



Wilton Park



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Report

No child left behind: what is the complementary role of non-state actors in the delivery of quality basic education in low resource environments?

Wednesday 13 – Friday 15 September 2017 | WP1577

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Across the world, countries have made incredible progress in getting children into school. In low and middle income countries, 80 and 92 percent of children respectively are now enrolled in primary school¹. The corresponding figures for lower secondary are 65 and 85 percent². However, much remains to be done: 61 million primary school aged children, 10 percent of all children in low and lower middle income countries, are still out of school³.

Furthermore, this expansion in access has not been accompanied by similar improvements in learning. Millions of children who have completed several years of school still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills and even those who complete primary school fail to master basic competencies. Poor and vulnerable children, particularly girls, learn the least of all.

In this context, the non-state sector has grown and evolved rapidly, as parents have looked for alternative schooling options for their children - in many developing countries, close to one third of all children are enrolled in schools managed by non-state actors. But despite this massive growth, there is limited evidence showing that non-state provision is measurably better quality, or that non-state providers are able to reach the poorest children.

Too often, the debate around the role of non-state provision in basic education has been driven by ideology rather than robust evidence⁴. This Wilton Park event, in partnership with the UK Department for International Development and Ark Education Partnerships Group (Ark EPG), aimed to move beyond ideology. The event convened diverse and global expertise for a dynamic, policy focused and evidence-based discussion on the role that non-state education can play in delivering quality education and expanding access in developing countries, including the role of non-state actors in helping to achieve Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, 'Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and

¹ EFA GEM, 2016, p.182 Table 10.1, accessed 22.08.17

² *ibid*

³ Education Commission, *The Learning Generation*, accessed 19.06.17

⁴ Aslam, M. (2017). *Non-state education provision; access and quality for the marginalised*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies

promote lifelong learning for all’.

The programme included a mixture of roundtable, group and plenary discussions, with participation from 50 experts, including education policymakers, government representatives, school operators, academics, civil society, the non-state sector and donor agencies. This created opportunities to identify tangible policy solutions, as well as providing the intellectual and creative space to develop the collaborations needed to turn recommendations and ideas into substantive action.

The first day surveyed the global landscape, before delving into the lessons learned and evidence generated in Pakistan. The second day examined the role, experience and challenges of the major players in the education system, looking at government, non-state actors, civil society and donors. The final day pulled together key learning from days one and two, applying an equity lens before drawing out conclusions and key takeaways.

Executive summary

The key objective of this Wilton Park meeting was to explore how non-state actors are delivering basic education in developing countries, and to identify and articulate strategies to help all stakeholders in expanding this complementary provision whilst setting and maintaining appropriate standards for access, quality and equity.

The forum brought non-state education providers and operators from, and working in, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia together with other development organisations (donors, government and civil society), to consider a wide ranging, complex and inter-dependent set of challenges relating to the provision, funding and quality of non-state education.

Non-state education providers and operators are educating a growing number of poor people with education of varied quality. Even with projected fair-to-good economic growth, the fiscal realities of providing education for rising populations – Africa, for example, will need to educate 1 billion children by 2030 – will necessitate non-state sector capital and delivery solutions if Sustainable Development Goal 4, and leave no child behind is to be achieved. It is in the public interest to make sure they work better.

A set of principles and recommendations were identified for the actions that collectively have the greatest potential to bring about meaningful improvement in access to high quality, equitable basic education for the world’s poorest children.

Principles for all actors

- i) The state is the guarantor of quality basic education for all, ensuring that no child is denied the right to quality basic education;
- ii) However, the state need not be the sole financier nor provider of basic education services;
- iii) In the case of non-state financing and provision of basic education services, the state has a critical regulatory and oversight function to ensure that:
 - a) Non-state providers meet clear and realistic standards and adhere to guidelines; and
 - b) Equity concerns arising from a diverse mix of providers, including financial and other barriers, are adequately addressed, so that no child is unable to go to school because of costs.

