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World Bank

June 2009

Online at <http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/16464/>
MPRA Paper No. 16464, posted 25. July 2009 / 14:36

CHAPTER 11

Comparing the Private Cost of Education at Public, Private, and Faith-Based Schools in Cameroon

Prosperre Backiny-Yetna and Quentin Wodon

Introduction

It is often argued that faith-based organizations (FBOs) provide a substantial share of education, health, and other social services in African countries, that they do so at a lower cost than the public sector, that the services provided by FBOs are of better quality than those of the public sector, and finally that these services tend to be better targeted toward the poor than is the case for the public sector (and certainly for the private sector). If all of those assertions are correct, they have clear implications for policy, as donors as well as governments should then be more inclined than is currently the case to support FBOs in their service delivery activities.

As discussed in part 2 of this book, there is some evidence that faith-based and more generally private schools achieve a better outcome for their students than public schools and contribute to a more competitive marketplace for education services (e.g., Altonji et al. 2005; Cox and Jimenez 1990; Evans and Schwab 1995; González and Arévalo 2005; Hsieh and Urquiola 2006; and Hoxby 1994).

Yet in this book, the evidence provided on faith-based schools is mixed. Allcott and Ortega (2009) suggest that in R. B. de Venezuela, *Fe y Alegria* schools perform slightly better on standardized test scores than public schools, but the difference between the two sets of schools is limited, and although *Fe y Alegria* schools are in principle targeting poor neighborhoods, the data suggest few differences in the characteristics of the students served by both sets of schools. In Bangladesh, Asadullah et al. (2009) suggest that there are few differences in test scores between religious (madrasas) and secular schools when selection into religious school is taken into account, but they document a statistically significant learning deficit for graduates of primary madrasas, who tend to have lower test scores in secondary schools even after controlling for school- and classroom-specific unobservable correlates of learning. Wodon and Ying (2009) show that in Sierra Leone, faith-based schools do reach the poor much better than public schools, and that after appropriate controls to take into account the characteristics of students and endogenous school choice, faith-based schools also perform marginally better than public schools in promoting literacy and numeracy among students. By contrast Backiny-Yetna and Wodon (2009) suggest that in the Democratic Republic of Congo, there are no systematic differences between faith-based and public schools in serving poor as opposed to nonpoor students, with also small differences in quality that tend not to be statistically significant.

Apart from the issue of the comparative performance of students from different schools, there has also been some work in the literature on the cost of services for their users, and how this cost, or the level of the service provided, varies between faith-based and public providers. In their analysis of health service provision in Uganda, Reinikka and Svensson (forthcoming) use a change in financing of not-for-profit health care providers through untied grants to test two theories of organizational behavior. The first theory postulates that not-for-profit providers are intrinsically motivated to serve the poor and will therefore use new resources to expand their services or cut the cost of these services. The second theory postulates that not-for-profit providers are captured by their managers or workers and behave like for-profit actors. Although they may not appropriate profits, they would tend to use untied grants to raise the salaries of their staff or provide them with other benefits that would not directly serve the poor. The authors' empirical results suggest that the first altruistic theory is validated by the data, and that the results matter in the sense that this altruistic difference makes a difference for the poor.

In this chapter, using recent household survey data for Cameroon, we focus on measuring the cost for households of the education services that their children receive and assessing how this cost varies according to the type of service provider. Thus, although we provide basic statistics on the performance of various types of schools, we focus our econometric analysis on the estimation of the private cost of education. We do so because contrary to what is observed in some other countries, the data suggest that faith-based schools in Cameroon serve primarily better-off children, with public schools serving the poor better (private schools are even more tilted toward better-off students, but that is to be expected). Cameroon is a country in which the state provides subsidies to faith-based schools, but not to private schools. However, subsidies provided per student to faith-based schools in Cameroon are typically smaller than the subsidies provided to public schools. This means that faith-based schools have to raise more funds than public schools to be sustainable, which makes them more expensive for parents than public schools and results in a weaker targeting performance in reaching the poor (for details on education in Cameroon, see among others World Bank 2003, 2005).

