In Whose Interest?

The UK's role in privatising education around the world

By Global Justice Now and National Education Union,
based on initial research carried out by Mark Curtis

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About Global Justice Now

Global Justice Now campaigns for a world where resources are controlled by the many, not the few. We champion social movements and propose democratic alternatives to corporate power. Our activists and groups in towns and cities around the UK work in solidarity with those at the sharp end of poverty and injustice.

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About the National Education Union

The National Education Union is the largest education union in Europe, supporting and representing more than 450,000 members, including the majority of teachers. We campaign to shape the future of education.

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Introduction

Today, 262 million children and young people worldwide are being denied a basic human right: the right to education. Despite the commitment made in 2015 by the international community through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to deliver this right for all children and young people, millions remain unable to access the "inclusive and equitable quality education and...lifelong learning opportunities" they were promised.[1]

The gap between ambition and provision is being exploited by private actors in pursuit of profits, who see the estimated $5 trillion global education market as a business opportunity.[2] Consequently, the private education sector has grown significantly in recent decades, a development that has perpetuated education inequality and is undermining attempts to "ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education," as required by SDG 4.1.

The number of children educated privately across the globe has mushroomed in the last 20 years, with over a quarter of all secondary school pupils now enrolled in private schools.[3] The proliferation of the private sector has reached extreme heights in some parts of the world - in Lagos, Nigeria, 85% of schools operate as private businesses[4] and in settlements in Nairobi up to 63% of children attend non-government schools.[5] In a sign of the ambitions of the private sector, Bridge International Academies, a for-profit chain of schools operating in the global south currently educating 500,000 pupils per year, recently declared its intention to grow to 10 million pupils by 2025.[6]

This trend is being perpetuated by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Over the last decade in particular, DFID has been at the forefront of an international push to use public resources in order to leverage private capital into poorer parts of the world. This is based on the idea that there aren't sufficient public resources to meet the SDGs, a rationale which has been used to channel huge sums of aid into financial markets and, directly and indirectly, into the private sector, including private education. However, this fixation with leveraging international capital risks embedding highly unequal, volatile and crisis-prone economic models into developing countries and crowding out domestic resources. In turn, the focus on private schools risks permanently undermining the attempts to build universally available public education systems.

These developments are part of wider changes in the way the UK government conceives of its aid spending. Increasingly, the UK is focused on using its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to support commercial interests. This approach was exemplified by a call from the Secretary of State for International Development, Penny Mordaunt, for UK aid to unite "compassion and capital" and expand opportunities for the British public to profit from international development. This pro-market, instrumental approach to international development is fundamentally at odds with an agenda which places human rights, welfare and the redistribution of wealth at its core.

Support for the privatisation of education is one manifestation of this misguided approach, and brings with it many problems. Education privatisation risks lowering standards across the board, can lead to a system stratified along social, geographical and income lines, undermines democratic accountability and fails to deliver quality education. It is the poorest and most marginalised in society who will suffer. As a consequence, the internationally ratified right to education is being undermined.

The UK's support for private education overseas is informed in part by the presumed success of the privatisation of education in England. A growth in private methods has been particularly stark in the schools' sector since 2010, with the dramatic expansion of academies. This has seen three quarters of secondary schools and a quarter of primary schools removed from democratic accountability and instead controlled by unaccountable academy sponsors which operate, and are legally defined, as private companies. This trend has been accompanied by little evidence of success, but countless examples of exploitation of the system by private actors, lowered standards for young people and teachers, and deepening social stratification in England.

This report will interrogate the trend of privatisation in education perpetuated by DFID, whilst at the same time looking at the connections between this trend and what is actually happening in the UK. In the interest of clarity, the report will only engage with basic education.

Importantly, this report interrogates what the privatisation of education means in concrete terms for children and young people around the world, and outlines what the UK should instead be supporting. Tax justice, including closing tax loopholes and limiting exemptions, and domestic resource mobilisation are crucial to ensuring that public education systems have the necessary resources to operate successfully. Properly resourced, fully supported education systems are the only way to deliver education for everyone. Ultimately, we conclude that the privatisation of education at home and abroad will not support the realisation of SDG4.

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Chapter 1: The Push for Private

The UK is seen as a leader in education development and financing globally. The legislation passed in 2015 to commit 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to ODA, agreed with cross-party support, is a welcome acknowledgement of the role that the UK can play in building fairer societies worldwide.

However, what this aid is spent on, and for whom, is open to scrutiny, particularly in terms of education. In this chapter, we will interrogate the figures, the position and the programmes that define the UK's support for the privatisation of education across the globe.

UK aid spending on education – the figures

The UK is one of the leading funders of global education, ranked only behind Germany, France and the United States in relation to total ODA spending on education.[7]

In 2017, the UK spent £785m of UK bilateral ODA on education, equating to 8.9% of its total bilateral ODA spend and making it the fifth highest sector of the UK's ODA budget.[8] The UK is also a key donor to a number of multilateral education funds, including the Global Partnership for Education, the Education Cannot Wait fund, and the Platform for Girls' Education.

The size of the UK's aid budget for education means that it is an influential player in the global education field, helping to set the agenda and influence education policy.

Since 2016, Ministers have claimed on several occasions that over 95% of the UK's spending on education goes to the public sector.[9] However, DFID's response to a Parliamentary Question in early 2019 indicated that this figure "includes for-profit organisations who deliver services through the public education system."[10] DFID also stated that this figure represented "a one-off exercise" in 2016/17 that gave "a snapshot of the education portfolio at the time" based on a methodology that would be "too costly" to repeat.[11] Given this, the 95% figure adds little to DFID's position.

Although we lack clarity as to the exact figure DFID spends on private actors in education, we do know that substantial sums are involved. Recent Parliamentary Questions have revealed that, since 2016, hundreds of millions of pounds of UK aid has been channelled through private companies for education programming. In Pakistan alone, over £100m has been channelled through for-profit businesses to deliver education services since 2016.[12] Among the beneficiaries of DFID's funding are a number of British-based, for-profit development consultancies (including, among others, Mott MacDonald, Oxford Policy Management and IMC Worldwide Limited) each attracting millions of pounds of funding.[13]

The issues with DFID's support for education privatisation are explored below. Yet it is important to note, at this point, that DFID's failure to properly distinguish its spending on public and private education is itself highly problematic. Blending public and private education financing can confuse ODA spending, limit transparency and accountability and, crucially, make it hard to evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches. This follows a wider trend in development, led in part by the UK, which uses public aid to leverage private investment in development.

