

YUNMUN XXX

UNESCO

### Topic 1: The Introduction of Private Schools into the Public School System

Not all countries can fully fund public education for everyone. In the United States, we have seen how private education has become a staple of education. In political discourse, the issue of public funding for private education has come to the fore, especially with the appointment of private education advocate Betsy DeVos to the U.S. Department of Education. There has been a recent increase in the development of private schools all around the world, often created with the purpose of creating a market for schools to compete. Competition, the private schools argue, forces school administrators and teachers to work harder and perform at a higher level. Private schools also provide parents with options as to where to send their children.

Defenders of public schools counter that studies do not necessarily show that opening a market of schools increases student performance, and, in some cases, it even decreases it. Private schools may also evade regulations and become centered around private interests. Introduction of new schools may increase socio-economic inequality, as private schools will contain higher percentages of wealthy students who can afford them, while poorer students will remain in the public schools.

Our question has increased in underdeveloped countries and nations in Africa and South Asia. There, private education is growing exponentially: one-third of the 6-18 year old demographic in South Asian countries attend private schools. Some of these countries provide government subsidies for private education; some do not. Some countries have implemented questionable regulatory procedures; many have not.

Quality education is one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, and it is particularly UNESCO's job to help assure we achieve it. Thus, we must ask the following questions, and keep in mind they will be answered differently for each country:

- Do private schools help us meet our goal? What is wrong with public education?
- Which countries have had the greatest increase in private education? Has it been successful? Do underdeveloped nations have what to learn from others?
- Should governments help fund private schools?
- How can we help regulate private school? Is it financially worth the price?
- How can we avoid an increase in socio-economic inequality as a result of private schooling?

These are only a few questions amongst many you should begin to ask and research as the conference approaches. Remember: you represent a specific country with unique problems, so make sure you learn those problems well. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Good luck, and I look forward to seeing you soon,

Ben Atwood

Chair, UNESCO

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