

## Public policies and the privatisation of education in Burkina Faso ☐

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### Introduction

In this chapter, the process of the privatising education in Burkina Faso will be examined on the basis of an analysis of public policies. Firstly, it should be noted that the degree of privatisation in the education sector varies from one level of education to another. For pre-school education, 79% of children are enrolled in non-state structures, and at this level, only a very small proportion of children of pre-school age is enrolled (6.6% in 2022-2023)<sup>61</sup>. In the primary education sector, the private sector experienced a distinct trajectory. Initially, it exhibited significant growth during colonial times and continued this trend throughout the first decade of independence. However, it witnessed a steep decline following the nationalisation of Catholic schools. In 1960, 38.4% of primary school students were enrolled in private schools; by 1970, this percentage had dropped to 2.8%. Thereafter, there was a notable increase in the proportion of children enrolled in private schools, particularly between 2009-2010 and 2022-2023, reaching 29.8% of all primary school students. Since this new phase of privatizing primary education, the distribution of enrolments between the different types of private schools has changed considerably. Catholic schools will never regain their former levels, and in 2022-23, private Muslim and secular schools constitute the majority of private school students, making up 82.95% of the total private school student population.

For a long time, secondary education was accessible to only a small minority of young people in Burkina Faso. Recent changes have, to some extent, been influenced by the growth of the private education sector, although it has not ensured widespread accessibility. It was only when the State, in collaboration with local authorities and

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<sup>61</sup> The indicators, percentages, etc. cited in this chapter were calculated by the author using school registers and other documents produced by the ministries responsible for education. These documents are available online, Burkina Faso being one of the few countries in French-speaking Africa to respect its commitments regarding free access to official public documents. For pre-school, primary and secondary education: [http://cns.bf/spip.php?id\\_rubrique=14&page=publdetails](http://cns.bf/spip.php?id_rubrique=14&page=publdetails); for higher education: [http://cns.bf/spip.php?id\\_rubrique=15&page=publdetails](http://cns.bf/spip.php?id_rubrique=15&page=publdetails)

associations, made substantial investments in the construction of public schools did lower secondary education become more accessible to a larger number of boys and girls. In contrast, upper secondary education has not yet received sufficient public funding. Despite the significant presence of the private sector in both levels of secondary education, (approximately 39% for the lower level and 49% for the upper level), the overall enrolment of young people in primary education in Burkina Faso is relatively low, with a gross enrolment rate (GER) of 49.9% in 2022-2023 and only 20.7% for secondary education. This lack of public investment has resulted in limited access to secondary education for most young people.

Higher education has also experienced a trend towards privatisation: in 2004-2005, 16.39% of students were enrolled in a private institution. This proportion has fluctuated over the years from year to year, increasing to 21% in 2019-2020 and then decreasing to 18.1% in 2021-2022. It is worth noting that private investments in higher education are primarily focused on the provision of shorter courses.

In this first section, we examine the integration of private education into public education policies, assess Burkina Faso's reliance on financial and technical support from donors, analyse the roles of education providers, and scrutinise the policies governing the recognition of private schools. The second section looks at the categories of private educational institutions, the objectives of interventions by private operators and conflicts with the State. This part also outlines the challenges faced by authorities in Burkina Faso in monitoring private schools and universities, and highlights the substantial presence of unregistered, illegal, or clandestine schools.

In terms of methodology, this study used scientific literature, along with legal texts that outline the rights and obligations of private education operators. It also incorporated education plans, sectorial policy documents, and materials from the websites of the ministries overseeing education. Additionally, documents from UNESCO and other international institutions were consulted, as were online articles from Burkina Faso's press, which frequently address issues related to private institutions or their affiliated teaching staff.

## **1. The role of private education in public education policies**

In the first instance, the conditions of Burkina Faso's financial reliance on international financial aid will be examined. This dependency limits the choices available to Burkina Faso government regarding its stance on private education and its decisions concerning investment in the public sector. Subsequently, the economic

significance of private education providers, and the legislative instruments that govern their operations, shaping the landscape of private education, will be reviewed.

### *1.1. Burkina Faso's financial and technical dependence*

International aid is important and even crucial to the development of education in certain countries of the South, despite the relatively modest amounts involved. Assistance may be in the form of grants or loans. Over the past ten years, Burkina Faso has primarily received grants, with the exception of 2016 (Directory 2019-2020: 433).

International aid plays a decisive role, although it is largely influenced by the allocation of budget items within the States' own resources. Most of their own resources are earmarked for teachers' salaries. Such allocation does not make it possible to devote sufficient financial resources to operations and investment, which explains the substantial influence of donors in determining school investment policies including aspects such as location, construction type, and the targeted education levels. In countries experiencing rapid demographic growth, addressing both the rise in the school-age population and the necessary development of various levels of education for universal basic education requires an inevitable increase in the overall total payroll. In Burkina Faso, the total payroll of the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages (MENAPLN) increased from 73,890,516,000 CFA francs in 2010 to 364,856,213,000 CFA francs in 2020 (Yearbook 2019-2020: 433), i.e. a fivefold increase in ten years.

However, the proportion of the budget allocated to salaries can vary considerably from one year to another. This variability is due to the diverse teacher recruitment policies that, influenced by certain international partners such as the World Bank (Altinok, 2005; Lauwerier, 2013), have aimed to reduce teachers' salaries. Subsequently, due to pressure from trade union movements, governments were compelled to raise these salaries or integrate certain categories of 'voluntary' or contracted teachers into the civil service (Lange, et al., 2021). Thus, as in other French-speaking African countries, Burkina Faso has experienced the recruitment of inadequately compensated young graduates, such as those hired under the Presidential Youth Employment Programme for National Education (PEJEN). The first intake of teachers was recruited in 2016. After a period of suspension, the programme was relaunched in 2021, only to be halted again later.