UK aid policy – the position

Support for education privatisation is clearly expressed in DFID's communications, policies and programmes. DFID's 2018 Education Policy *Get Children Learning* (GCL) outlines support for various forms of privatisation, including public-private partnerships, low-fee private schools (LFPS), non-state providers and private investment in education.[14]

With regards to the role of 'non-state' education, DFID states that it will:

- "Support public-private partnerships which open up access to low-cost private schools to out-of-school and marginalised children, including those with disabilities.
- Work with others to maximise the availability of finance to non-state providers who wish to invest in quality and/or infrastructure.
- Support governments to improve regulation of the non-state market and share learning on how this can be done."[15]

Get Children Learning recognises that "the state is the guarantor of quality basic education for all" but notes that "non-state providers, including low-cost private schools, play an important – and growing – role in delivering education in low- and middle-income countries."[16] While the policy rightly recognises that some state systems do not reach every child, its approach appears to prioritise underpinning a parallel system rather than engaging with the development of the public sector. It is unclear how, if the state is the guarantor of education for all, DFID is comfortable asserting that "non-state education provision will play an important role in meeting the educational needs of growing populations."[17]

Elsewhere, the UK government has commented on "the important role that the private sector can and does play in developing and delivering high-quality education provision alongside the public sector within appropriate regulatory and accountability frameworks."[18] DFID has also stated that "the private sector plays a vital role in our delivery of aid" and suggested that "without the expertise, flexibility and professionalism of the private sector, DFID could not have achieved the results it has in recent years in terms of lives saved, children educated, and jobs and opportunities created."[19]

These quotes all indicate an ideological push by the UK to alter the nature of the state from provider to commissioner of public goods. We need only look at academisation in the UK (explored in chapter 3) to find evidence of this ideology domestically.

In addition to education provision, *Get Children Learning* outlines DFID's support for reforms that encourage the growth of the private sector. The policy notes:

"We will support decision-makers to develop good regulatory arrangements which boost quality, accountability and innovation in the non-state sector and public-private partnerships which improve access to education for poor and marginalised children."[20]

Finally, *Get Children Learning* outlines DFID's intent to support "strategies to attract private investment in the education sector".[21] These stated aims together indicate the UK's pro-private policy in education.

DFID's support for private education appears to be informed by experiences of education privatisation in the UK. In its presentation of the case for helping to develop a new public-private partnership in Uganda, DFID states that one of the advantages of the programme is "building on UK expertise (including through the UK Academy model)".[22] DFID outlines how its 'Best of British' approach will include "relevant UK expertise" in, amongst other things, "more effective public-private partnerships".[23]

The UK's vision for exporting British educational business overseas was outlined in the Government's March 2019 *International Education Strategy: global potential, global growth*. In the foreword to the strategy, the Secretaries of State for Education and International Trade outline their ambition "to increase the value of our [the UK's] education exports to £35 billion per year", building on the almost £20 billion made in 2016 and encouraging growth to an estimated £23 billion annually by 2020.[24] The strategy sets out an approach that will "address the practical barriers they [education providers] face in expanding their exports and breaking into new markets", working across government departments (including the Department for International Trade and Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) to support businesses to implant their product in education sectors overseas.[25] This is described as both fiscally beneficial and instrumental as a way of "broadening the UK's soft power", and builds on the belief outlined in the UK's 2015 Aid Strategy and *Get Children Learning* that "overseas development activity helps UK education trade and investment opportunities overseas and strengthens UK influence."[26] By viewing education as a means for generating profit for private enterprise, DFID is pushing a business model that undermines its own position of education as a basic human right and of the state as the main guarantor of that right. Education is no longer seen as an end in itself but as a means through which UK companies can generate returns.

UK aid programmes – the implementation

DFID's practical support for privatisation takes many forms - from investment to research to direct provision of schooling. This section will outline some of the ways in which DFID's stated support for privatisation in education is being implemented.

Financing and investing in private education

In November 2016, DFID confirmed that it had "made direct investments in low-fee schools in Nigeria, Kenya and Pakistan."[27] Low-fee private schools (LFPS) purport to deliver quality education at an affordable price to the poorest families in a community. They charge fees and cut outgoing costs in order to support their business model, advertising to attract students to ensure the school can stay afloat. Some LFPS run as chains of schools, offering a standardised model of private education across communities and countries.

DFID has invested in one particular for-profit education company that manages LFPS, Bridge International Academies. Bridge was established by Americans Jay Kimmelman, Phil Frei, and Dr Shannon May in 2008 and currently operates over 500 nursery and primary schools in Kenya, Nigeria, Liberia, Uganda and India.[28] CDC, the UK government's development finance institution wholly owned by DFID, invested a total of $7.1m (£5.3m) in Bridge in 2014.[29] DFID itself provided direct funding through a competitive grant awarded to Bridge for its work in Nigeria, totalling £3.45m, which enabled it to open 23 Bridge academies in Lagos.[30]

In addition to LFPS, the UK (through CDC) has made investments in elite, high-cost private schools in countries in the global south. For example, CDC invests in GEMS Education, which runs a network of 90 elite private schools mainly in the Middle East but with three schools in Kenya and Uganda.[31] While based in the United Arab Emirates, the company is controlled by GEMS MENASA, a company incorporated in the Cayman Islands, an autonomous British Overseas Territory with a policy that no tax is taken on money earned outside of its jurisdiction.[32] CDC has invested in excess of $45m (£34.3m) in GEMS Africa.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

More prevalent than the direct financing of private education, however, is the UK's investment in public-private partnerships (PPPs). PPPs are, broadly speaking, deals between the government and the private sector to deliver a project. Often, this involves public money going to private actors to provide a public service.[33] In the case of education, this can include vouchers (financing for children's tuition and additional school fees), subsidised private schools, and delivery contracts. In DFID's case, PPPs have been a key mechanism through which it has supported the roll-out of LFPS and the entrenchment of private actors in education systems across the global south.

Pakistan

One of the largest education PPPs supported by DFID is the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) in Pakistan. PEF describes itself as "the largest public private partnership based program of free quality education in the Punjab" and provides "gratis educational facilities to 2.5 million most-deserving students".[34] DFID describes the programme as delivered "through a voucher scheme, new schools programme and subsidies to existing low fee private schools."[35] In PEF, children are enrolled in publicly funded but privately managed schools, supported in part by DFID. DFID states that it is providing £68.6m in "support to the Punjab Education Foundation to build the capacity and quality of Punjab's growing low cost private sector."[36]

Uganda

In 2007, Uganda introduced a PPP to help roll out its Universal Secondary Education programme (USE) policy, in order to increase access to secondary education across the country. Under the PPP, private schools would receive a capitation grant from the government in order to enrol USE pupils for free. In practice, however, a number of schools have charged tuition fees, and a recent study found that non-tuition fees were charged in all schools under the PPP.[37]

From 2012-2017, DFID supported this PPP by providing funding to a network of 28 schools participating in the programme, run by the UK charity Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS).[38] In 2016, DFID stepped up its engagement with PPPs in

Uganda, announcing £5.4m of funding for PEAS schools participating in the existing PPP. Simultaneously, DFID commissioned a study by UK based Absolute Return for Kids (ARK), to help develop a new PPP framework for the country, using the PEAS schools as a pilot. This commitment to PPPs in Uganda is part of an effort to support a "mixed economy" in education, populated by both public and private providers, marked by an "increasingly diverse range of education providers".[39]

Ghana

In Ghana, the Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP) is seeking ways in which it can strengthen education, including through PPPs.[40] The Project Information Document notes that DFID is expected to support the "Reform Secretariat".[41] The Ghana Partnerships Schools (GPS) programme, described by Ghanaian unions as "a subtle and potential privatisation, commercialisation and commodification of public education in Ghana with the approval of the government", is being funded in the context of PPPs in GALOP.[42]

Private finance in the pipeline

In addition to direct investment in private actors, DFID has been exploring and supporting a number of additional complex financing initiatives that enhance the role of private actors in education.