The following set of minimum guiding recommendations for governments and international stakeholders are intended to be a starting point, subject to further discussion and expansion. They are consistent with both international human rights law and global goals, and are amenable to translation into policies and legislation. Many are codified as an appeal to funders - action comes with cost – but delivery will require collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders.

1. Establish global principles and objectives for government engagement with the non-state sector in education.

- Until and unless there is an effective national regulatory environment, there continues to be an urgent role for donors and civil society to oversee accountability for the social responsibility of non-state operators.
- The creation of a simple code of conduct/principles for engagement is recommended that promotes transparency, openness, sharing and good management, and make this symmetrical for all operators.

2. Continue to invest the bulk of aid finance in strengthening government systems.

- Invest in mechanisms that work. Build capacity of each state to make its own decisions regarding actors and operators in education, based on objective and rigorous analysis of its own and others' evidence base.
- Support governments to learn from best practice, to set their own standards, and to effectively and appropriately manage and regulate all education provision in their portfolios.
- Create a set of guiding principles for investors, including detailed guidelines for how to conduct rights-based social impact assessment. Invest accordingly, strengthening state and civil society for accountability.

3. Strengthen the evidence base on non-state education.

- More work is needed to define what good looks like and how to achieve it. There is a critical need for rigorous data collected against a universal framework of common metrics, helping donors to link funding to the right incentives.
- Support an even playing field by defining quality in ways that show progress in learning, and create measures that enable like-for-like comparison on quantities such as cost per student.
- Consider establishing a working group to look at how to achieve more, better and better-coordinated research.
- Bring together world-leading models for the management, delivery and oversight/regulation of mixed state/non-state systems, with a strong focus on accountability for learning outcomes across both state and non-state sectors.
- Engage deeply with the academic community and understand what is needed to incentivise their participation.

4. Engage donor and multilateral systems in market-shaping and Public Private Partnerships (PPP) programmes

- Shape markets and support PPPs through financing, shareholder influence, advisory support, technical assistance and joint programming.
- Advocate for simple measures such as clear, transparent and uniform procurement rules that will better align contractors' incentives with the public interest. Evaluate the results, and learn from programmes such as in Uganda, Liberia, Nigeria and Pakistan. Ensure that output is comparable across key issues such as access, quality, equity and finance. Make the learning clear, easy to access and disseminated in a way that can have immediate impact on practice.

- Make education investments and advisory services more pro-poor and more systems focussed, including working through aggregators of single proprietor (i.e. non-chain) schools such as PPPs and financial services.
- Work together to support scaling of provision in areas with gaps in education age group provision, for example without early years or lower secondary, and to provide education during conflict and disaster.

5. Change the terms of debate for non-state actors and education.

- Move beyond ideology to evidence, and focus on how the state and non-state sectors can work more effectively and productively together for the benefit of the poor. Recognise that this is increasingly how education services are financed and delivered, with growing evidence of the benefit, and invest proportionately in mixed state/non-state systems.
- Create better incentives for all non-state schools to register, engage with and participate in a welcoming and supportive national system, and encourage and support collaboration over competition.

