



Unlocking Private Support to Public Education Systems

Non-state actors' role in bringing ancillary service innovations in support of public education systems in low- and middle-income countries.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Context.....	4
The Education Finance Network.....	5
The Technical Working Group	5
Ancillary Service Innovations Case Studies.....	7
Case Study: Lee Conmigo.....	7
Case Study: Zeraki.....	8
Case Study: MateWasi	9
Case Study: Elimu-Soko.....	10
Case Study: Creative Schools Program	11
Case study: Inspect and Improve	12
Lessons Learned: Challenges and Opportunities.....	13
Policy Recommendations	14
Conclusion	15
References	16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education is a fundamental human right, yet globally the sector faces a variety of challenges that are slowing down the achievement of universal access and better learning outcomes. Developing countries in particular face a growing need to improve the seven benchmarking indicators for the Sustainable Development Goal (SGD) 4 including early childhood education attendance, out-of-school rates, completion rates, gender gaps in completion rates, minimum proficiency rates in reading and mathematics, trained teachers, and public education expenditure.

Certain education challenges can be difficult to tackle due to the nature of public education systems. Public education systems have grown in size, becoming more centralized and creating barriers to innovation such as bureaucratic hurdles, organizational capacity gaps, financial constraints, and political interference and opposition.

In this context, non-state actors play a crucial role in introducing innovation to the public sector, addressing unmet needs and offering opportunities for dedicated educators to implement innovative approaches in education delivery and management. Their involvement is less restricted by administrative regulations, allowing for greater flexibility and agility in driving positive change in the education system.

To improve understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by non-state actors when supporting public education systems, the Education Finance Network organized a technical working group to explore this topic. The working group, launched in November of 2022, focused on understanding how non-state actors can bring ancillary service innovations in support of public education systems. The working group was chaired by Higherlife Foundation and comprised six Education Finance Network member organizations who met for three sessions over a period of six months to share lessons and practical insights.

This paper showcases innovative ancillary services models implemented by members of the Education Finance Network and explores how to strengthen public education systems by fostering collaboration between public and private actors. The paper also presents a set of **seven recommendations** for governments and non-state actors wishing to strengthen and scale support to public education systems and improve educational outcomes.

CONTEXT

Despite global efforts to improve access to education, nearly 244 million children in low- and middle-income countries remain out of school, and 70 percent of children cannot read by the end of primary school.¹² Even with an increase in domestic public expenditure, UNESCO estimates that the annual financing gap for delivering high-quality universal education from pre-school through junior secondary levels by 2030, meeting SDG4, is around \$100 billion³. This means that education spending in low- and lower-middle-income countries would need to increase from 3.5 percent to 6.3 percent of GDP by 2030 to deliver universal pre-primary, primary and secondary education.⁴

These gaps represent significant barriers to realizing the ambitious SDG 4 education goals by 2030. Doing so will demand a two-pronged approach involving significant scaling of financing and improved delivery of education services. While the onus of providing education lies with the state, governments can leverage the power of collaboration and forge partnerships with other stakeholders, including civil society and non-state actors in education. These strategic alliances hold the potential to create a powerful synergy that transcends conventional boundaries, paving the way for innovative solutions and targeted interventions.

Non-state actors play a variety of roles in the education space with notable footprints in funding, service delivery, policy advocacy, and innovation. They include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, enterprises, philanthropic foundations, impact investors, research organizations, and religious institutions. Non-state actors play a particularly important role in bringing innovative approaches to education, for instance new teaching methods and curricula, and technologies that enhance learning outcomes and address specific educational challenges.

The 2021/22 Global Education Monitoring Report recommends that governments work in partnership with all actors to build an education system that works for all while creating conditions for multiple actors to interact, cooperate and benefit from different views and sources of expertise and innovation. UNESCO also recommends non-state actors in education to align with government needs in education through engagement with ministries of education, national education plans, and global frameworks to determine education priorities.¹ By embracing this inclusive approach, governments can tap into diverse resources, knowledge, and expertise, opening avenues for transformative change within the education sector.

Through shared responsibilities and joint efforts, the collective impact of these stakeholders can foster a more equitable, accessible, and high-quality education landscape, positively impacting the lives of countless learners worldwide.

Key Figures

- ✓ Nearly **244 million children** in low- and middle-income countries **remain out of school**, and **70 percent of children cannot read** by the end of primary school.
- ✓ The **annual financing gap** for delivering high-quality universal education from pre-school through junior secondary levels by 2030, meeting SDG4, is around **\$100 billion**.