International Finance Facility for Education

First proposed by the Education Commission[43] in 2015, the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) is seeking to enable countries, particularly lower-middle income countries (LMICs), to access finance for education through loans. The premise is complex: states with high credit ratings, such as the UK, make financial guarantees to Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), which are then able to borrow funds from international markets at lower interest rates. MDBs then pass on these interest rate savings in the loans they grant to beneficiary countries. Further increasing the benefit of the lower interest rate is the addition of donor grants included in the IFFEd 'pool'.

The thinking behind IFFEd is that when a country 'graduates' from low-income status to become an LMIC, it loses many opportunities to apply for international education grants. However, many of these countries do not have robust tax revenue structures and therefore find it difficult to make up the lost income.

In September 2018, Penny Mordaunt challenged the Education Commission to have a final design recommendation on the table in two months, stating that "The UK stands ready to support this process and its important work. Let's get it done."[44] The government has since reaffirmed its support for the principle of IFFEd, but is holding off announcing any formal position until the details of the Fund have been finalised.[45] An announcement on the amount and terms of financing is expected in 2019.

Education Outcomes Fund and Development Impact Bonds

The Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) was proposed by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity and the Global Steering Group for Impact Investment in 2018.[46] The Fund would support Development Impact Bonds (DIBs) for education, seeking private investment to the tune of $1 billion to provide the upfront funds for results-based projects.[47] Private funds would be collected in the

EOF for projects, with investors receiving reimbursement plus interest if a project is successful. This reimbursement would come from a so-called outcomes funder, envisioned to be philanthropic funds and donor countries (such as the UK).

The model is a network of contracts, payments, repayments, targets, indicators, lawyers, experts, businesses, private actors, governments and service providers. Repayment will be determined by success as defined through carefully constructed measurements, such as learning outcome targets or test scores. Thus, investors will be repaid based on the achievement of students in standardised assessments. EOF would work exclusively with non-state actors in education, whether or not they operate in parallel to the public system (such as LFPS) or within it (such as textbook providers).

DFID is currently exploring the possibility of supporting EOF, but has yet to confirm when, if or how much support will be provided. However, DFID is already supporting some DIBs in education, including the *Quality Education India DIB*, "providing experience and funding for programme management, legal advice, learning and evaluation."[48] The DIB has gathered $3m (£2.25m) of upfront investment from the UBS Optimus Foundation, which would see a 6% return on investment if the programme is successful.[49] These private investors thus stand to earn $180,000 (£135,000) from outcomes funders.

Supporting pro-private research and reform

DFID also funds a number of initiatives exploring and promoting private education. For example, DFID funded the creation of the Centre for Education Innovations (CEI) with support of £6.3m over four years (2012 - 2016).[50] The CEI, based in Washington (USA), "is an online resource which profiles hundreds of innovative, non-state education models and approaches for the poor".[51] Launched in 2012, the CEI is coordinated by the Results for Development Institute (R4D), a non-profit organisation also based in Washington whose role includes "supporting private-sector (non-state) actors to adapt, test and operationalise promising innovative models in healthcare, education and nutrition".[52] DFID is also a funder of R4D.[53]

DFID is also a partner of the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) which analyses and evaluates education systems in over 130 countries.[59] One of its roles is to "assess how well country policies enable provision of high quality and inclusive basic education services by non-state providers" and "analyse laws and regulations to identify the types of private engagement for basic education... that are legally established in each country".[60] One of SABER's explicit "policy goals" is to ensure that "Government places no limits on the number, student enrolment, or location of privately managed schools." Another is that "Government provides incentives for market entry [for private providers] such as access to start-up funding, public land and public buildings".[61]

Centre for Education Innovations

The Centre for Education Innovation (CEI) "seeks to fill the gaps in global understanding about innovative education programmes striving to increase access to quality education for students in low income communities."[54] DFID project documents on its previous support for the CEI note that it"will document market-based interventions that make the education sector function better for the poor" including examples of "private ownership and contracting out" and "innovative policy reform".[55] The documents also make clear that its intention is to influence developing country policy-making:

> **"This information will improve LIC [low income country] governments' understanding of the non-state education provision in their countries and globally. CEI will invite policymakers from LICs to participate in dissemination events that showcase the most promising education models for the poor".[56]**

The CEI is also intended to influence other donors: "Currently, there is no mechanism for funders of non-state education to co-ordinate their support to the sector. Many education fora acknowledge the role of the private sector in education provision, but their members do not actively collaborate to improve it."[57] DFID's Business Case for supporting the CEI acknowledges that "there are few donors willing to take the risk of investing in a new model such as CEI" and that "there are fewer donors working in non-state education".[58] Through CEI, DFID is supporting increased privatisation and influencing other donors to consider privatised provision in their ODA portfolio.

Supporting pro-private reforms has also been a theme of DFID's bilateral aid spending. For example, this was a central goal of DFID's Developing Effective Private Education (DEEPEN) in Nigeria. The DEEPEN project, which was completed in January 2019, sought to demonstrate "how market approach [sic] can be applied in the education sector in Nigeria and other similar context [sic]".[62] It involved "where possible advocating for greater government ownership of, and support for, the private education market".[63] DEEPEN even appears to have involved support for private companies in their efforts to influence the government; DFID states that the project aimed to "build market players' capacity to advocate for [government support] in their own right".[64]

Hiring private contractors

A key tenet of DFID's pro-private reform agenda, explored above, is the use of private contractors. While much of this spending supports public education, private contractors are nonetheless making huge profits from the aid budget. In addition, in some cases, the work private contractors are doing with public education systems further promotes and embeds private education in an education system.