Introduction

1. No child left behind: Sustainable Development Goal 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. A vision for education must reflect the rights of every child, and nothing less than 100% achievement is acceptable.
2. The global community has made progress in increasing access to basic (pre-primary to upper secondary) education, but continued population growth and improvements in health mean much more must be done to make this universal. Research has found that equity and quality remain unacceptably poor in many areas, Globally, six out of ten children and adolescents are not achieving a minimum standard in reading and mathematics. Overall across developing countries after 5 years of schooling an average 50% of women cannot read a single sentence. This is an unacceptable return on education for individuals, communities and governments.
3. These three challenges of access, equity and quality are not being addressed through incremental change, and UNESCO has declared a global learning crisis. A paradigm shift is needed in order to bring about meaningful difference in schooling provision on a grand scale. Action must move beyond discussion of the ideology of state and non-state comparisons, and instead identify complementarities to create a very practical framework for accelerated change.
4. Private sector enrolments in basic education are growing fast in low- and middle-income countries, and the non-state sector now dominates provision in much of urban and peri-urban Africa and Asia. Non-state education includes community schools, NGO schools, faith-based schools, low-cost for-profit private schools and high-cost private schools serving wealthier communities and households. This range of forms and combinations covers a wide assortment of models for financing and provision.
5. According to the World Bank, the percentage of students enrolled in non-state primary schools doubled from 11% to 22% in low-income countries globally between 1990 and 2010. In South Asia for example, around one-third of 6- to 18-year-olds are attending non-state schools.
6. Non-state schools are not exclusive to the rich or middle-class. They can be quick and cheap to set up, and responsive to the market demands of growing and/or transitory populations. This flexibility and adaptability means they are often much more successful than state schools in supporting some of the most difficult populations to reach, such as those in slums and impermanent settlements.
7. Non-state schools generally report lower absence rates, which can be considered a

proxy for better management, however they can also ‘skim cream’, taking better students to show better results. It is relatively easy to show improvements in test scores but harder to observe value add, again reflecting the need to instead measure change over time. More and better-designed experiments are needed to understand nuances and inform government decisions about adopting non-state school strategies in a state schooling system.

Case Study: Partnership Schools for Liberia⁵

Liberia has one of the world’s weakest education systems with very low provision of both access and quality of education. In 2015, Liberia’s education system ranked 175 out of 187 countries and net primary enrolment was 38%.

Under the Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL) programme, the Liberian government has delegated management of 93 state schools to eight contractors. PSL schools, which were randomly assigned to the programme from existing government schools, receive additional resources. However teachers in PSL schools remain on government payroll; schools remain free to students and the property of the government; and contractors are prohibited from screening students based on ability or other characteristics.

Results from the first year of a three-year randomised evaluation found that PSL schools raised student learning by 60% compared to standard state schools. PSL increased teachers’ quality of instruction and students in PSL schools spent twice as much time learning each week. However costs were high, performance varied across contractors, and the largest contractor was able to push excess pupils and under-performing teachers onto other government schools, raising questions about the sustainability and scalability of the initiative.

There is evidence of positive effects for Liberian children during the first year, but PSL has yet to demonstrate it can work in average Liberian schools with sustainable budgets and staffing levels, and without negative side-effects on other schools. The preliminary evaluation recommends that the remaining two years of the three-year pilot and evaluation be used to test additional refinements and build up public sector

Case study: BRAC

In Bangladesh, as in many places, distance is a defining factor in basic access to schools. The BRAC model – one-room schools with teachers drawn from the community - was designed to address this and other issues affecting access and equity. At its peak the programme ran almost 40,000 primary schools in Bangladesh, catering to the poorest and most vulnerable children. As more government schools became available and other conditions improved, BRAC reevaluated and reduced the number of their schools.

Recognising that basic access has now been achieved in Bangladesh, BRAC has adapted its model to focus on the provision of basic, quality, affordable education, charging fees in line with people’s ability and willingness to pay. Narratives have changed accordingly, as has the dynamic of interaction between teachers and parents as parents increasingly expect more accountability.

BRAC positions itself as a complementary partner to the government who are, in turn, happy because education standards are improving. With an advocacy role at state level, BRAC is able to engage the government in improving their own capacity to achieve a longer-term state vision that is not at the cost of current students.