How much more expensive are faith-based schools in comparison with public schools? To answer that question, basic statistics are not enough because we need to use proper econometric techniques to control for the endogeneity of school choice. What is meant by endogeneity is the fact that the choice of school by parents depends itself on the cost of the schools. Because faith-based schools are more expensive than public schools, parents who can afford these schools are likely to be able and willing to spend more on the education of their children, all other things being equal. This will typically generate an upward bias in the estimation of the cost of faith-based schools for parents if no controls for endogeneity are used in the econometric analysis. Our econometric methodology enables us to avoid such bias and obtain more reasonable comparisons of costs than would be obtained without such an approach.

This chapter is structured as follows. In the next section, we provide basic statistics on the key variables of interest for the analysis, including the market share of the various types of schools, the satisfaction rates of parents with the schools, and the costs of attending the schools. The subsequent section provides the results of our econometric analysis to assess the cost differential between different schools after controlling for the characteristics of the children and their households, as well as the endogenous choice of the school attended by the children. A brief conclusion follows.

Basic Statistics

We focus our analysis on primary schools. The data are from the nationally representative ECAM 3 survey implemented by the Institut National de la Statistique in 2007. Tables 11.1 and 11.2 provide data on the market shares of various types of school providers by quintile of per capita consumption (with the first quintile, “Q1,” representing the poorest 20 percent of the population, and the top quintile, “Q5,” the richest 20 percent) and by the religious affiliation of the children. Given that the proportion of the population in poverty is at 39.9 percent according to official estimates from the National Statistical Office, the first two quintiles can be considered as representing the poor.

Faith-based providers account for 14 percent of all primary school students in urban areas and 11 percent in rural areas (12 percent at the national level). The market share of public government schools is 86 percent in rural areas (in which private schools are virtually nonexistent) and 57 percent in urban areas (in which private schools account for 29 percent of all students). Thus, although faith-based schools in Cameroon do not have as large a market share as faith-based networks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Backiny-Yetna and Wodon 2009) or Sierra Leone (Wodon and Ying 2009), their role as service providers is far from negligible.

Table 11.1 Distribution of Students in Primary School by Quintile of per Capita Consumption

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	All
Urban						
Public	8.4	14.8	26.1	28.6	22.2	100.0
Private	0.5	5.7	15.9	29.3	48.5	100.0
Religious	6.2	10.9	22.7	28.1	32.1	100.0
All	5.8	11.6	22.7	28.7	31.2	100.0
Rural						
Public	34.3	28.9	20.9	12.1	3.7	100.0
Private	20.2	24.4	24.5	24.2	6.7	100.0
Religious	16.1	33.0	24.2	19.2	7.5	100.0
All	31.9	29.2	21.4	13.3	4.2	100.0
Cameroon						
Public	28.1	25.6	22.1	16.1	8.1	100.0
Private	4.3	9.3	17.5	28.3	40.5	100.0
Religious	12.3	24.5	23.6	22.6	17.0	100.0
All	23.5	23.6	21.8	18.2	12.9	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations using ECAM 3 survey for 2007 (INS, Cameroon).

Table 11.2 Distribution of Students by Religion of Their Parents

	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Protestant</i>	<i>Other Christian</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>All</i>
Urban						
Public	47.9	56.3	50.5	82.3	50.8	57.1
Private	36.9	26.9	34.2	7.2	41.6	28.7
Religious	15.2	16.7	15.3	10.5	7.6	14.3
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Rural						
Public	80.5	87.8	81.2	90.8	94.4	86.1
Private	3.0	3.6	3.6	4.4	0.7	3.2
Religious	16.6	8.6	15.2	4.7	4.9	10.7
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cameroon						
Public	68.1	79.1	72.8	87.9	86.3	76.8
Private	15.8	10.0	11.9	5.4	8.3	11.4
Religious	16.1	10.9	15.2	6.8	5.4	11.9
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations using ECAM 3 survey for 2007 (INS, Cameroon).

Faith-based schools tend to serve households that are better off compared with government schools. This is visible especially when comparing statistics for students from the bottom quintile in rural areas, because 16 percent of the students in faith-based schools belong to the poorest quintile in rural areas, versus 34 percent for government schools (the differences for the other quintiles are much smaller). In urban areas, differences are largest in the top quintiles, which account for 32 percent of all students in faith-based schools, versus 22 percent for the public sector. As expected, private schools are even more tilted toward children from the top quintiles.