One company heavily supported by DFID that is pushing for pro-privatisation reforms in developing countries is Adam Smith International (ASI). A 2016 report by Global Justice Now showed that ASI, one of the UK's largest consultancies, won at least £450m in aid-funded contracts from DFID since 2011, many of which promoted the private sector and "market-based development" in the global south.[65] Since 2016, ASI has secured at least £35m of contracts in education development.[66] ASI achieved widespread notoriety in 2017 amidst revelations of attempts to falsify evidence to a Parliamentary enquiry and public controversy over consultants' salaries.[67] In February 2017, ASI 'voluntarily' froze bidding for future contracts with DFID after a scathing report from MPs on the company's "inappropriate" conduct.[68] But a year later, in February 2018, DFID cleared ASI to resume bidding for its contracts.[69] In the twelve months following February 2018, ASI has secured just short of £50m of DFID contracts across all sectors.[70]

ASI notes that it "has been closely involved in developing and supporting the reforms of education systems in a wide range of transitional and developing countries in South Asia, the Middle East and across Africa".[71] This work includes "the provision of advice on the root and branch reform of entire education systems, as well as more targeted initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education provision and the more effective financing of education by both government and the donor community".[72]

ASI's website lists 22 education projects in the global south.[73] The company specifically promotes and advises on LFPS, helping to establish them, run and regulate them, and establish public-private partnerships. Importantly, the guidelines outlined by ASI are all logistical, rather than regulatory or rights-based.[74]

ASI has been intimately involved in several DFID projects promoting private schools, including:

- Managing DFID's £36.4m 'Kenya Essential Education Programme' which ran from 2012-16.[75]
- Acting as one of the three partners – with Bridge and Cambridge Education – of DFID's DEEPEN project in Nigeria.[76] The Innovation Fund component of this project provided its first grant to Bridge in 2014 and in 2016 DFID selected ASI to manage this Fund.[77]
- Providing technical assistance on DFID's £283m Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Programme in Pakistan, running until 2020.[78]
- Providing technical assistance to DFID's £384m Punjab Education Support Programme II, running until 2020.[79]

ASI's practices are indicative of the types of businesses employed by DFID to deliver and consult on its education programming.

In another illustrative example, PWC, one of the 'big four' accounting firms with an annual revenue of £3.8 billion in the 2018 fiscal year,[80] is currently supporting implementation of nearly £800m of projects identified by DFID as related to education. This includes the £500m Girls' Education Challenge (II), which PWC implements alongside Unicef.[81] The contractor fee for PWC to deliver GECII is stated in DFID's business case as £32.7m.[82] This model encourages other INGOs to engage in non-traditional partnerships in order to attract funding, including working more with the private sector. This is further evidence of the multiplier effect of DFID's support for, and investment in, private actors in education.

Chapter 2: The Problems of Privatisation

This chapter explores the key issues with the privatisation of education. Four important areas of discussion are identified: equality; quality; accountability and transparency; and undermining public education systems.

Equality

Across the world, inequality in education is rife. Social class, gender, place of birth, disabilities and other characteristics play a decisive role in determining whether a child will receive education at all, for how long, and of what quality.

In this context, private education is presented as a way of promoting educational equality, especially by reaching those hardest to reach. For example, DFID suggests that "public-private partnerships...improve access to education for poor and marginalised children".[83] However, there is now a large body of evidence that suggests that private education systems actually maintain or deepen inequality. Four ways in which privatisation entrenches inequality are explored below.

Economic inequality

Fees charged by private schools are the most straightforward way in which barriers are created for the poorest children. In one illustrative example, a study found that families in Uganda would need to pay roughly 46-55% of the average household income to send two children to a Bridge school.[84] DFID itself has recognised that LFPS are out-of-reach of the very poorest, seeing it necessary to fund programmes that pay LFPS tuition for the poorest children in a project in Kenya.[85]

It is important to recognise that in some contexts public schools are not free, and it may even be the case that LFPS are less expensive than their public counterparts. However, supporting LFPS does little to ameliorate this situation. Instead, it creates a market where privatisation is not only enabled, but encouraged - where public and private schools compete against each other to attract students.

LFPS costs are not limited to tuition fees. Uniforms, books, exams and other hidden costs also contribute to the burden on families. For example, a 2016 study of the DFID-supported PPP in Uganda found that every school visited charged non-tuition fees, even including compulsory boarding school fees in some cases.[86] Unsurprisingly, the study found that these fees prevented the poorest children from attending the schools.

Even where children from poor families are formally enrolled in a LFPS, fees may prevent them from gaining a meaningful education. Students who are unable to pay may be turned away, causing distress and embarrassment, with some children from an LFPS in Kenya excluded for "as little as 50 cents".[87] One study found that over half of Bridge pupils in Kenya interviewed had been suspended for delayed payments.[88] Fees have also been cited as the main reason for students dropping out of school in Lagos, Nigeria. Here, a 2018 study found that "the proliferation of private schools has not reduced the likelihood of dropout or vulnerability to not completing school."[89]

Social inequality

As poorer students drop-out of school (or fail to access education in the first place) due to fees, communities undergo a deepening of social stratification. Research from India found that "user fees in education exacerbate inequality and lead to more social stratification."[90] The poorest children are relegated to an underfunded public system, or left out of education altogether, as their better-off peers enjoy higher quality schooling.

This can also be the case for out-of-school children, a key constituency for LFPS and PPPs. For example, the large PPP in Pakistan run by the Punjab Education Forum (PEF) and supported by DFID has as one of its major objectives reaching out-of-school children. But a detailed 2018 study found that "very few children in the PPP schools were previously out-of-school". As a school principal interviewed as part of the study commented, "In PEF schools you will not find out-of-school children or the poorest of the poor. The majority that makes the student population in PEF schools is of those who can afford to pay some fees."[91]

Investments in elite, high-cost private schools similarly stratify communities and bolster the middle- to upper-class, rather than engage the poorest and most marginalised. Even if the intention of CDC investments in high-cost private schools is to create a return on investment that can then be used to support other education programmes, the unintended consequence of social stratification has already made the problem worse.

Privatised education can also exacerbate inequality along lines of gender and disability. School fees may force parents to choose between their children. Due to harmful stereotypes and social norms, a consequence can be parents favouring investment in education for sons over daughters,[92] or non-disabled children over children with disabilities.[93] This is contrary to DFID's stated interest in supporting education for girls and children with disabilities - two of the key groups identified in *Get Children Learning*. The privatisation agenda also undermines the UK's place at the top of the Platform for Girls' Education (which the Foreign Secretary chairs).

Disability inequality

At the same time, there is evidence of LFPS failing to provide support for children with additional needs. In Uganda, a 2016 study of a PPP found that most schools visited were not physically accessible to disabled children and that not one of the schools had a single special needs teacher. Thus, most PPP schools in the study did not follow the minimum national standards – a "stark contrast" to government-aided schools.[94] Likewise, some teachers in Bridge schools in Kenya reported that students with additional or special needs were not supported by the schools and therefore not admitted.[95]

The limited provision for learners with additional needs stems from the cost-cutting imperatives faced by private schools. As Ugandan human rights activist Angella

Nabwowe put it, “Private actors are looking for a profit. And if they are looking for a profit they compromise everything else that will affect their profits.”[96]

Funds that rely on results, such as the Education Outcomes Fund model of using Development Impact Bonds, can also risk undermining inclusive education. When results are placed at the centre of funding, measurable outcomes are required to determine success. Some students, including disabled students and those with other additional needs, may not be those who are most able to ‘deliver’ results. This can be ameliorated by ambitious and monitored equality targets, which are proposed in some DIBs.