Contracts were for one year, renewable twice. Upon completion of the three-year period, an examination was scheduled for the "PEJENs" to join the civil service; however, many candidates failed the examination (Libre info, 1 March 2021). The

recruitment of PEJENs was criticised in the Annual Monitoring Report 2018 of the Strategic Development Programme for Basic Education (PDSEB) carried out by MENAPLN (2019). The report outlines some of the recruitment challenges indicating that the recruitment rate over the first three years (2016, 2017 and 2018) only reached 78.5% of available positions. Moreover, these teachers experienced notably high turnover, with a retention rate of only 62.2% in January 2019, without clarification on the reasons for the disappearance of many PEJEN teachers. The difficulties inherent in recruiting low-cost teachers therefore seem to be significant in both public and private schools. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted some of the issues faced by private teachers, often lacking employment contracts (Lange et al., 2021). From a public policy perspective, attempting to control the cost of teaching staff appears to be futile.

Despite various attempts to reduce teachers' salaries, they accounted for 83.19% of MENAPLN's total expenditure in 2020 (Table 1). Investments accounted for only approximately 6% of the budget, a highly inadequate percentage that hampers the Government of Burkina Faso from constructing new public schools in crucial areas, such as impoverished urban outskirts (Boly & Lange, 2022) or in isolated villages lacking public education infrastructure. This meagre budget is also insufficient to cover the upkeep of schools. The other highly inadequate budget line is that allocated to operations, which includes, amongst other things, fuel costs for the inspectorates. In fact, most inspectorates lack the necessary budget for conducting essential visits to monitor schools, particularly those in the private sector.

**Table 1: State funding for education (in thousands of CFA francs and as a percentage) from MENAPLN per budget item in 2020**

MENAPLN budget items	CFA francs ('000)	%
Salaries	364 856 213	83,19
Operational costs	24 900 482	5,68
Transfers	22 583 013	5,15
Investments	26 254 901	5,99
<b>MENAPLN Total Budget</b>	<b>438 594 609</b>	<b>100,00</b>

*Source: Author's calculations based on data from 2019-2020 Directory: 433.*

On the one hand, the percentage of the budget earmarked for investments is insufficient, but, on the other hand, as the data in Table 2 shows, the majority of MENAPLN's investments are funded by external sources (over 66%). This is where the donors intervene to steer public policies towards the priorities they impose<sup>62</sup>. The purchase of schoolbooks financed by aid also presents a challenge: donors, through imposing large, bulk orders, effectively sideline national publishers. Since the various independence movements, UNESCO reports have consistently emphasised the necessity of addressing the issue of the schoolbook published in sub-Saharan Africa. However, in 2003, Jean-Pierre Leguéré still referred to it as a 'monopoly market' (Leguéré, 2003: 22). Despite efforts by the Government of Burkina Faso to assert control over the publishing, production, and distribution of schoolbooks (MENA, 2017), the matter of private suppliers remains unresolved. This is one aspect related to the involvement of private businesses, usually international, in the education sector that has received minimal attention.

**Table 2: Proportion of government funds and external financing for MENAPLN's capital expenditure in 2020 (in thousands of CFA francs and as a percentage)**

MENAPLN Investments	CFA francs ('000)	%
Government funds	8 793 068	33,49
External funding	17 461 833	66,51
<b>Total investments</b>	<b>26 254 901</b>	<b>100,00</b>

*Source: Author's calculations based on data from 2019-2020 Directory: 433.*

Donor influence can also be exerted through the imposition of certain conditions. For instance, the elimination of grants for secondary school students (subsequently

<sup>62</sup> For example, a Minister of Education in Burkina Faso was refused funding to provide housing for teachers in remote rural areas. His argument was that, in some villages, it was impossible to assign teachers due to a lack of suitable accommodation; the donors' counterargument was that teachers' accommodation was often also used by other civil servants in rural areas who also had no accommodation (Field surveys, 2001-2005, M.-F. Lange). In fact, at the beginning of the 2000s, a Minister of Education had no decision-making power if he or she had access to external funding.

reintroduced in 2018) was imposed in this manner, as the governing policy aimed to prioritise the development of primary education while making cutbacks in other educational levels. However, the low level of funding earmarked for public secondary education resulted in the rapid growth of the private sector, and the discontinuation of scholarships had minimal impact on increasing secondary school enrolment.

Interactions with donors, referred to as “technical and financial partners” (TFPs) (Lange, 2003), are expected to be governed by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008). However, in 2017, the Directorate-General for Cooperation (DGCOOP)<sup>63</sup> had to reiterate the rules that should have been in force since 2005 (DGCOOP, 28 February 2017). Frequent reminders of the rules set out in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action suggest that they may not yet be fully implemented in practice. Certain points have been put into practice, such as appointing a representative of Burkina Faso authorities to lead education clusters or aid coordination units, a practice uncommon in Burkina Faso in the early 2000s<sup>64</sup>. However, the on-going reliance on external funding to ensure the development of education makes it difficult to achieve complete independence in implementing public education policy guidelines. There have been attempts by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), a global fund for education<sup>65</sup>, to impose collaboration between the country’s authorities, TFPs and civil society organisations. Thus, to secure funding for the 2017-2030 Education and Training Sector Programme (PSEF), an endorsement letter had to be signed on 5 June 2017 by the TFPs and civil society representatives before being sent to the Director General of the GPE Secretariat<sup>66</sup>. This endorsement letter asserts that the “*strategy development process was carried out by leveraging national expertise, without recourse to foreign technical assistance*” (page 1). It is worth noting that, until a few years ago, African education policy plans were often drafted by foreign experts. Burkina Faso now seems to be taking charge of the technical components in the development of its education policies, with some exceptions (see Universalia reference, 2018). Despite this shift, certain international consultancy firms still play a role. The endorsement letter, issued by both the TFPs

<sup>63</sup> A directorate that ensures the coordination and effectiveness of public development aid. [https://www.dgcoop.gov.bf/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=181&lang=fr](https://www.dgcoop.gov.bf/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=181&lang=fr)

<sup>64</sup> Field surveys between 2001 and 2005 (M.-F. Lange).