Faith-based schools also tend to serve Catholic and other Christian children proportionately more than other groups, but Muslim and other children also attend those schools. Thus one can argue that in Cameroon as in other countries in which faith-based schools benefit from public funding, there is probably no discrimination by faith-based schools against students on the basis of their religion because the schools aim to cater to the needs of all students.

Although we will focus in the rest of this chapter on the private cost of schooling, it is still useful to provide basic statistics on the performance of faith-based and government schools. Three main outcome indicators can be obtained from the survey: (1) whether students can read and write

in English or French (Cameroon is a bilingual country, and the education system supports education in both English and French, with the majority of the students enrolled in French schools); (2) whether students have repeated a grade in the previous year; and (3) whether children are still enrolled at age 15. Table 11.3 provides summary statistics on these three performance indicators. Most parents declare that their children can read or write in either English or French, but the performance of faith-based schools seems to be lower than that of other schools in urban areas and higher in rural areas. In regard to repetition rates, public schools have the lowest at the national and urban levels, and in rural areas the repetition rate seems higher among faith-based schools. Faith-based schools have the highest drop-out rates in all areas, with more than 20 percent of students dropping out in the rural areas.

Table 11.4 provides data on the private costs of schooling by education provider. The data for Cameroon are especially rich in this respect, as it is feasible to identify the cost of schooling for each child, as opposed to only having data for the household as a whole. We focus on the expenditures that are directly paid to the schools because that is what is

Table 11.3 Student Performance by Type of School

	<i>% of students</i>		
	<i>Who can read and write in French or English (grade 2 to 6)</i>	<i>Who have not repeated a grade in the previous year (grade 1 to 6)</i>	<i>Who are still enrolled in school at age 15 (all grades)</i>
Urban			
Public	92.5	75.9	94.0
Private	95.3	84.4	94.5
Religious	89.3	78.3	89.3
All	92.8	78.7	93.7
Rural			
Public	79.1	66.3	92.1
Private	73.2	74.5	86.2
Religious	83.7	76.2	78.8
All	79.5	67.6	90.9
Cameroon			
Public	82.5	68.6	92.6
Private	91.2	82.5	92.7
Religious	85.9	77.1	82.8
All	83.9	71.2	91.9

Source: Authors' calculations using ECAM 3 survey for 2007 implemented by the INS, Cameroon.

Table 11.4 Annual Education Expenditure (fees and related) by Student and by Type of School (in Franc CFA)

	<i>Registration</i>	<i>Fees</i>	<i>Parent association</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>All</i>
Urban					
Public	1,372	939	2,816	708	5,864
Private	7,313	38,141	1,609	1,418	49,420
Religious	4,198	17,152	1,839	1,107	24,818
All	3,504	14,157	2,333	969	21,181
Rural					
Public	496	286	2,402	447	3,674
Private	3,604	13,248	1,163	401	19,400
Religious	1,714	8,454	984	525	11,571
All	730	1,612	2,218	453	5,051
Cameroon					
Public	707	443	2,502	510	4,199
Private	6,576	33,184	1,520	1,215	43,499
Religious	2,703	11,857	1,325	762	16,717
All	1,633	5,689	2,255	621	10,257

Source: Authors' calculation using ECAM 3 survey for 2007 implemented by the INS, Cameroon.

affected by the type of funding that the schools receive from the government (as explained earlier, a key reason for the higher cost of faith-based as opposed to public schools is the fact that, although faith-based schools are subsidized, they do not benefit from subsidies as much as public schools do).

Table 11.4 shows that private schools are by far the most expensive, but faith-based schools are significantly more expensive than public schools in both urban and rural areas. Most of the differences in costs are related to registration fees, and especially other fees. By contrast, fees for parent associations and other costs are not too different between the various types of schools. The various fees paid to schools represent most of the private cost of schooling for households (however, those data are available only for the household as a whole and not by child); other expenses include the cost of uniforms, transport, books and materials, and the like. The proportion of the formal fees paid to schools to the total private costs of schooling, which is at 43 percent for the sample as a whole, is fairly stable across well-being quintiles.

Looking at the data in table 11.4, one could be led to believe that faith-based schools are about four times more expensive than public schools in urban areas and three times more expensive in rural areas. However, such

simple cost comparisons between the two types of schools do not account for the fact that there are potentially important differences in the types of students that enroll in public and faith-based schools. As mentioned earlier, students enrolled in government schools tend to be from poorer backgrounds than students in faith-based schools. Parents of poorer students are likely to spend less on schools for obvious reasons. The key question is, whether by controlling for the characteristics of the students and their households and taking into account endogeneity in the choice of school attended by children (this depends on the cost of schools for parents), are faith-based schools still more expensive than government schools? To answer that question, we turn to an econometric analysis in the next section.

