

Trends of education privatisation research in sub-Saharan Africa from 1990 to 2020 ☐

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Introduction

Published studies make it possible to map the research terrain and can indicate the interests and priorities of scholars and funding agencies. They can also express the intensity with which a given phenomenon is observed in time and place. Surveying published articles has long tradition in comparative and international education. Several different methodologies or analytical approaches are used to survey published articles, although the strategy is common, i.e., to determine emphasis on scholarship and to review what scholars have published (Foster, Addy, and Samoff 2012; Davidson et al. 2020; Wiseman Alexander, Davidson Petrina, and Stevens-Taylor 2016). Our approach was to review peer-reviewed publications that were published between 1990 and 2020 concerning education privatisation in sub-Saharan Africa. To this end, we used three databases: ISI of Web Knowledge, Web of Science (WoS) and Scielo.

Education privatisation was selected for this study taking into consideration that education plays a key role in global agendas, is a human right and is increasingly becoming a field for doing business (Adrião 2018; Belfield and Levin 2004; Klees 2008; Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo 2016).

The paper draws on a corpus of documents characterised as existing data published between 1990 and 2020. It starts in the year the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990) was launched and follows through 2020. In this way, it encompasses the three main international education agendas from the last 30 years – the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All, the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments (2000), and the Education 2030: Incheon Declaration (2015).

The article is organised in three main parts. Following these introductory notes, it first provides an overview of the issues involved in education privatisation, followed by methodology and data. Following this overview, we explore the data according to

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thematic focus (keywords), research design and source of research funding. The third and final part presents the concluding reflections.

1. Education between the public and the private

Education, and in particular the quality of education, has cut across educational agendas in the last 30 years. In this way, education has been elected as a priority by bilateral, multilateral and civil society organizations (e.g., UNICEF, World Bank, Save the Children, Plan International, NORAD, Global Partnership for Education). These organizations have been actively engaged in building a global education architecture and promoting the emergence of global education policy space (Verger, Novelli, and Altinyelken 2018; Klees 2012). This global architecture includes a myriad of organisations that can interconnect several agendas, such as choice, freedom, and education as a right. In this way, several actors' for-profit schools can contribute to objectives such as access to education for the poor or quality education for all through internationally defined educational benchmarks (Verger, Steiner-Khamsi, and Lubienski 2017; Klees 2012).

In this context educational political space resembles a marketplace of ideas with the participation of various actors in three dimensions – education management, educational provision and curriculum (Mundy et al. 2016; Adrião 2018). This marketplace of ideas advances the rise of education privatisation in discourses and practices. This leads to global actors from outside the countries setting agendas and priorities, particularly for countries that are more peripheral or in the Global South (Verger, Novelli, and Altinyelken 2012; Robertson 2012; Verger, Novelli, and Altinyelken 2018). However, this influence should not be viewed from a simplistic approach. This stems from the fact that national actors, even from the most vulnerable and peripheral countries, are not passive, acting at the same time as creators and interpreters (George and Lewis 2011; Le Grange 2013; Kassaye 2013).

Taking this into consideration we can conclude that education privatisation is a multifaceted and contingent phenomenon. Education privatisation can also be characterised as a process of social transformation and not only of reform. (Robertson and Dale 2013, 432; Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo 2016; Ball 2007). Also relevant for our analysis are the two main types of education privatisation proposed by Ball and Youdell (2008): 1) privatisation of public education, or “exogenous” privatisation; 2) privatisation in public education, or “endogenous” privatisation.

In the Global South we are seeing a transition from a *de facto* privatisation strategy to a strategy by design⁷. This is happening because initiatives by individuals or communities, such as low-cost schools or community schools, are being incorporated into national strategies and in transnational networks (Srivastava 2010). These strategies are developed by individuals or communities to overcome the absence of public education or to address the provision of inadequate public education.