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-11-Burkina%20Faso%20-Endorsement.pdf>

and representatives of Burkina Faso's civil society, could only be drafted and signed once a consensus was achieved. This notion of consensus has faced criticism from numerous authors studying the dynamics of these partnerships. They have shown that it is often a vague consensus (Palier & Surel, 2005) that fails to allow the diverse of demands of civil society to be adequately expressed (Grégoire *et al.*, 2018).

### ***1.2. The economic significance of private and non-state education providers***

In Burkina Faso, as in other African nations, gauging the economic significance of private businesses in the education sector proves to be notably challenging. A comprehensive understanding of the motives driving the privatisation and commercialisation of education necessitates an analysis of financial investments, turnover and profits. Some information can be found in the National Institute of Statistics and Demography's (INSD) database of private companies which categorises businesses by branch of activity and illustrates changes in their numbers (RSE/INSD in MCIA, 2019: 29). However, only a handful of private businesses within the "education" sector are included, due to the prevalence of schools that are either unregistered or legal but are not declared as private businesses. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in 2016 the "education" sector ranked fifth out of 21 categories, trailing behind trade, construction, specialised activities, and manufacturing activities. The count of teaching businesses recorded a significant increase between 2014 and 2016, with a particularly noteworthy surge between 2010 and 2016, as this branch of activity was not ranked in 2010 due to its minimal size at that time.

Also not included in this list of commercial education activities are private not-for-profit establishments, such as denominational primary, secondary or higher education institutions, community or association schools and certain non-profit international schools. Financial and budgetary perspectives also overlook the activities of international NGOs operating in the education sector in economic statistics. Despite contributing to the development of Burkina Faso's education sector, NGO funding poses a financial burden on the State as these non-profit structures benefit from various tax, customs, and non-financial advantages (DGCOOP, Thursday 13 January 2022). Similarly, small, unrecognised private entrepreneurs who fail to declare their teachers to the tax or social security authorities (Lange, et al., 2021) represent a loss of income for the State and social security funds (health, retirement, etc.). While educational plans and other State education policy instruments often emphasise the essential role of private or voluntary sector investment, the economic and financial impact as well as the cost in terms of lost revenue for the State, are not always fully understood.

Since 2015, MENAPLN has been trying to compile a list of all private non-profit NGOs/DAs (non-governmental organisations/development associations) and foundations. The most recent directory, published in December 2022, does, however, acknowledge the difficulties associated with conducting such a census: *“they mainly concern: the reluctance of some NGOs/DAs and foundations to complete the data collection forms, the submission of incomplete forms, particularly the section relating to the budget [...], the non-exhaustive identification of all the NGOs/DAs and foundations working in the fields of education, literacy and training”*. (MENAPLN, 2022: 4). While the Government of Burkina Faso recognises the crucial financial role played by NGOs/DAs and foundations in the development of education, it also acknowledges that these private institutions often hesitate to provide information about their activities and, more specifically, their budgets.

How can public education policies that are independent of the various non-state players be defined and supported? It is only recently that the 2012-2021 Education and Training Sector Programme (PSEF, 2013) has addressed the issue of the State’s own resources, emphasising that *“The tax burden helps determine the State’s capacity to mobilise its own resources [...] The Fast Track Initiative’s framework sets the tax burden rate at between 14% and 18% for developing countries such as Burkina Faso that do not have oil resources [...] Burkina Faso is still a long way from reaching this minimum threshold, since the tax burden rate was 13.80% in 2012”* (PSEF, 2013 : 21). A discernible shift in perspective is evident when comparing the perspectives articulated in this 2013 document with those of the Ten-Year Basic Education Development Plan 2000-2009 (MEBA, n.d.) produced approximately a decade earlier. Reaffirming the States’ role in shaping public policies (Grégoire & Lange, 2018) requires a reflection of the means to finance them, specifically considering the State’s own resources, enabling greater autonomy in the choice of public actions.

### ***1.3. Regulations and policies for the recognition of private education***

The first legislative texts governing private education date back to the presidential decree of 14 February 1922 (Coulibaly, 1997: 109-110). After independence, regulations were still based on the colonial texts of 1948, and thereafter private education was governed by numerous legal texts, agreements, and conventions (Lange *et al.*, 2021). Between 1979 and 2021, some 27 legal texts were published (laws, decrees, collective agreements) (Boly & Lange, 2022: 132-135). All these documents provide guidelines concerning the mandatory declaration of private schools or universities, including the



necessary conditions (completion of forms, submission of documents, etc.), adherence to infrastructure standards for schools and universities (building, classroom size, playgrounds, etc.), the qualifications required for school directors and teachers and curriculum guidelines applicable to both public and private, denominational or secular institutions. Since 2019, the management of private primary education in the private sector has been overseen by the Private Education Directorate (DEP) (Burkina Faso, 2019). The Permanent Secretary of the National Commission for Private Secondary and Higher Education is responsible for private secondary and higher education. Both these entities report to MENAPLN and the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation (MESRSI) respectively.

