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English schools abroad stress gap between rich and poor

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The growing popularity of English-medium private schools is widening the gap between rich and poor in developing countries.

The teaching of English is increasingly seen as vital for pupils who hope to progress on to high-status, high-paying jobs. As a result, demand for private, English-me [More...](#)

Their report says: "At the upper end, we see the growth of high-cost private schooling with standards defined internationally; at the bottom end we find sporadic attendance and low-quality schooling, perceived to have minimal pay-offs.

An economic and social elite see access to high-quality private education and English-language instruction as part of the maintenance of an elite status for their children."

The academics conclude that, if social change is to take place, compulsory schooling must be extended beyond primary.

They examined schooling in India and China - two countries that make up 40 per cent of the world's population. In India there is great disparity between rich and poor. The private sector grows but access to primary schooling remains difficult in rural areas, particularly for girls and children from lower castes or indigenous tribes.

The report says: "Huge classes and inadequately trained teachers may mean that

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investment, enthusiasm and a hugely dynamic economy still leave the majority of children barely literate."

In China, school enrolment has increased dramatically over the last 20 years. Since 2001, the primary curriculum has emphasised transferable skills and problem-solving. But it also retains traditional elements, such as moral education. This is designed "to strengthen patriotism, collectivism and the socialist ideal". Chinese girls are much less likely than boys to attend school, and lack teachers and resources. Rural areas and ethnic minorities remain disadvantaged.

Private schooling disappeared in China in 1949, but was reintroduced with economic reforms in 1978. The researchers say: "Given the growing economic and political significance of the new urban middle classes in China, their further expansion is almost inevitable."

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