

Regulating & partnering with the non-state sector

Why we need better guidance
for governments worldwide

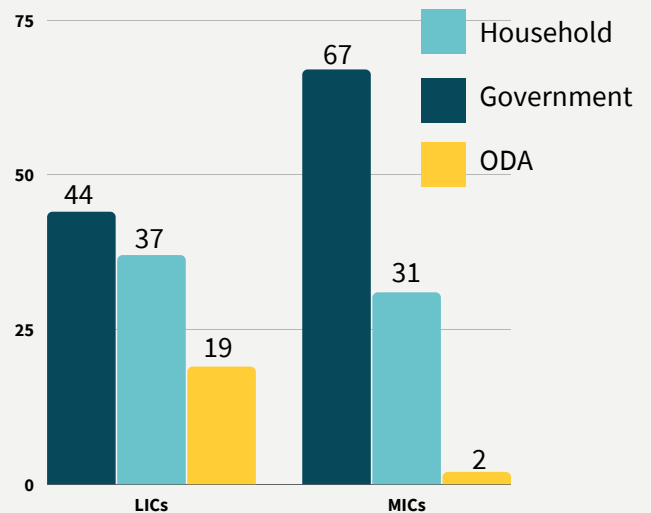


The non-state sector provides a large (and in many countries, growing) share of education provision

According to [UNESCO](#), the share of enrollments in private institutions globally rose between 1990 and 2018 from 23% to 42% in pre-primary education; 9% to 18% in primary education, and 19% to 26% in secondary education. [Survey data](#) shows even higher levels of enrolment in private institutions in low-income urban settings such as Lagos (70%), Nairobi (72%), and Kampala (86%). In low-income countries, 37% of total education financing comes from [households](#), while in middle-income countries the equivalent figure is 31%

The question for governments is how to engage with this growth in private financing and provision in a way that ensures the twin goals of equity and learning are met.

The role of governments is not confined to running of government schools. They also have an additional role as stewards of the entirety of their education systems (both public and private financing and provision of services). But it is far from clear that they are currently well-equipped for this.



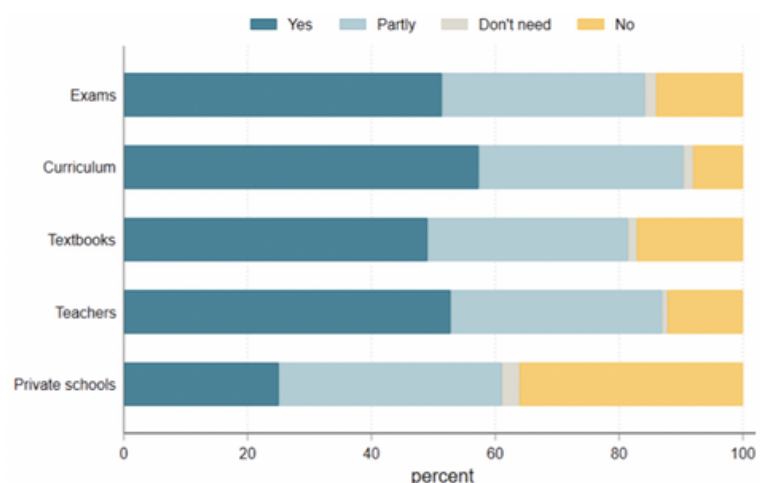
Percentage distribution of total education expenditure by source, 2018-19 (UNESCO GEM/World Bank, 2021)

The role of governments is not confined to running of government schools

The international community is not providing the evidence, advice and effective technical assistance governments need to effectively engage with the non-state sector.

[A recent survey](#) from the Center for Global Development asked 924 government education officials in 36 countries whether they were “content with the advice they receive” on a number of education policy areas.

Compared with the advice they received on other issues, officials were least satisfied with advice from donors about private schools.



Proportion of education ministry officials content with the advice they receive on education topics

This finding is supported by a brief GSF review of the guidance provided by the international community to help governments plan for, and manage, private financing and provision of education.

The conclusion from this review was that the guidance does not sufficiently reflect the role of non-state actors – particularly given their large and growing role in basic education service delivery. For example, in the 'Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation' by UNESCO IIEP / Global Partnership for Education, there was no mention of the private sector / non-state sector under the seven substantive sections that constitute 'the preparation of an education sector plan'¹.