The Education Finance Network

The Education Finance Network convenes diverse education stakeholders with a focus on directing non-state resources toward creating inclusive, high-quality education in low- and middle-income countries globally. The Network provides its members opportunities to network, engage the public sector through streamlined, transparent policy forums, work on technical issues and trends affecting the sector through technical working groups, access members only research, and participate in professional development. The vision for the Network is a global education sector where disadvantaged learners have equal access to quality education and where state and non-state education actors work together, relying on open dialogue, collaboration, and evidence of what works.

Higherlife Foundation

Higherlife Foundation is a social impact organization that invests in human capital to build thriving individuals, communities and sustainable livelihoods. Founded by Strive and Tsitsi Masiyiwa in 1996 out of their deep Christian faith, heartfelt compassion as well as their personal experiences of orphanhood. The foundation has operations in Zimbabwe, Burundi, Lesotho and Kenya and has to date supported more than 250,000 learners with access to education. Through synergies with a smart learning platform called Akello, Higherlife Foundation also catalyzes access to digital learning for more than 1.6 million learners and support digital literacy for educators.

The Technical Working Group

The establishment of the "Private Support to Public Systems" technical working group was an outcome of a comprehensive needs assessment conducted in collaboration with education stakeholders and members of the Education Finance Network. The assessment revealed an interest in exploring innovative solutions to support and strengthen public education systems. In response to this demand, the Education Finance Network set up a technical working group comprising experts from diverse backgrounds, including foundations, researchers, impact investors, and practitioners, with valuable experience in this domain.

The primary goal of the technical working group was to advance the collective understanding of how ancillary services innovation can effectively contribute to the enhancement of public education systems. By bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise, the group aimed to explore novel avenues for leveraging private sector resources, knowledge, and techniques to complement and strengthen public education provision.

Technical working group members included:

- **LEGO Foundation**, based in Denmark, shares the mission of the LEGO Group, to inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow. The Foundation is dedicated to building a future in which learning through play empowers children to become creative, engaged, lifelong learners. Its work is about redefining play and reimagining learning to ensure children build the broad set of skills they need to thrive and succeed.

- **Hempel Foundation** is a Denmark-based dedicated philanthropist striving to make a difference by empowering children to learn, sustaining biodiversity and realising great initiatives that bring about positive change.
- **Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS)** is a not-for-profit organization that expands access to inclusive, quality secondary education across Sub-Saharan Africa by running a network of 36 schools and partnering with governments to strengthen the wider education system.
- **FUSAL (Fundación Salvadoreña para la Salud y el Desarrollo Humano)** is a non-profit organization in El Salvador dedicated to supporting human development programs with active community participation aiming to improve the quality of life of all Salvadorans. They do this by working with children in their first 1,000 days to help them develop their human potential and access better economic opportunities.
- **Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)** is a US-based non-profit research and policy organization, that conducts randomized controlled trials (RCTs), along with other types of quantitative research, to measure the impacts of development programs in sectors including microfinance, education, health, peace and recovery, governance, agriculture, social protection, and small and medium enterprises. Its partner organizations include over 400 governments, nonprofits, academic institutions, foundations, and companies.
- **Acumen** is a non-profit impact investment fund based in the US that invests in social enterprises that serve low-income individuals. Acumen focuses on investing “Patient Capital” to bridge the gap between the efficiency and scale of market-based approaches and the social impact of pure philanthropy.

In a series of discussions, representatives from these organizations shared case studies of initiatives centered around integrating ancillary services into public systems. On the basis of these case studies, and discussions around challenges and opportunities encountered in these initiatives, the working group developed recommendations for policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders on how to effectively harness private support for the benefit of public education.

ANCILLARY SERVICE INNOVATIONS CASE STUDIES

Case Study: Lee Connigo

- Lee Connigo is a program developed by FUSAL to support Salvadoran children improve their reading skills and help them recover from the learning losses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The program established community reading circles in rural or semi-urban areas most affected by learning loss.
- The first stage of Lee Connigo reached nearly 4,000 children aged 6-9 years who presented reading levels lower than expected for their age. The program encompassed a total of 326 reading circles and delivered twenty 90-minutes reading sessions with each community.
- The project was financed by FUSAL's Fondo de la Solidaridad, which was created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic with the contribution of more than 30 private sector companies and individual donors.

