Education Financing and the Impact of Privatisation in Liberia

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Meaning
AAID	ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EI	Education International
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Sector Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Education Monitoring (Report)
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
LEAP	Liberia Education Advancement Program
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTAL	National Teachers' Association of Liberia
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PPP(s)	Public–Private Partnership(s)
PSL	Partnership Schools for Liberia
SDG 4	Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education)
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEC	West African Examinations Council
WB/WBG	World Bank / World Bank Group

Executive Summary

Education is a fundamental human right and the foundation of national development. In Liberia, however, the sector continues to face persistent challenges characterized by chronic underinvestment, limited public financing, weak governance, and a growing reliance on private and commercial actors. In 2022, government expenditure on education accounted for only **2**.3% of GDP, far below the international benchmark of 6% of GDP and the 20% of national budgets recommended by UNESCO and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for developing countries.

This study provides critical evidence to inform policy dialogue, reform, and advocacy, emphasizing that education in Liberia must remain a right, not a privilege, and that sustained investment in human capital is essential for national peace and development. It examines the state of education financing, the rise of privatisation and commercialisation of education, and their implications for access, quality, and equity. The analysis further explores patterns of public investment, the scope and drivers of private sector participation, including Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs), and assesses the effectiveness of existing policies and regulations in promoting inclusive education.

Literature and Context

Global and regional evidence underscores the importance of adequate financing in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4): inclusive and equitable quality education. However, Liberia lags behind regional peers such as Sierra Leone and Ghana, which allocate over 20% of their national budgets to education. Persistent underfunding, weak budget execution, and overreliance on donor aid have constrained progress. The expansion of low-fee private schools and PPP initiatives, notably the Liberia Education Advancement Program (LEAP), illustrates both innovation and rising inequality. While these models have improved efficiency in some cases, they have also intensified concerns about access, affordability, and sustainability.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative techniques with a total of **124 participants**: school administrators (n=19), teachers (n=40), students (n=36), parents (n=21), and key stakeholders, including teacher and principal associations (n=8), including officials from the Ministry of Education and civil society. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative interviews were thematically analyzed to capture stakeholder perspectives on financing, policy, and equity.

Key Findings

Findings reveal that education financing in Liberia is insufficient and inefficiently managed, with less than 60% of approved budgets typically disbursed and most funds absorbed by salaries and recurrent costs. This leaves minimal resources for infrastructure, teaching materials, and

professional development—resulting in overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, and low learning outcomes.

Private and non-state actors, including NGOs, faith-based groups, and for-profit providers, have increasingly filled gaps in service delivery. The proliferation of low-fee private schools and PPP initiatives such as LEAP has expanded access in some areas but also deepened inequality. Tuition fees remain unaffordable for many households, rural areas have fewer private options, and weak government oversight has led to the rise of unregistered and under-regulated schools. Stakeholders expressed mixed views—some noted improved discipline and performance in private schools, while others raised concerns about teacher exploitation, commercialization, and inequity. Quantitative data showed that 67% of respondents observed an increase in private schools, 60% reported inadequate learning materials, and **68%** identified high fees as the primary barrier to access for poor students.

Conclusions

The study concludes that Liberia's education system remains underfunded, unevenly regulated, and increasingly privatized, undermining efforts toward equitable access and quality. Despite commitments under the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID), weak implementation and accountability continue to limit progress. Without decisive action, Liberia risks widening the divide between public and private education, threatening the achievement of SDG 4 and long-term national development goals.

Recommendations

To address these challenges, the study recommends that the Government of Liberia and partners:

1. **Increase and Rationalize Public Education Financing** by meeting minimum global benchmarks (20% of national budget;6% of GDP) and ensuring equitable resource distribution, especially for ECE, primary education, and teacher welfare.
2. **Strengthen Quality and Foundational Learning** through sustained investment in teacher training, curriculum reform, and adequate classroom resources to improve literacy, numeracy, and STEM outcomes.
3. **Enhance Infrastructure and Inclusive Access** by rehabilitating schools, expanding scholarships and school feeding programs, and constructing disability-friendly and gender-sensitive facilities in underserved areas.
4. **Regulate and Monitor Private and PPP Schools** through clear, enforceable quality standards that go beyond school fees to cover teacher recruitment and qualifications, working conditions, curriculum delivery, governance, and accountability—ensuring private participation strengthens quality and equity rather than undermining access and fairness.

5. **Promote Accountability and Participatory Governance** by engaging teacher unions, civil society, and local communities in education planning, budgeting, and monitoring processes.
6. **Leverage Data and Research for Policy Reform** by strengthening EMIS and promoting evidence-based decision-making and accountability.
7. **Sustain Focus on Equity and Gender Inclusion** by expanding programs that empower girls, support children with disabilities, and close urban–rural learning gaps.

In sum, the study highlights that education must remain a public good and a national priority. Achieving inclusive and quality education in Liberia requires increased investment, effective regulation, participatory governance, and evidence-based policy reform. With renewed commitment and coordination, education can serve as the foundation for Liberia's sustainable peace, equity, and prosperity.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Education is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for national development. In Liberia, the education sector has faced significant challenges (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017), including limited public investment and increasing involvement of private actors. The rise of private and commercial entities in education, including low-fee private schools and public-private partnerships (PPPs), is shifting the country's education sector. As of 2022, government expenditure on education was reported at 2.3% of GDP, which is far below the global benchmark of 4-6% (World Bank Group, 2023). According to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), governments are to commit at least 20% of national budgets to education to close the financing gap.

Given the persistent challenges in education financing and the growing trend toward privatisation, this rapid research assessment is intended to assess the current state of education financing in Liberia. The study seeks to critically examine how privatisation and commercialisation have impacted access, quality, and governance within Liberia's education system, with the goal of providing evidence-based insights to inform policymakers and advocacy groups.

1.2 Rationale

While the Liberian government has consistently expressed its commitment to education through national development frameworks such as the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID), the persistent underinvestment in education has led to systemic challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, underqualified or underpaid teachers, and deteriorating infrastructure. In this gap, private actors—including NGOs, faith-based institutions, and for-profit operators—have stepped in to manage and operate schools, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas. While these efforts have, in some cases, expanded access and introduced innovation, many are driven by commercial motives (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2021). Despite the expanding role of non-state actors in education delivery, empirical research in Liberia on the broader implications of privatisation and commercialisation remains scarce. Available data is often fragmented, outdated, or narrowly focused on specific programs, leaving critical gaps in understanding how these trends affect the broader education system.

This study therefore aims to fill a critical evidence gap by providing a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of how privatisation and commercialisation are reshaping Liberia's education landscape. The findings will inform evidence-based policy reform, strengthen accountability, and contribute to ongoing efforts to ensure that education in Liberia remains inclusive, equitable, and of high quality—particularly for the most vulnerable.

1.3 Research Objectives

The goal of this research is to provide evidence-based insights that inform policymakers, educational stakeholders, and advocacy groups about the implications of these trends and support the development of strategies for enhancing public education. Specifically, the study aims to:

1) Assess the level, patterns, and trends of government investment in public education, including the adequacy of budget allocations and expenditure relative to international benchmarks.
2) Investigate the scope, forms, and driving forces of education privatisation and commercialisation in Liberia, with particular attention to private sector participation, public-private partnerships, and the motivations behind these shifts.
3) Compare service quality and inclusivity between public and private education institutions, and examine the socio-economic implications of privatised education on equity, affordability, and access—especially for marginalized populations.
4) Explore stakeholder perspectives and analyze the effectiveness of existing policy and regulatory frameworks, with the aim of proposing evidence-based recommendations to strengthen public education and ensure equitable, inclusive, and quality learning opportunities for all.

1.4 Research Questions

1) What are the current **levels and trends of government investment** in public education, and how do they compare with international financing benchmarks?
2) To what extent **has education in Liberia been privatised or commercialised**, and what **forms and drivers** characterise this trend?
3) How do **quality indicators and access compare between public and private schools, particularly** for marginalised groups?
4) What are the **perceptions of key stakeholders** on education financing and privatisation, and how effective are **current policies in promoting equity and quality** in the education system?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global and Regional Context of Education Financing

Across the world, ensuring adequate financing to education is vital to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which relates to inclusive and equitable quality education. Consistent with international benchmarks, developing country governments are urged to allocate at least 6% of GDP or 20% of their national budgets to education (UNESCO, 2022). However, evidence from most low-income countries falls short of these targets, thus affecting adequate financing of public education (UNESCO, 2021).

According to evidence from the Education 2030 Framework for Action, the importance of sustainable domestic financing is to ensure that education remains a public good (UNESCO GEM, 2021). Nevertheless, a significant gap remains—estimates show that low-income countries face an annual $148 billion shortfall in meeting SDG 4 targets (World Bank & UNESCO, 2021).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, average education spending stands at about 4.4% of GDP, far less than the minimum benchmark but uneven across countries. Ghana allocates between 20–23% of its national budget to education, though execution challenges persist. Sierra Leone has increased spending to over 21% of the national budget since 2018 through its *Free Quality Education Policy*. In contrast, Nigeria spends only about 7% of its federal budget on education, well below regional and international standards (UNICEF, 2022).

For Liberia, which spends about 2.3% of GDP on education (2022), these comparisons show a substantial gap. Neighbouring countries demonstrate that prioritising education in fiscal policy is possible, provided there is strong political will and accountability.

2.2. Liberian Government Investment in Public Education

In the last 10–15 years, Liberia's education financing has consistently fallen below international benchmarks. In 2022, the country spent only about 2.3% of GDP on education, far below the UNESCO target of 6%. Similarly, the share of the national budget allocated to education has remained low, averaging 10–12%, compared to the recommended 20% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2022; LISGIS, 2023).

Public spending is heavily skewed toward recurrent costs, mainly teacher salaries, with very little available for infrastructure, teaching materials, or quality improvements, yet teacher salaries remain appallingly poor. With the free and compulsory education policy in place, enrollment continues to rise, but this expansion comes with enormous challenges. Many classrooms are overcrowded, with limited seating capacity and a shortage of qualified teachers to meet the growing demand (Gbollie, Waydon, & Bernard, 2016). The Ministry of Education itself acknowledges that despite increased enrollment, poor learning outcomes persist (Ministry of Education, *Getting to Best*, 2015). Moreover, with the drawdown of major donors such as the

United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the financing gap needed to improve access and quality remains a critical challenge.

Audit and expenditure reviews further highlight problems in budget execution. A World Bank public expenditure review (2021) revealed that less than 60% of approved education funds were actually disbursed and spent, reflecting leakages, weak accountability, and systemic inefficiencies.

Compared to its neighbours, Liberia lags significantly behind. Sierra Leone and Ghana dedicate over 20% of their national budgets to education, demonstrating stronger political commitment. In contrast, Liberia's chronic underinvestment continues to drive shortages of teachers, poor infrastructure, and persistent barriers to equitable access.

2.3. Privatisation and Commercialisation of Education

Over the past two decades, privatisation has expanded significantly within Liberia's education sector, ranging from elite private schools in urban areas to low-fee, faith-based, and community-run institutions that cater to poorer households. A particularly notable development has been the introduction of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), most prominently the Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL), later rebranded as the Liberia Education Advancement Program (LEAP). Through this initiative, providers such as Bridge International Academies and several non-governmental organisations assumed management responsibilities for selected public schools, applying private-sector approaches to curriculum delivery, monitoring, and accountability. While the program was hailed internationally as a bold innovation, it also sparked significant debate at home and abroad.

The growth of privatisation in Liberia has largely been driven by the weakness of public financing and persistent gaps in service delivery in government schools. International donors, particularly the World Bank and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), played a strong role in promoting PPPs as solutions to systemic challenges. At the same time, many parents opted for private institutions because of the perception that they provided higher quality education, better discipline, and stronger accountability compared to public schools.

Evidence from evaluations suggests that PPP schools achieved some improvements in learning outcomes; however, these gains were accompanied by serious concerns about sustainability, teacher welfare, and equity. Studies by the World Bank (2020) and Education International (2023) point to risks associated with commercialisation, including the potential erosion of education as a public good. Critics argue that the expansion of private provision may deepen inequality by privileging families who can afford tuition while leaving behind those from the poorest and most marginalised backgrounds.

2.4. Education Quality, Equity, and Inclusivity

Research presents a mixed picture regarding education quality in Liberia. Some private schools demonstrate relatively better learning outcomes, lower pupil-teacher ratios, and stronger

infrastructure compared to public institutions (World Bank, 2020). Yet these improvements often come at higher costs, raising critical concerns about affordability. For many Liberian families, annual private school fees exceed average household incomes, and although scholarship programs exist, they remain limited in scope and unevenly distributed (UNICEF, 2022).

Private education is therefore largely inaccessible to the poorest households. Girls, children with disabilities, and rural populations are disproportionately disadvantaged. In rural areas, quality private schooling is scarce, leaving public schools as the only option despite their chronic underfunding and resource shortages. This reality exacerbates inequalities between urban and rural populations and deepens the barriers faced by marginalised groups (Education International, 2023).

World Bank research claims that some private schools in Liberia achieve stronger outcomes than public institutions, including lower pupil-teacher ratios and better facilities (World Bank, 2020). However, these advantages come at a cost: tuition fees in many private schools far exceed average household incomes, making them inaccessible to the majority of families. While scholarship schemes exist, they remain limited and unevenly distributed, failing to bridge the affordability gap (UNICEF, 2022).

A closer examination of education quality in Liberia reveals that differences in learning outcomes are strongly shaped by structural and contextual factors rather than school ownership alone. Evidence from sector reviews indicates that student–teacher ratios in many public primary schools frequently exceed 45–60:1, particularly in rural areas and densely populated urban communities, compared to approximately 20–30:1 in higher-performing private schools (World Bank, 2020; MoE, 2021). Public-school teachers often face heavy workloads, teaching multiple subjects across large classes with limited instructional supervision and delayed or irregular compensation, which negatively affects instructional quality and morale (Education International, 2023). In contrast, better-performing private schools generally have more consistent access to teaching and learning resources (TLRs)—including textbooks, classroom furniture, and basic infrastructure—while many public schools, especially in rural counties, continue to operate with acute shortages (UNICEF, 2022). These quality differentials are closely linked to school fees, as private tuition costs often exceed average household incomes, effectively limiting access to families from relatively advantaged, predominantly urban backgrounds. Consequently, students in higher-performing schools are more likely to come from households with greater socioeconomic stability, while poorer learners, girls, children with disabilities, and rural students remain concentrated in under-resourced public schools, reinforcing systemic inequities and the risk for learners from impoverished communities (World Bank, 2021).