Geographical inequality

Geographic inequality, or the rural/urban divide, is also perpetuated by private education. Private education has proven ill-equipped for addressing inequalities of provision between urban and rural areas. Where private schools are run for profit, there is an incentive for them to be based in urban areas where there is a large market of school-age children, as opposed to in under-served remote areas. This phenomenon has been documented in Nigeria, where Bridge Academies were found to be “located in areas where there were already large number of schools, close by, both public and private.”[97]

Likewise, a 2016 Uganda study found that PPP schools were mostly concentrated in urban areas for reasons of cost-effectiveness. A government education official quoted in this study commented that “Most of these private actors in education are business people in need of a return on their investment – [they] don’t want to start up schools in rural or very remote areas where parents are poor.”[98] The study also found that, of the few PPP schools that were established in rural areas, most failed. The authors thus concluded that private schools are “not a feasible method for expanding education provision in rural settings.”[99]

Quality

At the heart of the case for private education models is the claim that they offer improvements in learning outcomes. DFID’s 2014 review of the evidence about the effects of private schools in developing countries found strong evidence that teaching quality was superior to that in state schools, and moderate evidence of improved learning outcomes in private schools.[100] A recent DFID-funded study of the DEEPEN programme in Nigeria found evidence of superior performance in maths and literacy among private schools, with Bridge pupils scoring particularly high on literacy.[101] Findings such as these have emboldened those who claim that private systems can provide innovative solutions to improve learning.

However, the wider academic literature on private providers provides a more ambiguous picture. Regarding PPPs, a recent literature review found that some studies identified positive effects on learning, whereas others contend that the evidence is “marginal or non-existent”.[102] Likewise, a detailed study commissioned by Ark found that the limitations on existing research on PPPs means that “definitive conclusions … on a wide scale” cannot yet be reached.[103] For Development Impact Bonds, on which the Education Outcomes Fund is based, a 2019 report commissioned by DFID found that “there is only limited evidence available that discusses the impact of impact bonds either on education or in LMICs.”[104]

While the evidence is inconclusive, there are clear concerns arising about teaching standards, a narrowed learning experience and unsustainability in the privatised model of education.

Undermining teaching standards

Despite DFID's assertion that its top priority is teaching quality,[105] evidence from education PPPs has found that they can lead to a worsening of teachers' conditions.[106] In a detailed study of a DFID-supported PPP in Pakistan, the predominantly female teaching workforce was found to be paid less than half the minimum wage and provided with limited training or support.[107] The study concluded that the programme relied on gender inequality to ensure that relatively low fees were charged to pupils.

Similar patterns appear in LFPS more generally. In Bridge schools, teachers are typically unqualified, and concerns have been raised about their working conditions. Bridge teachers can be pulled into marketing to promote the school, with their pay docked if they don't meet certain targets.[108] They may also experience long working hours, job insecurity, and unfair pay.[109]

The underlying factor at play here appears to be the cost-cutting imperative faced by private providers. Given that teachers' salaries are the highest cost in education, private schools looking to maximise profits or market-share are incentivised to hire unqualified (or under-qualified) and low-paid teachers.

A narrow learning experience

A key concern about private providers is that they draw on a narrow, rigid approach to education focused overwhelmingly on outcomes in standardised assessments. In the PEF PPP, teachers were found to rely on "rote memorization and teaching to the test" as a result of the high-stakes testing environment built into the programme. Omega and Bridge schools have taken this further, where the 'schools-in-a-box' model is adopted. In the case of Bridge, this involves "Learning Facilitators" (i.e. unqualified teachers) working from a pre-programmed, centrally designed, lesson plan from an electronic tablet.[110] These are used in all Bridge schools across the different countries they work in, and are rigidly enforced.[111] This approach naturally undermines the possibility for pedagogical creativity, local or national context or targeted to particular students' needs.[112]

This limited approach to teaching and learning could be intensified by the International Finance Facility for Education and the Education Outcomes Fund. The results-based financing built into these models incentivises schools and teachers to focus exclusively on quantitatively defined outcomes, such as test scores. The danger of this approach is a sidelining of less easily quantifiable aspects of educational experience such as critical thinking, creativity and civic engagement. The narrowing of the curriculum caused by results-based financing is one of the reasons the system was discarded in England in the early 20th century.[113]

Unsustainability

Finally, the quality of education is undermined through the short-term focus of private models. Education systems are not built for one generation - they are expected to provide an education for many years to come. But, as noted by the UK's International Development Committee, while private sector providers might be able to achieve some short-term learning gains, it is questionable whether the model is sustainable in the long term.[114]

This is especially true for LFPS, a model reliant on income garnered, in full or in part, through user fees. Should a LFPS become unprofitable, or deemed in breach of laws or regulations, schools will close and can leave those pupils who attended without access to education. The focus on private investment, dictated by external forces rather than domestic resources, can also undermine the sustainability of an education system. IFFEd, for example, risks countries slipping into further indebtedness as they borrow money against the expectation of future financial returns.

Transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability are at the heart of debates about education. To whom do education providers ultimately answer? Are there mechanisms through which parents, students, the community or elected governments make sure that education systems are delivering equitable, quality education? And is the system sufficiently transparent for the public to access the information they need to hold education decision-makers to account in the first place?

There is considerable evidence that private actors in education suffer from a major democratic deficit. UNESCO's 2017 Global Education Monitoring Report warned that many private schools in the global south are unregulated, that LFPS have grown faster than governments can handle, and that the rapid expansion of private chains is a particular cause for concern.[115] Similarly, a recent study of education PPPs emphasises the difficulties that governments face in ensuring private schools are abiding by public regulations, such as providing schooling for free.[116] Private actors have been accused of corruption through inspections, as in the Punjab Education Foundation in Pakistan,[117] misrepresentation, as in the case of Bridge in Kenya,[118] and routine violation of government agreements, as in the DFID-supported PPP in Uganda.[119]

For models that rely on Development Impact Bonds (DIBs), such as the Education Outcomes Fund, the inclusion of private actors seeking a return on investment adds an unwelcome level of accountability - accountability 'up' to shareholders, rather than 'down' to students and their families.

DIBs are also likely to empower profit-driven private investors. Research on similar schemes in Britain has found that investors have had the right to replace service providers if they fear the outcomes will not be achieved – turning "private financial investors in particular and financial markets more generally into public policy-makers". Meanwhile, service users have tended to have limited involvement in these schemes.[120]

In addition, the complex network of actors involved in DIBs further makes it difficult to trace the operations of the schemes, undermining the ability for the public to hold these actors to account. In one illustrative example from a health-related DIB, the project involved at least seven different international partners, including outcomes funders (3), investors (2), service provider (1), and an independent evaluator (1).[121]

This profit drive is what is perhaps most concerning about DIBs and the proposed EOF. The upfront funders will seek to make interest on their investments; exploiting the human rights of the poorest and most marginalised global citizens for financial gain. The potential returns are enormous - one DIB in education saw a 15% internal rate of return repaid on private investments.[122]

Some foundations involved in DIBs would expect to reinvest any interest earned on their investments into more development programming. DIBs are thus envisioned by some as a method of blended finance, using aid to garner additional private funding. This, however, raises serious issues of transparency and accountability.