Government regulation

8. Governments are providers, financers and regulators of education. They have an objective function to guarantee that all children have access to high quality, equitable education regardless of national and local constraints. This is a considerable challenge in developing countries where contexts vary significantly across relatively short distances, and where policy and strategy decisions at government level often have little or no impact in the classroom.
9. The state role as controller of education in developing countries often focuses entirely on driving conformance to rules and regulations. Inadequate resources might, for instance, fail to keep pace with increased enrolment numbers, brief and/or infrequent inspections may not contribute to a qualitative improvement in the system of education and learning.
10. When the government is both regulator and provider of education, double standards can occur, and often what is tolerated for state provision is disallowed for non-state operators. There is little incentive for non-state schools to register or engage with this eco-system.
11. For example, Hyderabad, India has about 5000 schools, of which about 3500 are private. The many non-state providers, often running just one school in exceptionally difficult conditions, find it impossible to meet stringent government rules, meaning only 200 non-state schools conform to regulations and 3300 remain on the edge of the formal system. With no means to enforce such strict legislation, policy reform needs to instead focus on creating an enabling environment that enforces accountability for locally designed and appropriate models of non-state schooling.
12. There is often a reluctance for states to identify and admit to problems, which all stakeholders agree is an essential step in moving forward.

Strengthening systems to reach the poorest

13. The state role as financer and provider of education is not exclusive. Working with and alongside non-state actors, and looking for complementarities within the system, can help extend their reach to bring about real change in all classrooms.
14. There are valid concerns over equity and gender with respect to low cost non-state schools, with some negative evidence about equality achieved, financial sustainability, affordability and state capacity to regulate the operators. In particular, the risk of rationing access to education by price, thereby excluding the poorest, and the ensuing economic stratification, are considerable.
15. Children living in conflict, with special needs, and/or from the poorest backgrounds are the least likely to access education. Managing education provision for those living within displaced communities is a global challenge commonly met by impermanent and imperfect schools for impermanent and imperfect settlements.
16. In general debates about schooling there are many overlooked realities, for example the ability for poor children to move school is exaggerated because in reality it is prohibitively expensive to start again with new uniform and books; distance and travel generally are huge factors in school choice; longer days at non-state schools work better for working parents; parents can be suspicious of innovation that does not reflect their expectations of what education looks like; teacher training leads to high turnover as they move on to better salaries. Not enough is said or done about children's home environments and the relationship of schools to communities. If children are not supported to get to school, they cannot be expected to learn.
17. There is a large range of non-state actors that have the closest relationship with the poorest and hardest to reach communities. When there are teachers doing at least something with children in a 'classroom', and the alternative is no access to education, then taking a regulatory or ideological stance against engaging with the non-state

sector misses an important opportunity to strengthen a fragile system. It can be argued that in the short term there is no choice but to do whatever is possible, regardless of legitimate debates about the long term.

18. There is extensive dispersion of performance within the non-state education sector, making it very difficult to design intelligently for quality and equity. Additionally, there is a dearth of reliable evidence on the quality of the schooling within the sector. Single school proprietors and school chains can contribute to building stronger and more equitable education systems by making a concerted effort to collaborate and influence each other to raise and maintain standards. Greater transparency in the market will make it easier to identify and isolate any 'bad apples in the barrel'.
19. There is no time for the 'luxury of complacency' or waiting for an ideal solution – innovation is essential. However mistakes may often be repeated because there is insufficient sharing of learning across the global system and this must be improved. Better benchmarking would help comparisons about what does and does not work. There is a duty of care of investors, donors and funders to hold all operators to account for both positive and negative impact to ecosystems.
20. The SDG for Education is tracking the least advantaged in order to know that change is being achieved. It is vital to ensure that no child is left behind in this process and to understand improvement for all children in terms of change created from beginning to end. Measurement should also acknowledge issues of perception and how this influences data and evidence.

The non-state sector and Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)

21. There are three principal types of PPPs: (i) contract schools: private management of state schools, with private operators under contract with government; (ii) subsidies for schools: public subsidy, often on a per-student basis, for operators of private schools; (iii) vouchers for parents: public subsidy to parents that they can redeem against school places, effectively meeting the costs of school fees.
22. There is some evidence that PPPs, particularly when targeted at disadvantaged populations, can engage private sector to improve both access to education and learning outcomes. There is also some evidence, when explored through an economics lens, that a completely random allocation of cash to state schools will produce similar results.
23. The very weak evidence base on the validity and efficacy of PPPs means much more data collection and evaluation is needed.