This imbalance reinforces educational inequality. Children from poorer households—particularly girls, rural learners, and children with disabilities—are left dependent on under-resourced public schools. In rural Liberia, where private options are scarce, these inequities are even more

pronounced. Ultimately, the expansion of private provision risks entrenching a two-tiered system in which wealth determines access to quality education (Education International, 2023).

The Education Reform Act of 2011 provides the framework for regulating both public and private schools in Liberia. However, implementation and enforcement remain weak, and the introduction of Public-Private Partnerships such as LEAP occurred without broad-based consultation, fueling tensions with teachers' unions such as the National Teachers' Association of Liberia (NTAL, 2018).

Teachers' unions have voiced concerns about job security, working conditions, and equity (NTAL, 2018). Parents and communities are divided: some welcome PPP schools because of perceived quality improvements, while others worry about costs and fairness. The government often views PPPs as a pragmatic response to limited capacity but continues to struggle with regulation and oversight. Civil society and NGOs, meanwhile, argue for stronger public investment and caution against the dangers of commercialisation (EI, 2023).

Monitoring and compliance are also serious challenges. The Ministry of Education lacks the technical and financial resources to regulate thousands of private schools effectively, enabling the proliferation of unregistered or under-regulated institutions. This weak oversight undermines quality assurance and further entrenches inequality within the education system (World Bank, 2021).

2.5 Desk Review

As part of the inception phase, a desk review was undertaken to map existing evidence and policy commitments relevant to education financing and privatisation in Liberia. The review covered national policy frameworks (ESP, PAPD, ARREST Agenda, MoE operational plans), sector data sources (EMIS, LISGIS, WAEC), and international reports from UNESCO, GPE, the World Bank, and Education International. Evaluations of initiatives such as the Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL/LEAP) were also examined.

This process highlighted three critical insights:

1. Persistent gaps between Liberia's policy commitments (e.g., free and compulsory primary education) and actual financing levels.
2. Evidence of mixed outcomes from PPP models and ongoing debates on equity and accountability.
3. Weaknesses in available statistical data, which is often outdated and insufficiently disaggregated.

These insights directly informed the formulation of the study's research questions and guided the design of data collection tools.

2.6 Liberia's Estimated Expenditures on Education

Liberia's estimated allocations and expenditures on education between 2020 and 2025 reveal a consistent pattern of underinvestment in education relative to international benchmarks. While UNESCO recommends at least 6% of GDP and 20% of the national budget be dedicated to education in developing countries (UNESCO, 2021; UIS, 2022), Liberia's spending has remained significantly below these thresholds.

In 2020, education accounted for roughly 11% of the national budget and 2.5% of GDP, but the execution rate was only about 65%, largely due to the fiscal disruptions of COVID-19 and reliance on external donor support (World Bank, 2021; UIS, 2022). In 2021, allocations fell to 10% of the national budget, with execution rates dropping below 60% as inefficiencies in public financial management persisted (World Bank, 2021).

By 2022, education expenditure was reported at 2.3% of GDP, with about 12% of the national budget allocated. However, execution again lagged at around 58%. This coincided with a gradual scale-down of USAID support, leaving significant financing gaps (LISGIS, 2023; UIS, 2022). The 2023 data reflected a continuation of this trend, with allocations estimated at 11% of the national budget and expenditure at 2.3% of GDP. While there was a modest improvement in tracking enrollment and access, overcrowded classrooms and resource shortages remained pressing challenges (LISGIS, 2023).

Projections for 2024 and 2025 suggest allocations will remain between 10–12% of the national budget and roughly 2.2–2.4% of GDP. With the drawdown of external donor funding and competing national priorities under the PAPD and ARREST Agenda, these projections highlight the risk of continued underfunding. Unless significant domestic resources are mobilised, Liberia is unlikely to meet its obligations under SDG 4 and Education 2030 commitments (MoE, 2024; GPE, 2023, 2024; UNICEF, 2025).

Overall, Table 2.1 underscores that chronic underfunding, weak execution of approved budgets, and dependence on donors remain the defining features of Liberia's education financing. Compared to neighbours such as Sierra Leone and Ghana—both of which allocate over 20% of their budgets to education—Liberia's financing effort remains inadequate. This reality perpetuates challenges of teacher shortages, poor infrastructure, and inequitable access, particularly for rural and marginalised groups.

Table 2.1: *Liberia's Estimated Budgets and Expenditures on Education (2020–2025), Highlighting Chronic Underfunding, and Weak Budget Execution*

Year	Education Allocation (% of National Budget)	Education Expenditure (% of GDP)	Execution Rate (% of Approved Budget Spent)	Notes / Observations	Source
2020	11%	2.5%	~65%	COVID-19 disrupted spending; heavy donor dependence.	World Bank (2021); UIS (2022)
2021	10%	2.4%	<60%	Public Expenditure Review highlighted inefficiencies.	World Bank (2021)
2022	12%	2.3%	~58%	Still below UNESCO benchmark; USAID scaled down support.	UIS (2022); LISGIS (2023)
2023	11%	2.3%	~60%	LISGIS data confirms low financing; overcrowding persists.	LISGIS (2023)
2024*	(est. 10–11%)	(approx. 2.2%)	TBD	Donor drawdown continues; PAPD/ARREST priorities strain budgets.	Projections – MoE Policy Briefs (2024)
2025*	(projected 10–12%)	(approx. 2.2–2.4%)	TBD	Budget projections show underfunding persists.	Projections – World Bank/UIS

Note: *Execution rates are indicative, derived from World Bank public expenditure reviews and sector PFM assessments*.

Table 2.1 and the literature review show that Liberia's education sector remains underfunded, with allocations below international benchmarks, weak budget execution, and heavy donor reliance. This has been a major factor contributing to various challenges in the sector, including the growth of largely unregulated privatisation.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employed a concurrent mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the extent and implications of education privatisation and commercialisation in Liberia. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how these dynamics influence access, quality, and governance within the education system, while ensuring triangulation and validation of findings.

Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to key education stakeholders, while qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews and direct responses. Collecting both forms of data concurrently enhanced credibility, complementarity, and convergence, enabling the researchers to compare statistical patterns with narrative perspectives and derive evidence-based conclusions that inform policy and advocacy efforts.

3.2 Data Collection Tools

***Quantitative Data*:** Quantitative data were gathered using structured questionnaires developed to capture measurable information on key themes such as education financing, school governance, access and enrollment trends, quality indicators, and household education costs. The instruments were designed and pretested to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity.

The questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items to facilitate statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 27). Target respondents included: school administrators, teachers, students (grades 9–12), and parents/guardians from both public and private schools.

Qualitative Data: Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interview guides, which allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and viewpoints. Respondents were purposively selected to ensure representation of different stakeholder categories.

The interview tools focused on key thematic areas, including government investment and financing trends, extent, forms, and drivers of privatisation, quality indicators and access, and stakeholder perceptions and policy effectiveness. Participants included: Officials from the Ministry of Education and county education offices; representatives of private school associations, teacher unions, and civil society organisations and education experts and researchers. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was recorded with participant's consent, which were transcribed and analysed thematically.

3.3 Research Participants (Quantitative)

The quantitative data of the study involved a total of **116 participants**, comprising **school administrators (n = 19), teachers (n = 40), students (n = 36)**, **and parents (n = 21).** These groups were purposively selected to capture their perspectives on education financing and the impact of privatisation within Liberia's education system.

The demographic data captured key variables such as gender, age, education, qualification, experience, employment status, school type and level, number of school-age children, and access to learning resources. These profiles provided essential context for understanding stakeholder perspectives on equity, quality, and governance in Liberia's education system.

3.3.1 School Administrators

Table 3.1 presents the demographic characteristics of school administrators who participated in the study. The data summarised key background variables, including gender, age group, type and level of school administered, educational qualification, and years of professional experience. These variables provide essential context for understanding the leadership composition, experience, and diversity within Liberia's school management structure, which are central to discussions on education financing, governance, and the effects of privatisation.

Table 3.1 *Demographic information of respondents* ***(school administrators)***

School Administrators				
#	**Variable**	**Description**	**(n=19)**	**%**
1	**Gender**	Female	9	47.4
		Male	10	52.6
2	**Age group**	25–30 years	4	21.1
		31–35 years	1	5.3
		36–40 years	2	10.5
		41–45 years	4	21.1
		46 years or above	8	42.1
3	**Type of School**	Public	2	10.5
		Private (for profit)	8	42.1
		Faith-based	8	42.1
		Community	1	5.3
4	**Level of School**	Early Childhood & Primary	6	31.6
		ECE, Primary & Junior Secondary	6	31.6
		ECE to Senior Secondary	7	36.8
5	**Level of Education Attained**	Associate Degree	1	5.3
		Bachelor's Degree	13	68.4

		Master's Degree	3	15.8
		Doctorate / PhD	1	5.3
		Others	1	5.3
6	**Years of Experience**	3–5 years	7	36.8
		6–10 year	2	10.5
		Over 10 years	10	52.6

According to the results, a slight majority of respondents were male (**52.6%**), with females (**47.4%**) reflecting near gender parity in school leadership. Most administrators were aged **46 years or older (42.1%)**, indicating a mature and experienced leadership group. The majority served in faith-based (42.1%) and private-for-profit (42.1%) schools, with limited representation from public (10.5%) and community (5.3%) institutions.

In terms of educational scope, ECE to Senior Secondary schools (36.8%) were most represented, while both ECE & Primary and ECE–Junior Secondary schools accounted for 31.6% each. Regarding qualifications, most held a bachelor's degree (68.4%), and 15.8% had a master's degree, suggesting strong academic preparation among administrators. Over half (52.6%) possessed more than 10 years of experience, highlighting a seasoned leadership cohort that plays a crucial role in shaping school performance, quality, and governance across Liberia's education sector.

3.3.2 Teachers

Table 3.2 presents the demographic profile of teacher respondents (n=40). The table captures key background variables such as gender, age, school type and location, qualification, teaching level, experience, and employment status, which together provide insight into the professional and institutional diversity of the teaching workforce represented in the study.

Table 3.2 *presents the demographic characteristics of the teacher respondents (N = 40) in the study.*

Teachers				
#	**Variable**	**Description**	**(n=40)**	**%**
1	**Gender**	Male	25	62.5
		Female	15	37.5
2	**Age Group**	25 Below years	2	5.0
		25–34 years	17	42.5
		35–44 years	14	35.0
		45–54 years	5	12.5
		55 or above	2	5.0
3	**School Type**	Public	9	22.5
		Private (for profit)	15	37.5
		Faith-based	15	37.5
		Community	1	2.5
4	**School Location**	Urban	35	87.5
		Semi-urban	4	10.0
		Rural	1	2.5
5	**Highest Qualification**	High School Certificate	2	5.0
		Teaching Certificate	7	17.5
		Associate Degree	13	32.5
		Bachelor's Degree	16	40.0
		Master's Degree	2	5.0
6	**Years of Experience**	3–5 years	12	30.0
		6–10 years	10	25.0
		Over 10 years	18	45.0
7	**Teaching Level**	Early Childhood	6	15.0
		ECE & Primary	9	22.5
		Primary & Junior Secondary	12	30.0
		Senior Secondary (various levels)	13	32.5
8	**Employment Status**	Full-time	25	62.5
		Part-time	11	27.5
		Volunteer	4	10.0

The results show that a majority of respondents were male (62.5%), with most teachers aged 25–34 years (42.5%), indicating a relatively young teaching cohort. The largest share served in private (37.5%) and faith-based (37.5%) schools, with 87.5% located in urban areas. Privatisation of

education in Liberia occurs primarily through private and faith-based schools, which have expanded rapidly, especially in urban areas and now employ a large share of teachers. The higher proportion of private-school respondents therefore reflects this broader shift toward private provision and commercialisation of education. In terms of qualifications, 40% held a bachelor's degree, while 32.5% possessed an associate degree, suggesting a moderate to strong academic background.

Nearly half (45%) had over 10 years of experience, and 62.5% were employed full-time. Collectively, these findings point to a predominantly urban, moderately qualified, and experienced teaching force, central to shaping education delivery and outcomes in Liberia's school system.

3.3.3 Student Respondents

For student respondents (N = 36) who participated in the study, the variables include gender, age group, grade level, type of school attended, source of school funding, access to learning resources at home, and household situation. These indicators provide insight into the background of students whose perspectives help to illuminate the broader issues of access, equity, and the effects of privatisation in Liberia's education system.

Table 3.4 *Demographic Information of Parent Respondents*

Students				
#	**Variable**	**Description**	**(n=36)**	**%**
1	**Gender**	Male	16	44.4
		Female	20	55.6
2	**Age Group**	Below 15 years	3	8.3
		15–16 years	12	33.3
		17–18 years	12	33.3
		19–20 years	6	16.7
		21 years or above	3	8.3
3	**Grade Level**	Grade 10	11	30.6
		Grade 11	12	33.3
		Grade 12	13	36.1
4	**Type of School Attended**	Public	15	41.7
		Private (for profit)	13	36.1
		Faith-based	7	19.4
		Community	1	2.8
5	**Who Pays Your School Costs**	Parents/Guardians	26	72.2
		Relatives	5	13.9
		Self (I work to support myself)	5	13.9

6	**Access to Learning Resources at Home**	Textbooks for all subjects	6	16.7
		Electricity/light to study at night	10	27.8
		Desk/table for study	1	2.8
		Computer/laptop	3	8.3
		Internet/smartphone for learning	2	5.6
		None	2	5.6
		Most (multiple resources)	12	33.3
7	**Household Situation**	Living with both parents	13	36.1
		Living with one parent	13	36.1
		Living with relatives/guardian	9	25.0
		Living alone/independent	1	2.8

The data reveal that the majority of student respondents were **female (55.6%)**, mainly within the **15–18-year age range (66.6%)**, and enrolled across Grades 10–12. Most attended **public (41.7%)** or **private-for-profit (36.1%)** schools and depended largely on **parents or guardians (72.2%)** for educational expenses. While some students reported access to multiple learning resources (33.3%), a considerable number lacked basic facilities such as electricity and study materials. Furthermore, most students lived with **both or one parent (72.2%)**, indicating a relatively stable family background. These demographic characteristics provide essential context for interpreting students' views on education financing, school quality, and privatisation dynamics.