Econometric Analysis

Our technique for assessing the correlates of cost is simple. We estimate a linear regression model on the logarithm of the cost of schooling (taking into account only the various fees paid to schools as outlined in table 11.4). Because the choice of school for a child depends on cost, we instrument the choice of the type of school the child goes to through probit regressions, which include as regressors all the correlates of the cost regression plus the leave-out share of the students in the child's geographic area that are going to faith-based or private schools. The child's geographic area is identified through the primary sampling unit to which the household belongs in the survey (typically each primary sampling unit includes between 20 and 30 households). We compute the leave-out participation rate in faith-based schools not taking into account whether the child himself or herself goes (thus, for each child in the same primary sampling unit, we compute a different leave-out participation rate).¹

The results for the determinants of the type of school attended are not shown but are available on request. The leave-out market shares of different types of schools at the PSU level are key determinants of the type of school the child attends. In addition, students in the Anglophone system are more likely to go to private schools, whereas students in rural areas are less likely to do so. Very young and older children are more likely to go to public schools than to private and faith-based schools. Catholics are more likely to enroll in religious schools, whereas all other groups are less likely to do so. There are strong geographic effects, with the probability of going to private schools highest in Douala, and the

probability of going to religious schools higher elsewhere. Children in higher grades are more likely to be enrolled in private or religious schools, as opposed to public schools. More often wealthier households send their children to private and religious schools. The education of the household head is not a key determinant of school choice, except when the head has a university education, in which case the child is more likely to go to a private or religious school. The sector of occupation of the head does not have a statistically significant impact on the type of school the child attends.

We focus here on the results of the cost regressions (see table A11.1 in the annex). The regressors or correlates of the cost are (1) the type of school attended by the child (this variable is instrumented as explained above to avoid endogeneity issues); (2) the grade in school the child is attending (with the first grade of the cycle being the reference category); (3) characteristics of the child—the age of the child and the age squared, the sex of the child, whether the child lives with his or her biological family; (4) the geographic location of the child according to urban or rural status and the main areas in the country (with Douala as the reference category); (5) the quintile of per capita consumption of the household in which the child lives; (6) household demographic variables—whether the household head is male or female; (7) the education level of the household head; and (8) the socioeconomic group of the household head.

The key variable of interest is the impact on cost of the type of school attended by the child. Without instruments, the premium for private and religious schools over public schools is very high, with private schools about three times as expensive as public schools and religious schools at least twice as expensive. With instruments, the differences are much smaller, but still large. Thus instrumenting the regressions reduced as expected the differential in costs. Private schools cost about 47 percent more than public schools, and the premium for religious schools is at 40 percent. Other key drivers of cost include the fact of studying in the Anglophone system (increase in cost of 18 percent) or being located in Douala or Yaoundé (with Yaoundé more expensive than Douala, and Douala more expensive than the other areas). The higher the grade the child is in, the higher the cost is, with an especially large increase in cost in grade 6. Better-off households tend to spend more, as proxied by the quintiles of per capita consumption. When the household head has achieved secondary education or a higher level, the household also spends

more for the child's schooling. The occupation of the household head is less of a factor.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to provide a comparative assessment of the cost of faith-based, private, and government schools in Cameroon. Contrary to what has been observed in some other African countries such as Sierra Leone, religious schools in Cameroon are less targeted toward the poor than public schools. This is probably in part because they are more expensive, and in turn the cost of religious schools may be related to the fact that, although they benefit from public subsidies, these subsidies are not as large as for public schools.

Simple basic statistics suggest that in regard to the fees that must be paid to the schools, faith-based schools are about four times more expensive than public schools in urban areas and three times more expensive in rural areas. Private schools are even more expensive. Regression results without controls for the endogeneity of school choice suggest as well very large differences in costs between public and faith-based and private schools. Yet once controls for endogeneity of school choice are introduced, the differences in costs, although still large, are reduced substantially. The results suggest that private schools cost 47 percent more than public schools, and the premium for religious schools is at 40 percent.