For the purpose of this paper, we share the perspective of Belfield & Levin (2004) regarding education privatisation when the authors examine the ways in which this phenomenon has been occurring in the United States. For these authors, education privatisation:

“is an umbrella term referring to many different educational programmes and policies. As an overall definition, ‘privatization is the transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government/public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies.’ Also, privatization is often thought of as ‘liberalization’ – where agents are freed from government regulations, or as ‘marketization’ – where new markets are created as alternatives to government services or state allocation systems.” (2004, p.19)

2. Methods and data

This study is a qualitative time-series analysis of articles concerning education privatisation in sub-Saharan Africa published between 1990 and 2020, found in three databases. In order to identify relevant studies, we conducted a systematic search of publications in three databases using key words in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish: ISI Web of Knowledge, Web of Science (WoS) Scielo and in the Réseau de Recherche Francophone sur la Privatisation de l'Éducation (ReFPE). We included the Scielo and ReFPE databases because 95.4% of the literature present in the WoS in 2019 are in English (Vera-Baceta, Thelwall, and Kousha 2019). We used the research protocol defined by Adrião (2018)⁸. We only reviewed publications that were published after peer-review, and we did not perform a meta-analysis of the articles. The search in the databases takes into consideration the publications' title,

⁷ *de facto* privatisation means that education privatisation is a process apparently unrelated to public policy and privatisation *by design* occurs when public authorities proactively promote education privatisation and implement explicit measures (Verger; Fontdevila; Zancajo, 2016).

⁸ The database search was conducted by the research assistant Andrey Mori following the research protocol supervised by the authors.

abstract and keywords. The keywords used in the databases were financing, public-private partnership, co-management; aid or subvention; cooperative; privatisation, charter, and choice interconnected with the words school, basic, secondary, primary, elementary or compulsory.

To examine the results of the search in the databases, the research team collected information through the following coding process: study title, author(s), publication date, author affiliation, publication type and name, abstract, funding agency, method(s), factors under study, countries under study and main results/conclusions.

The results of the database screening following the above criteria resulted in the inclusion of 54 studies in this review, as shown in table 1. The 54 studies from this review were submitted to an in-depth analysis to map the terrain.

The articles were written in English (44), French (9) and Portuguese (1). The research methods used were varied, with the predominance of a qualitative approach (27) followed by a quantitative approach (14), a mixed methods approach (12), and other (1) (table 2). The classification of the studies' methodology posed some challenges to the research team. The studies were coded as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods when they included an explicit acknowledgement or outline of their research strategies, or when it was possible to identify their research strategies from the methods section. The articles whose research strategies could not be identified were classified as other.

Overall, only 10 out of 54 studies reported having received support from the following organisations: National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation; University of Massachusetts Boston; Privatisation in Education Research Initiative (PERI) of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) PERI; Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; Centre of Sustainable Livelihoods, Vaal University of Technology; Tiger Brands Foundation; John Templeton Foundation; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan; Japan Society for the Promotion of Science; and Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKENHI).

Table 1 – Studies distributed by keywords

Charter	(Verger, Steiner-Khamsi, and Lubienski 2017; Feldman 2020)
Choice	(Härmä 2016a; Gastineau <i>et al.</i> 2015; Hunter 2015; Sakaue 2018; Baum, Abdul-Hamid, and Wesley 2018; Zuilkowski <i>et al.</i> 2018; Longfield and Tooley 2017; Ayling 2017; Ndimande 2006; Härmä 2016b; Uba and Nwoga 2016; Mayengo, Namusoke, and Dennis 2015; Baum and Riley 2019; Sabates <i>et al.</i> 2019; Gulson and Fataar 2011; Ndimande 2012; Hill 2016; Humble and Dixon 2017; Maistry and Africa 2020)
Financing	(Menashy and Dryden-Peterson 2015; Mestry and Bodalina 2015; Boateng 2014; Daly, Mbenga, and Camara 2016; Gbreyesus 2017; Ron Balsera, Klees, and Archer 2018; Turrent and Oketch 2009; Crabbe 1999; Mestry 2016; Motala 2014; Silva 2018; Languille 2019; Arestoff and Antoine 2001)
Public-private partnership	(Wokadala and Barungi 2015; Hochfeld <i>et al.</i> 2016; Edwards, Klees, and Wildish 2017; Kolade 2019; d’Aiglepierre and Bauer 2016)
Privatisation	(Zeitlyn <i>et al.</i> 2015; Klees 2018; Aubry and Dorsi 2016; Roos 2004; Edwards Jr, Okitsu, and Mwanza 2019; Tessitore 2019; Ofutt-Chaney 2019; Baum, Cooper, and Lusk-Stover 2018; Zamblé and N’guessan 2019; Balonga and Ziavoula 2005; Lanoue 2004; Guth 2004; Lanoue 2003; Erny 2004; N’Guessan and Zamble 2020; Calvès, Kobiané, and N’Bouké 2013; Pilon 2004)

3. Analysis of the articles

The following sections briefly outline the findings of the studies, according to the studies’ thematic focus taking into consideration their distribution by the keywords used in the database search.