With regard to Catholic education, an initial agreement was reached on June 13, 2000, between the State and the Catholic Church. This agreement involved the Burkinabé government transferring state-owned primary schools back to the Catholic Church, which had been nationalised in 1969 (Baux, 2006; Compaoré, 2003; Coulibaly, 1997: 193-196). Since 2014, the government has consistently entered into five-year agreements with the Catholic Church including those in 2014, and 2019. The latest agreement aims to cover a portion of salaries of teachers in Catholic schools. For secular private education, an agreement was signed on May 13, 2016, following five years of discussions, and building upon the convention signed in 1979 (Lange *et al.*, 2021). Although the regulations for private establishments appear to be grounded in precise legal texts and agreements today, the primary issue revolves around non-compliance with signed conventions, both on the part of the government and the leaders of private schools or universities. For instance, the State has often been indebted to private schools and has not honoured the agreements it has signed<sup>67</sup>. Simultaneously, the heads of private schools do not always comply with applicable rules and are sometimes forced to close by the educational authorities.

Thus, implementing the decision to fund private education for lower secondary education to compensate for the lack of places in public education spaces is proving challenging. This decision is in line with the public policy on the educational continuum, aiming to promote enrolment from primary to lower secondary education. Indeed, “*according to the legal framework, basic primary and post-primary education is now compulsory for children aged 6 to 16*” (Ministries in charge of education and training, 2017: 39). However, entry into the first year of lower secondary school is

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.burkina24.com/2016/05/27/issa-compaore-letat-doit-environ-un-milliard-et-demi-de-fcfa-a-lenseignement-prive/>.

dependent on passing a competitive entrance examination, with limited places in the public school system (the admission rate was 26.2% in 2019). Unsuccessful students in the entrance exam have the option to enrol in private schools, which may or may not be under state contract (Ministries in charge of education and training, 2017: 39). This system of state delegation to private secondary school establishments presents a number of difficulties with “*the main one being the delayed payment of school fees. [...] Another issue related to managing these students is the reliability of their payment status. By way of illustration, an inspection carried out in 2019 revealed four thousand and twenty-three (4,023) fictitious students for whom the promoters had requested payment of school fees amounting to approximately two hundred and five million (205.000.000) CFA francs*” (MENAPLN, 2021: 74). This system of state delegation has led to a high incidence of fraud, incurring substantial costs for the state in terms of both organisation (drafting of contracts with establishments, making payments, verifying the existence of listed students, etc.) and financial misappropriation.

To conclude this section, it is worth noting, as already highlighted by various authors (Braun *et al.*, 2006; Henaff *et al.*, 2009; Kitaev, 1999), that the growth of private education is a consequence of both the lack of public schools and universities and the deterioration in teaching conditions in the public sector. This pattern is evident in Burkina Faso, affecting pre-school and secondary education as well as primary education in urban areas. In these urban regions, the State has virtually stopped building schools and leading to a rapid expansion of the private sector, whether legal or illegal. The influence of international organisation in the decision to prioritise primary education at the expense of other levels of education has prompted the State to withdraw from certain areas, fostering the rapid development of private secondary education. The decision to focus on the construction of public schools in disadvantaged rural areas has resulted in the neglect of impoverished urban outskirts, which, in reality, have limited access to public schools (Boly & Lange, 2022).

## **2. The varied landscape of education providers and State oversight**

The educational landscape has become increasingly diverse since the 1990s, as various types of educational institutions have emerged alongside the more uniform public schools and universities (Lange, 2001; 2003). The private sector, in particular, presents a wide array of choices, ranging from private, secular, and denominational establishments to those with associative or community-based affiliations, and distinctions in profit orientation. These institutions may or may not be financed

and officially recognized by the State. This section explores the different categories of private establishments, shedding light on the challenges encountered by the State in their identification and oversight.

### ***2.1. The diverse contexts of private religious educational institutions***

Private religious establishments may or may not be legally recognised and may or may not be operating under contract with the State. There are three categories of religious establishments that are officially recognised and have their respective representatives: the entire network of Catholic schools is represented by the National Secretariat for Catholic Education (SNEC), Protestant schools are represented by the Federation of Evangelical Churches and Missions (FEME) and private Muslim institutions are represented by the Federation of Islamic Associations of Burkina Faso (FAIB). According to the Ministry of Education, “*the Federation of Islamic Associations of Burkina Faso (for Franco-Arab schools) receives subsidies, as do the federations of Catholic and Protestant denominational schools (SNEC, FEME) and the association of secular private schools (UNEEP-L)*” (MENA, 2017: 36).

Regulations governing the relationship between the Government of Burkina Faso and private Catholic schools have evolved since the 1960s. Initially funded by the State, these schools underwent nationalisation and were subsequently handed back (Baux, 2006; Cissé *et al.*, 2019; Compaoré, 2003). They are now officially recognised, and the government has committed to providing financial support, particularly in response to the teacher recruitment crises they experienced arising from low salaries (Lange *et al.*, 2021). Catholic education is well-structured, with SNEC accreditation being a prerequisite for a school to be deemed Catholic: “*A school is said to be Catholic only if it is administered by the competent ecclesiastical authority or a person who is a legal public ecclesiastical entity or recognised as such by the ecclesiastical authority through written documentation.*”<sup>68</sup> Despite government funding, both private Catholic and secular schools, which partially depend on school fees, continue to face difficulties. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the vulnerability of these private schools, whose financial sustainability relies to some extent on family contributions (*La Croix*, 22 June 2020).

