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POLICY INSIGHTS

MODELS OF PHILANTHROPY IN EDUCATION

ABOUT THE PROJECT

From 2017 to 2020, NORRAG, in partnership with the Al Qasimi Foundation, the Open Society Foundation and the Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, conducted a symposium series, *Philanthropy in Education: Global Trends, Regional Differences and Diverse Perspectives*. Events were held in China, India, South Africa, Switzerland, and the USA, to facilitate greater understanding and collaboration between philanthropic organisations, national policymakers, representatives of international organisations and academics. The project provided space for sharing empirical research and diverse perspectives and exploring socially responsive and effective giving of individuals, corporations, and foundations.

This Policy Insights publication concludes the vital work conducted over several years that involved hundreds of experts and stakeholders. It shares short pieces authored by participating experts and aims at sharing learning on regional and global philanthropic giving to education with a broader audience. "Policy Insights: Models of Philanthropy in Education" provides policy stakeholders and others with a range of innovative and critical perspectives on the topic, drawing on the discussions and findings that contributed to the [Philanthropy in Education Symposium Series](#).

More information: www.norrag.org/symposium-series-philanthropy-in-education

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

A complete list of the 39 experts who contributed to this publication, including their biographies, is included at the end of the publication. This publication is edited and introduced by Arushi Terway, Theme Lead: Private Sector Approaches at NORRAG, and Moira V. Faul, Executive Director at NORRAG. Laura Savage, Executive Director of the International Education Funders Group (IEFG), provided the foreword to the publication.

ABOUT NORRAG

NORRAG is the Global Education Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute and is a global network of more than 5,600 members for international policies and cooperation in education and training. NORRAG is an offshoot of the Research, Review, and Advisory Group (RRAG) established in 1977 and at the time funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Swedish International Development Authority (Sida). The current name was adopted in 1986. Since the move to Switzerland in 1992, NORRAG has been significantly supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies Geneva.

NORRAG's strength lies in addressing under researched questions of quality and equity in key issues in education and development, and in amplifying under-represented expertise particularly from the South. NORRAG's core mandate is to produce, disseminate and broker critical knowledge and to build capacity for and with the wide range of stakeholders who constitute our network. Our stakeholders from academia, governments, NGOs, international organisations, foundations and the private sector inform and shape education policies and practice at national and international levels. Through our work, NORRAG contributes to creating the conditions for more participatory, evidence-informed decisions that improve equal access to and quality of education and training.

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FOREWORD

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All over the world, education is a top choice for those looking to donate their money, whether as individuals or through institutions set up for this philanthropic purpose. Yet, the dynamics, characteristics and potential contribution of philanthropy to the achievement of education goals in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) are not widely appreciated – even by many within the education philanthropy world.

The three-year series of events and publications on education philanthropy curated by NORRAG started to change this. NORRAG is known for its high-quality research on topics that are under-represented in global education knowledge, and this series produced some of the most comprehensive and specific evidence we have on the contribution and activities of

philanthropy across different regions of the world. It revealed the variety yet commonalities within education philanthropy and raised important critical challenges.

Participation in the NORRAG Philanthropy in Education series was a significant learning experience for members of the International Education Funders Group (IEFG). IEFG is a network of around 100 philanthropic grant-makers passionate about improving education outcomes for children and youth in LMICs. IEFG members are based all over the world, focus on different education challenges and deploy a whole range of approaches to tackle these. There is strength in diversity. A key benefit of being part of the network is lesson-learning and knowledge-sharing, as these

philanthropic organisations are on a constant journey of self-improvement. Joining NORRAG for the philanthropy series provided not only a learning opportunity for the members, but also a platform for contribution to the wider education community about the potential role of philanthropy to global education goals.

This selection of policy insights is a welcome close to this series, kicking off a whole new level of debate on philanthropy in education. *Policy Insights: Models of Philanthropy in Education* speaks to policy stakeholders and others with a range of innovative and critical perspectives on the topic, drawing on the discussions and findings that contributed to the [Philanthropy in Education Symposium series](#).