3.3.4 Parent Respondents

Table 3.4 presents the demographic characteristics of parent respondents (n=21). The table captures essential variables such as gender, age group, type of school attended by children, educational qualification, employment status, and household size—providing context for interpreting parents' perspectives on education financing and access.

Table 3.4 *Demographic Information of Parent Respondents*

Parents				
#	**Variable**	**Description**	**(n=21)**	**%**
1	**Gender**	Male	15	71.4
		Female	6	28.6
2	**Age group**	25–34 years	5	23.8
		35–44 years	8	38.1
		45–54 years	4	19.0
		55 or above	4	19.0
3	**Relationship to child Type of school child attends**	Parent (mother/father)	21	100.0
		Public	1	4.8
		Private (for-profit)	9	42.9
4	**Number of school-age children in household**	Faith-based	8	38.1
		Community	3	14.3
		1 child	5	23.8
5	**Highest qualification**	2–3 children	11	52.4
		4–5 children	5	23.8
		Primary education	2	9.5
6	**Employment status**	Tertiary	14	66.7
		Postgraduate	5	23.8
		Formal employment	12	57.1
		Informal/self-employed	3	14.3
		Unemployed	6	28.6

The descriptive statistics show that a majority of respondents were **male (71.4%)** and mostly within the **35–44 age group (38.1%)**, representing active working adults. Most parents' children attended **private (42.9%)** or **faith-based (38.1%)** schools, indicating the growing role of non-public providers in education. Over half (**52.4%**) had two to three school-age children, and most parents were **highly educated**, with **66.7%** holding tertiary qualifications and 57.1% in formal employment. Overall, the sample reflects a well-educated and economically active parent population, whose engagement and perspectives are valuable for understanding education financing and quality in Liberia.

3.4 Research Participants (Qualitative)

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews designed to capture participants' experiences and perspectives on equity, access, policy effectiveness, teacher experiences, and the socioeconomic effects of education commercialisation. Respondents were purposively selected to ensure diverse representation across the education sector, including

officials from the Ministry of Education and County Education Offices, representatives of private school associations, teacher unions, civil society organisations, and education experts. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, was audio-recorded with participants' consent, and later transcribed and thematically analysed to identify emerging patterns and insights that complemented the quantitative results.

The qualitative phase of the study involved a total of eight participants representing varied professional backgrounds within Liberia's education landscape. To maintain anonymity and uphold ethical standards, all participants are identified by coded IDs rather than their real names, and their affiliated institutions are withheld. The selected participants possess extensive experience in educational administration, policy development, and school management—providing a rich, balanced, and contextually grounded perspective on the study's central themes.

Table 4.5 *Demographic Information of Key Informant Interviewees*

Parents						
#	**Participant ID**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Role**	**Years in Education**	**Highest Education**
1	**Part01**	Male	30–39 years	Principal	Over 15 years	Master's
2	**Part02**	Female	30–39 years	Government Official	11–15 years	Master's
3	**Part03**	Male	40–49 years	Education Expert	11–15 years	Master's
4	**Part04**	Male	30–39 years	Education Officer	6–10 years	Master's
5	**Part05**	Female	30–39 years	Principal	11–15 years	Bachelor's
6	**Part06**	Male	30–39 years	Acting Principal	6–10 years	Bachelor's
7	**Part07**	Male	40–49 years	Public Service Technician	11–15 years	Master's
8	**Part08**	Female	50–59 years	Education Manager	More than 20 years	Master's

As shown in Table 3.5, the participants represent a mix of genders, age groups, and professional roles, with extensive experience in the education sector ranging from 6 to over 20 years. Most hold a **Master's degree**, reflecting a highly educated sample capable of offering informed insights into the study's thematic areas.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded, entered, and analysed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 27)**. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were computed to summarize demographic variables and stakeholder responses. The analysis provided measurable insights into patterns of education financing, levels of privatisation, and perceived quality differences between public and private institutions.

Qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and analysed thematically. Emerging themes were organised around the study's objectives—capturing stakeholder perceptions of access, affordability, policy effectiveness, and the broader implications of privatisation.

Finally, triangulation was used to compare quantitative and qualitative findings, enhancing the validity and reliability of results by identifying points of convergence and divergence across data sources.

4. Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

This segment presents the findings of the study. It analyses and interprets data in relation to the study's objectives and research questions, providing empirical insights into how privatisation and commercialisation influence access, quality, governance, and equity in Liberia's education system.

The analysis draws on quantitative data from respondents—comprising school administrators, teachers, students, and parents, supplemented by qualitative perspectives from education officials, private school associations, teacher unions, civil society representatives, and experts. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (Version 27) through descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means, while qualitative data were coded and thematically analyzed to generate explanatory patterns that complement the quantitative results.

To ensure alignment with the research objectives, findings are organised under four major sections, each addressing a specific research question and objective. The first section (4.1) examines trends in government investment and education financing, focusing on expenditure levels, patterns, and their alignment with international benchmarks for education funding.

4.1 Trends in Government Investment and Education Financing

4.1.1 School Administrators

This section presents the findings from school administrators regarding the levels and trends of government investment in education over the past three years. It explores whether schools have benefited from government support, how such support has evolved, the proportion of school budgets funded by the government, and perceptions of Liberia's compliance with international education financing benchmarks. The analysis provides insight into the extent of government commitment to education financing and its perceived adequacy in promoting equitable and quality education delivery as presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 *School Administrators' Responses on Levels and Trends of Government Investment (N=19)*

#	Variable	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	**Has your school received government support in the last 3 years?**	Yes	4	21.1
		No	**15**	**78.9**
2	**Trend of government investment in your school over past 3 years**	Increased significantly	2	10.5
		Stayed the same	**10**	**52.6**
		Declined	**7**	**36.8**
3	**Approximate % of annual budget covered by government support**	**0%**	**16**	**84.2**
		1–25%	1	5.3
		51–75%	1	5.3
		Above 75%	1	5.3
4	**Is Liberia meeting international benchmarks (20% of national budget or 4–6% of GDP)?**	Yes	5	26.3
		No	**7**	**36.8**
		Not sure	**7**	**36.8**

As shown in **Table 4.1**, government investment in education remains notably low at the school level. Only 21.1% of schools reported receiving government support in the past three years, while 78.9% received none—indicating that public financing rarely reaches operational institutions, especially non-public schools. The trend analysis further shows limited progress: 52.6% of respondents stated that investment has remained the same, 36.8% observed a decline, and only 10.5% noted an increase. This pattern reflects stagnation and possible fiscal constraints that hinder growth in education financing.

Additionally, 84.2% of schools reported receiving **0% of their annual budget** from government sources, underscoring a heavy reliance on tuition and private resources. This dependence threatens equity and sustainability, particularly for low-income learners.

Regarding international benchmarks, only 26.3% of administrators believed Liberia meets the UNESCO target of allocating 20% of the national budget or 6% of GDP to education, while the rest either disagreed or were unsure. This indicates both a **perceived funding gap** and weak transparency in budget information.

Overall, the findings in Table 4.1 suggest that **education financing in Liberia remains insufficient and stagnant**, limiting quality improvement, teacher motivation, and equitable access. A stronger fiscal commitment and transparent allocation mechanisms are essential to ensure that government investment translates into tangible school-level outcomes.

4.1.2 Teachers on government investment and education financing

Figure 4.1 presents data on the sources of teacher salaries, income trends, and government investment in teacher development. The data provide insight into the financial conditions of teachers and the adequacy of institutional support for their motivation and continuous improvement.

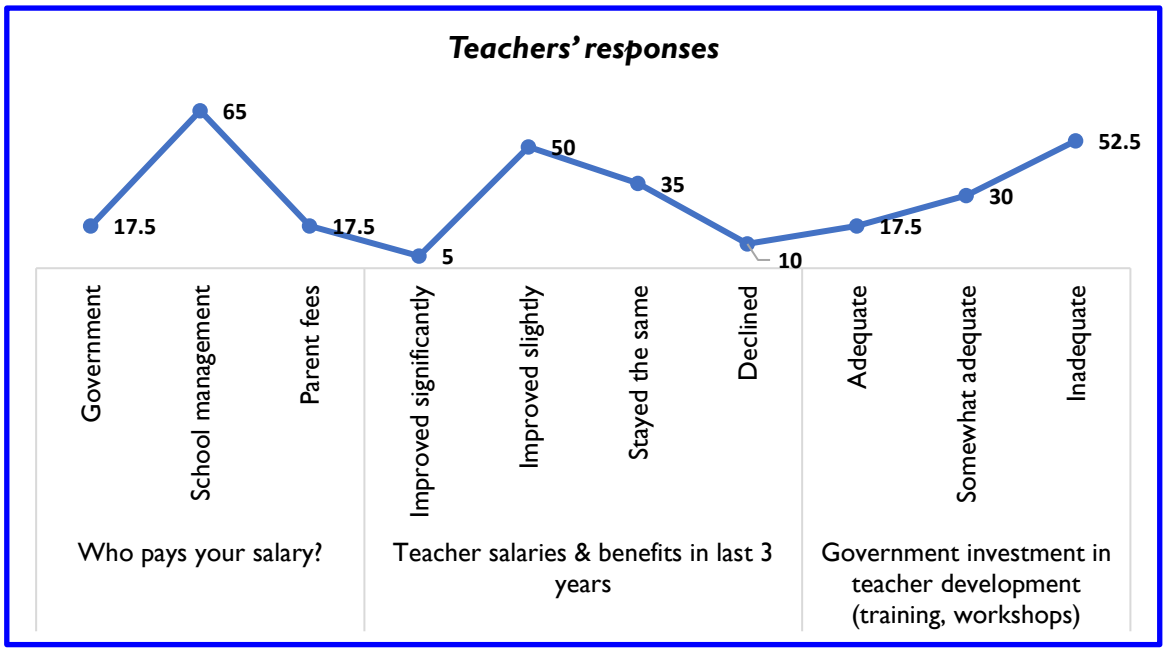


Figure 4.1 *Teachers' responses on financing, salaries, and professional development*

As shown in **Figure 4.1**, most teachers' salaries are paid by **school management (65%)** and **parent fees (17.5%)**, with only **17.5%** covered by government payrolls—indicating a heavy reliance on non-state funding sources. Regarding income trends, **50%** reported that over the past 3 years, their salaries had **improved slightly**, while **35%** said they **remained the same**, and **10%** experienced a **decline**. Only **5%** reported significant improvement.

In terms of professional development, **52.5%** rated government investment as **inadequate**, with only **17.5%** considering it **adequate**. These findings suggest that teacher financing and capacity-building support remain weak and unevenly distributed. Strengthening teacher welfare, ensuring consistent salary payments, and expanding access to training are crucial for improving motivation, retention, and instructional quality in Liberia's education sector.

4.1.3 Students' perspectives on government investment in education

Results indicate that while some learners have benefited from initiatives such as scholarships and free learning materials, the majority feel that **government investment remains insufficient to keep students in school**. Students also identified priority areas where increased funding would have the most impact on access and learning outcomes as presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 *Students' responses on levels and trends of government investment (N = 36)*

#	Variable	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	**Have you personally received any government support (scholarship, free books, school feeding, etc.)?**	Yes	8	22.2
		No	**28**	**77.8**
		Not Sure	11	30.6
2	**Do you think government is investing enough to help students stay in school?**	No	17	47.2
		Not sure	8	22.2
3	**If government invested more money in education, which area should be the top priority?**	Teacher salaries and training	7	19.4
		School buildings and facilities	7	19.4
		Free learning materials	7	19.4
		Technology and internet access	6	16.7
		Scholarships and fee reduction	**9**	**25.0**

As shown in **Table 4.2**, only **22.2%** of students reported receiving government support such as scholarships, free books, or school feeding, while the majority (**77.8%**) said they had received none. This indicates that direct government assistance reaches only a small proportion of learners. Nearly half (**47.2%**) of the respondents believed the **government is not investing enough** to help students remain in school, and **22.2%** were unsure, reflecting concerns about the adequacy and visibility of current education support programs.

When asked to identify funding priorities, **25%** of students selected scholarships and fee reduction as the top priority, followed by teacher salaries and training (19.4%), school facilities (19.4%), and free learning materials (19.4%). A smaller proportion (**16.7%**) emphasizsed the need for technology and internet access, highlighting growing awareness of digital learning gaps.

Overall, the findings reveal that students perceive **government support as limited and unevenly distributed**, with many still struggling to afford basic educational needs. Strengthening financial aid schemes, expanding access to free learning materials, and improving school infrastructure and connectivity would help ensure that more students can stay in school and learn effectively.

4.1.4 Parents' perspectives on levels and trends of government investment

Figure 4.2 presents SPSS results on parents' experiences with and perceptions of government investment in education. The analysis highlights the extent to which government subsidies and funding trends are visible and impactful at the household level.