DIB investors will have the decisive say in which projects they invest in and, therefore, will, to some degree, shape the international development agenda. As the additional funds these foundations are investing are originally outcomes funders' finances (paid out as interest), this ultimately means that outcomes funders, such as DFID, will be paying private philanthropists to decide which projects they deem good investment opportunities. These foundations are accountable only to their boards and financers, and not the people who are receiving or paying for aid. Again, the accountability is upward to investors, not downward to people on the ground - putting the delivery of inclusive, holistic education into jeopardy and putting aid in the hands of unaccountable and opaque operators.

This also has implications for accountability to the British people. The UK's commitment to 0.7% GNI spending on ODA is a welcome and proud policy, secured and continued with cross-party support. However, any of this funding channelled through EOF could see a breach of the OECD definition of ODA, which requires "each transaction" to have "the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective", and only outlines low income, least developed, low-middle income, and upper middle income countries as recipients of ODA.[123] Any money that is paid to private actors as interest on investments could therefore be misrepresentative if considered ODA.

Undermining public education

Perhaps the biggest problem of privatisation is the impact it has on the public education system.

As discussed in chapter 2, DFID tends to cite problems within domestic education systems in making its case for supporting LFPS. However, supporting a parallel, paid-for sector undermines the public system. The government has the ultimate responsibility to fulfil the right to education,[124] but funding and supporting the private sector can lead governments to shirk their duty. The result can be a system, such as in Lagos, Nigeria or Haiti, where the vast majority of schools are private and the government has little role as provider, defaulting to becoming the regulator.

This phenomenon risks an unjust system stratified along social lines. Those students who are better off are more likely to attend the private schools that have marketed themselves as of higher quality, leaving the very poorest students in an under-funded and devalued public system. Likewise, in instances where the private sector attracts the most highly-qualified teachers, this further undermines the quality of learning in state schools. This can lead to a negative spiral of increasingly poor quality for the state system, as resources are further and further stretched. The opportunities of already well-off students are advanced, with poorer students further disadvantaged.

Bridge Academies was found to take this phenomenon one step further in its work as part of the Partnership Schools Liberia (PSL) programme. PSL's midterm report found that "contracts authorized the largest contractor [Bridge] to push excess pupils and under-performing teachers onto other government schools."[125] In other words, Bridge schools turned away pupils in order to improve results, and, rather than investing in upskilling less-trained teachers, simply pushed them into government schools (a move "unlikely to raise average performance in the system as a whole").[126]

DFID's exploration of the Education Outcomes Fund is also problematic, as this Fund would work exclusively with non-state actors and could further condemn public education systems to a future of dependency on external support. Whether through separate provision or in-school interventions, the system will be built around a reliance on donor-support, rather than holistic and complete public schooling. For example, the *Quality Education India DIB*, which DFID is supporting, funds the NGO Gyan Shala, a large school programme for poor children that educates over 45,000 pupils.[127] This NGO has become the provider for these students, drawing pupils away from the public sector and creating a reliance on external financing. This is the same financing model that is creating profits for private investors operating in the global north.

In sum, privatisation erodes the capacity and sovereignty of the public system and makes it reliant on external actors. This phenomenon carves out space from the public system and leaves a hole that only private actors can fill.

Chapter 3: A Global Shift – at home and abroad

Support for privatisation of education is evidenced both internationally and domestically, with a strategy that seems to set the state as commissioner, not deliverer, of education.

England's school system has undergone a radical transformation since 2010 through a series of reforms first enacted under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition Government from 2010-2015 and extended by the current Conservative Government. These reforms have seen widespread 'academisation' and, at the same time, fragmented the English school system, weakened and undermined democratically accountable local authorities, boosted the power of private actors in the state system, and increased scope for profiteering and commercial exploitation. This chapter explores how the issues of privatisation seen in DFID's work abroad are mirrored in domestic education policy.

Domestic implementation – the policy

An academy school is described by the Government as a "publicly funded independent" school.[128] Unlike all other publicly funded schools, academies operate independently of the local authority in which they operate. They are funded directly by the Department for Education (DfE) and are run by self-governing charitable trusts. Academy trusts cannot be run for profit but are structured somewhat like companies: there are members of the trust and a board of directors or trustees – responsible for the trust's day to day management. Since 2010, thousands of state schools that were previously overseen by local authorities have been transferred into the hands of private actors which operate schools or groups of schools through a private contract with the Government. There are now more than 8,000 academies in England educating nearly 3.8 million pupils, 72% of all secondary school pupils and 30% of all primary school pupils.[129]

The Academies Act 2010 made provision for schools considered high performing – which meant having been awarded a grade of good or outstanding by the national schools' inspection body Ofsted - to convert to academy status voluntarily, becoming 'standalone' academies run by academy trusts. It also forced any schools that were considered low performing to be taken over by academy sponsors. These organisations were chosen by central Government with no meaningful consultation of parents, staff, unions or pupils.

The trend in England's increasingly academised landscape is for consolidation of academy schools into larger groups or chains known as multi academy trusts (MATs). There are more than 450 MATs which run five or more schools.[130] The largest four academy trusts control more than fifty schools and manage enormous annual budgets running into hundreds of millions of pounds.

A large number and range of private organisations are now involved in running England's schools through academy sponsorship: these include faith groups, universities, education charities and wealthy individuals as well as private businesses such as weapons' manufacturer BAE systems. Schools involved in these chains face the same problem of accountability as is seen through private financing in the global south: they are accountable to board members, not the pupils they serve.

The problems of privatisation

Academisation has seriously undermined the power and integrity of local authorities in England - still, by law, any new school must be a free school (a type of academy).[131] The growth of academies in England echoes, informs and underpins many of the problems caused by privatisation in the global south. These include equality; undermining the public system; transparency and accountability; and teachers and education quality.

Equality

Although local authorities remain legally responsible for providing enough school places for all children within their boundaries, all new schools in England must be a free school.[132] This means local authorities cannot open new schools and they are also unable to direct academies to expand or reduce their pupil numbers according to local need. This makes it much harder to ensure there are enough school places of the right type in each local area or to coordinate pupil admissions and ensure that school admissions are equitable. The school system's ability to reach the hardest to reach students in this model, as with DFID's support of low-fee private schools, is severely impacted.

The competition built into the system further undermines the goal of educational equality. A recent four year study into Government reforms, including the academies programme, found the English school system "has become less equitable since 2010, with higher-performing schools admitting relatively fewer disadvantaged pupils."[133]

With academies competing against one another to be seen as the best provider, test scores and measurable success is paramount. This has resulted in high levels of exclusions, with academies excluding at higher rates than non-academies.[134]

Undermining the public system

The expansion of the academies programme has also drastically reduced the capacity of local authorities to provide important education support services to schools – services which range from human resources (HR) to other vital areas such as speech and language therapy, safeguarding, school improvement, support for pupils whose first language is not English and for pupils with special educational needs. These services are funded via a top-slice of the schools grant that the local authority receives from central Government and then distributes to local schools. Consequently, as more schools leave their local authorities, funding for these services is lost. This has, in many cases, created a perverse incentive for schools to 'choose' to academise as they have seen local authority services diminished and underfunded.

