a private school are more likely to get a higher salary than those who attended a government school, or both a government school and a private one, or no school at all.

The problem and its extent in Togo

Equality in education means that all young people, regardless of their background, socio-economic origin, and physical environment, should have equal opportunities to access the education system at all levels. Togo's education system is characterized by a dichotomy of educational choices between government and private schools. The increase in the number of private schools since the liberalization of the education sector in the 1990s has led to a rapid growth in private schools throughout the country in general and in some of its regions in particular.

Despite the absence of current statistics on the trends in school attendance, the available statistics for 2005 show that even though the number of government schools (2,600) was higher than that of private schools (1,664), the number of the latter increased at a faster rate, thus making private schools the preferred choice for parents.

However, the direct and indirect costs associated with sending a child to a private school, which are generally high, have led to the exclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds from this type of school. Statistics show that 83.89% of students in private schools come from wealthy households and only 16.11% come from poor ones. Conversely, 88.35% of the children in government schools come from poor households, against just 11.65% from wealthy ones.

This difference in educational choices has implications for the economy as a whole and for the labour market in particular. Statistics show that although the poverty rate fell between 2006 and 2015 in Togo, youth employment remains a big issue in the country. Learner performance indicators according to the type of school attended show that in 2018 the rate of unemployment was highest (59.34%) among the young people who had attended government schools, followed by those who had attended both government and private schools (47.39%). It was lowest (32.57%) among those who had attended private schools (40.6%). It was also found that young people's access to employment increased with their level of education: the rate was higher among those with university education (68%) than among those who had done technical and vocational training courses (62%).

In the face of these worrying statistics, there is an urgent need to tackle the issue of inequality in education, if the goal of reducing inequality of all kinds within the education system, which is the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4), is to be achieved.

Togo has undertaken a series of actions, including the adoption of the Dakar agreement reaffirming its commitment to achieving the Education-for-All goal by 2015.

This came following the World Conference on Higher Education, which recommended widening access to higher education and strengthening links with society, in particular with the world of work, and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007-2015, which was launched by the Heads of State at the Ouagadougou Summit in 2004 and finalized at the 11th African Youth Summit for Sustainable Development in May 2011.

Economic policy options and recommendations

In Togo, the characteristics of students and those of their parents were identified as the main factors responsible for the differential choice of the type of school to attend. It was observed that young people who attended a private school had a higher salary, once employed, than those who attended a government school, or a combination of government and private schools, or no school at all.

Public intervention strategies are therefore needed to support the education sector. There is a need for policies aimed at social inequality reduction and income redistribution. In this regard, there should be increasing funding for government schools so that they can offer the same quality of education as private schools. In this undertaking, priority could be given to the government schools in the regions of the country where there is a high concentration of poor populations (that is in the rural areas and regions such as Maritime and Kara).

Source: Campus Togo (2016); Togo TopNews (2022).



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