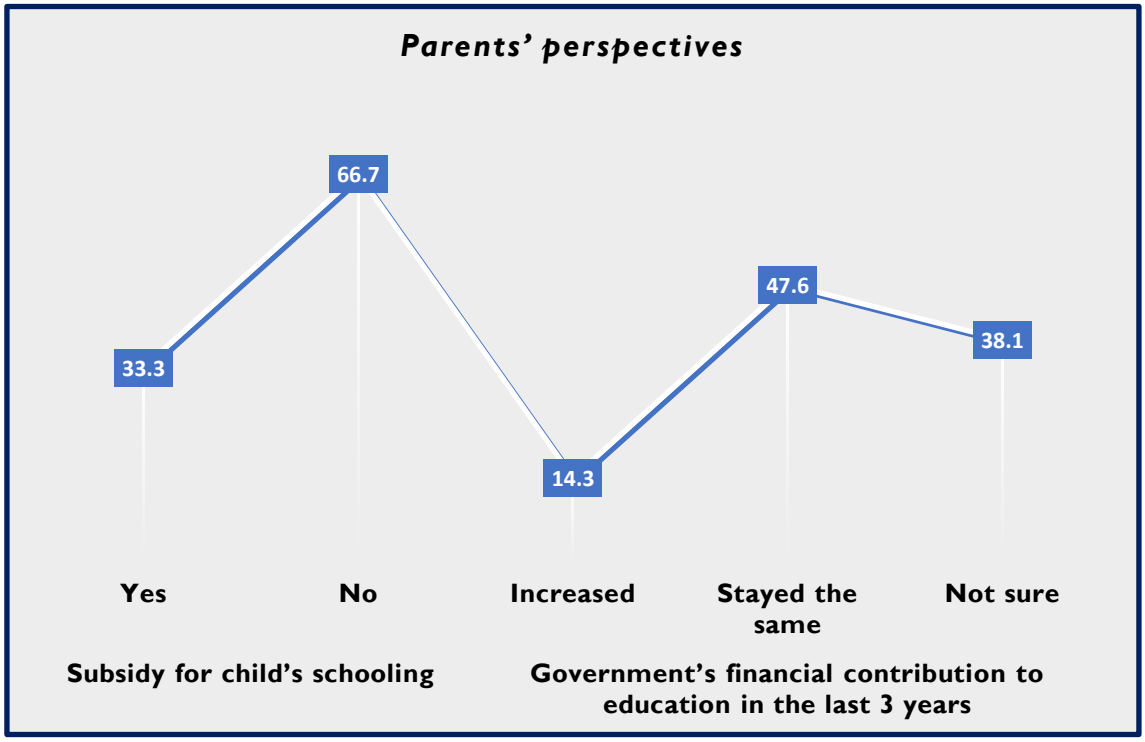


Figure 4.2 *Parents' responses on levels and trends of government investment*

As shown in Figure 4.2, SPSS results revealed that only **33.3%** of parents reported receiving any form of **government subsidy**, including scholarships, free materials, or school feeding, while a larger proportion (**66.7%**) stated that they had not benefited from such initiatives. This demonstrates limited direct support from government programs to ease the financial burden on families. Regarding perceptions of **funding trends**, nearly half of respondents (**47.6%**) believed that the government's contribution to education had **remained the same** over the past three years, while **14.3%** observed an increase and **38.1%** were unsure. The lack of clear awareness or perceived progress suggests weak visibility of education investments at the household level.

Overall, the findings indicate that parents view **government investment in education as limited and stagnant**, with minimal direct impact on school affordability or household welfare.

Enhancing the reach of education subsidies, strengthening communication about ongoing programs, and ensuring transparent and equitable distribution of resources are essential steps to rebuild public confidence and promote inclusive access to education.

4.2 Extent and Forms of Privatisation and Commercialisation in Education

4.2.1 School Administrators

This section presents findings from school administrators on the extent, forms, and underlying factors driving the privatisation of education in Liberia. The analysis highlights ownership structures, modes of private involvement, major motivations behind privatisation, and the estimated proportion of students enrolled in private schools. The results provide insights into how private participation is shaping access, competition, and the overall structure of Liberia's education system.

Table 4.3 *School Administrators' responses on extent, forms, and drivers of privatization*

#	Variable	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	**School ownership/management structure**	Government	2	10.5
		Private Individual	**10**	**52.6**
		Faith-based	6	31.6
2	**Forms of private involvement**	Full private ownership	**15**	**78.9**
		Public–private partnership	3	15.8
		Other	1	5.3
3	**Main drivers of privatization in Liberia**	Profit	5	26.3
		Rising demand for quality education	**11**	**57.9**
		Limited access in public schools	1	5.3
		International donor/ IMF/World Bank policies	1	5.3
		Other	1	5.3
4	**Estimated % of students enrolled in private schools (county level)**	Below 25%	1	5.3
		25–50%	6	31.6
		51–75%	**9**	**47.4**
		Above 75%	3	15.8

As shown in Table 4.3, **private actors dominate Liberia's education landscape**. Over half (**52.6%**) of schools are owned or managed by **private individuals**, and **31.6%** are **faith-based**,

while only **10.5%** are **government-run**—indicating a major shift toward private provision of education services.

In terms of operational models, **78.9%** of schools reported **full private ownership**, and only **15.8%** functioned through **public–private partnerships**, suggesting that privatization is largely **market-driven and weakly regulated**. The main driver identified was the **rising demand for quality education (57.9%)**, followed by **profit motivation (26.3%)**, with smaller shares citing limited access to public schools or donor influence. Respondents also estimated that **over 60%** of students in their counties are enrolled in private institutions, with **47.4%** reporting 51–75% private enrollment and **15.8%** placing the figure above 75%. This reflects the growing dominance of private education, particularly in urban areas.

Overall, the findings indicate that **education in Liberia is heavily privatised**, driven by public demand and profit incentives, but lacking sufficient state oversight. While this growth expands access and choice, it also raises concerns about **equity, affordability, and quality assurance**. Strengthening policy regulation and accountability frameworks is therefore essential to balance private participation with public interest.

4.2.2 Teachers views on extent and forms of privatisation and commercialisation of education

Teachers' views on the growth of private schools compared to public schools and the main reasons parents prefer private institutions highlight the expansion of private education and shifting parental expectations within Liberia's school system as presented in Figure 4.3.

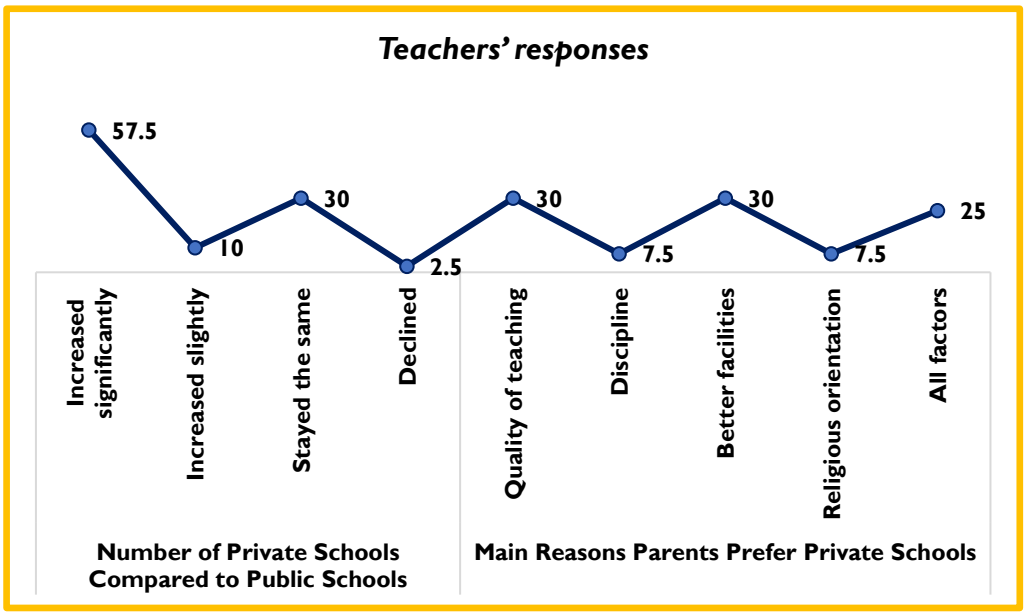


Figure 4.3 *Teachers' responses on growth and preference for private schools*

As shown in **Figure 4.3**, over half of respondents (57.5%) reported a **significant increase in private schools**, confirming continued expansion of private education. This growth reflects both

unmet demand in public schools and parents' desire for improved learning outcomes. The leading reasons for parental preference include **quality of teaching (30%)** and **better facilities (30%)**, followed by discipline and religious values. A quarter (25%) cited various factors combined, suggesting parents seek holistic quality in schooling.

It is worth noting that these findings should be interpreted cautiously, as teachers' educational backgrounds, including whether they attended public or private schools may influence their perceptions of school quality and parental choice. At the same time, the strong growth of private education underscores the urgent need to expand and strengthen public schooling. Without sustained investment in public education to improve teaching quality, facilities, and accountability, the continued expansion of private schools risks deepening inequalities in access and learning outcomes.

4.2.3 Students' perspectives on the extent, forms, and drivers of privatisation

Students' perceptions of the extent of privatisation in their communities, including the type of schools they attend, whether more private schools have opened in recent years, and their views on the quality of education in private versus public institutions were examined. The findings, presented in Figure 4.4, provide insight into how learners experience and interpret the growing influence of private education in Liberia.

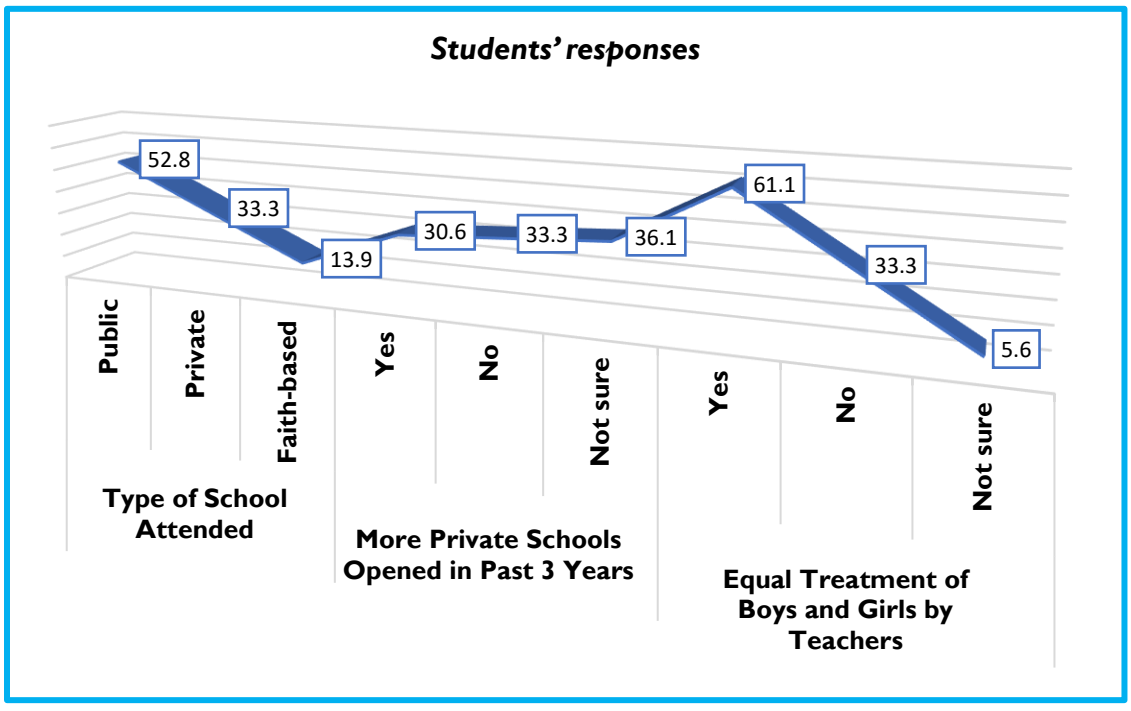


Figure 4.4 *Students' responses on the extent, forms, and drivers of privatization*

As shown in **Figure 4.4**, more than half of the student respondents (**52.8%**) attended **public schools**, while **33.3%** were enrolled in **private institutions** and **13.9%** in **faith-based**

schools. This indicates that public schools still serve the majority of learners, but private and faith-based institutions remain significant players in education delivery.

When asked about the growth of private schools, **30.6%** of students observed that **more private schools have opened** in their areas within the past three years, while **33.3%** reported no change and **36.1%** were unsure. This suggests moderate but noticeable expansion of private education, particularly in urban and semi-urban regions.

A majority of students (**55.6%**) believed that **private schools provide better education** than public ones, mainly due to perceived improvements in teacher commitment, discipline, and learning outcomes. However, **36.1%** disagreed, emphasizing that some public schools still maintain strong academic standards, and **8.3%** were uncertain.

Overall, the findings indicate that students recognize a **growing presence and influence of private schools**, often associated with better perceived quality. However, the mixed opinions also highlight ongoing debates around **equity, affordability, and quality assurance**, underscoring the need for balanced policies that ensure both public and private schools deliver inclusive and high-quality education.

4.2.4 Parents' Perspectives on the Extent, Forms, and Drivers of Privatisation

Parents' perspectives on the extent and drivers of privatisation in education were explored as it relates to the types of schools their children attend, reasons for school choice, satisfaction with educational quality, and attitudes toward private schools as a pathway to better opportunities. The findings reflect parental priorities and perceptions within Liberia's increasingly mixed education landscape.

Table 4.4 *Parents' Responses on the Extent, Forms, and Drivers of Privatization*

#	Variable	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	**Type of school your child attends**	Public	3	14.3
		Private	10	47.6
		Faith-based	6	28.6
		Community	2	9.5
2	**Why you chose this school**	Quality	9	42.9
		Affordability	2	9.5
		Accessibility	1	4.8
		Various factors	9	42.9
3	**How satisfied are you with the quality of education in your child's current school?**	Very satisfied	7	33.3
		Satisfied	11	52.4
		Neutral	2	9.5
		Dissatisfied	1	4.8
4	**"Private schools provide better opportunities for my child's future compared to public schools."**	Strongly agree	12	57.1
		Agree	3	14.3
		Neutral	2	9.5
		Disagree	1	4.8
		Strongly disagree	3	14.3

As shown in **Table 4.4**, nearly half of the parents (**47.6%**) had children enrolled in **private schools**, while **28.6%** chose **faith-based schools**, **14.3%** public, and **9.5%** community institutions. This distribution indicates a strong preference for non-public schooling options, underscoring the dominant role of private and religious providers in Liberia's education system.