Transparency and accountability

Academy trusts cannot make money directly from their education operations, however, there have been serious concerns about the ways in which some individuals have gained commercial benefit from their involvement with academies. While local authorities have had no option but to cut back on essential services, commercial opportunities for private operators have opened up. In some cases, academy chains themselves have set up their own companies to deliver services such as IT support or HR.

Even more concerning, some academy trust directors, or their family members, have financially benefited through so-called "related party transactions" – where an academy enters into a commercial relationship with an organisation that is related through common directors or family members. The arrangements for preventing this sort of profiteering are weak and ineffective. A total of £134m was paid out by academy trusts on related-party transactions in 2017-18, up from £122m in 2015-16.[135]

This profiteering is a product of a lack of transparency in the system. Similarly, this system has changed the dynamic of accountability to one of accountability 'up' - to trust board members - rather than 'down' - to students and their families. With a marketised system, opportunities for indirect profits and a need to deliver for the private businesses and their board members behind the MAT, there remains little room for a fair, transparent and accountable system.

Teachers and education quality

As well as the increasing marketisation of the English schools' system, the academy programme, similar to privatisation overseas, represents a threat to teacher professionalism and the terms and conditions of school staff. Academies are legally able to employ unqualified teachers. They are also able to diverge from national pay and conditions arrangements which has led to an erosion of pay and conditions for teachers and other school staff and accelerated the use of performance-related pay linked to pupils' test and examination results.

The academy programme was championed as improving school performance by increasing school autonomy and competition between schools. It has not worked: there is no evidence that academies perform better than other state funded schools and plenty which shows the opposite.[136]

While the academy reforms have not resulted in the wholesale privatisation of English schools, they are clearly part of a global shift towards privatisation within public education systems. In combination with funding cuts to local authorities and school budgets, these reforms are undermining England's state education system, while at the same time providing more profit-making opportunities for the private sector.

Case study: Ark

The UK charity Ark is an example of the concrete connections between what is happening in England and the promotion of low-fee private schools in the global south. Ark, formerly Absolute Return for Kids, is a charity founded by the hedge fund billionaire Arpad Busson in 2002. It runs 39 schools in England through its academy sponsor Ark Schools. The charity Ark has also been involved in advising the government on public-private partnerships through its Education Partnerships Group (EPG). EPG has an explicit focus on promoting PPPs globally; on its website it states: "evidence from Columbia [sic], Venezuela and Pakistan shows that privately-managed, publicly-funded government schools have the potential to improve results for even the very poorest children."[137] Ark is also involved in consultancy on projects in Ghana and Uganda.[138]

The Independent Grammar School (IGS) : Durham

Despite the wealth of evidence against low-fee private schools in the global south, the UK's first LFPS opened in Durham, in the north east of England, in September 2018.[139] It is the brainchild of Professor James Tooley, a proponent of LFPS in the global south and the co-founder and chairman of Omega Schools Franchise Ltd, a chain of low-fee private schools in Ghana. Tooley is credited with significantly influencing Conservative Government education policies internationally. Andrew Mitchell, former International Development Secretary has said "Professor Tooley's work on private education in developing countries had a profound impact on the Conservative Party's policy on education in international development which my team and I formulated in Opposition and then implemented in Government."[140]

Tooley has said that he is not a supporter of the UK Government's domestic reforms and that he wants to "see private schools emerge and then the state just move aside from education."[141] Enter IGS Durham, a school promoting itself as a 'no-frills' private school that economises on facilities. IGS Durham is marketed as being affordable with fees of £2,700 a year, equivalent to £52 per week which is much lower than the average UK private school fees of £17,000 a year.[142] Tooley says that he has plans to open a chain of such schools in England and there is also talk of a similar 'no-frills' £100-per-week project being headed up in London by Sophie Sandor, a former employee at the Adam Smith Institute and the Institute of Economic Affairs.[143]

However, IGS Durham has been heavily criticised concerning its overall financial viability, ability to offer acceptable terms and conditions to teaching staff, and to provide a decent standard of education to pupils. Despite ambitious goals, the school is reported to have only attracted 12 pupils in its first year of operation.[144]

Chapter 4: **Getting it Right**

Properly resourced public education systems are the only way to deliver on the promise to leave no one behind in delivering Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education. As Linda Noah from EACHRights (Kenya) notes, "The public sector is where they [the UK] should be investing because then you can reach the most marginalised, the most poor, and in a sustainable way."[145] This was echoed by DFID Shadow Minister Preet Kaur Gill MP in a Westminster Hall Debate in 2019: "public education systems...are the most effective way to advance equity".[146]

And, importantly, while the UK's commitment to overseas aid is significant, it is a small part of the picture. Efforts must be made to promote Domestic Resource Mobilisation (DRM) to reach the $3 trillion total spending on education required across low- and middle-income countries by 2030.[147] It is therefore imperative that UK aid is spent in support of the public sector - not at its expense.

Public education systems rely on sustainable, domestic financing obtained through robust and resilient tax bases. Thus, if DFID is serious about supporting education for all, it must also take seriously its responsibility to support DRM. Funding any parallel systems and privatising education undermines this effort to deliver social justice and education for all.

Domestic Resource Mobilisation and progressive taxation

Education is chronically underfunded, evidenced by the estimated $1.8 trillion gap in annual education spending in low- and middle-income countries.[148] This is often used to justify the involvement of private actors in education, suggesting that governments alone could not, or are not willing to, close this gap. However, it is recognised that domestic financing will be important to finance education for everyone.[149]

A financing gap necessarily means too small a budget for the Ministry of Education, a problem that can only be addressed through DRM. DRM is defined by the European Commission as "the generation of government revenue from domestic resources, from tax or non-tax sources (royalties, licenses, levies or other income)."[150] DRM builds robust public financing bases from which education systems can be funded.

It is vital that DFID supports countries to increase DRM and build strong, transparent and accountable financial structures within countries. These structures should be underpinned by progressive taxation, where those who earn more pay more as a proportion of their earnings.[151] Progressive taxation would further increase the financial base required to finance stable education systems. Research has also found that progressive taxation can reduce income inequality.[152]

The 4 S Framework[153]

ActionAid International has developed a 4S framework for education financing, which has since been taken on by both the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and Education International (EI). The framework focuses on the:

- Share of a government's budget spent on education, with a view to achieving the 20% recommended in the Incheon Declaration;
- Size of government income, including from tax and non-tax income;
- Sensitivity of how education financing is spent, with an eye on equity; and
- Scrutiny of spending, to promote education for everyone.

This framework is helpful to ensure that government spending is both adequate and fair, and could be used by DFID to shape its work with countries on DRM. The African Union Ministers of Education have already adopted the framework at their high-level meeting in April 2018.

Tax justice

Tax justice involves a system of fair taxation across society, free from avoidance, evasion and corruption. It is a key component of properly resourced public education systems.