3.1 Thematic focus

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the reviewed studies by year of publication taking into consideration the keywords. A closer examination indicates that most of

the studies were published after 2015 even though the search time frame was 1990 to 2019. In figure 1 it is also possible to see that in the years before 2015 the keyword financing prevails, followed by choice and privatisation. After 2015 the keywords privatisation, choice and financing stand out.

Figure 1 – Publications by year and keyword 1990 - 2020

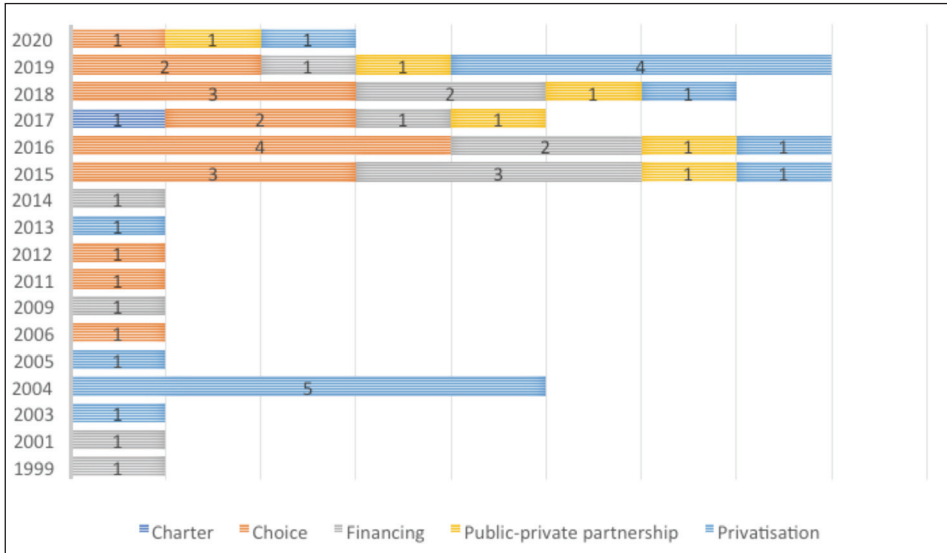


Table 2 presents a snapshot of the studies reviewed over the period 1990-2020. Regarding the studies’ distribution according to the keywords, the choice studies are the majority at 33% (n = 18) closely followed by privatisation (30%; n=16) There were also 24% (n = 13) focusing on financing, 11% (n = 6) focusing on public-private partnership, and 2% (n = 1) focusing on charter. This indicates that the issues related to choice and privatisation are the main interests and priorities of scholars and funding agencies in the period under analysis. It is also relevant to highlight that in 2004 most of the articles (n=4) are published in French as a special issue in a journal.

When considering the methods used in each study, qualitative methods were used in 27 studies (50%), 14 studies (26%) used quantitative methods, 12 studies (22%) used mixed methods, and 1 study (2%) was classified as other because it was not possible to identify the research strategies used.

Table 2 – Summary data of the studies reviewed (1990 – 2020)