Regarding **school choice**, **42.9%** of parents cited *quality* as their main reason, another **42.9%** mentioned *multiple factors*, while fewer considered *affordability (9.5%)* or *accessibility (4.8%)*. This suggests that perceptions of higher quality and better learning outcomes are key drivers behind private school enrollment.

In terms of **satisfaction**, a combined **85.7%** of parents (33.3% *very satisfied* and 52.4% *satisfied*) expressed positive views about the quality of their children's schools, reflecting confidence in their chosen institutions. When asked whether **private schools provide better opportunities for the future**, the majority (**57.1% strongly agree**, **14.3% agree**) affirmed the statement, while only **9.5%** remained neutral and **19.1%** disagreed. This indicates a widespread belief that private education enhances long-term prospects for academic and career success.

While the SPSS results show a strong parental preference for private and faith-based schools, this preference is shaped by **multiple factors beyond perceived quality**. In many cases, public schools are **not within accessible distance**, or are **overcrowded and under-resourced**, pushing parents toward private options. In addition, the **commercialisation of education**, including advertising of high examination results and claims of discipline and effectiveness, influences parental perceptions of superiority. Social, religious, and peer factors further reinforce these choices. Together, these dynamics suggest that preference for non-public schools reflects both **systemic weaknesses in public provision and market-driven narratives**, highlighting the need to strengthen public education while ensuring private sector expansion is properly regulated and equitable.

4.3 Comparative Analysis of Access and Quality between Public and Private Schools

4.3.1 School Administrators

This aspect presents quality-related indicators and equity of access within Liberia's education system. It examines student–teacher ratios in comparison to public standards, the proportion of students from low-income households, and the major barriers limiting enrollment of marginalized learners. The analysis provides insight into how quality and access intersect under current education financing and privatization dynamics as provided by school administrators on.

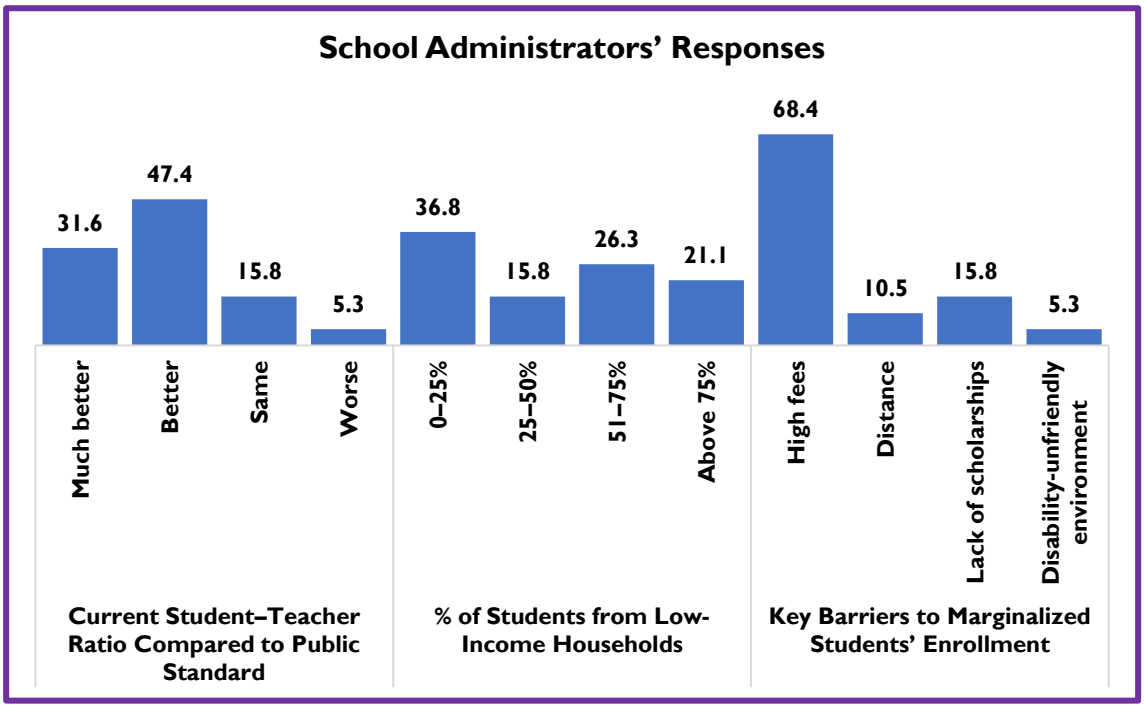


Figure 4.4 *School Administrators' Responses on Quality Indicators and Access*

As shown in **Figure 4.4**, most school administrators reported relatively favourable class conditions compared with public-school norms. Nearly half **(47.4%)** rated their student–teacher ratios as *better*, and another 31.6% as *much better*, indicating that private and faith-based schools often maintain smaller classes and more individualised instruction. Only one respondent (5.3%) described ratios as *worse*, suggesting that, on average, private-sector schools may deliver improved teacher attention and classroom management.

Despite these positive quality indicators, access remains uneven. About **36.8%** of schools serve student populations with fewer than 25% from low-income households, while just 21.1% enroll a majority (over 75%) of such students. This distribution suggests that private education, though expanding, primarily attracts families with moderate or higher income levels, leaving economically disadvantaged learners under-represented.

The most frequently cited barrier to marginalised students' participation was **high school fees (68.4%)**, followed by limited scholarships (15.8%) and long distances to school (10.5%). Only one respondent mentioned disability-unfriendly environments, yet this still points to issues of inclusivity. Collectively, these barriers reveal that financial costs remain the dominant constraint to equitable access within both public and private schooling contexts.

Overall, the findings in Figure 4.4 indicate that **while the quality of instruction in private and faith-based schools appears comparatively higher, access is constrained by economic inequality**. The prevalence of high fees and limited financial aid restricts opportunities for low-income and vulnerable learners. Strengthening policies that promote inclusive financing—such as targeted subsidies, scholarship schemes, and equitable resource allocation—would be essential to ensure that quality gains translate into universal access and learning equity across Liberia's education system.

4.3.2 Teachers on Equity, Access, and Learning Resources

Teachers' perceptions regarding equity and access among students of different economic backgrounds and genders, as well as the adequacy of learning resources such as textbooks, laboratories, and ICT facilities indicate continuing disparities that affect learning quality and inclusiveness across schools as presented in Figure 4.5.

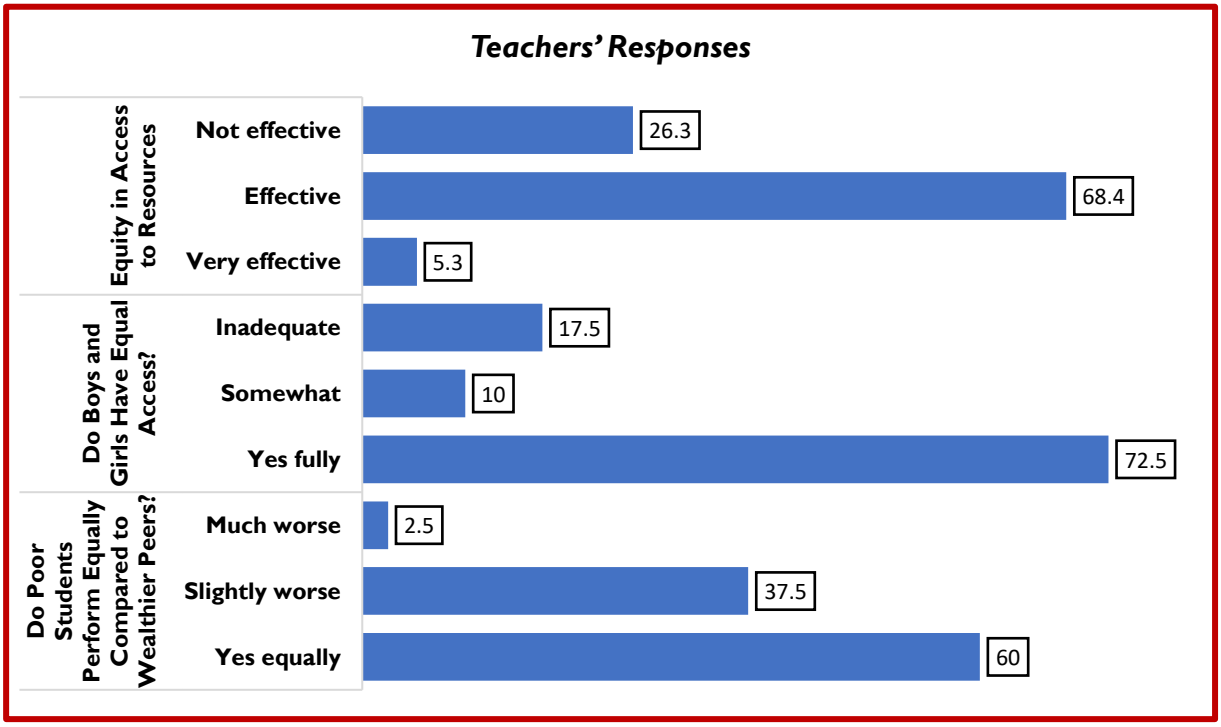


Figure 4.5 *Teachers' Responses on Equity, Access, and Learning Resources*

As shown in **Figure 4.5**, most teachers (60%) believed that students from low-income households **perform equally** with wealthier peers, although a significant proportion (37.5%) noted that poorer students perform *slightly worse*. This suggests that while schools strive to maintain fairness, socioeconomic disadvantage still influences academic outcomes.

Access between **boys and girls** was reported as largely **equal (72.5%)**, indicating gender parity gains in enrollment and participation. However, 17.5% of teachers still observed inadequate access for girls, especially in rural areas or low-resource settings. Regarding **availability of learning resources**, over half of respondents **(60%)** rated them as *inadequate or very inadequate*, particularly in the areas of textbooks, laboratories, and ICT. This shortage limits the quality of teaching and learning, especially in science and technology subjects.

Overall, the findings reveal that while **gender equity and performance parity are improving**, **resource constraints and economic inequalities** continue to hinder learning outcomes. Ensuring equitable resource distribution, targeted support for low-income learners, and investment in modern learning tools are essential to advancing educational quality and inclusion in Liberia.

4.3.3 Students' Perspectives on Quality Indicators and Access

Students' perceptions of learning quality and access, focusing on the adequacy of textbooks and materials, gender equality in teacher treatment, and the main learning challenges they face were also investigated. The findings, presented in Figure 4.6, highlight persistent resource shortages and classroom constraints affecting students' daily learning experiences.

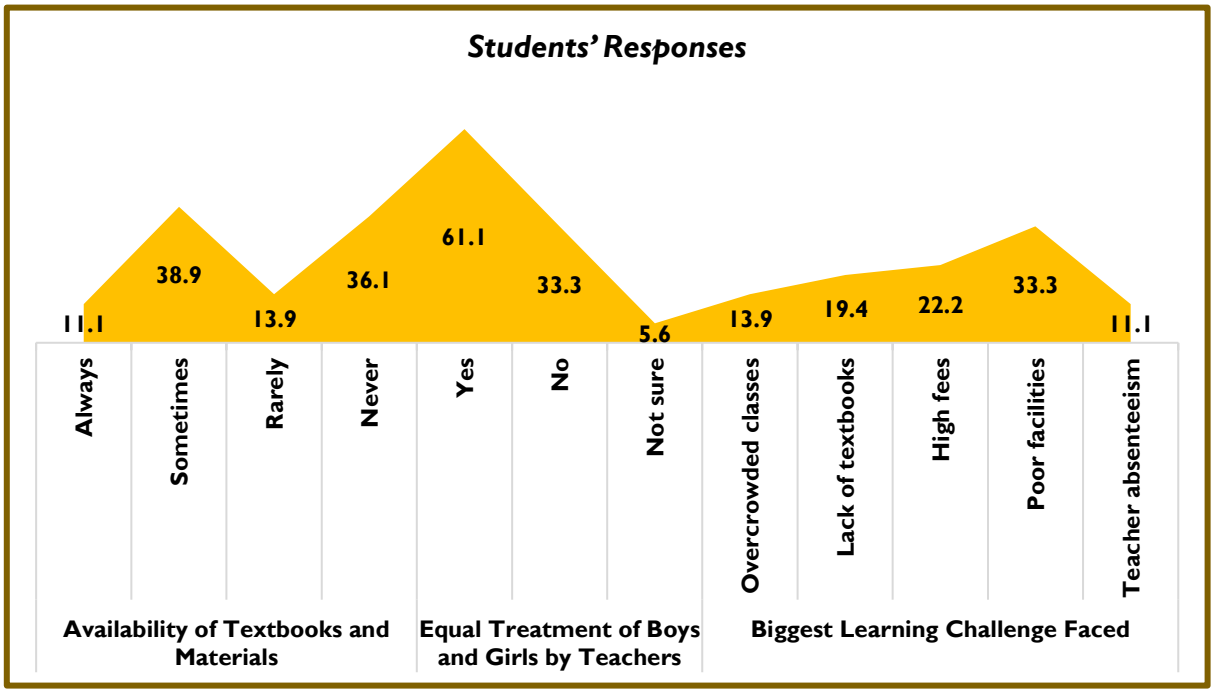


Figure 4.6 *Students' Responses on Quality Indicators and Access*

As shown in **Figure 4.6**, only **11.1%** of students reported *always* having enough textbooks and materials, while the majority (**38.9%**) said *sometimes*, and **36.1%* indicated *never*. This highlights significant shortages of essential learning resources in many schools.

A majority (**61.1%**) of respondents agreed that **boys and girls are treated equally** by teachers, reflecting progress toward gender equity in classroom interaction. However, one-third (**33.3%**) believed inequality persists, suggesting that gender-sensitive teaching practices are not yet universal. When asked about their **biggest learning challenge**, the most common responses were *poor facilities (33.3%)* and *high fees (22.2%)*, followed by *lack of textbooks (19.4%)*. Fewer students mentioned *overcrowded classes (13.9%)* and *teacher absenteeism (11.1%)*. These results point to resource deficits and financial barriers as major obstacles to quality learning.