Case Study: Delivering non-state education in Punjab, Pakistan

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) is a non-profit government body, established in 1991 under the School Education Department of the Government of Punjab to promote and encourage education in non-state institutes in the region. PEF selected the 5000 lowest performing schools to convert to PPP management. The expenditure per month per child is less than 50% of the costs incurred in state schools because of salary standards. Early results were poor, but a massive injection of additional staff is now showing strong returns.

The Citizen's Foundation (TCF) is a non-profit operator running 1,400 schools in Pakistan. TCF recently took on 250 PPP schools, in partnership with PEF, in some of the poorest urban communities in Punjab. Many of the state schools it took over were dilapidated and the children were badly neglected – TCF found many examples of abuse. All TCF teachers and principals are women, even in the most conservative communities. Parents value this highly and demand for enrolment in TCF schools is high. TCF develops its own books and lesson plans in local languages, which is highly unusual in the non-state sector, and children do well in its schools. TCF has a good relationship with PEF and acknowledges the importance of shared vision.

Case study: Uganda UPE & PEAS (Promoting Equity in African Schools)

The Ugandan government has a Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy, established in 1997, and works with the non-state sector to supplement its own resources and capacity to deliver. The government regulates the system through management structures and PPP agreements, and pays \$13 per child joining a PPP school. Access and quality have improved through this programme but there are significant challenges, especially in working productively with those actors who are focused solely on profit.

The Ugandan government is working closely with ARK and DFID on a review to capture lessons learned and re-orientate the system. Likely outcomes include limits on the number and type of operators, stronger frameworks for management and building closer relationships with those organisations that the government identifies as key to improving the system. The government is also considering incentives for partners to work in the most difficult areas, such as providing an increased subsidy, tax exemptions and support for teachers' wages.

The Ugandan government cites its relationship with PEAS as a model for PPP that is positive and mutually beneficial. PEAS runs 28 secondary schools in Uganda, all built in areas where children would otherwise struggle to access secondary school. It is an organisation with a strong ethical ethos, and has developed an excellent, collaborative relationship with the Ugandan government based on mission alignment with the government's drivers for quality in education.

24. The Ugandan experience reflects wider recognition that while contracting PPPs is 'relatively simple', managing such partnerships at scale is anything but. In order to maximise the potential of PPPs, government and non-state organisations must work together with a shared ethos to a common cause. Economic research demonstrates that the emergent properties of any system applied in multiple contexts make it impossible to regulate universally.
25. In Kenya, the Government turned to PPPs to both identify and address some of the greatest challenges in providing basic education. For example its taskforce, headed by

Microsoft Education, recognised that slums are difficult to reach and often inaccessible for the government. The taskforce devised a framework for an implementation unit to source and appropriately incentivise non-state operators, funded by the money government would otherwise have spent trying to reach these areas and overseen by a board representing government/public interest. However, before this could be actioned there was a change in government structure and the programme is now on hold, illustrating some of the frustrations of implementing education policy in difficult political contexts.

26. In addition to PPPs which involve public contracting and subsidies, to help make low cost non-state school markets more effective there are opportunities for market-shaping, involving limited or no ongoing public or donor subsidy such as the DEEPEN programme in Nigeria.

Case study: Developing Effective Private Education (DEEPEN) in Nigeria

Nigeria's DFID-funded DEEPEN programme recognised a massive diversity among small private institutions, finding that 74% were not formally approved by the system and were therefore unable to participate in a financial market.

DEEPEN seeks to develop an 'enabling environment' for all private schools through four intervention areas: rules and standards; market information; financial services; and school improvement services. The project has developed an innovative system – Graded Assessment of Private Schools (GAPS) - for the surveying and grading of schools in terms that are meaningful to parents. GAPS improves parental ability to make informed choices about the options available to them, and schools have taken positive action for change as a direct result of their survey result. However it has been hard to engage the State Government's commitment to non-state schooling, and the State is reluctant to implement GAPS or even allow the results to be published.