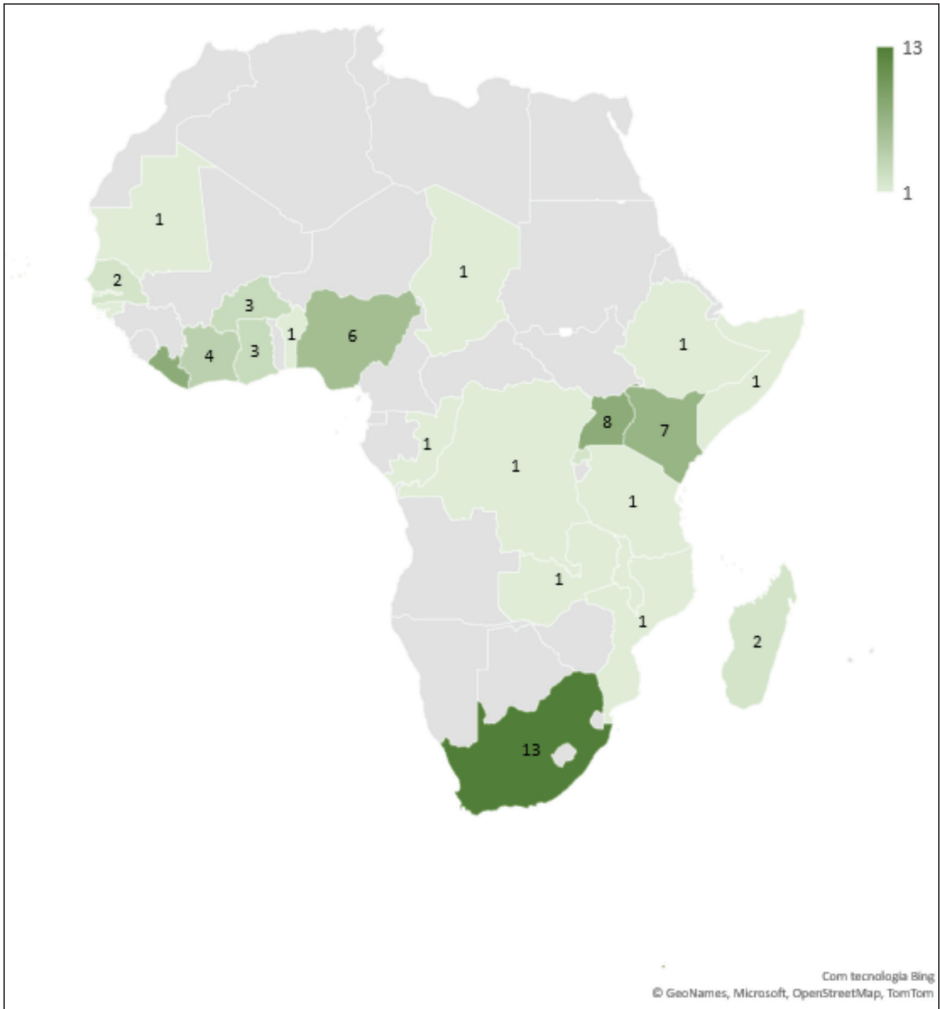
	Count	Per cent
Total number of studies	54	
Focus of the articles (keyword)		
Charter	1	2%
Choice	18	33%
Financing	13	24%
Privatisation	17	31%
Public-private partnership	6	11%
Methods used in the studies		
Qualitative	27	50%
Quantitative	14	26%
Mixed methods	12	22%
Other	1	2%

Figure 2 shows the countries mentioned in the analysed studies. Regarding the studies that focused on a single country and multiple countries reveals that 21 out of 48 countries from sub-Saharan Africa are not mentioned. South Africa appears consistently at the top of the lists ($n = 13$), followed by Uganda and Liberia ($n = 8$). A closer examination, however, reveals that countries such as Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, , Eritrea, Guinea, Somalia, Togo, Zimbabwe, Benin, and Mali are only mentioned in articles that provide an overall perspective of sub-Saharan Africa or low-income countries.

3.1.1 Charter

The keyword *charter* produced only one result. The article included in the review is published in a journal and addresses issues related to “the rise and consequences of an emerging global education industry” (Verger, Steiner-Khamsi, and Lubienski 2017, 325). Although the article deals with more generic issues, it is included in this review taking into consideration that the authors use examples from sub-Saharan Africa (Uganda and Liberia). The article highlights that within the global education industry, the notion that for-profit schools can contribute to noble goals, such as providing education to the poorest and most marginalised populations, is problematic.

Figure 2 – Countries referred to in the studies and frequency



The authors argue that low-fee private schools have unusual media coverage at international level. The article also highlights that international development agencies that traditionally support public education now embrace these private solutions.

The article also mentions that charter schools from the United States of America are networking and supporting low-fee private schools in the Global South. These alliances and the consultancy firms work together to standardise educational processes.

This standardisation is a strategy to enable the production of one size fits all products (e.g., materials, curriculum) to promote economies of scale.

3.1.2 *Choice*

The keyword *choice* includes studies with reference to Burkina Faso, Benin, Comoros, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Mauritania, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, and Uganda.

The studies reviewed related to the keyword *choice* point out that the socio-economic conditions of the populations make it impossible for them to choose. This stems from the fact that the private sector is growing due to the lack or insufficiency of government education provision. Nevertheless, the article that mentions data from Nigeria; Côte d'Ivoire; Somalia; Mauritania; Chad; Comoros; Burkina Faso; Gambia and Senegal (d'Aiglepierre and Bauer 2016) analyses the parents' choice concerning Arab-Islamic education. This article gives a different view of choice concerning countries that have most of the populations that are Muslim. This study concludes that parents' main driver to choose Arab-Islamic education is cultural and religious concerns, followed by inadequate facilities and a lack of quality in relation to formal education. However, also highlights that we must consider that each country analysed has very different historical and present circumstances that must be considered.