Overall, the findings indicate that while gender equality in teacher treatment has improved, **access to learning materials, affordable education, and adequate school facilities remains limited**. Addressing these gaps through targeted resource investment and fee reduction programs is crucial to improving equity and learning outcomes across Liberia's schools.

4.3.4 Parents' Perspectives on Quality Indicators and Access

Parents' perceptions of educational quality and access in their children's schools were assessed. The analysis focuses on equality of opportunity for poor students, main quality-related challenges, and gender equity in treatment by teachers. These insights help illustrate how parents view fairness, inclusiveness, and resource adequacy across Liberia's education system.

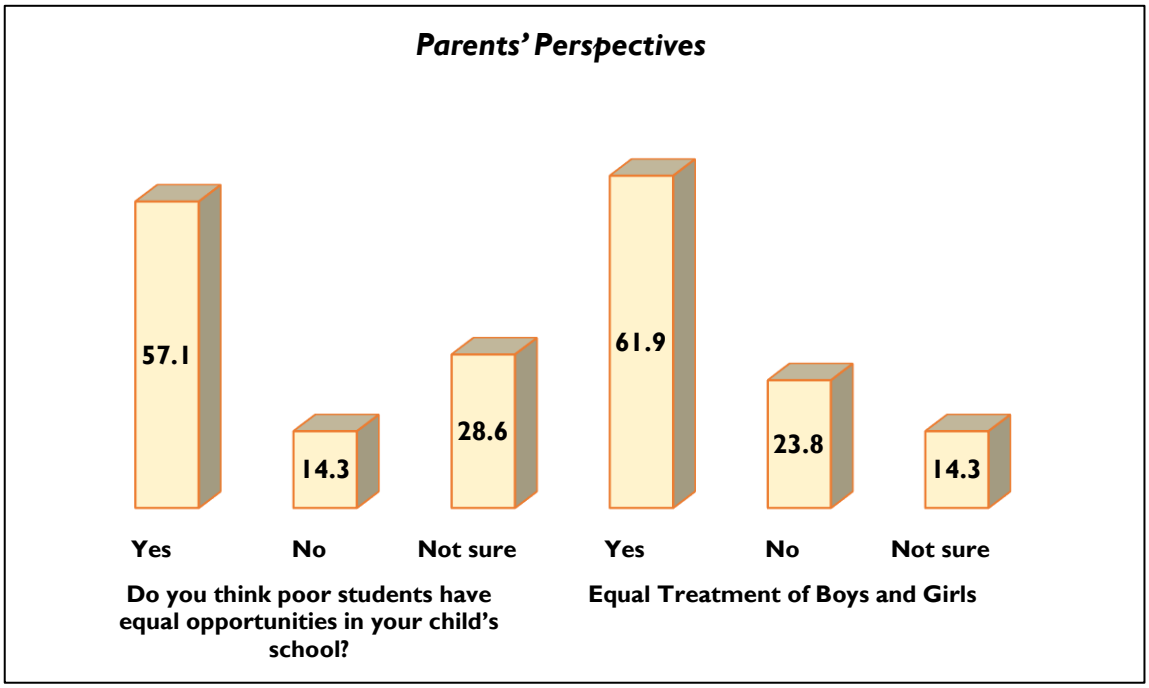


Figure 4.7 *Parental Perceptions of Educational Equity and Learning Conditions*

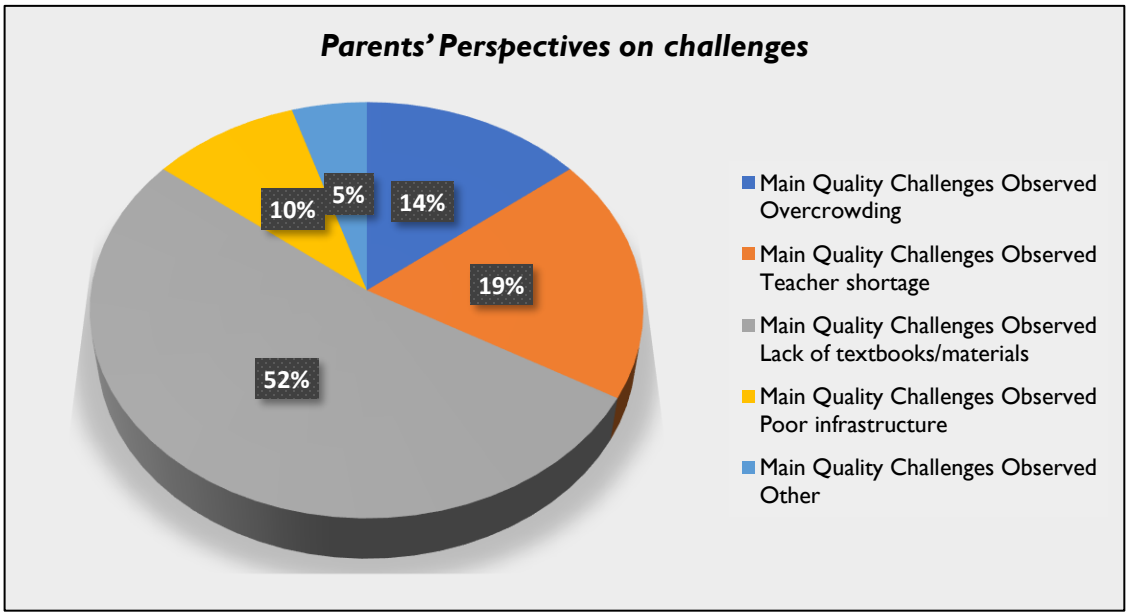


Figure 4.8 *Parental perceptions of educational challenges*

As presented in Figures 4.7 and 4.8, more than half of the parents (**57.1%**) believed that **poor students have equal opportunities** in their children's schools, while **14.3%** disagreed and **28.6%** were *unsure*. This suggests that although some schools promote inclusiveness, perceptions of inequality remain for a significant number of parents—possibly due to differences in school resources or fee policies.

In terms of **gender equity**, a majority (**61.9%**) of parents reported that **boys and girls are treated equally**, while **23.8%** said they are not, and **14.3%** were uncertain. This indicates steady progress toward gender equality in schools but highlights that inconsistent teacher practices may still exist.

The most frequently cited **quality challenge** was the *lack of textbooks and materials (52.4%)*, followed by *teacher shortages (19.0%)* and *overcrowding (14.3%)*. These findings point to persistent gaps in essential teaching and learning resources, which directly affect instruction and student performance.

Overall, the SPSS results reveal that parents generally perceive schools as moderately inclusive and fair, but ongoing issues such as inadequate learning materials, teacher shortages, and occasional gender disparities continue to hinder quality. Addressing these gaps through resource improvement, equitable teaching practices, and targeted support for disadvantaged learners remains critical to achieving inclusive and high-quality education in Liberia.

4.4 Stakeholders' Perceptions on Education Financing and Policy Effectiveness

4.4.1 *School Administrators*

This section presents school administrators' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of current education financing and policy frameworks in promoting equity, quality, and regulation, as well as their views on whether government policies favor public or private schools. The analysis provides a deeper understanding of how stakeholders perceive the fairness, inclusiveness, and balance of education policies within Liberia's evolving education system.

Table 4.5: *School Administrators' Responses on Perceptions of Financing, Privatization, and Policy Effectiveness*

#	Variable	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	**Equity in access**	Very effective	1	5.3
		Effective	**13**	**68.4**
		Not effective	5	26.3
2	**Quality in education**	Very effective	6	31.6
		Effective	10	52.6
		Not effective	3	15.8
3	**Regulation of private schools**	Very effective	3	15.8
		Effective	**12**	**63.2**
		Not effective	4	21.1
4	**Do current policies favor public schools, private schools, or both equally?**	**Public schools are more favoured**	**13**	**68.4**
		Private schools are more favoured	1	5.3
		Both public and private schools equally favoured	2	10.5
		Neither (no school type is favoured)	1	5.3
		Don't know / Not sure	2	10.5

As presented in **Table 4.5**, most school administrators rated existing education financing and policy interventions as **moderately effective** in addressing key sectoral priorities. A majority (68.4%) viewed current efforts toward promoting **equity in access** as *effective*, although 26.3% considered them *not effective*, suggesting uneven implementation across school types and regions.

Perceptions of **quality improvement policies** were more favorable: 84.2% of respondents (combining "very effective" and "effective") believed that financing and reform initiatives have contributed to better quality outcomes. This may reflect visible gains in private-school performance and teacher engagement, though a small proportion (15.8%) remained skeptical.

Regarding **regulation of private schools**, 63.2% described government oversight as *effective*, and 15.8% as *very effective*. However, one-fifth (21.1%) found regulation *ineffective*, implying that while policy frameworks exist, enforcement and monitoring may still be limited, especially outside urban centers.

When asked which school type current policies favor, the majority **(68.4%)** felt that **public schools receive greater policy support and funding**, compared to only 5.3% who believed private schools are more favored. About 10.5% perceived policies as balanced between both,

while another 10.5% were unsure. This indicates a prevailing perception of policy bias toward public institutions, despite the growing dominance of private providers in the education sector.

Overall, the findings in Table 4.4 suggest that **education stakeholders view Liberia's financing and policy environment as partially effective but unevenly applied**. While progress is recognized in improving access, quality, and regulation, disparities persist between school types. Strengthening policy coherence, ensuring equitable financing, and enhancing regulatory enforcement remain essential to achieving balanced and inclusive educational outcomes across the country.

4.4.2 Teachers' Welfare, Rights, and Perceptions of Privatisation

Results indicate that more needs to be done to improve **teachers' professional development opportunities, salary and working conditions, and protection of union rights**—particularly in private schools. Teachers also expressed mixed perceptions of **privatisation**, reflecting diverse views on how current reforms influence their welfare and professional stability as seen in Table 4.6

Table 4.6 *Teachers' responses on welfare, rights, and privatization*

#	Variable	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	**Teacher development**	Adequate	19	47.5
		Somewhat adequate	9	22.5
		Inadequate	12	30.0
2	**Salary/conditions**	Adequate	8	20.0
		Somewhat adequate	15	37.5
		Inadequate	17	42.5
3	**Union rights in private schools**	Protected	12	30.0
		Restricted	18	45.0
		Don't know	10	25.0
4	**Privatization is:**	Helping	21	52.5
		Harming	6	15.0
		Both	4	10.0
		Not sure	8	20.0

The findings in **Table 4.6** show that **47.5%** of teachers rated professional development as *adequate*, **22.5%** as *somewhat adequate*, and **30%** as *inadequate*. This suggests moderate progress in teacher training, though opportunities remain uneven.

In contrast, only **20%** of teachers described their **salary and working conditions** as *adequate*, while **37.5%** found them *somewhat adequate* and **42.5%** *inadequate*, reflecting persistent dissatisfaction with pay and benefits. Regarding **union rights in private schools**, **45%** reported

that rights are *restricted*, **30%** said they are *protected*, and **25%** were *uncertain*, indicating limited freedom of association in many private institutions. Perceptions of **privatisation** were more positive, with **52.5%** viewing it as *helping* the system, **15%** as *harming*, and **20%** unsure. Teachers generally acknowledged its role in expanding access but raised concerns about equity and fairness.

Overall, the data highlight that while **teacher development efforts are improving**, **poor working conditions, weak union protections, and mixed perceptions of privatisation** continue to challenge teacher motivation and stability. Addressing welfare gaps and ensuring fair labour and policy frameworks remain essential for sustaining quality education delivery in Liberia.

4.4.3 Students' Perceptions of Financing, Privatisation, and Policy Effectiveness

Students' views on the adequacy of government financial support, the need for assistance to private-school students, perceptions of private-school opportunities, and government regulation of private institutions were explored. The findings reflect students' awareness of policy gaps, fairness issues, and the perceived balance between public and private education systems as seen in Table 4.7

Table 4.7 *Students' responses on perceptions of financing, privatization, and policy effectiveness*

#	Variable	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	**Do you think the government provides enough financial support to help students like you stay in school?**	Yes	11	30.6
		No	18	50.0
		Not sure	7	19.4
2	**If your school is a private or faith-based school, do you think the government should give support to students in private schools?**	Yes	28	77.8
		No	4	11.1
		Not sure	4	11.1
3	**Do you think private schools provide better opportunities than public schools in Liberia?**	Yes, much better	17	47.2
		Yes, slightly better	8	22.2
		About the same	2	5.6
		Public schools are better	8	22.2
		Not sure	1	2.8
4	**How well do you think the government is regulating private schools (fees, quality standards, fairness)?**	Very well	7	19.4
		Fairly well	6	16.7
		Not well	8	22.2
		Don't know	15	41.7

As shown in **Table 4.**, half of the respondents (**50.0%**) believed that the **government does not provide enough financial support** to help students remain in school, while only **30.6%** felt support was adequate. This reflects continued concern about limited state assistance and the financial burden on families.

A large majority (**77.8%**) agreed that **students in private and faith-based schools should receive government support**, suggesting a broad call for inclusive education policies that recognize all learners, regardless of school type. When asked about **educational opportunities**, nearly **70%** of respondents (combining *much better* and *slightly better*) perceived **private schools as offering superior opportunities**, while **22.2%** considered public schools better. This highlights a common perception that private institutions provide higher quality learning and better prospects.

Perceptions of **government regulation of private schools** were mixed: **19.4%** said regulation was *very well handled*, *16.7%* said *fairly well*, but *22.2%* thought *not well*, and *41.7%* were *uncertain*. This suggests low visibility or understanding of the government's oversight role among students.

Overall, the findings indicate that students perceive **government financial support as inadequate**, view **private education as more advantageous**, and express **limited confidence in regulatory enforcement**. Strengthening financial aid programs, promoting policy transparency, and ensuring equitable oversight across all school types are essential to improving fairness and trust in Liberia's education system.

