

Education is the fundamental responsibility of the state, but in order to achieve the objectives of Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) and Education for All (EFA) along with the objectives of access and equity, government has allowed private sector to share the responsibility of the state. Presence of two sectors has created discrepancy in educational quality, which is significant to be explored, as, such differences may open doors for divide and inequalities in the society.

The objectives of the present study were to explore and compare academic achievement and cognitive development of students of public and private sectors at primary level. Data were collected from 500 students of grade V at the end of academic year from 10 public and 10 private sector educational institutions of Islamabad city. Two research instruments were developed for data collection. For data analysis mean scores were calculated, and t-test was applied to seek comparison in both sectors.

Findings showed that overall academic achievement of public sector students was better, their performance remained better in the subject of Mathematics whereas, there was no significant difference in academic achievement students of both sectors in the subjects of English and Urdu. There was no significant difference between the cognitive developments of students of both sectors. It was further revealed that female students outperformed their male counterparts in all subjects and in cognitive development.

Findings of the present study remained inconsistent with most of the previous studies, therefore the researcher recommended, that all public sector educational institutions should be provided similar educational facilities and teaching faculty as that in the Islamabad Model Colleges so that all public sector institutions could perform well. Research work is needed to find out reasons of low performance of male students, so that efforts could be planned to improve performance of male students in coming future.