Overall, the articles that do not mention the Arab-Islamic education point out that business interests will never align with universal access to education. This is particularly true for the most marginalized populations and those living in remote areas. Nevertheless, some of these studies also indicate that the private sector is contributing to universal access to education. This is due to the fact that the private sector is heterogeneous and context specific.

A more detailed analysis of each article allows us to observe nuances in the various countries. This relates to the countries' characteristics and whether the studies are conducted in rural areas, urban areas or in areas with high population density.

In the cases of South Africa (Ndimande 2006; Hunter 2015; Maistry and Africa 2020), Benin (Gastineau et al. 2015), Mozambique (Härmä 2016a) and Uganda (Sakaue 2018) the authors mention that there is no choice. This is because the private sector in education is growing due to the lack or insufficiency of government education provision and the population's socio-economic conditions. Yet, the Nigeria article (Härmä 2016b) states that issues related to population density also play a role in allowing the choice mechanism to work. Nevertheless, other articles from South

Africa (Hill 2016; Ndimande 2012; Gulson and Fataar 2011) indicate that there was choice operating, albeit in an informed and complicated fashion. This is because the choice patterns are aligned with historical patterns of racial inequality and the complex conditions and contradictory elements of education marketization. These factors also develop new patterns of stratification in access to education, preserving educational inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa. In this way school choice in South Africa depends on racism and creates racialization.

The Liberia (Longfield and Tooley 2017; Humble and Dixon 2017), Nigeria (Baum, Abdul-Hamid, and Wesley 2018) and Kenya (Zuilkowski et al. 2018; Baum and Riley 2019) cases indicate that the families are applying choice mechanisms and choosing private schools or faith-based mission schools as opposed to government schools. The authors particularly highlight the case of low-fee private schools in urban areas with high population density. These papers argue that the private sector is substantially contributing to universal access to education in these countries. In this way, the articles advocate that the different governments should support these initiatives.

Taking this into consideration, it is also relevant to highlight that the authors of the Nigeria study (Baum, Abdul-Hamid, and Wesley 2018) advocate the support of the state to private schools. This stems from the fact that the authors consider that when the private sector educates significant parts of the student population the government should ensure that all students have access to quality education. The authors state this based on the assumption that the public schools are inferior in quality or perceived as unsafe. It is also commonly suggested by these articles that parents are active choosers, even when living in difficult circumstances.

The Uganda case (Mayengo, Namusoke, and Dennis 2015) highlights a different perspective concerning choice and the role of the public and private sectors in a country dependent on international development funds. The authors argue that small non-registered private schools provide a strange twist, since this form of privatisation is less tied to capital entrepreneurship than schools that are part of the Ugandan government's Universal Primary Education programme. This is because the government of Uganda is implementing the Universal Primary Education programme with a World Bank loan, thus connecting the government schools to a market economy and a profit-driven business model instead of the private schools.

The Kenya article (Baum and Riley 2019) points in a different direction, indicating that parents favour private schools. The reasons underlying this option are connected to the fact that parents perceive the private sector as being better and Kenyan public

education is constrained in its ability to provide high quality education to all children, since classrooms are crowded, academic resources are dispersed, and teachers' motivation is low.

The Ruanda case (Sabates et al. 2019) explores a different perspective, the impacts of unconditional cash transfers on school-related choices. The study concludes that in this case the unconditional cash transfers did not impact the families' ability to send their children to school. Thus, the authors point out that the unconditional cash transfers supported the students that were already in school and did not impact the most marginalized children that were not in school.

3.1.3 Financing

In this theme we find articles that deal globally with sub-Saharan African countries and articles with a particular focus on Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda in issues related financing/ funding.

The articles that deal with sub-Saharan African countries more broadly (Turrent and Oketch 2009; Menashy and Dryden-Peterson 2015) address issues of funding education in fragile and conflict-affected states. These two articles state that without investment from donors in the education sector of fragile and conflict-affected states these countries will never achieve education for all. It is stated that the introduction of performance-based systems attached to loans and development aid do not seem to be appropriate to support the world's most vulnerable countries.