4.4.4 Parents' perceptions of financing, privatisation, and policy effectiveness

Parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of government financing and education policies were solicited, examining views on affordability, regulation of private schools, public investment priorities, and the role of public–private partnerships in improving education quality. The findings reflect parents' perspectives on the balance between government responsibility and private sector participation in Liberia's education system.

Table 4.7 *Parents' responses on perceptions of financing, privatization, and policy effectiveness*

#	Variable	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	**Do government policies make education more affordable?**	Yes	7	33.3
		No	**9**	**42.9**
		Not sure	5	23.8
2	**Government adequately regulates private schools?**	Yes	3	14.3
		No	**17**	**81.0**
		Not sure	1	4.8
3	**Government should increase spending on public schools to reduce household financial burdens.**	Strongly agree	15	71.4
		Agree	6	28.6
		Yes, strongly	**15**	**71.4**
4	**The Ministry of Education should regulate tuition and fees charged by private schools.**	Yes, somewhat	3	14.3
		Neutral	1	4.8
		No, strongly against	2	9.5
5	**Public–private partnerships (PPPs) are a good strategy for improving education quality.**	Strongly agree	**8**	**38.1**
		Agree	7	33.3
		Neutral	4	19.0
		Disagree	2	9.5

As shown in **Table 4.**, SPSS results revealed that only **33.3%** of parents believed **government policies make education more affordable**, while **42.9%** disagreed and **23.8%** were *unsure*. This suggests that affordability challenges remain a major concern for families, with limited perception of government programs reducing school-related costs.

A significant majority (**81.0%**) reported that **the government does not adequately regulate private schools**, and only **14.3%** believed regulation was effective. This finding underscores the need for stronger oversight in areas such as tuition control, school registration, and quality assurance.

An overwhelming **71.4%** of parents *strongly agreed* and **28.6%** *agreed* that **government should increase spending on public schools** to lessen the financial burden on households. Similarly, **85.7%** (combining "strongly" and "somewhat") supported Ministry of Education regulation of private school fees, reflecting strong public demand for policy intervention to ensure fairness and affordability. In addition, **71.4%** of respondents (combining *strongly agree* and *agree*) viewed public–private partnerships (PPPs) as a *good strategy* for improving education quality, though a minority (**9.5%**) disagreed. This indicates cautious optimism toward PPPs as a complementary approach to strengthening education delivery.

Overall, the findings suggest that parents see government funding and regulation as insufficient, while expressing strong support for increased public investment and tighter control of private education costs. Enhancing accountability, expanding subsidies, and promoting well-structured partnerships between public and private actors are crucial to building a more affordable, equitable, and high-quality education system in Liberia.

4.5 Qualitative Report

4.5.1 Overview

This section presents findings from the qualitative component of this study. Eight participants drawn from key stakeholder groups—including school principals, district and county education officers, senior officials of the Ministry of Education, a Ministry of Finance representative, and a civil society program manager—were interviewed using semi-structured protocols. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and perspectives related to four central themes: **(1)** government investment and financing, **(2)** the extent and drivers of privatization, **(3)** quality and access disparities, and **(4)** policy and regulation.

4.5.2 Government Investment and Financing

Stakeholders consistently described **government investment in education** as *inadequate, inconsistent, and poorly targeted*. Participants noted that, although the Ministry of Education receives national allocations, **resources rarely reach schools in sufficient quantities**. Many institutions therefore depend on **registration fees, community contributions, and volunteer labor** to remain functional (Part01, Part05).

A principal (Part01) emphasized that *"schools largely survive on fees collected from students,"* while an education expert (Part03) likened government support to *"a drop in the pocket."* The situation is most acute in **Early Childhood Education (ECE)**, where fees are paradoxically higher than at primary or junior secondary levels despite the economic vulnerability of families. As one education manager (Part08) explained, *"ECE students pay the highest fees even though most teachers are untrained."*

Several respondents acknowledged minor increases in education funding in recent years, yet stressed that **Liberia's 14.8% allocation to education in 2024** remains below the **20% benchmark** recommended by UNESCO. According to Part08, this gap manifests in "poor facilities, unpaid teachers, and limited instructional materials."

The findings indicate an urgent need for **equitable, transparent, and targeted financing mechanisms**, with priority given to **ECE, teacher development, and infrastructure** to reverse underperformance and promote inclusive access.

4.5.3 Extent and Drivers of Privatisation

All participants acknowledged that **privatisation has expanded rapidly** in Liberia's education landscape. This trend was attributed to **weak public provision, urban population growth, and parental demand for better quality**. According to Part08, *"Private schools now account for more than 45% of total enrollment."*

Parents reportedly view private education as superior in discipline and outcomes, even at great personal cost. A school administrator (Part05) stated that *"parents will pay any amount because they believe public schools can't guarantee learning."*

The Liberia Education Advancement Program (LEAP) was cited as a major catalyst, introducing public–private partnerships aimed at improving performance. However, participants expressed **mixed views**: while Part04 and Part07 recognized *improved exam results and gender parity*, others such as Part06 argued that *"scripted lessons and digital monitoring systems restrict teacher creativity."*

Privatisation appears to fill critical service gaps but also intensifies inequality, as access to quality education increasingly depends on household income. Participants (Part03, Part08) emphasized the need for clear regulatory safeguards to ensure affordability and accountability across private and PPP schools.

4.5.4 Quality and Access

Participants consistently underscored the stark contrast in quality between public and private schools. Private institutions were described as offering better facilities, smaller classes, and stronger academic outcomes. As one education expert (Part03) noted, *"Nearly all top WAEC performers come from private schools."*

Public schools, however, face overcrowding, inadequate materials, and limited accessibility. Part01 reported that *"some classrooms have no chairs or textbooks,"* while Part08 pointed out that *"a child in a wheelchair cannot access most classrooms."* Despite the government's "free education" policy, hidden costs such as uniforms and registration fees make it effectively unaffordable for many low-income families (Part02, Part05).

These challenges have deepened social stratification: **wealthier families increasingly choose private schooling**, while disadvantaged children remain confined to under-resourced environments. Part08 explained that *"parents sacrifice everything to pay private fees, even when it hurts the family economy."*

Improving educational access requires addressing quality, inclusion, and affordability simultaneously. Equity-focused reforms—such as subsidies for vulnerable groups and minimum standards for school infrastructure—are critical to ensure that access to quality education is not determined by income or geography.

4.5.5 Policy and Regulation

Although Liberia has developed several education policies—including the LEAP framework, the Education Sector Plan, and the National Policy on Girls' Education—participants highlighted weak implementation and enforcement. Policies were described as *"good on paper but weak in practice"* (Part07).

A Ministry official (Part04) confirmed that *"many private schools operate independently, setting their own fees and standards without oversight."* While new initiatives—such as school supervision handbooks and task forces—were recognized, participants agreed they remain under-resourced and inconsistently applied (Part02, Part08).

Several respondents recommended strengthening accountability through stakeholder participation, including parents, teacher unions, and civil society (Part06). One civil society manager emphasized that *"policy monitoring must involve those closest to the schools if it is to work."*

Effective policy reform demands institutional capacity-building, regular monitoring, and inclusive governance mechanisms to ensure compliance and shared accountability between the public and private sectors.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Drawing from both quantitative and qualitative data, the study has come up with the following conclusions:

1. **Persistent Underinvestment in Public Education:** The findings reveal that government investment in education remains inadequate, unpredictable, and below global benchmarks. Quantitative data indicated that nearly half (47.6%) of respondents believed government spending had remained stagnant over the past three years, while qualitative interviews confirmed that limited budget allocations rarely reach schools. This underfunding constrains infrastructure development, learning materials, and teacher motivation, particularly at the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level.
2. **Expansion of Private Education and Deepening Inequality:** The number of private schools has grown significantly—over two-thirds (67.5%) of respondents observed a notable increase. While private institutions have contributed to improved access and quality in some areas, they have also widened socioeconomic divides. Poor students are often excluded due to high fees and limited scholarships, as affirmed by both statistical and narrative evidence.
3. **Quality and Access Remain Uneven:** Quantitative findings showed that only 11.1% of students "always" have enough textbooks, and 33.3% cited poor facilities as their greatest learning challenge. Qualitative evidence reinforced that public schools remain overcrowded and under-resourced compared to private institutions, which generally perform better in

standardized assessments. Access is thus heavily shaped by income, geography, and parental means.

4. **Equity and Gender Inclusion Show Gradual Progress:** Across the dataset, most respondents (61–72%) affirmed that boys and girls receive equal treatment and opportunities in schools. However, hidden barriers persist, particularly for students from low-income and rural households. While gender parity is improving, socioeconomic inequity continues to limit genuine inclusion.
5. **Weak Policy Implementation and Oversight:** Despite the presence of progressive policies such as the National Policy on Girls' Education, enforcement remains inconsistent. Respondents noted weak regulation of private schools and minimal accountability mechanisms.
6. **Systemic Gaps in Coordination and Governance:** Both data strands highlight fragmented coordination among government, school authorities, and communities. Limited stakeholder engagement in policy formulation and monitoring has weakened accountability and hindered policy ownership at the grassroots level.

In sum, Liberia's education system is characterized by low investment, growing privatization, quality disparities, and weak regulatory enforcement. These challenges collectively threaten equitable access and the sustainability of education reform efforts.

5.2 Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following advocacy, policy, institutional, and programmatic recommendations are proposed:

1. **Increase and rationalise public education financing:** The Government of Liberia should progressively raise education spending to meet or exceed the 20% global benchmark, ensuring funds are equitably distributed across counties and subsectors. Priority should be given to ECE, primary education, and teacher welfare, where deficits are most severe.
2. **Strengthen quality and foundational learning:** Invest in teacher training, continuous professional development, and curriculum improvement, especially in core subjects such as literacy, numeracy, and STEM. Providing adequate learning materials and monitoring classroom quality are essential for improving learning outcomes.
3. **Enhance infrastructure and inclusive access:** Construct and rehabilitate disability-friendly and gender-sensitive facilities, particularly in underserved rural areas. Introduce targeted subsidies, school feeding programs, and scholarship schemes for children from low-income households to mitigate cost-related exclusion.
4. **Regulate and monitor the expanding private sector:** Establish a transparent and enforceable regulatory framework for private and PPP schools. This should include fee

guidelines, performance standards, and reporting requirements to ensure that privatisation contributes to equity rather than exacerbates inequality.

5. **Promote accountability and participatory governance:** Institutionalise multi-stakeholder engagement by involving civil society organisations, teacher unions, parent associations, and local communities in education planning, budgeting, and oversight. This approach enhances transparency, responsiveness, and ownership of education reforms.
6. **Strengthen the capacity of teacher unions and civil society organisations:** Provide targeted support to build skills in policy analysis, education budget tracking, monitoring, and advocacy, enabling meaningful participation and effective oversight of transparent and accountable education financing implementation.
7. **Bridge the public–private divide through partnerships:** The Government of Liberia should foster public–private collaboration guided by clear accountability measures. Partnerships must complement, but never serve as a replacement for public education. Besides, such partnership must ensure that learning opportunities remain affordable and inclusive for all.
8. **Leverage data and research for policy reform:** Strengthen the education management information system (EMIS) and support research collaborations to inform data-driven decision-making. Evidence should guide funding priorities, teacher deployment, and policy adjustments to enhance efficiency and impact.
9. **Sustain focus on equity and gender inclusion:** Build on recent gender equity gains by expanding programs that empower girls, support adolescent mothers, and address social and cultural barriers to schooling. Targeted interventions should also support children with disabilities and those in conflict-affected or remote communities.

In short, Liberia stands at a pivotal juncture in education reform. Without decisive investment, coherent regulation, and inclusive governance, the widening divide between public and private education could undermine national commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4): inclusive and equitable quality education for all. A coordinated, well-funded, and equity-driven strategy is essential to ensure that every Liberian child, regardless of background can learn, thrive, and contribute meaningfully to national development.

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Annex 1: Research Tools

Study on
Education Financing and the Impact of Privatisation in Liberia
for EI Africa Office | NTAL Project

Research Questionnaire for School Administrators

FREE (Foundation for Research, Education & Empowerment), with support from Education International Africa Office and the National Teachers Association of Liberia, is carrying out a study on ***Education Financing and the Impact of Privatisation in Liberia****.*

Your participation is very important. By completing this questionnaire, you will help us understand how education is financed, how privatization affects schools, and what can be done to improve access and quality for all students.

There are ***no right or wrong answers****—just share your honest views. All responses are* ***confidential****. Thank you for your time and contribution.*

Would you like to take part in this survey?