The model

Provide academic reinforcement in community spaces through reading circles

Equip caregivers with strategies to keep children reading and close to literate environments

Establish local alliances to ensure the continuity of the project through internal uptake of the initiative

Learnings to date

Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program has helped increase the ability to read, especially for children of younger ages (6-7 years). The recipients of the program had an increased likelihood of learning to read of 25%, with no statistically significant differences between geographic regions. • Children who participated in the program demonstrated an increase in reading ability of approximately 10 words per minute, compared to the control group. • The program increased the likelihood that children will be at an advanced level of achievement by 14% and improved reading comprehension by 15 percentage points.
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FUSAL engaged pre-service teachers to continue running the reading circles after the initial funding ended. FUSAL seeks to grow its program to under municipalities in El Salvador under phase 2.

Summary facts

Development stage	In Execution Launch date for phase I: May 2022 End date for phase I: March 2023
Geography	El Salvador: 20 municipalities of the departments of Ahuachapán, Sonsonate, La Libertad, Usulután y Morazán.
Partners	Funded by FUSAL Fondo de la Solidaridad and UNICEF Implemented by FUSAL Evaluated by Fundación para la Educación Superior MoU signed with Government of El Salvador
Key figures	Beneficiaries: total of 326 reading circles and 4.055 children who improved their reading abilities by 10 correct words per minute Funding: \$660,000

Case Study: Zeraki

- Zeraki is a Kenyan-based EdTech enterprise that has built a digital learning and school data analytics platform aiming to reducing operational inefficiencies to contribute to the delivery of high-quality education.
- In Kenya, where the solution was first launched, several significant barriers to quality education had been identified: teachers and school administrators spent valuable time on administrative tasks instead of teaching, parents had limited visibility into their child's performance, and students faced challenges with teacher absenteeism and personalized learning.
- Zeraki's digital learning platform and data analytics services reduces teachers' administrative burdens by automating administrative tasks, helps parents to track students' performance, and provides learning resources to supplement the children's education.

The model

Mobile solutions to improve school administration efficiency while reducing costs

Tutoring app and e-learning resources for students, parents and teachers

Marketplace to provide access to education resources and supplies for parents and schools

Learnings to date

Outcomes

- 95% of Zeraki's clients are public schools. Most schools have at least 100 students and are located in peri-urban and rural settings. 44% of users were accessing an app like Zeraki for the first time, and users in girls-only schools were more likely to be first-time users.
- The software has led to a number of school level changes. 98% of schools noted improvements in parental engagement; a critical lever for improving student learning. 70% of educators reported reductions in administrative tasks, freeing them up to focus on student needs. 85% of school administrators noted changes in student performance as a result of using Zeraki.
- Access to data on individual student performance has helped teachers understand what each student requires for perform better. The software also allows teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching methods, and thus helps them improve their teaching.

Next steps

- The seed funding round led by Acumen in November 2022 will help contribute to the solution's regional growth in ten new markets over the coming three years.

Summary facts

Development stage	In execution Launch date: 2014 End date: NA
Geography	Pan-African: Started in Kenya, expanded to Uganda and Guinea
Partners	Seed funding round led by Acumen Fund. Save the Children Impact Investment Fund, Verdant Frontiers Fintech, Logos Ventures, Nairobi Business Angels Network and Melvyn Lubega participated in the round. 60 decibels conducted Impact Assessment
Key figures	Beneficiaries: 5129 public schools and 671 private schools, serving over 2 million students Seed Funding: \$1.8 million

Case Study: MateWasi

- The closing of Peruvian schools in March 2020 preceded one of the longest periods of school closures in the world, lasting through the academic year of 2021. To support children during this period of remote learning, the 'MateWasi - Aprendiendo en Familia (Learning as a Family)' program was established, using interactive radio instruction as a means to improve science learning outcomes.
- To set the foundations for future learning, MateWasi was designed for the preschool age. It was implemented during summer vacation (January to March 2021) in Peru's San Martin region where radio instruction became widespread during pandemic-related school closures, and where the levels of math learning outcomes were among the lowest in the country.
- For ten weeks, forty 15-minute mathematics lessons were broadcast on public radio to prepare the children for first grade. These lessons included concepts on counting; simple math operations with symbols like addition; measuring; and understanding, recognizing, and drawing different shapes.
- Since MateWasi was broadcast on public radio, all households could access and listen to the lessons. A total of 1,065 households with at least one child of preschool age participated in the intervention. The households were then divided randomly into two groups: one where the caregiver received remote coaching, and a control group where the caregiver did not receive coaching.
- Coaching for caregivers included weekly calls and text messages from education coaches who guided them through caregiving topics and math activities to do with their children to supplement radio lessons.