Overall, the studies in this keyword state that the funding available for public education is inadequate, leading to the existence of school fees and/or informal fees. This factor contributes to the exclusion of children or is an extra barrier for children who are out of school.

The articles with specific reference to South Africa also highlight issues concerning inefficient management of available funds (Boateng 2014; Motala 2014; Mestry and Bodalina 2015; Mestry 2016). Nevertheless, all mention inadequate funding of education. The management efficiency mentioned in the articles is related to the ability to manage available funds and planning. One article (Mestry 2016) argues that managers should find innovative and creative strategies to procure additional funding. It also highlights that managers should see entrepreneurship as part of their responsibility to complement government funds. These authors suggest that

fundraising and financial efficiency are the main function of South African school managers.

The article with specific reference to The Gambia (Daly, Mbenga, and Camara 2016) deals with issues related to out-of-school children and funding. The article addresses a voucher system implemented by the government with support from the World Bank. The School Improvement Grant voucher analysed in this article follows a different direction from what is commonly found in the literature (e.g. Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo 2016). This system was developed to help families cope with informal school fees when out-of-school students access public schools.

In relation to Ghana (Crabbe 1999) the study addresses the publications market. The author stresses that the state must privatise this area because the private sector has the potential to provide better publishing services. It also mentions that the publishing companies should lobby the government to achieve this.

The article that addresses the cases of Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar and Uganda uses these countries as an example of the consequences of inadequate funding to education (Ron Balsera, Klees, and Archer 2018; Arestoff and Antoine 2001). The authors state that market-based approaches undermine the use of private education providers as a strategy to expand access to inclusive education. The funding gap to public education leads to quality constraints and undermines the governments' duty to provide free and compulsory education. The authors state that if the governments do not improve the education budget for public schools it will be hard to achieve the goal of inclusive, quality education for all.

The case of Ethiopia (Gbre-eyesus 2017) deals with funding to secondary education and technical and vocational training. The author stresses the importance of secondary education meeting the needs of students who enter the labour market. It considers that secondary education that focuses on technical-vocational education programmes can play an important role in developing human capital to boost economic growth. According to the author, this process will support Ethiopia in its journey to become a middle-income economy.

The Tanzania case (Languille, 2019) also deals with secondary school funding. The author tries to show the issues surrounding power and conflict in relation to education policies and budgets in a historical perspective. The author highlights that mass secondary education is a priority for several governments but that has not led to any substantial change of education budgets. The author also concludes that education bureaucrats within the state who enjoy degrees of autonomy struggle with other factions in power to defend the sector's specific budget interests. She also points out that the

international emphasis on domestic revenue to fund education requires caution. This stems from the fact that domestic funding does not undermine the constant need for robust international aid to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4.

The case of Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe (Silva 2018) is related to the Global Partnership for Education financial support to these countries. The author analyses the Education Sector Plans submitted by these countries to obtain financial support from the Global Partnership for Education. He concludes that in these Plans education for all is a common goal to all countries. He also states that the language from business and economics is becoming the centre of educational discourse together with decentralisation issues. In relation to Cape Verde and Mozambique, the author states that in these countries' education is identified as a strategy to solve economic and social challenges. Education privatisation in a broader perspective occurs explicitly in the documents of Guinea Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe, presenting an optimistic view regarding the importance and need to increase the role of education private providers.

3.1.4 Public-private partnership

The articles addressing *public-private partnership* issues focus on cases from Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. Overall, the studies included in this review take two different approaches. One set of articles highlights how public-private partnerships increased or maintained inequalities in access to quality education (Edwards, Klees, and Wildish 2017; Wokadala and Barungi 2015; Klees 2018; Feldman 2020). Another set of articles advocates the advantages of public-private partnerships in relation to public providers (Hochfeld et al. 2016; Kolade 2019).

The Uganda case (Wokadala and Barungi 2015) illustrates that the public-private partnership schools analysed seem to benefit richer households. The authors also indicate that, for example, a student with poor school results from a wealthy family is more likely to have a high-quality education than a bright student from a poor family. The authors conclude that public-private partnerships are more regressive than the total of universal secondary education funding.

The Kenya case (Edwards, Klees, and Wildish 2017) deals with issues related to government support to low-fee private schools. The authors conclude that government resources should be channelled to public schools considering that low-fee private schools have an uncertain effect on quality and a negative impact on equity. The authors also point out that if quality public education with no fees is available the low-fee private schools will go out of business.

