Beyond Short-Term Learning Gains: The Impact of Outsourcing Schools in Liberia after Three Years

The Liberian Education Advancement Partnership (LEAP), originally known as Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL), began in 2016 with 93 public schools, and has since expanded to an additional 101 schools. The model is similar to charter schools in the United States or academies in the United Kingdom. LEAP schools remain public schools, charge no fees, and are staffed by public school teachers, but each school is managed by one of eight private contractors, including three for-profit companies and five charities which have taken responsibility for everything from teacher in-service training to fixing leaks in the roof.

While originally motivated by the government’s desire to improve test scores, the initiative has been dogged by the expulsion of students by private operators, an alleged coverup of sexual abuse of minors, and cost overruns.
This brief summarizes the results of a three-year randomized control trial, comparing outcomes for children in LEAP schools to those in regular government schools through March-May 2019. We highlight impacts on four dimensions: access, learning, sustainability, and child safety. Results vary enormously across operators, and the overall picture for some operators looks much better (or worse) than the average.

Read the full paper here.

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