Understanding operators and markets

27. It is not possible to infer everything about a non-state operator simply by categorisation – large, small, religious etc – as there is so much variation within categories. What happens within a classroom is often much more about the ethos of the organisation which is running it. Understanding this, and working with the best non-state operators, could help to get schools on a track of self-improvement in the absence of an effective regulatory environment.
28. World Bank assessment of the economics of market interventions in education finds that schemes that rely on local entrepreneurs to understand what parents want, and use that to leverage school improvements via market pressures, can significantly raise quality at minimal cost. Letting schools adapt their offering to the local ecosystem is critical, but this flexibility is often overlooked in centralised programmes aiming to standardise investments across a system.
29. The IDP Foundation works closely with a small number of schools in Ghana, developing solutions 'one barrier at a time'. They find the private sector is resilient and schools are often well-established, using creative solutions to deal with their constraints. In a recent study IDP found that although schools are focused on quality and understand teachers are important, they are still hiring untrained teachers and high school graduates in order to pay them low wages. Parents are satisfied with the quality of these teachers but not the quality of the infrastructure, so schools are pressured to take out loans to deal with infrastructure issues.
30. Recognising the reality of market-based education can make it easier to engage with development. For example where free teacher training is offered it is often not valued

or taken to scale, whereas presenting it in a commercial framework can be more effective. Similarly, paying for fees can make parents value the service more and strengthen accountability – this is an important point in analysing the role of perception within the system. When schools are forced to act according to their market base, as in the IDP example, there is a need to support the agency of parents to demand for the right things.

31. There is also a tension between market level competition and collaboration between operators. Collaboration, including open source development, sharing of tools and learning and support of new operators, is essential for system-level improvement but has a cost that could have direct impact on per pupil costs. A system level organisation could take on this coordination, working closely with state to ensure that standards are common for all operators.

A role for civil society

32. Civil society in the education arena is a very diverse group of organisations and networks that does not always have clear responsibilities within and across itself. It is suggested that civil society should be concerned with elevating the voices of parents and communities, creating transparency and availability of information, and building the capacity of national organisations to deal with that information effectively.
33. National education policies should reflect the human right to free education without discrimination. The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is developing a normative framework against which to assess appropriate involvement of non-state actors in education. The draft framework will be opened to online consultation from October 2017 – February 2018⁵.
34. Save the Children advocates for a range of actors to help achieve the goal of education, assessing all models, state or non-state, against a standard of helping the most deprived children to access education. Responsibilities of civil society organisations such as Save include overseeing quality in learning, cost effectiveness and efficiency, systems strengthening and transparency, accountability and regulation. However resources are often stretched and coordination and cooperation is vital.
35. Experience of key actors such as PEAS indicates that it would be helpful and practical to agree a code of conduct and set of benchmarking principles for socially responsible behaviour, supporting operators to be accountable to themselves and civil society including parents, communities and NGOS.
36. Characteristics of such socially responsible non-state actors include:
 - Social justice mission and ethos that includes impact and quality;
 - Awareness of impact at system level, minimising disruption and unintended impact on markets;
 - Absolute transparency about data and willingness to collaborate on data use.

Aid finance and private philanthropy

37. All donors face the challenge of assessing and supporting, through investment, quality of evidence that enables the best probabilities for long term planning of accessible,

⁵ The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – Human rights guiding principles on the obligations of states regarding private schools. Available at: <http://globalinitiative-escr.org/advocacy/privatization-in-education-research-initiative/human-rights-guiding-principles-on-the-obligations-of-states-regarding-private-actors-in-education/>

equitable, quality education.