Private Muslim schools also underwent major changes during the colonial era and post-independence, primarily aimed at modernising the curriculum. This led to the transformation of some Koranic schools into Medrassas (Cissé *et al.*, 2019) and their

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.educationcatholiquebf.org/index.php/a-propos/presentation-de-l-education-catholique>

subsequent official recognition by the Government of Burkina Faso. Muslim education is highly diverse and relies on a wide range of individual, national, and international private funding, whether affiliated to different religious institutions or not. Unlike Catholic education, Muslim education do not have a single convention. However, several associations, such as the FAIB, have intervened to represent and defend the interests of private developers of Muslim schools. The Muslim Cultural Union (UCM) had already opened educational institutions in Burkina Faso in the late 1950s (Cissé *et al.*, 2019: 201). Subsequently, the Upper Volta Muslim Community (CMHV), which was created in 1962, took over from the UCM in terms of the development of these private Muslim institutions (Cissé *et al.*, 2019). From the 1970s onwards, financial aid from Arab countries “*Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, Kuwait, Syria, Algeria and Morocco*” (Cissé *et al.*, 2019: 222) helped to modernise Arab-Muslim education. More recently, the Government of Burkina Faso has become more involved in the recognition and structuring of Arab-Muslim education and has provided financial support. The “*programme document submitted to the Global Partnership for Education for the implementation of the 2017-2030 Education and Training Sector Programme*” specifies the provision of “*support for Franco-Arab schools*” (MENA, 2017: 36) and a relationship between the State and Franco-Arab schools. The document also outlines international partnerships (Islamic Development Bank) and current achievements, such as the construction of school buildings, the strengthening of initial and in-service training for teachers, school directors and educational supervisors, and the creation of an Arabic-speaking department at the National College for Primary School Teachers (ENEP) in Loumbila (MENA: 2017: 36).

The problems posed by Arab-Muslim education have been identified by various authors (Cissé *et al.*, 2019; Compaoré *et al.*, 2022). These issues encompass a lack of genuine standardisation in training and qualifications, an inability to apply curricula in numerous establishments due to the low calibre of teachers, and the subpar quality of supervisory staff who should undergo training to carry out inspections in these establishments, among other issues. As Issa Cissé, Maxime Compaoré and Marc Pilon point out: “*These are major problems that have always been associated with Islamic religious education, especially in Madrassas. Yet, their numbers continue to grow, and the social integration of students trained in them remains an unresolved concern*” (Cissé *et al.*, 2019: 208).

Private Catholic education spans all levels, ranging from pre-school to higher education, whereas Arab-Muslim education is predominantly found at the primary level and has minimal representation at the secondary and higher education levels.

As Maxime Compaoré, Amadou Kaboré and Bouakaré Gansonré have observed: “*the limited growth of private Franco-Arab secondary education, due in particular to a lack of infrastructure and a shortage of teachers, makes it difficult for students to continue their studies after primary school*” (Compaoré *et al.*, 2022: 16). There are, however, a few private Muslim colleges and higher education institutes, such as the Burkina Polytechnic University Centre (CUPB), the Al Houda Higher Institute, the Al Moustapha International University, the African Institute of Islamic Finance and Management (IAFIG) in Ouagadougou and the Al Fourquan Higher Education Institute in Bobo-Dioulasso. Some of these institutions are part of international networks financed by foreign investors. Indeed, there is growing trend towards Islamic higher education and some of these Muslim Private Institutions of Higher Education (IPES) have been recognised and accredited (MESRSI, 15 July 2021), inspected and rated (MESRSI, 2021). Nevertheless, a major concern is the non-recognition of numerous private Arab-Muslim primary and secondary schools (Cissé *et al.*, 2019; Compaoré *et al.*, 2022; Universalia, 2018: 6). A variety of estimates have been made, both by researchers and by the education authorities, without it being known whether these estimates are close to reality or not. In contrast, a historical analysis of school statistics shows a rapid increase in the number of Arab-Muslim primary schools in recent years, indicating that these private schools are gradually gaining recognition.

## ***2.2. The uncontrolled growth of private secular schools***

The rapid growth of private secular schools, especially since the 2000s, has posed challenges for Burkina Faso’s authorities to effectively regulate this growth. Certain private secular schools are officially recognised and affiliated with the National Union of Secular Private Education Establishments (UNEEP-L), which was set up in 1975 and covers education from pre-school to university, including vocational and technical education. This union brings together the founders of legal private secular schools and boasts 1,300 members (*Burkina 24*, 10 February 2022). While most of these officially recognised private secular schools and universities operate for profit, they are keen to provide education, for example at the primary level, in urban areas where the State presence has diminished. In general, the promoters of private secular establishments never express any other objectives than the provision of education, either to address the inadequacy of other schools, including low-quality state schools, or due to the absence of state schools. Nevertheless, the Government of Burkina Faso is finding it difficult to identify all the private secular schools and “*there are also issues relating*

to the so-called 'unrecognised' schools [...]. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the proportion of schools in the private sector is underestimated in official school statistics but to a degree that is difficult to quantify" (Cissé *et al.*, 2019: 199). Certain schools and universities are not officially acknowledged either because they are unregistered or do not meet established standards, leading to closures. The incidence of clandestine or illegal schools seems to be increasing nationwide, though quantifying their numbers is challenging due to their lack of legal recognition.