Tax avoidance is a chronic problem, undermining the ability of governments around the world to fund quality public services. As development education expert David Archer has noted, "aggressive tax avoidance by rich elites and multinational corporations are depriving governments of desperately needed resources to fund public services."[154] Indeed, ActionAid has identified that tax exemptions cost developing countries upwards of $138 billion every year.[155] This is having a direct impact on education - the organisation found that "Malawi need only spend 6% of its revenue losses from tax incentives to educate all girls, while the figures for the other countries are Mozambique 23%, Nepal 11% and Tanzania 6.5%."[156] Closing tax loopholes, reducing tax incentives, and supporting strong, fair and just tax systems is a key way to deliver education for all.

The economic incentives of supporting tax justice are twofold: firstly, the increased revenues for the country from tax-paying companies themselves, and secondly the increased earnings of students who have benefitted from a properly resourced education system. The same ActionAid study found that in Nepal, for example, the country could see $1.51 billion (£1.14 billion) in added value over the next 45 years if all girls who are currently out of school were educated. Annually, educating all girls would see an additional 0.14% added to the economy.[157] This is crucial for a low-income country such as Nepal. While aid is a key piece of the development puzzle, it is not enough to build strong and sustainable education systems.

By uniting its work on education with support for tax justice, the UK Government could support partner countries to build education systems that are better insulated against disasters, financial crises, and indebtedness. At the same time, the UK would be supporting economic growth and reducing income inequality.

Policy responses

Positive solutions to the problems of global education are not simply attractive ideas. In the last two years a number of significant policy responses have emerged on the global stage, indicating a growing recognition of the need to curb privatisation and promote public education for all.

European Parliament

On 13 November 2018, the European Parliament adopted the resolution on EU development assistance in the field of education (2018/2081(INI)). In this resolution, the EU noted that it "insists… that the European Union and the Member States, in accordance with SDG 4.1 and Article 26 of the UDHR, must not use ODA to support private, commercial educational establishments, which do not uphold the Union's principles and values". One reading of this would suggest that no commercial educational establishments uphold the Union's values. Another reading suggests that only those which do uphold the EU's values can be supported by ODA. In either reading, however, the result is the same: commercial entities do not deliver SDG4.1 - free education. This resolution goes a long way to protecting education in countries supported by EU donor countries (among the largest donors globally) from commercial interests and profiteering.

The Abidjan Principles

The Abidjan Principles on the Right to Education, published in 2019, synthesise the human rights laws that affirm the right to education in one document, clarifying the obligations of states. The Principles are clear that public education is at the heart of the right to education, noting that states must provide free, quality public education "as effectively and expeditiously as possible, to the maximum of their available resources."[159]

The Principles also have a major focus on the role of private actors in education. The Principles recognise that parents or legal guardians have a right "to choose for their children an educational institution other than a public educational institution", and to establish such institutions themselves, but also set out a number of important restrictions on the role of private education. In particular, private education must not lead to disparities of educational opportunity in ways which undermine rights to equality and non-discrimination. Private education must also not undermine the capacity of the state to provide free, quality public education. In addition, the Principles also state that international assistance and cooperation must prioritise building public education systems.

The Abidjan Principles are an important consolidation of existing human rights law. While not universally accepted by international civil society, they form a key pillar around which to base discussions and measure interventions of private actors in education, and by which to hold them to account.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston

The UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston released a critical report on privatisation of public services in September 2018. The report, submitted alongside the Human Rights Council resolution 35/19, acknowledged that "privatization [sic] has also metamorphosed into an ideology of governance", undermining the public system and in doing so "raises fundamental questions from a human rights perspective."[160] These include: *Are private entities dedicated to maximizing their own profits best placed to protect the rights of the community?, How could corporations ensure the rights of the least well-off without undermining their own profitability?, and What meaningful role can participation and accountability play when private corporations, operating on commercial principles, are taking key decisions affecting public welfare and individual rights?*[161]

The report includes several recommendations as to how UN bodies can address privatisation. These include:

- "Insist that appropriate standards be set by public and private actors involved with privatisation to ensure that data on human rights impacts are collected and published, and that confidentiality carve-outs are strictly limited;
- Undertake systematic studies of privatisation's impact on human rights in specific areas, and on poor and marginalized communities;
- Insist that arrangements for the privatisation of public goods specifically address the human rights implications; and
- Explore new ways in which treaty bodies, Special Procedures, regional mechanisms, and national institutions can meaningfully hold States and private actors accountable in privatisation contexts."

In highlighting these issues in such a public forum, and calling out privatisation as not merely a funding mechanism but an ideological position, Alston supports the fight for public services that are free from commercial interests. He exposes the underlying issues, and unavoidable consequences of the current trajectory, and insists on change.

Chapter 5: **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Privatisation in and of education is wide-reaching, with consequences as troubling as they are varied. From profiteering off global education inequality to undermining public education systems, there is no denying that private providers, investors and companies are not supporting the realisation of every child's right to education. Rather, they are seeking to support a parallel system or reap rewards from engaging in the public system to line the pockets of investors. This is privatisation of public services at its very worst.

Similarly, the academisation programme in England is seeing the introduction of private actors into the public sector to the detriment of equality, teacher professionalism and accountability. The 'Best of British' deal seems anything but.

The UK's Department for International Development has not only been complicit in this privatisation, but has actively promoted it financially, rhetorically and programmatically. This report has sought to highlight just some of the issues brought forth by this phenomenon and supported by DFID.

The underinvestment in education around the world, and the gaps in delivering Sustainable Development Goal 4 for all children and young people, are deeply troubling. World leaders must step up efforts to support education and deliver this human right for all young people.

At the same time, this Goal and right must not be exploited by private actors who see profits where they should see potential. Rather than undermine the efforts of public educators and systems, DFID should support the real, meaningful and sustainable delivery of education for all. To do so, the Government should:

1) Continue and expand upon the commitment made in Article 12 of the European Parliament resolution of 13 November 2018 on EU development assistance in the field of education (2018/2081(INI)) to "not use ODA to support private, commercial education establishments, which do not uphold the Unions principles and values" after Brexit.

2) Retract stated support for PPPs and LFPS in DFID's *Get Children Learning*.

3) Commit to phasing out all support for for-profit education providers in the global south by 2025, and in the meantime support strong regulatory human rights based frameworks for private providers and financing.

4) Use DFID's influential position internationally to encourage multilaterals to abandon privatisation and adopt a public education approach.

5) Commit to focussing on supporting domestic resource mobilisation and, in particular, progressive taxation to fund public education. DFID should advocate within government for a strong focus on tax justice and a commitment to closing tax loopholes, and for the UK to champion these approaches in global fora.

6) End the academy and free school programme and ensure all state-funded schools are democratically accountable to parents and local communities. In addition, all state-funded schools to be subject to the same regulatory framework covering pupil admissions and exclusions, curriculum, governance and staff pay and conditions, overseen by elected local authorities.

7) Refrain from participating in the Education Outcomes Fund and use its influence on the global stage to persuade other donors targeted as outcomes investors to do the same.

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