CONTENTS

	FOREWORD	3
	Laura Savage, Executive Director, International Education Funders Group (IEFG)	
	INTRODUCTION	8
	Arushi Terway, Theme Lead: Private Sector Approaches, NORRAG and Moira V. Faul, Executive Director, NORRAG	
1	GLOBAL TRENDS IN NEW PHILANTHROPY	10
	Global trends in new philanthropy and implications for education development	11
	Dana Brakman Reiser	
	Where does philanthropy begin and end? The pandemic, EdTech and digital humanitarianism	12
	Stephen J. Ball	
	Technology philanthropy: disruption, innovation, impact	13
	Lara Patil	
	New philanthropy: effects of introducing business sensibility in education development	15
	Christopher Lubienski and Moaaz Hamid	
	How new philanthropy is participating in education governance	17
	Marina Avelar	
	Recent trends in “global education” philanthropy	18
	Laura Savage, Jo Kelcey, Gordana Kelava and Spings Akumah	
2	A SPACE FOR LEARNING AND COLLABORATION FOR EDUCATION PHILANTHROPIES IN AFRICA	20
	Towards understanding African philanthropy	21
	Fabrice Jaumont and Teboho Moja	
	Collaboration between philanthropy and government: lessons from the Zenex Foundation	22
	Fatima Adam	
	Philanthropy in education in Africa: a space for learning and new forms of collaboration	24
	James Keevy	
	Building community ownership models for a shift in Africa	26
	Rooksana Rajab	
	Philanthropy in education in Africa: an ever-deepening response	28
	Gary Shearer	
3	PHILANTHROPIC ENGAGEMENT IN ADDRESSING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES	30
	Philanthropy and education in Latin America and the Caribbean: between new questions and structural trends	31
	Iván Matovich	
	Corporate philanthropy jeopardizes public education in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Lusophone Countries	32
	Fernando Cássio and Salomão Ximenes	



4

5

From the right to education to the right to learn: impacts from the new philanthropy in the education policy-making in Brazil	34
Andressa Pellanda and Daniel Cara	
New philanthropy and implications for education development: lessons from the Dominican Republic	35
Alejandro Caravaca, D. Brent Edwards Jr. and Mauro C. Moschetti	
Philanthropists, coalitions, and public-private partnerships in Latin America: challenges, opportunities, and open questions of a dynamic and evolving trend	36
Tomás Esper	
How can philanthropies in Latin America build capacity to close educational achievement gaps?	38
Matthew Bird and Vicente M. León	
PHILANTHROPIC AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN INDIA	40
Corporate social responsibility support for education in India	41
Nishant Chadha and Bharti Nandwani	
Role of philanthropy and corporate social responsibility in building an effective and equitable education system	42
Vidya Shah	
Philanthropic foundations and corporate social responsibility in India's education	44
V. Santhakumar	
Envisioning the role of philanthropic and corporate social responsibility contribution to education in India	45
Pradeep K. Choudhury	
PHILANTHROPY IN EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION	47
Education and philanthropy in the Middle East and North Africa: leveraging expertise for the global good	48
Natasha Ridge and Vehbi Emre Tandogan	
Philanthropy in education in the Middle East and North Africa: case for climate education	50
Naila Farouky	
New philanthropy as a bridge or a double-edged sword? Implications for education development	51
Seungah S. Lee	
CONTRIBUTORS	52
REFERENCES	56



List of figures

Figure 1	New philanthropy/philanthrocapitalism	16
Figure 2	Collaboration framework for funders	23
Figure 3	Citizen-civil – a public-private partnership	25
Figure 4	Building a community ownership model for systems change	27
Figure 5	New philanthropies and the right to education	34
Figure 6	Organisational Capacity Index – pillars and Indicators	38
Figure 7	Funding of foundations in the MENA region: state, private individuals/families or businesses/corporations in GCC countries versus non-GCC countries, by percentage (%)	49



Acronyms

AFF	Arab Foundations Forum	netFWD	OECD's network of foundations working in development
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report	NIPUN	National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy
COP	Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	MoE	Ministry of Education
CSR	Corporate social responsibility	NEP	National Education Policy
CTE	Collaborators for Transforming Education	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
CZI	Chan Zuckerberg Initiative	ODA	Overseas development assistance
DAF	Donor-advised fund	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DAO	Decentralised autonomous organisation	PO	Philanthropic organisation
ECD	Early Childhood Development	PPP	Public-private partnership
EdTech	Education technology	REDUCA	Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil por la Educación / Latin American Network of Civil Society Organisations for Education
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
GDP	Gross domestic product	STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
GESS	Global Educational Supplies and Solutions	TCF	Tencent Charity Foundation
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank	UAE	United Arab Emirates
IEFG	International Education Funders Group	UK	United Kingdom
ICT	Information and communications technology	UN	United Nations
IRC	International Rescue Committee	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
INR	Indian rupee	US	United States
IT	Information technology	USD	United States dollar
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean	WEF	World Economic Forum
LLC	Limited liability company		
LMIC	Low- and middle-income countries		
MDG	Millennium Development Goal		
MENA	Middle East and North Africa		