For the city of Ouagadougou, Dramane Boly (2017: 170) has shown that the number of unrecognised private primary schools rose sharply between 2007 and 2013: "*the percentage of unrecognised private schools rose from 0.6 % in 2007 to 29 % in 2013*" (Boly, 2017: 170). This explosion in unofficial private secular primary schools can be explained by several factors. Firstly, the State's failure to construct public infrastructure in underdeveloped areas of towns and cities, including those in the capital, plays a significant role. This lack of priority is justified by the already high level of school enrolment in comparison to other regions. The second factor is the rapid and poorly controlled urbanisation of the city of Ouagadougou (Ouattara, 2005). Thirdly, the basic education districts (CEBs) tasked with overseeing primary schools lack sufficient financial resources to monitor and supervise the proliferation of both authorised and unauthorised private primary schools due to insufficient funding for transportation and fuel (Boly, 2017). For private secondary schools, as mentioned earlier, the public policy of the *educational continuum* has enabled the rapid development of private secular schools due to the limited availability of places in the public sector. These private schools receive state funding to cater for lower secondary students after signing a contract with the State.

### ***2.3. The difficulties associated with registering and monitoring private schools***

Burkina Faso's school statistics are undoubtedly the most comprehensive and the most reliable in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa. They are also published regularly and are accessible online. However, the explosion in the number of private schools, many of which are illegal, makes it difficult to both identify and monitor these schools. The Permanent Digital Map of Schools in Ouagadougou (Pilon *et al.*, 2021) sheds light on the complexities of documenting all primary and secondary schools in the city. To compile this map, "*primary and secondary schools were geo-referenced with the aid of the global positioning system (GPS) in 2015 and 2020*" (*Idem.*: 7). The authors observed that it was difficult to identify schools because of name or location changes, and that "*some*

*schools operating in the field were not listed by the Ministry [...]. This means that statistical records are not regularly updated by schools, especially those that are not officially accredited ('illegal' schools). There are establishments that are open but not listed or authorised by the Ministries. Furthermore, any establishments that are closed remain on the lists (Idem: 7). Lastly, the authors observed "a large amount of missing data, including certain schools that were geolocated but could not be traced in the Ministries' education databases: 312 of the 954 geolocated primary schools and 66 of the 392 secondary schools [...]. This lack of information varies considerably depending on the type of school. While all Catholic schools are documented, over half (53.8%) of Muslim schools are not. This lack of information also applies to 31.8% of Protestant schools, 40.6% of private secular schools and, surprisingly, 7.7% of public schools (!)". (Idem: 7-8). In fact, it is almost impossible to know the exact number of private schools (except for Catholic schools).*

For pre-school, primary and secondary education, annual visits by education authorities have resulted in closures: in 2020, 134 unauthorized schools were shut down (MENAPLN, 26 August 2020); in 2021, 233 schools (pre-school, primary and secondary) were also closed.<sup>69</sup> With regard to higher education, MESRSI conducts "monitoring and surveillance visits to private higher education institutions (IPES)" and publishes a report in which these institutions are rated and ranked according to an official matrix (MESRSI, 2021; 2023). The regular assessment of IPESs by the General Directorate for Higher Education (DGSUp) encourages these institutions to comply with state regulations. A favourable ranking gives them greater visibility and makes them more attractive with some IPESs incorporating the results of the DGSUp results in their promotional campaigns. At this level of education, the Government of Burkina Faso seems to have the problem of expansion under control, and has even been able to evaluate it, even though the instability of these private educational structures poses a problem. In 2023, following an audit carried out by MESRSI in August 2023, of the 95 universities or higher institutes assessed: five, "operating illegally", were forced to close, four "had only obtained authorisation to set up, but had not been authorised to open", four "were being restructured following previous controls", 36 had closed and seven had suspended their activities (MESSRI, August 2023: 4), i.e. 49 private higher institutes out of the 95 assessed were no longer operational. A similar pattern of instability can be seen across the other education levels, although the government's limited capacity to survey all primary and secondary schools

<sup>69</sup> <https://burkina24.com/2021/08/19/burkina-faso-liste-des-ecoles-et-etablissements-non-reconnus-a-fermer-pour-lannee-2021-2022/>



makes it impossible to measure this phenomenon as accurately as it can for higher education.

Frequent conflicts arise between private operators and the State, primarily due to the non-payment or delayed payment of owed sums by the State and the private operators' failure to adhere to legislation, regulations, or ministerial directives. According to the latter, an abundance of decrees, orders, specifications, etc., further exacerbates these issues, as some texts are perceived to be contradictory. It seems that the Government of Burkina Faso is consistently trailing the initiatives and energy of private operators, necessitating continual efforts to regulate the rapid privatisation and commercialisation. These efforts aim to supervise and control the process, mitigating its potentially detrimental impacts. For higher education, an example is Order No. 2017-530/MESRSI/SG/DGESup of 12 December 2017, which regulates the activities of teacher-researchers, university hospital teachers and public researchers in private higher education and research establishments. This decree was issued relatively late compared with the decrees and orders published in the 1990s concerning private education. During the 2021 inspections, the monitoring and control report on Private Institutions of Higher Education (IPES) highlighted that "among the many shortcomings, nearly all IESR [Public Higher Education and Research Institutes] teachers employed in IPESs lacked a teaching contract (or leave of absence) and lacked a documentation confirming their availability for various administrative positions" (MESRSI, 2021: 7). In fact, private higher education establishments (as well as secondary schools) make use of teachers from the public sector who, in some cases, are no longer able to effectively perform the tasks required of them in the public establishments that pay them. As a result, these teachers contribute to the further decline in quality in the public sector and encourage the development of the private sector.