Learnings to date

Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remote coaching increased the involvement of caregivers in their children's educational development which in turn improved children's math learning.• Remote coaching also increased the probability of caregivers engaging in math-related activities with their children by 13 percentage points and this involvement had greater impact on boys than on girls.• The program increased the likelihood of participating in mathematics activities by 21 percentage points for boys and 5 percentage points for girls. The impacts on child learning were primarily driven by caregivers with less education than caregivers with higher education.
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The implementing team identified a low-cost route for the sustainable scale-up of MateWasi led by local state and non-state actors. The team worked with the Regional Education Unit of San Martin to build partnerships with the local Institutes of Pedagogy, to provide continuity to the project. IPA also identified a local organization, Enseña Perú, as capable and committed to continue with the implementation and scaling it to other regions where they operate.

Summary facts

Development stage	Completed Launch date: January 2021 End date: March 2021. Evaluation lasted until June 2021.
Geography	Peru: San Martin region
Partners	Funded by the Old Dart Foundation Evaluated by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) Developed by IPA and the Inter-American Development Bank Co-designed with MoE of Peru
Key figures	Beneficiaries: total of 533 households reached Improved children's math learning by 0.12 standard deviations

Case Study: Elimu-Soko

- Elimu-Soko is an initiative developed by the Hempel Foundation aiming to scale up innovations with demonstrated success through pilot programs, by linkages between innovators and governments across Africa.
- Elimu-Soko works with governments to identify key priorities in education as well as innovations to align with government priorities. The program targets pilots in rural areas and aims to secure government commitment to long-term public financing of successful interventions.
- The initiative provides innovators with a unique opportunity to co-design the piloting of innovations between the Ministry of Education, the funder, and the innovators. Furthermore, it offers financial support to conduct the pilot, technical support in implementation and monitoring and evaluation, as well as policy support and access to government.
- The government of Rwanda has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish Elimu-Soko Rwanda in 40 public schools in rural areas. The Rwanda pilot has worked with the government and identified inadequate teacher training (both pre-service and in-service training) as one of the key bottlenecks advancing foundational learning.
- In the first call for proposals Elimu-Soko Rwanda was looking for proposals of innovations that could improve foundational learning outcomes through improved teacher training (either pre-or in-service). Rising Academies was selected as the first model to be piloted between January and September 2023.
- Rising Academies provides curriculum improvements, intensive teacher coaching, and actionable data to help teachers and school leaders improve teaching quality.

Learnings to date

Early insights

- Government's political and technical buy-in are crucial to test scaling of innovations.
- To improve the process of scaling successful innovations, governments should consider aligning procurement systems to enable and support processes of engaging with service providers in testing innovative solutions.
- Collaboration with procurement personnel ensured that the tender adhered to the government's criteria and was posted through official government channels and other relevant platforms.
- Key success criteria include the government's willingness to invest in solutions that prioritize their needs, and the funder's flexibility on the time required for the government to fully assume the financing of the program.
- The long-term plan is for the government to take over responsibility for delivering and scaling up the project, with Rising Academies remaining as the service provider.

Summary facts

Development stage	In execution Launch date: January 2023 End date: September 2023
Geography	Pilot in Rwanda
Partners	Funded by Hempel Foundation Implemented by Rising Academies Evaluated by TSI/Brink MoU signed with Government of Rwanda
Key figures	Beneficiaries: As of 2023, the program has reached 40 public schools. Funding of \$320.000

Case Study: Creative Schools Program

- The Creative Schools Program, part of the LEGO Foundation's Tech and Play initiative, aims to support the Secretaries of Education (SoE) of Brazil in transforming public schools into more creative places for all students, through Creative Learning. Creative Learning is an approach based on the premise that students learn best when given the opportunity to build something that is meaningful and when they are encouraged to exchange ideas with others and explore materials and concepts in a playful way.
- The Creative Schools Program works in partnership with public administrators, school leaders, and researchers to map, encourage, and promote activities that engage school curriculum differently, helping to reduce school dropout rates. These activities include increasing community participation, promoting training for teachers and school leaders, curriculum integration of subject content through the Creative learning Approach. The program brings together Mayors, SoEs, and teachers in workshops designed to provide hands-on experience with the methodology.
- An important innovative aspect of this model is the adaptive learning framework that ensures that implementation is flexible and adaptive to the needs of schools and informed by continuous evaluation.