The Liberia case (Klees 2018) deals with issues concerning the public-private partnerships named Partnership Schools of Liberia that cost over \$25 million over a three-year period. The author states that Partnership Schools of Liberia is a waste of resources. He also highlights that the gains in testing obtained by the schools included in this partnership have more likely been due to changes that could be made in regular public schools. The findings indicate that Partnership Schools of Liberia appears to have been started for ideological reasons rather than for its cost-effectiveness or potential effectiveness.

The Nigeria case (Kolade 2019) highlights that private education providers and religious organizations are making a significant contribution to access to basic education in the country, particularly religious schools. The author points out that the results of non-state schools in basic education indicate that the Nigerian government should support these actors. The author concludes that, as in other sectors, the government should launch new incentives to engage businesses as partners in order to expand resources and facilities in public schools.

The fifth study included in this keyword addresses issues related to the public-private partnership between the Tiger Brands Foundation and the government of South Africa to support school meals (Hochfeld et al. 2016). The authors indicate that the Tiger Brands Foundation has introduced a successful model of school nutrition in vulnerable schools. The study suggests that this school nutrition model has contributed to provide employment and business opportunities for community members, as well as increasing knowledge about healthy food. The other article from South Africa (Feldman 2020) addresses a PPP in the Western Cape Education Department. The author suggests that this model is advancing and most likely will become “an accepted mode of delivering education to schools in areas of poverty” (Feldman 2020, 15). Although the study shows that the PPPs are advancing in Western Cape also emphasizes that is unclear if this model fits in the South African context.

3.1.5 Privatisation

The keyword *privatisation* includes two articles that give an overall perspective about education privatisation in sub-Saharan Africa and six articles that make specific reference to Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

One of the articles that gives an overall perspective on education privatisation (Aubry and Dorsi 2016) provides access to a tool for assessing whether the education

sector is aligned with the human rights framework. The authors state that the next step is to define guiding principles on the role of private actors in education from a human rights perspective, where a set of standards will be developed on how states should approach private education provision.

The other article that gives an overall perspective on education privatisation presents the results from “research to assess the relationship between private sector regulation and private sector growth in education” across twenty countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Baum, Cooper, and Lusk-Stover 2018, 101). This study states that the existing private school regulation theory in sub-Saharan Africa has a negative effect on the growth of official private schooling markets. The results also suggest that these regulatory environments provide regulators with opportunities for rent seeking and corruption, with minimal social benefit.

In the Malawi case (Zeitlyn et al. 2015) the authors analyse secondary education private schools and how this subsystem is dependent on the private sector. The authors state that secondary education private schools in Malawi are extremely diverse in students’ performance and fees. The authors highlight that the students and also many teachers are in these schools because they have no choice. These results from the selectivity of government schools based on primary school leavers’ exam results. The authors state that the fees vary and seem to be associated to pass rates in national exams. In this way national exams serve as the main barometer for entering the best secondary schools rather than the student’s family’s wealth. This study also indicates that the main characteristics of secondary education private schools in Malawi include extreme annual variations in the number of pupils and teachers, and minimal investment in infrastructure and teaching and learning materials.

The South Africa case focused on issues related to the extent to which the legislative framework and education-funding models applicable to school education in South Africa post-1994 have, in attempting to address historical inequalities, resulted in a particular form of privatisation of public education (Roos 2004). The author also examines the impact on autonomy of the funding and human resourcing of Section 21 school. The author concludes that this broad autonomy developed several mechanisms to balance unequal access to education due to the role played by private education providers.

The cases of Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda (Tessitore 2019) deals with issues related to the Bridge International Academies. The author points out that private companies are influencing education in African countries, although their positive impact on the public sector remains inconclusive. The author also highlights that the goal of

public education in Africa is the same goal of Bridge International Academies, i.e., to successfully educate all students.

The Zambia case (Edwards Jr, Okitsu, and Mwanza 2019) addresses issues related to low-fee private schools in a slum of Lusaka. The authors conclude that low-fee schools at the level of early childhood care and education contribute to the access to education of poor children who would not otherwise have this opportunity. However, the authors inform that entry in these schools is only possible for many families if they make significant sacrifices, given that the enrolment of one child accounts for 30% of the household income. This case study indicates that early childhood care and education operate without any monitoring or support from the Ministry of Education. It also concludes that the government has not devoted sufficient resources to the sector, despite being the most resource consuming. The authors also point out that since Zambia is subject to the whims of economic globalisation, as debt payments increase there are fewer funds available for social services, including education.