#### ***2.4. The uncontrolled growth of private teaching-training centres***

When the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were introduced, many teacher training colleges were closed in sub-Saharan Africa (Lange, 2021), whether in Mali, Senegal (Barro, 2009; Lauwerier, 2013) or Togo (UNESCO, 2014: 57-58). In Burkina Faso, the duration of teacher training was reduced (André, 2007) and, since the SAPs, there have been no consistent policies for teacher training, due to the constant changes in decisions taken, as well as an increase in the number of teacher categories, including PEJEN teachers, who only received three months' training before taking up their positions (*Le Faso.net*, Tuesday 27 November 2018).



Burkina Faso has State-operated teacher training colleges for primary education, known as *Écoles normales des enseignants du primaire* (ENEP), offering both initial and in-service training for primary school teachers. Since 2010, private counterparts, referred to as *Écoles privées de formation des enseignants du primaire* (EPFEP), have also been established. The education sector policy document (2014-2023) acknowledges their presence, stating, “*In addition to these public ENEPs, a number of private teacher training institutions also exist, all of which increase the training available for primary school teachers*” (Burkina Faso, PSE, 2013: 35). Secondary school teachers receive training at the Teacher Training College in Koudougou, while higher education teachers undergo training at the university. The authorization for the creation of private teacher training colleges for primary school teachers was granted through Decree no. 2010-358/PRES/PM/MEBA on June 29, 2010. Although the ministries overseeing education regularly update lists of accredited private schools (pre-school, primary, secondary, and higher education) or schools facing closure, there seems to be no equivalent for teacher training colleges for primary education, with the most recent available list dating back to 2017.

The proliferation of new EPFEPs appears to have spiralled out of control. In 2012-2013, Étienne Ouédraogo identified 20 such establishments, a number that increased to 32 in 2014 (Ouédraogo, 2016: 73). By 2017, *Laborpresse.net* published a list featuring 148 recognised EPFEPs, some of which has received ministerial authorisation for their opening (*Laborpresse.net*, 2 September 2017). This dramatic increase in the number of EPFEPs, from 20 in 2012 to 148 in 2017 raises the question about the identities of the private promoters engaging in this activity. An article published online by *Le Faso.net* announced the opening of one such EPFEP in June 2015. The promoter, Mr Zéphirin Paré, was presented as “*the developer of several companies [...], Managing Director of Arc en Ciel Services and IMS sarl. and promoter of the Bientama Group based in Toma in the province of Nyala, which is a consortium of businesses (bakery, distribution of Brakina beverages, manufacture of ice cream bars, dry cleaning and, very soon, an hotel complex of international standard) and the Bientama Private Training School for Primary Education Teachers (EPFEP)*” (*Le Faso.net*, Tuesday 23 June 2015). While the promoter highlights the social aspect of his teaching training venture providing initial and ‘quality training’ for primary school teachers in a region lacking such facilities, it is clear that he considers this activity as an economic pursuit, suggesting that the movement to privatise education is intertwined with a process of commercialisation. While this example of a private businessman may not be representative of all founders of private teacher training

colleges, insufficient data hampers a thorough investigation into the reasons behind this rapid proliferation of EPFEPs.

### ***2.5. International schools and universities***

International schools, recognised by the authorities as private institutions, are authorised to provide tuition and in some cases to award foreign qualifications. This includes overseas French establishments operated by the French Agency for Education Abroad (*Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger*, AEFÉ). These French institutions target children of French nationality, bi-nationals (French-Burkinabè) eligible for scholarships, or Burkina Faso nationals from affluent families due to the notably high cost of schooling. Although Burkina Faso students, along with French students, enjoy preferential rates compared to students of other nationalities, children of other nationalities (non-French and non-Burkinabè) are subject to higher fees. Typically, such students come from privileged backgrounds, or they may be international executives or diplomats whose employers cover their tuition fees.

In Burkina Faso, there are two French schools—one in Ouagadougou and another in Bobo-Dioulasso. The Saint Exupéry Lycée Français (LFSE) in Ouagadougou caters to students from nursery school to the final year of secondary school. Annual fees for 2023-2024 vary from approximately €3,000 for nursery school to €4,500 for high school<sup>70</sup>. In Bobo-Dioulasso, fees at the International André-Malraux Lycee Français range from around €2,250 for nursery school to €4,600 for upper secondary school<sup>71</sup>. Other private international schools, such as the International School of Ouagadougou (ISO), a private non-profit school, offer foreign qualifications<sup>72</sup>. The fees are much higher than those of the international French schools, ranging from €3,059 to €5,303 for nursery school, to around €16,012 up to grade 5 (primary equivalent), then €17,549 and €18,112 respectively for grades 6 to 8 and 9 to 12, which correspond to lower and upper secondary school levels. It is the only nursery, primary and secondary school in Burkina Faso accredited by the American government, awarding American diplomas and facilitating enrolment in American or English-speaking universities. One of the advantages of these international establishments is that they can guarantee

<sup>70</sup> <http://lfse.org/> On 29 June 2023, the Guaranteed Minimum Professional Wage (SMIG) was increased to 45,000 FCFA (68.61 euros) per month. The cost of one year at an international school equates to several years' earnings on Burkina Faso's SMIG.

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.ecolefrancaise-bobodioulasso.com/>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.iso.bf/>

their students enrolment at North American or European universities. The rationale behind these schools is the quality of education and exam results, the French or American curriculum, but they also place a great deal of importance on the cultural or national ‘diversity’ of the children and young people who attend them. The aim is undoubtedly to show that these schools are not simply ‘transplants’ of foreign school systems, but that they are situated in a world of ‘diversity’ (LFSE) or within a context of ‘globalisation’ (ISO).