The model

Strategic communication	Curriculum Integration	Professional development	Community Engagement
Support discussions and the development of public policies, resources, support conditions, and recognition of best practices.	Enable the development of content of different knowledge areas, competencies, and skills in the classroom.	Promote training and engagement opportunities for teachers, school leaders, and other professionals in the school environment.	Foster the engagement of schools by disseminating the methodology and increasing community participation.

Learnings to date

Early insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional development resources were very positively evaluated by participants, teachers reported a greater sense of engagement in their profession, SoEs began to assume responsibility for professional development in Creative Learning, incorporating BCLN materials and routines.• SoE and schools are making significant investments in the Creative School Program with two SoEs allocating resources for dedicated staff time (20h/wk) and three SoEs securing dedicated spaces. 72% of survey respondents report using generally available materials and communal spaces in the school for program activities and 52% report they plan to engage in program activities but without a dedicated day or time.
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Summary facts

Development stage	In execution Launch date: October 2020 End date: October 2024
Geography	Brazil
Partners	Funded by the LEGO Foundation Implemented by the Brazilian Creative Learning Network (BCLN) with support of Fundação Lemann and the MIT Media Lab MoU signed with SoEs at municipal or state level
Key figures	Beneficiaries: 957 schools and a total of 334.342 students and 14.025 teachers reached by the end of 2022 Funding of \$3.974.437

Case study: Inspect and Improve

- The Inspect and Improve (I&I) program was co-designed by PEAS and the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) in Uganda, in response to the Ministry of Education Sports (MoES) goal to improve education quality at secondary level by improving the quality of school inspections and providing follow up support to school leaders so they can drive school-level improvements.
- The programme has been rolled out to 200 government secondary schools, with the intention to identify what works at scale to inform national approaches to school improvements.

The annual cycle



Learnings to date

Early insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engaging school leaders from the start and partnering with DES in co-creating and implementing the program were crucial to implement and adapt the program in government schools.• Although the costs of the program are presumed to be higher than the costs of a regular inspection, the additional cost is justified by the improvements offered at school and system-level. The evaluation found that stakeholders agreed I&I offers very good value for money.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School leaders reported improved authority and engagement with stakeholders, teacher and student attendance, teaching quality, and gender-sensitive approaches.• Reduced time needed for district inspectors to produce and share inspection reports. PEAS supported this change by bringing digital inspection tools, to ensure that inspectors can use their time for the feedback processes with school leaders, rather than spending time on reporting. Tools also facilitate better access and organization of data so that governments can better target their resources and support.• Gender sensitive teaching and wellbeing practices have had a positive impact on girls' enrolment, attendance, and confidence in school.
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2023, PEAS is adapting the program in fifteen non-state schools, as the non-state sector makes up two thirds of secondary schools in Uganda and planning to further scale in government schools in partnership with DES.

Summary facts

Development stage	In execution Launch date: February 2019 End date: PEAS is committed to working with our government partners, DES, to support government-led nationwide improvements in the long-term
Geography	Uganda
Partners	Funded by the UK Foreign Community and Development Office (FCDO), Mastercard Foundation and Waterloo Foundation Implemented by PEAS Evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)
Key figures	Beneficiaries: As of 2023, the program had reached 200 public schools and is planning to expand to 15 non-state schools, reaching 120,000 beneficiaries.

LESSONS LEARNED: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The six case studies highlighted in this report embody various ways in which non-state actors can contribute to the implementation of ancillary service innovations in public education systems. The case studies, implemented in low-and middle-income countries, showcase interventions funded, implemented, or researched by Education Finance Network members between 2020 and 2023. Across the three working group meetings where members shared and discussed these examples, a number of common challenges and opportunities were identified.

The agility of non-state actors in designing and implementing innovations is a key advantage that can benefit governments. This agility allows non-state actors to respond swiftly to crisis situations, as demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic when remedial solutions were developed to mitigate sudden disruptions in education systems. In contrast, government systems often face challenges to implement solutions at scale due to bureaucratic hurdles and coordination complexities, especially in resource-constrained environments. Two initiatives described in this paper – MateWasi in Peru and Lee Connigo in El Salvador – aimed to mitigate the negative consequences of Covid-19 school closures. In both cases, non-state actors' agility played a crucial role in supporting public education systems during crisis situations.