☐ *YES*

☐ *NO*

Section 1: Survey Questions

The following questions explore: Levels and Trends of Government Investment		
No.	**Questions**	**Responses**
1	Has your school received government support in the last 3 years?	1. Yes (specify: payroll teachers / grants / infrastructure / instructional materials) 2. No
2	Trend of government investment in your school over past 3 years:	1. Increased significantly 2. Increased slightly 3. Stayed the same 4. Declined
3	Approximate % of your annual budget covered by government support:	1. 0% 2. 1–25% 3. 26–50% 4. 51–75%

		5. Above 75%
4	Compared to **international benchmarks** (20% of national budget or 4–6% of GDP), is Liberia meeting expectations in education funding?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
The following questions explore: Extent, Forms, and Drivers of Privatization		
5	School ownership/management structure:	1. Government 2. Private individual 3. Corporation 4. Faith-based 5. Community 6. NGO 7. Partnership
6	Forms of private involvement (mark all):	1. Full private ownership 2. Public-private partnership (PPP) 3. Outsourced services (catering, transport, security) 4. Supply of materials (books, uniforms) 5. Trust/management boards 6. Other: _____
7	Main drivers of privatization in Liberia (mark all):	1. Profit 2. Rising demand for quality education 3. Limited access in public schools 4. Declining standards in public schools 5. International donor/IMF/World Bank policies 6. Other: _____
8	Estimate % of students in your county enrolled in private schools:	1. Below 25% 2. 25–50% 3. 51–75% 4. Above 75%
The following questions explore: Quality Indicators and Access		
9	Current student–teacher ratio compared to public standard:	1. Much better 2. Better 3. Same 4. Worse

10	% of your students from low-income households:	1. 0–25% 2. 26–50% 3. 51–75% 4. Above 75%
11	Key barriers to marginalized students' enrollment	1. High fees 2. Distance 3. Lack of sanitation/gender facilities 4. Lack of scholarships 5. Disability unfriendly environment 6. Other
The following questions explore: Perceptions of Financing, Privatization & Policy Effectiveness		
12	Effectiveness of current government policies in ensuring:	•
12A	Equity in access:	1. Very effective 2. Effective 3. Not effective
12B	Quality in education:	1. Very effective 2. Effective 3. Not effective
12C	Regulation of private schools:	1. Very effective 2. Effective 3. Not effective
13	Do current policies favor public schools, private schools, or both equally?	1. Public schools are more favored 2. Private schools are more favored 3. Both public and private schools equally favored 4. Neither (no school type is favored) 5. Don't know / Not sure
Section 2: Personal Information		
1	**Gender**	○ Male ○ Female
2	**Age group**	○ 25–30 ○ 31–35 ○ 36–40 ○ 41-45 ○ 46 or above
3	**School Location:**	○ Urban ○ Semi-urban

		○ Rural
4	**Type of School:**	○ Public ○ Private (for-profit) ○ Faith-based ○ Community ○ NGO-supported ○ Other: _____
5	**Level of Education Provided** (mark all that apply):	○ Early Childhood ○ Primary ○ Junior Secondary ○ Senior Secondary
6	**Administrator's Highest Qualification:**	○ High school certificate ○ Associate degree ○ Bachelor's degree ○ Master's degree ○ Doctorate/PhD ○ Other: _____
7	**Years of Experience as School Administrator:**	○ Less than 3 years ○ 3–5 years ○ 6–10 years ○ Over 10 years

Thank You for Participating

Study on

Education Financing and the Impact of Privatisation in Liberia

for EI Africa Office | NTAL Project

Research Questionnaire for Teachers

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Your participation is very important. By completing this questionnaire, you will help us understand how education is financed, how privatization affects schools, and what can be done to improve access and quality for all students.

There are ***no right or wrong answers****—just share your honest views. All responses are* ***confidential****. Thank you for your time and contribution.*

Would you like to take part in this survey?

☐ *YES*
☐ *NO*

Section 1: Survey Questions

The following questions explore: Levels and Trends of Government Investment		
No.	**Questions**	**Responses**
1	Who pays your salary?	1. Government 2. School management 3. Parent fees 4. NGO/Donor
2	Teacher salaries & benefits in last 3 years:	1. Improved significantly 2. Improved slightly 3. Stayed the same 4. Declined
3	Government investment in teacher development (training, workshops):	1. Adequate 2. Somewhat adequate 3. Inadequate
The following questions explore: Extent, Forms, and Drivers of Privatization		

4	Number of private schools compared to public schools in your area has:	1. Increased significantly 2. Increased slightly 3. Stayed the same 4. Declined
5	Main reasons parents prefer private schools (mark all):	1. Quality of teaching 2. Discipline 3. Better facilities 4. Religious orientation 5. Accessibility/location
The following questions explore: Quality Indicators and Access		
6	Do poor students perform equally compared to wealthier peers?	1. Yes equally 2. Slightly worse 3. Much worse
7	Do boys and girls have equal access?	1. Yes fully 2. Somewhat 3. No
8	Availability of resources (books, labs, ICT):	1. Very adequate 2. Adequate 3. Inadequate 4. Very inadequate
The following questions explore: Perceptions of Financing, Privatization & Policy Effectiveness		
9	Effectiveness of policies in:	
9A	Teacher development:	1. Adequate 2. Somewhat adequate 3. Inadequate
9B	Salary/conditions:	1. Adequate 2. Somewhat adequate 3. Inadequate
9C	Union rights in private schools:	1. Protected 2. Restricted 3. Don't know
10	**Privatization is:**	1. Helping 2. Harming 3. Both 4. Not sure
Section 2: Personal Information		

1	**Gender**	○ Male ○ Female
2	**Age group**	○ Below 25 years ○ 25–34 years ○ 35–44 years ○ 45–54 years ○ 55 years and above
3	**School Location:**	○ Urban ○ Semi-urban ○ Rural
4	**Type of School:**	○ Public ○ Private (for-profit) ○ Faith-based ○ Community ○ NGO-supported ○ Other: _____
5	**Highest Qualification:**	○ High school certificate ○ Teaching certificate / C-certificate ○ Associate degree ○ Bachelor's degree ○ Master's degree ○ Doctorate/PhD ○ Other: _____
7	**Years of Experience as a teacher:**	○ Less than 3 years ○ 3–5 years ○ 6–10 years ○ Over 10 years
8	**Level Taught (mark all that apply):**	○ Early Childhood ○ Primary ○ Junior Secondary ○ Senior Secondary
9	**Employment Status:**	○ Full-time ○ Part-time ○ Volunteer

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Research Questionnaire for Parents

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Your participation is very important. By completing this questionnaire, you will help us understand how education is financed, how privatization affects schools, and what can be done to improve access and quality for all students.

There are ***no right or wrong answers****—just share your honest views. All responses are* ***confidential****. Thank you for your time and contribution.*

Would you like to take part in this survey?

☐ *YES*

☐ *NO*

Section 1: Survey Questions

The following questions explore: Levels and Trends of Government Investment		
No.	**Questions**	**Responses**
1	Have you received **any subsidy** for your child's schooling (scholarship, free materials, feeding)?	1. Yes 2. No
2	Government's financial contribution to education in last 3 years has:	1. Increased 2. Stayed the same 3. Declined 4. Not aware
The following questions explore: Extent, Forms, and Drivers of Privatization		

3	Type of school your child attends:	1. Public 2. Private 3. Faith-based 4. Community
4	Why you chose this school (mark all):	1. Quality 2. Affordability 3. Accessibility 4. Religious values 5. Discipline/reputation
5	How satisfied are you with the quality of education in your child's current school?	1. Very satisfied 2. Satisfied 3. Neutral 4. Dissatisfied 5. Very dissatisfied
6	To what extent do you agree with this statement: "Private schools provide better opportunities for my child's future compared to public schools."	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
The following questions explore: Quality Indicators and Access		
7	Do you think poor students have equal opportunities in your child's school?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
8	Do boys and girls receive equal treatment in the school?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
9	Main quality challenges you observe:	1. Overcrowding 2. Teacher shortage 3. Lack of textbooks/materials 4. Poor infrastructure 5. Other
The following questions explore: Perceptions of Financing, Privatization & Policy Effectiveness		
10	Do government policies make education more affordable?	1. Yes 2. No 3. No change

11	Government adequately regulates private schools?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
12	To what extent do you agree: *"Government should increase its spending on public schools to reduce household financial burdens."*	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
13	Do you think the Ministry of Education should regulate tuition and fees charged by private schools?	1. Yes, strongly 2. Yes, somewhat 3. Neutral 4. No, not necessary 5. No, strongly against
14	To what extent do you agree: *"Public-private partnerships (such as private management of public schools) are a good strategy for improving education quality in Liberia."*	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Section 2: Personal Information		
1	**Gender**	○ Male ○ Female
2	**Age group**	○ Below 25 years ○ 25–34 years ○ 35–44 years ○ 45–54 years ○ 55 years and above
3	**Relationship to Child:**	○ Parent (mother/father) ○ Guardian/Relative ○ Other:
4	**Type of School Child Attends:**	○ Public ○ Private (for-profit) ○ Faith-based ○ Community ○ NGO-supported ○ Other: _____

5	**Number of School-age Children in Household:**	○ 1 ○ 2–3 ○ 4–5 ○ 6 or more
6	**Highest Qualification:**	1. No formal education 2. Primary education 3. Junior secondary 4. Senior secondary 5. Vocational/Technical certificate 6. Tertiary (Associate/Bachelor's) 7. Postgraduate (Master's/PhD)
7	**Employment Status:**	○ Formal employment (government, company) ○ Informal/self-employed ○ Unemployed ○ Farmer ○ Other: _____

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Research Questionnaire for Students

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Your participation is very important. By completing this questionnaire, you will help us understand how education is financed, how privatization affects schools, and what can be done to improve access and quality for all students.

There are ***no right or wrong answers****—just share your honest views. All responses are* ***confidential****. Thank you for your time and contribution.*

Would you like to take part in this survey?

☐ *YES*

☐ *NO*

Section 1: Survey Questions

The following questions explore: Levels and Trends of Government Investment		
No.	**Questions**	**Responses**
1	Have you personally received any government support (scholarship, free books, school feeding, etc.)?	1. Yes 2. No

2	Do you think government is investing enough to help students stay in school?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
3	If government invested more money in education, which area should be the top priority? (Choose one)	1. Teacher salaries and training 2. School buildings and facilities 3. Free learning materials (books, uniforms, supplies) 4. Technology and internet access 5. Scholarships and fee reduction
The following questions explore: Extent, Forms, and Drivers of Privatization		
4	Type of school you attend:	1. Public 2. Private 3. Faith-based 4. Community
5	More private schools opened in your area in past 3 years?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
6	Do private schools give better education than public schools?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
The following questions explore: Quality Indicators and Access		
7	Do you have enough textbooks and materials?	1. Always 2. Sometimes 3. Rarely 4. Never
8	Are boys and girls treated equally by teachers?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
9	Biggest learning challenge you face:	1. Overcrowded classes 2. Lack of textbooks 3. High fees 4. Poor facilities 5. Teacher absenteeism
The following questions explore: Perceptions of Financing, Privatization & Policy Effectiveness		
10	Do you think the **government provides enough financial support** to help students like you stay in school?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure

11	If your school is a **private or faith-based school**, do you think the **government should give support** (e.g., textbooks, scholarships, subsidies) to students in private schools?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure
12	Do you think **private schools provide better opportunities** than public schools in Liberia?	1. Yes, much better 2. Yes, slightly better 3. About the same 4. Public schools are better 5. Not sure
13	How well do you think the government is **regulating private schools** (fees, quality standards, fairness)?	1. Very well 2. Fairly well 3. Not well 4. Don't know
Section 2: Personal Information		
1	**Gender**	○ Male ○ Female
2	**Age group**	○ Below 15 ○ 15–16 years ○ 17–18 years ○ 19–20 years ○ 21 years and above
3	**Grade Level:**	○ Grade 10 ○ Grade 11 ○ Grade 12
4	**Type of School You Attend:**	○ Public ○ Private (for-profit) ○ Faith-based ○ Community ○ NGO-supported ○ Other: _____
5	**Who Pays Your School Costs?**	○ Parents/Guardians ○ Relatives ○ Scholarship/Donor ○ Self (I work to support myself)

		○ Other: _____
6	**Do You Have Access to the Following at Home?** (mark all that apply)	○ Textbooks for all subjects ○ Electricity/light to study at night ○ Desk/table for study ○ Computer/laptop ○ Internet/smartphone for learning
7	**Household Situation:**	○ Living with both parents ○ Living with one parent ○ Living with relatives/guardian ○ Living alone/independent

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Qalitative Research Questionnaire – Key Stakeholders

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Your participation is very important. By being part of interview, you will help us understand how education is financed, how privatization affects schools, and what can be done to improve access and quality for all students.

There are ***no right or wrong answers****—just share your honest views. All responses are* ***confidential****. Thank you for your time and contribution.*

Would you like to take part in this survey?

☐ *YES*

☐ NO

Section 1: Personal Information		
1	**Gender**	○ Male ○ Female
2	**Age Range:**	○ Under 30 ○ 30–39 ○ 40–49 ○ 50–59 ○ 60+
3	**Institution/Organization:**	○
4	**Position/Role:**	○
5	**Type of Institution:**	○ Government (MoE / County Office) ○ Private School Association ○ Civil Society / NGO ○ Teacher Union ○ Academic / Research Institution ○ Community Leader ○ Parent / Guardian ○ Student Representative ○ Youth Organization ○ Other: _____
6	**Years of Experience in Education Sector:**	○ Less than 5 years ○ 5–10 years ○ 11–15 years ○ 16–20 years ○ More than 20 years
7	**Highest Level of Education Completed:**	○ Secondary / High School ○ Diploma / Certificate ○ Bachelor's Degree ○ Master's Degree ○ Doctorate / PhD ○ Other: _____
Section 2: Qualitative Questions		
Section A: Government Investment & Financing Trend		

Question	
1. How would you describe the current **levels of government investment in public education** in Liberia?	
2. Over the past 5–10 years, what **trends** have you observed in government spending on education (increasing, decreasing, or stagnant)?	
3. How do you think Liberia's education investment **compares with international financing benchmarks** (e.g., 20% of the national budget or 4–6% of GDP)?	
4. In your opinion, what areas of education are **most underfunded** (e.g., teacher salaries, infrastructure, textbooks, marginalized groups)?	
Section B: Extent, Forms, and Drivers of Privatization	
5. To what extent has **privatization and commercialization** expanded in Liberia's education system?	
6. What forms of privatization are most visible (e.g., private schools, public-private partnerships, outsourcing of services)?	
7. What do you see as the **main drivers** behind privatization in education (e.g., demand for quality, profit, gaps in public provision, donor influence)?	
Section C: Quality Indicators & Access	
8. How does the **quality of education** in private schools compare with public schools?	
9. How does **access to education** differ between public and private schools, especially for marginalized groups (poor households, rural children, girls, children with disabilities)?	
10. Do you think privatization is **narrowing or widening inequalities** in Liberia's education system? Please explain.	
Section D: Stakeholder Perceptions & Policy Effectiveness	

11. How effective are current **government policies** in ensuring equity and quality in education across public and private schools?	
12. What are the **strengths and weaknesses** of existing policies on education financing and privatization?	
13. Do you think government adequately **regulates private schools** (fees, standards, fairness)? Why or why not?	
14. What role should different stakeholders (government, private sector, CSOs, unions, communities, parents) play in **improving education financing and governance**?	
15. What key **policy changes or strategies** would you recommend to make Liberia's education system more equitable and high quality?	