The Liberia case included in this keyword is a comparative study with New Orleans in the United States of America (Offutt-Chaney 2019). The author highlights that educational failure in Liberia is perpetuated by educational philanthropists and international for-profit chains. The author also states that anti-Black coloniality created by external interest groups continues to operate through contemporary neoliberal reforms. She also notes that, like the educational and philanthropic elites at the turn of the century, today's educational reformers have the same missionary zeal, destabilizing predominantly Black-run public school systems.

With reference to this keyword, there are four articles that analyse Côte d'Ivoire which give a historical overview of education in the country highlighting the influence of the Catholic Church in the education privatisation landscape (Lanoue 2003, 2004; N'Guessan and Zamble 2020; Zambé and N'guessan 2019). These studies also mention that the expansion of education private providers is related to the population educational demand not met by public education.

The Burkina Faso articles (Calvès, Kobiané, and N'Bouké 2013; Pilon 2004) mention that the Ivorian education system has a strong presence of private schools that surpass the public schools, especially since the mid-1990s in the urban areas. The main reason for the proliferation of private schools is the deterioration and lack of public investment in education. The cuts in public spending on education are also mentioned by the study that examines Madagascar that contributed to the increase of education private providers.

The article of Pilon (2004) gives an historical perspective of Burkina Faso education system mentioning the influence of the catholic church that still operates the

more prestigious private schools in the country. However, both articles from Burkina Faso allow us to understand that the country education system is segregated and there is 'two-speed' private sector – one 'popular' and one 'elitist'. Similar conclusion are advanced by the articles from the Republic of the Congo and Rwanda (Balonga and Ziavoula 2005; Erny 2004), where the catholic church still has an important role as an education private provider within a segregated education system.

The article that examines Senegal (Guth 2004) gives us a particular look at the private education providers in this country, French schools, that refuse to see themselves as private and are a legacy of France colonial rule in the country. These French schools promote republican values going in the opposite direction of the Franco-Arabic, however only to the students that can pay high school fees.

4. Conclusions

Drawing on the 54 articles in our review published between 1990 and 2020 we sought to map the research terrain and produce new knowledge without collecting new empirical data about the privatisation of education in sub-Saharan Africa. Our review shows clearly that education privatisation is under-researched in per-reviewed publications regarding sub-Saharan Africa. This conclusion stems from the fact that comprehensive studies focused on a reduced number of countries and there is lack of research in fragile and conflict-affected states.

The articles also show that there is clearly a split between pro and con education privatisation articles. However, the critical analysis of this phenomenon is more persuasive.

Our review offers an overview of the published research and enables the following patterns to be identified: the issues related to choice and privatisation are the themes to which the researchers devoted most attention, followed by funding, public-private partnership and charter; the country with the largest number of publications is South Africa (n = 13), followed by Uganda and Liberia (n = 8); the majority of studies used a qualitative approach (n = 27).

Overall, it is possible to conclude that education privatisation is expanding in sub-Saharan Africa. The population's socio-economic conditions are also a factor pointed out by the reviewed articles as critical to undermine the choice principles advocated in the literature. This is because the private sector in education is growing due to the lack or insufficiency of government funding or provision. The articles concerning public-private partnerships also follow the same path. Nevertheless, the South Africa case

highlights that school choice depends on racism and creates racializations, developing new patterns of stratification in access to education in that country.

The choice regarding countries where most of the populations is Muslim highlight that choice is more related to parents cultural and religious concerns rather than schools' performance advanced by the human capital theory.

Our more detailed analysis of the reviewed articles suggests that business interests will never align with access to education for the poorer and more remote population. However, the reviewed studies indicate that we must not overlook the fact that the private sector is multifaceted and context-specific and contributes to access to education particularly in urban areas and in countries where the public sector is underfunded.

It is also important to note that there is evidence from the reviewed studies that underfunding of public education promotes the existence of school fees and/or informal tuition fees. This contributes to parents' preference for private solutions, increasing the obstacles to and costs of access to education.

Finally, we consider important to stress that in an age when international development agencies are promoting private education initiatives, future research could analyse how international agencies (e.g. UNICEF, World Bank) and funds (e.g. Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait) act and position themselves in relation to education privatisation in sub-Saharan Africa. Future research could also review Grey Literature from international organizations and think tanks and expand the data bases used to allow a more exhaustive list of publications and, possibly, include more countries.

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