

Privatization of education and labor force inequality in urban Africa: The experience of first employment in Ouagadougou

Extended Abstract

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Context and Objectives

Like in many other sub-Saharan African countries, there has been an increased privatization of the school system in Burkina Faso since the 1990s. This growth of the private sector education is particularly visible in urban areas. In the capital city Ouagadougou, for instance, 70% of the private schools were opened after 1990, and by 2001 the number of private schools reached the level of their public counterparts (Pilon, 2004).

The burkinabé private system school is very heterogeneous, and, as in many other African countries, the «elitist» private schools have expanded alongside the «popular» ones (Künzler, 2008). Yet, existing data on school enrollment by students' social origin suggest that the growth private system has contributed to increase of education disparities in the last thirty years, especially at the secondary and higher education levels (Pilon and Wayack, 2001). In fact, the general discredit of the public system has pushed wealthy inner-city families to send their children in the private system, increasing the social selectivity. This has been exacerbated by the perception that the private school system offers better quality of education (Yaro, 1994).

However, as noted by Lange (2003: p.115), “the impact of the privatization of the school system is still embryonic because of the limited knowledge of the phenomenon”. For instance, little is known on its effect on subsequent employment inequality. Thus, the purpose of this study is to contribute to better grasp the consequences of school privatization by examining how schooling experience (public versus private) influences subsequent transition to first paid employment among young women and men in Ouagadougou, the capital city of Burkina Faso. Controlling for educational attainment, do youth who went through the private school system have any advantage in the job market compared to their counterparts who attended public schools? More precisely, how does schooling experience (public versus private) affect the timing and sector of first paid employment? And how does this effect vary by sex and education level?

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Data and Methods

This paper uses data from a unique representative retrospective survey entitled “Becoming a Parent in Ouagadougou” (BPO survey) conducted between November 2009 and February 2010 in Ouagadougou among 2036 young adults: 1109 females (20-29 years old) and 927 males (25-34 years old). The survey is well-suited to analyze the effect of education type on patterns of youth entry into the labor force. In fact, the data includes detailed employment histories and other longitudinal socio-economic information for both young men and women. More specifically, for each respondent, the section of the questionnaire devoted to economic activity history collected information on all periods of schooling, apprenticeship, economic activity (paid and unpaid employment), and inactivity (unemployed, at home, retired or sick) which lasted more than six months, since the respondent’s sixth birthday. For those who attended formal schools (outside koranic schools), each respondent was also asked whether they spent most of their primary, secondary and tertiary education in the public or private school system. For each period of economic activity, additional information was collected including the type of activity (open question), the status in this activity (self-employed, employer, employee, apprentice, family helper), whether the respondent was paid for the work performed, and whether he or she received or gave a pay slip (“fiches de salaire”).

The two dimensions of labor force inequality we will look at pertain to the differential in the timing and sector of first paid employment. To investigate the timing of transition to first paid employment by educational experience (level of attainment and type of education received), descriptive statistical analysis was first performed using Kaplan-Meier method. Among educated youth, we also looked at differential in the median duration between end of schooling and first job by level of education and type of school attended (private versus public).

Sector of activity for the first paid job will also be considered. While there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes the informal sector in urban Africa, there is agreement that the informal economy mainly operates outside the sphere of government regulation. Self-employed workers or employees in the informal sector are generally not registered, nor are small-scale informal enterprises. Thus, for practical purposes, we treat public sector employees as well as all those receiving a pay slip as workers in the formal or modern sector. Employers providing pay slips to their staff are also included in this sector. The formal sector is divided into public and private spheres of activity and activities in the informal sector are classified into five categories: agricultural, craft, petty trade of food, other petty trade and services.

The effect of private education on the hazard of getting a first paid job will then be analyzed using Cox semi-parametric proportional hazards models. In these regression models, the dependent variable is the hazard rate of getting a first paid job and the main independent variable is educational experience (never been to school, primary schooling, secondary public, secondary private, superior public, superior private). A number of socioeconomic factors (place of residence, marital status, social origin, etc.) likely to

influence first employment will also integrated in the multivariate analysis as fixed or time-varying control covariates.

Preliminary results

The preliminary descriptive analysis confirms the prominent role played today by the private sector in Burkina Faso's education system, especially at the secondary level. As seen in Figure 1, 12.8% of respondents who attended primary school did so in a private institution while 38.7% of those who went to secondary school went to private secondary schools and 23.8% of those who had a post-secondary education obtained it outside the public sector.

Figure 1. Type of schools attended by education level (%)

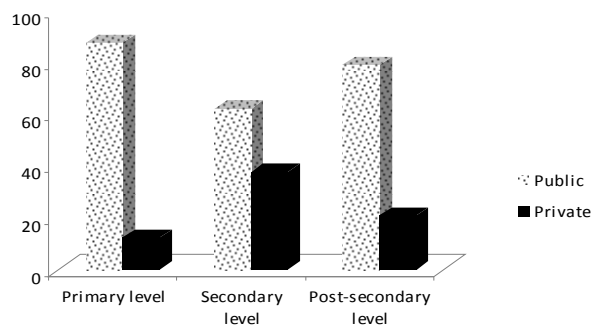


Table 1 combines educational attainment and type of school attained to present the schooling experience of both male and female respondents. Clear gender differences are visible. Women are less likely than men to have attended school (33% versus 19%) and to have a post-secondary education (11% versus 24%). Private schools are more popular among women with a secondary level education (14%) than among their male counterparts (11%).

Table 1. Schooling experience: educational attainment and type of school attended, by sex

	Men	Women	All
No formal schooling	19,5	32,8	26,8
Primary	22,2	25,5	24,5
Secondary public	22,4	16,2	19,0
Secondary with some private schooling	10,7	13,9	12,4
Post-secondary public	14,8	4,5	9,2
Post-secondary with some private schooling	9,4	7,1	8,1
N	927	1109	2036

Source : BPO survey 2010

Preliminary descriptive investigation of the timing of transition to first paid employment by educational experience (Table 2), suggests strong differences in median age at first paid employment by educational attainment but no significant difference by type of school attended (private versus public). Yet, median duration between end of schooling and first job suggests faster transition to paid employment among youth with some private education compared to those who only attended public school (1.7 years versus 3.6 on average).

Table 2. Transition to first paid job, by schooling experience

	None	Primary	Secondary and post-secondary public	Secondary and post-secondary with private	All
Median age at first paid job (in years)	19.9	20.0	26.3	26.4	23.2
Cox test for significance (1)			***		
N =2036					
Median duration between end of schooling and first job (in years)	---	7.9	3.6	1.7	5.3
Cox test for significance (1)			****		
N =1065					

Source : BPO survey 2010

1) Testing for equality of survival curves, two-tailed

As for quality of employment obtained, strong gender differentials emerge: while private schooling seems to help educated young women get a first paid job in the formal sector it has the opposite effect on young men (Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of first paid job in the formal sector, by schooling experience and sex

	None	Primary	Secondary and post-secondary public	Secondary and post-secondary with private	All	N
Men	4,3	7,7	46,9	39,4	23,8	647
Women	2,5	5,5	31,1	56,7	13,1	556
All	3,2	6,6	42,6	45,7	18,9	1203

Source : BPO survey 2010

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