The IIEP Education Policy Toolbox is an interactive toolbox summarizing 500+ policy options that address educational planning challenges; none included the non-state sector.

The Bibliography for the Toolbox lists 935 reference documents; searches for 'non-state' / 'non state' / 'public private partnership' / 'PPP' yielded zero returns. Guidance from the international community' is largely written as guidance for managing government schools; not as guidance for running education systems that comprise both public and private schools.² Nor do other major international agency initiatives such as the World Bank Education Policy Dashboard adequately cover the non-state sector. Furthermore, there are attempts to fill the void created by this lack of guidance with anti-private sector advocacy, and with assertions that education services must be delivered solely by the public sector.³

The need for a greater focus on supporting governments with regulation of the non-state sector is the stand-out message of the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/22 on Non-State Actors.

- **The GEMR seeks to bring a new tone to previously unhelpful 'public versus private' debates.** "Governments need to see all education institutions, students and teachers as part of a single system" (p.2).
- **The GEMR is clear that public-private partnerships are the norm, rather than the exception.** "Governments financially support non-state schools in 171 out of 204 countries: these include private schools in 115 countries, faith-based schools in 120 countries; and non-governmental organization and community schools in 81 countries."⁴
- **The GEMR calls for state and non-state actors to partner to maximise innovations system-wide.** "Facilitate the spread of innovation throughout the education system for the common good" (p.23)
- **The GEMR urges Governments and development partners to invest in regulation for equity and learning.** "Regulations should focus not on administrative details and unrealistic input standards but on education processes and results." (p.19)⁵

There is a clear need for the global education community to provide updated guidance for governments and others on working with non-state actors.

We recommend that:

- The principal international organisations mandated with providing guidance to governments and others – UNESCO, UNESCO IIEP, GPE, the World Bank – should collaborate on providing updated guidance on the regulation of non-state actors and on public-private partnerships.
- Funding for such work should either be found within existing budgets, or should be supplemented by development partners (principally bilateral agencies and philanthropic foundations) who fund these organisations.
- Such guidance should ideally be included within existing products and processes listed above (eg, IIEP/GPE guidance and WB Education Policy Dashboard); and at a minimum should be referenced within these products and processes.
- Such guidance should involve non-state actors and their membership bodies in their production.⁶
- International organisations with significant country presence – such as UNICEF and the World Bank – should be better equipped to support government counterparts to regulate and partner with the non-state sector. This has implications for their staff capabilities, technical assistance and financing products.

¹ The seven sections are: Education sector analysis; Policy formulation; Programme design; Plan costing and financing; Action plan; Implementation arrangements and capacities; Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

² IIEP have responded to our review in positive terms and we are working with them to review how their products can include the non-state sector.

³ For example, the claim that: “UN Statements indicate that States are required as a matter of human rights law to directly provide public services or ensure their provision by a public body.” GI-ESCR Policy Brief, October 2020. This assertion by GI-ESCR has no basis in international law.

⁴ Blog by Dr David Sengeh, Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Sierra Leone, and Chair of the GEMR Advisory Board.

⁵ Regulation must be proportionate, transparent to parents, and focused on learning outcomes. But many regulatory systems do the exact opposite: ignoring outcomes and focusing excessively on controlling inputs.

A new license for a private school in Delhi requires 125 documents, which move through 155 steps at the education authority and through the hands of over 40 officers – a lengthy exercise open to corruption.

⁶ In contrast to some existing processes: “Private sector backgrounds are markedly absent among the drafting committee members and signatories of the Abidjan Principles” (UNESCO GEM Report 2021/22, p.115).



About Global Schools Forum

Global Schools Forum (GSF) is a catalytic community working to improve education outcomes at scale.

We do this by supporting social enterprises in education through:

- Curated learning and networking opportunities
- Funding and coaching to scale innovations in partnership with government
- Generating evidence
- Strategic policy engagement

Our network is currently 66 members strong, each working in partnership with communities and governments in 51 countries. Our secretariat – spread across 4 continents – has expertise in school leadership, education innovation, and education financing. Our vision is that all children in low and middle-income countries have equitable and safe access to quality education so they can realise their potential.

Our Supporters



Questions?

If you have questions about this briefing, please write to info@globalschoolsforum.org.