Non-state actors play a vital role in supporting improvements in education quality by bringing innovation into key components of the education system, such as teacher performance and stronger leadership and management. This type of collaboration supports Sustainable Development Goal target 4.c, which aims to increase the supply of qualified teachers⁵. Various case studies in this paper demonstrate the potential of non-state actors' involvement in this area: in Rwanda, the Elimu-Soko initiative sought innovations to enhance pre- and in-service teacher training; in Brazil, the Creative Schools Program provided training for both teachers and school leaders; and in Kenya, Zeraki Analytics helps reduce teachers' administrative burden and free up more time for teaching. Additionally, PEAS' Inspect and Improve program in Uganda contributed to improving leadership and management, which in turn supported improved teacher attendance and teaching quality.

Innovations introduced by non-state actors often encounter obstacles when it comes to sustaining and scaling them within public education systems. Barriers to sustaining and scaling initiatives discussed by working group members included obtaining political support, navigating government approvals, overcoming procurement hurdles, and dealing with limited public financing. A thorough understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to scalability and sustainability is essential for paving the way for successful and impactful implementation of innovative solutions in the education sector.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Promote innovations that reach the most marginalized. To improve the quality of education for disadvantaged students, non-state actors should concentrate on innovations that address the specific needs of rural and marginalized communities. Inclusive and equitable education solutions can narrow the education gap and ensure access for all students. Involving decentralized and local authorities in program delivery can help ensure that interventions are adapted to local contexts and meaningfully integrated into schools.

Recommendation 2: Align and partner with governments from inception. Involvement of the government throughout the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation phases is critical to ensure alignment with government priorities and increase the likelihood of government ownership and adoption. Engaging governments during the design phase can lead to greater alignment with national priorities and enhance the chances of successful government adoption of innovative programs. Non-state actors must actively collaborate with governments, leveraging their support and resources during the scaling process.

Recommendation 3: Design solutions that can be financially sustainable. Innovations must be cost-effective to enable scale, adoption into government systems, and long-term sustainability. Finding low-cost and sustainable financing models for scaling up innovations is crucial. Non-state actors should explore innovative funding mechanisms and partnerships between local state and non-state actors to ensure the long-term viability of education interventions.

Recommendation 4: Adjust procurement systems to foster an environment conducive for innovation. Governments should adjust procurement systems to better enable engagement with providers of innovative solutions. By removing bureaucratic barriers and fostering a conducive environment for innovation, governments can effectively harness the potential of non-state actors to improve education quality.

Recommendation 5: Ensure quality during scaling process. As interventions are scaled up, it is common for quality and effectiveness to decrease. To address this risk, governments and non-state actors should work together to identify the factors that influence the success of scaling efforts. By understanding the determinants of successful scaling, policymakers can develop targeted strategies to maintain intervention quality and effectiveness throughout the expansion process. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be integrated into the scaling plans to ensure continuous improvement and learning.

Recommendation 6: Develop strong monitoring and evaluation systems. Strong monitoring and evaluation of pilots is crucial to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of the solutions being tested. Results backed by data-driven assessments can strengthen the case for government support and further funding.

Recommendation 7: Collaborate for success. Non-state actors, governments, educational institutions, and communities should foster effective partnerships and collaborations. By combining resources, expertise, and knowledge, stakeholders can collectively drive innovation, improve education systems, and create sustainable change.

CONCLUSION

The involvement of non-state actors in education, whether non-profit or for-profit, is a contentious topic. Critics argue that such involvement may lead to lack of accountability and exacerbation of educational inequalities. Advocates argue that public education systems may have grown into large bureaucratic entities that stifle innovation, making improvements in education access and quality difficult to achieve. An analysis of 3,000 innovations in education suggested that 60% were implemented by NGOs, 26% by for-profit organizations, and 12% by public actors, indicating a predominant role of non-state actors in driving educational innovations.⁶ While such innovations are important to foster continuous improvement, enhance learning outcomes, and equip students with the skills needed to thrive in an ever-changing world, for them to have a large-scale and sustainable impact it is crucial to ensure they are ultimately embedded in public education systems.

In this paper, the Education Finance Network and Higherlife Foundation presented a set of recommendations for non-state actors around engaging with governments to ensure scalability and sustainability of innovations in public education systems. The aspiration is that they will serve to enhance collaboration between non-state actors and governments to improve learning outcomes for students across the world.

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