These schools now face competition from private schools run by international businesses, exemplified by ‘Enko Education’<sup>73</sup>. This entity has progressively established its presence in various French-speaking African nations, including Douala in Cameroon and Abidjan in Côte d’Ivoire (in 2016), Dakar in Senegal (in 2017), and Burkina Faso and Mali (in 2018) (Lange, 2021). To establish themselves in these countries, they often form partnerships with existing private schools or acquire local institutions, aligning with established internationalization practices (Lange & Henaff, 2015). Targeting affluent social classes, these schools typically charge tuition fees of approximately US\$4,000 per year, which is lower than the expenses associated with both French and American schools. In Burkina Faso, Enko Education operates Enko Ouaga, a private school offering a comprehensive curriculum from primary school to the baccalaureate level. The institution emphasizes its distinctive features on its website, aiming to provide an international African school that is more culturally aligned with students compared to French or American schools, which adhere to the national curricula of their accrediting countries. Emphasis is also placed on the fact that classes are limited to 24 students and that students are bilingual (English and French), which is designed to prepare them for a more globalised world. The target clientele is the affluent social classes who sometimes cannot access other international private schools due to their high costs or difficulties securing a place for their children. The rationale for enrolment in lower and upper secondary school is based on the same elements as for primary school, with emphasis on the possibility of preparing for the International Baccalaureate: “*this is the first school in Burkina Faso to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma programme*” (Enko Ouaga, **website**). These private international schools boast strong moral values and forget to mention, in the case of privately funded schools, that they are profit-making and that private investors expect to make a profit.

<sup>73</sup> Enko Education was founded by Cyrille Nkontchou from Cameroon (who set up the Enko Capital Investment Fund in Johannesburg in 2007) and Éric Pignot (Lange, 2021).

Currently, these private international schools in Burkina Faso serve a limited student population, exclusively accessible to children from highly privileged backgrounds due to their exorbitant fees. Nevertheless, they contribute to the evident hierarchy within private schools and reinforce the social segregation dynamics between the globalized elite and the broader population of the country.

Other aspects of the privatisation of education, which are not dealt with in this chapter, concern attempts at public-private partnerships, most of which have proven unsuccessful in Sahelian nations due to insufficiently solvent populations that hinder profitable investments (Lange, et al, 2021). This includes the rapid growth of additional courses, tutoring or support services financed by families, paid educational programs during school breaks, and other educational sectors that can be overseen by the private sector, such as the production of textbooks and manuals. As a result, private operators are intervening in a variety of ways, and the privatisation process is becoming increasingly complex. The model of these private establishments is very heterogeneous. The methods of commitment are very diverse, the hierarchy of these establishments is ever more pronounced, and each type of establishment caters for specific groups characterised by their faith, and their social and economic situation. Private profit-making establishments claim to have moral values or a role to play in replacing the State, which is seen as incapable of meeting the social demand for education, while they are often perceived as being motivated by profit (Sankara, 2020). However, details concerning their revenue, profits, and the investment funds on which they depend has yet to emerge.

## **Conclusion**

The primary aim of this chapter was to examine the influence of education policies on the privatization process. This involved assessing the role of private education, focusing on Burkina Faso's reliance on financial and technical support from TFPs, scrutinizing the key legal frameworks regulating private schools and delineating their rights and responsibilities, and dissecting various types of private establishments. The expansion of private education, especially in pre-school and secondary education, and in primary education in urban areas where the Burkina Faso government has nearly halted school construction, is attributed to the absence of public schools, fostering the rapid growth of private alternatives.

Legislation and education plans officially recognise and encourage the development of the private education sector. While the rights of private operators are clearly set out, as

is the case for non-profit associations, the oversight of their compliance with obligations is inconsistent. Government supervision of private schools and universities remains inadequate, particularly for primary and secondary education. The decentralised departments within the education ministries often lack the resources required for essential inspections, which encompass ensuring student safety, monitoring training standards, and overseeing the salary conditions of private-sector educators. Many of these private education businesses operate beyond both Burkina Faso's legal framework and the jurisdiction of the relevant education ministries. Furthermore, the recruitment of public-school teachers by private education entities raises significant issues. While the Ministry of Higher Education is attempting to address this issue, there appears to be a lack of attention from the Ministry of Secondary Education. The extent to which private secondary or higher education institutions could function without the involvement of teachers from the public sector, who are already remunerated by the government for their work in public institutions, remains an underexplored question, largely due to a dearth of statistical information. Likewise, the assessment of school programs and the evaluation of education quality are not consistently conducted.

Finally, the high number of unrecognised private schools raises questions about the Government of Burkina Faso's ability to address this issue. Resolving this challenge necessitates increased oversight and investment in public education facilities to meet the social demand for education. Private operators that fail to adhere to standards often cannot fulfil the educational needs of the most disadvantaged, and the government may find it challenging to enforce closures in the absence of public alternatives. This predicament is evident in the case of the private profit-making primary schools on the outskirts of Ouagadougou.

Private schools are mainly located in urban areas, where parents are perceived to be more financially secure. In primary education, during the 2019-2020 academic year, 14% of rural students were enrolled in private schools, while the figure stood at 48% for urban students. At the secondary level, encompassing both lower and upper secondary, 28% of rural students were enrolled in private schools, compared to 66% of urban students. The privatisation of education primarily impacts urban areas and the more affluent regions of Burkina Faso, with the proportion of private primary school pupils varying from 4.8% to 67% depending on the region. Ensuring quality education for all, especially children from socially and economically disadvantaged families, is imperative for the State.

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