Our results could have implications for policy, but before discussing any such implications, for example, in terms of the financing of faith-based schools, substantial additional contextual work would need to be done. These results are also interesting in the African context. It is often argued that faith-based schools serve the poor better than public schools. Although this may be true in some countries, it is not in others such as Cameroon. Detailed country-level work is needed to better document the role of faith-based schools in education systems before making any generalization on the services they provide, be it in regard to their performance or to their cost.

Annex: Regression Results

Table A11.1 Determinants of the Logarithm of Education Expenditure

	<i>Noninstrumented model</i>			<i>Instrumented model</i>		
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P>t</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P>t</i>
Private school*	1.8374	0.0239	***	0.4680	0.0227	***
Religious school*	1.3828	0.0198	***	0.4011	0.0167	***
Anglophone system (yes)	0.2362	0.0280	***	0.1864	0.0380	***
Rural (yes)	-0.1339	0.0165	***	-0.0096	0.0238	
Region						
Douala						
Yaoundé	0.2364	0.0376	***	0.1423	0.0530	***
Adamaoua	-0.6369	0.0417	***	-0.7317	0.0682	***
Centre	-0.2120	0.0383	***	-0.4643	0.0589	***
Est	-0.5453	0.0404	***	-0.6616	0.0665	***
Extrême-nord	-0.7448	0.0370	***	-0.7157	0.0645	***
Littoral	-0.2329	0.0421	***	-0.4447	0.0680	***
Nord	-0.6469	0.0398	***	-0.6445	0.0681	***
Nord-ouest	-0.6487	0.0433	***	-0.8648	0.0678	***
Ouest	-0.4922	0.0346	***	-0.7385	0.0551	***
Sud	-0.4568	0.0413	***	-0.5538	0.0680	***
Sud-ouest	-0.3657	0.0440	***	-0.5894	0.0668	***
Grade						
Grade 1						
Grade 2	-0.0534	0.0212	**	-0.0415	0.0283	
Grade 3	-0.0329	0.0216		0.0191	0.0290	
Grade 4	-0.0051	0.0223		0.0317	0.0299	
Grade 5	0.0522	0.0220	**	0.1000	0.0299	***
Grade 6	0.7755	0.0231	***	0.8221	0.0313	***
Quintile						
Q1						
Q2	0.1005	0.0218	***	0.0529	0.0293	*
Q3	0.1269	0.0221	***	0.0142	0.0298	
Q4	0.1803	0.0238	***	0.0053	0.0333	
Q5	0.3776	0.0272	***	0.1904	0.0395	***
Female head hh (yes)	0.0299	0.0157	*	0.0245	0.0208	
Education hh						
No education						
Primary incomplete	0.0571	0.0208	***	0.0497	0.0277	*
Primary complete	0.0158	0.0232		-0.0363	0.0311	

(continued)

Table A11.1 Determinants of the Logarithm of Education Expenditure (Continued)

	Noninstrumented model			Instrumented model		
	Coef.	Std. Err.	P>t	Coef.	Std. Err.	P>t
Secondary 1	0.0603	0.0226	***	0.0089	0.0302	
Secondary 2	0.1230	0.0270	***	0.0751	0.0364	**
University	0.2125	0.0363	***	0.1793	0.0490	***
Socioeconomic group						
Unemployed						
Wage earner, formal	-0.0790	0.0335	**	-0.0460	0.0445	
Independent agriculture	-0.0986	0.0310	***	0.0073	0.0416	
Employer, nonagriculture	-0.0169	0.0502		-0.0236	0.0669	
Own worker, nonagriculture	-0.0495	0.0312		-0.0080	0.0415	
Dependent, informal	-0.0881	0.0379	**	-0.0568	0.0505	
Student	0.0743	0.0670		0.1347	0.0892	
Constant	1.3727	0.0481	**	3.1850	0.0687	***
Statistics						
Number						
of observations	9542			9524		
R ²	0.7041			0.4765		

Source: Authors' calculation using ECAM 3 survey for 2007 implemented by the INS, Cameroon.

Note

1. As noted in earlier chapters of this book, this strategy of identifying the outcome regression through a leave-out mean PSU-level variable affecting the choice of an individual was used, among others, by Ravallion and Wodon (2000) in their work on schooling and child labor in Bangladesh and by Wodon (2000) in work on the impact of low income energy policies on the probability of electricity disconnection in France.

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