38. A set of guiding principles for investors could provide detailed guidelines for how to conduct rights-based social impact assessment and invest accordingly, strengthening state and civil society for accountability. Improvements in the accountability of education systems would also help states to raise domestic finance for public education.
39. Common metrics would be helpful for all donors. It is a challenge to link funding to the right incentives, for example specific milestones that lead to quality and equity, and help generate demand for quality. Donors could insist on having equitable measures such as scholarships for the poorest, and links to vouchers for PPPs.
40. Innovative financing mechanisms should ensure that commercial operators do not have to compromise between impact and financial viability. For example,
 - Social Success Notes - the investor provides a concessionary loan to a commercial provider and then a philanthropic donor will provide a bonus if they achieve the desired impact, making the concessionary loan a better return on investment.
 - Development Impact Bonds – funding is linked to social outcomes; the investor provides working capital up front, takes risk for intervention and is paid back only if the service provider delivers on impact. Working capital is provided for flexibility and innovation, however for risk averse operators it allows them to pay only if results are achieved
41. DFID believe that education should be delivered to give the best possible outcomes for the poor, viewing ideological opposition to diverse operators - including non- state – to be unfounded and unhelpful. Supporting governments to improve governance and accountability of all schools, through shared value partnerships, remains the top priority. DFID is interested in the critiques around whether operators should be commercially or socially driven, and where the value is added within the greater mix.
42. The EU focuses on support through a paradigm of SDG 4 and a strong legal framework of human rights. Their entry point is government and the strengthening of state ministries of education to run national systems effectively and efficiently. This includes building the capacity of ministries to be able to negotiate with private providers. Engaging with the private sector is a priority for the EU but how to do that in a social space like education is complex, and member states do not share agreement.
43. Initiatives such as the Africa Investment Facility allow the EU to create innovative financial mechanisms that combine EU grants with other resources such as loans from Development Finance Institutions in order to leverage additional financing for development, increasing the impact of EU aid.
44. Philanthropic donors can be more open to risk and test new approaches before there is conclusive evidence of impact. Their distinctive ability to be more flexible should remain protected during conversations about increased regulation of philanthropy.

Conclusion

A strong case for investment in non-state education that serves the poor, including using government resources and international aid.

1. These schools are here to stay; they are educating a very large and growing number of poor people with education of varied quality. It is in the public interest to make sure they work better;
2. Even with projected fair-to-good economic growth, the fiscal realities of providing education for rising populations – Africa, for example, will need to educate 1 billion children by 2030 – will necessitate non-state sector capital and delivery solutions;

3. Investment from governments and aid agencies in LCPSs is very small, and relative to the LCPS share of total education provision. The overwhelming majority of education funding should and does support state education systems;
4. The non-state sector is not necessarily better, but it has shown that in some contexts it can achieve equal or better outcomes at significantly lower cost – this alone justifies proportionate investment and experimentation.

There is a sovereign role of each government to uphold the rights of children in their country, including the right to education. This role extends across both state and non-state sector, and the guiding principles of access, quality and equity – as overseen by human rights laws, conventions and the SDGs - should be at the forefront of all decisions relating to education.

Education systems are massively complex, with infinite variables and emergent properties, and the challenge for governments in developing countries is to create an enabling policy environment that allows the best providers – state and non-state – to thrive within their local ecosystems.

Governments need support from the global community in order to meet this challenge, however the complexity makes it difficult, if not impossible, to apply lessons from one context to another. In order to invest in what works, much more evidence is needed on both the mechanisms of education and the design of programmes for intervention.

Many of the questions raised require new and different ways of thinking, and this will in turn need new structures to fund research, build capacity and ensure involvement of the right actors. It is difficult for donors to fund 'great ideas', and the data-driven knowledge needed by operators is essential, but is often hard for academics to use as personal evidence of scholarship. Having a shared understanding of the distinctions between monitoring, evaluation, accountability, learning and impact assessment could help translate academic and higher research into practical advice and tools for national and international government policy makers, operators and others involved in the provision of non-state education provision.

Stakeholders recognise that time and circumstances combine to make this a critical moment for recognising mixed education markets. Taking a smart and joined up approach to working with these markets has every potential to become a powerful contribution to the ultimate goal of quality education for all.

Anna Childs

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