INTRODUCTION

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Education continues to be the foremost cause for philanthropic giving across the globe after health – estimated at USD 4.5 bn in 2016–2019 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) and USD 2.1 bn in 2013–2015 (OECD, 2018). Philanthropic engagement in the education sector is not limited to contributing funds; it also encompasses the use of these funds to influence education systems across different contexts. Furthermore, a diversity in philanthropic actors exists, particularly regarding the role they envision for themselves and the approaches they take when engaging in education. The diversity of actors and approaches has generated critical debates on how philanthropies are meeting education systems’ needs for financing and innovation. Researchers and practitioners are also examining how philanthropies, as private actors, change the landscape of education as a common and public good.

Policy Insights: Models of Philanthropy in Education aims to succinctly present critical lessons to education policy stakeholders on the various roles and approaches philanthropic actors employ.

The knowledge generated by diverse stakeholders and captured within this *Policy*

Insights (and other knowledge products) highlights several global and regional trends in philanthropic engagement in education. These trends show great diversity in the perceived role of philanthropic actors and the methods they employ, which not only reflects the needs of the context but also the positioning of the philanthropic actor.

Philanthropic organisations can range from funding entities set up with financing from high-net-worth individuals to government-mandated corporate social responsibility (CSR) arms of corporations. Recently, some philanthropies have even morphed into cause-driven but profit-seeking investment organisations. Philanthropies are typically assumed to play a gap-filling role in providing services to those left behind. However, in many contexts, they also occupy significant space as national and global policy influencers. Philanthropic organisations have partnered with diverse actors – from grassroots service providers to policy coalitions – at national and global levels. They have fostered education innovations that aim to address underserved populations’ needs and to support scaling initiatives or policy reform.

Global conversations on philanthropy’s role in education or the approaches used are

often dominated by a Northern or Western conceptualisation of philanthropy, which misses the diversity and dynamism of regional philanthropies. Regional philanthropies utilise their own historical and contextual logics in contributing to the education sector (Ridge & Terway, 2019). Recent data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) demonstrate that, while American and European philanthropies continue to work in low-and middle-income countries (LMIC), domestic philanthropies in these countries also have a significant footprint (OECD, 2021). In examining philanthropy in these contexts, it is therefore essential to understand the positioning of domestic philanthropies.

The authors in this collection raise questions and critically analyse a variety of issues that emerge at global and regional levels in philanthropic engagement within the education sector. Several authors discuss the recent trend in many regions where philanthropic actors go beyond financial contributions and engage in the education ecosystem through network formation, policy dialogue and support for government capacity-strengthening. Some draw attention to the need to critically examine the impacts of private actors working

through philanthropic activities in privatising education. Many call for increased transparency and accountability for philanthropic actors who are not bound by public accountability mechanisms. In several articles, examples of collaboration between philanthropies, communities and governments highlight the potential for collective efforts towards tackling the challenges within education.

The articles in this publication draw on research and policy dialogue conducted between 2017 and 2022 by NORRAG in partnership with the [Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research](#), the [Open Society Foundations](#) and the [Geneva Graduate Institute](#). By engaging a varied group of stakeholders, the [Symposium series](#) facilitated greater understanding and collaboration between philanthropic organisations, national policymakers, representatives of international organisations and academics working in the field of education. The discussion forum specifically focused on surfacing knowledge and understanding of the

philanthropic landscape in various regions of the world. The regional partners (listed below) in each event played a central role in identifying pertinent issues and stakeholders for an engaging dialogue:

- [China](#): China Global Philanthropy Institute, the 21st Century Education Research Institute and the Lao Niu Brother & Sister Foundation
- [India](#): India Development Foundation
- [South Africa](#): Zenex Foundation and the Human Sciences Research Council
- [Switzerland](#): Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research, Open Society Foundations and the Geneva Graduate Institute
- US: [George Clement Bond Center for African Education](#) and the [Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society](#)

The engagement of researchers and policy actors also resulted in several knowledge products – an [edited book](#), a [NORRAG special issue](#), and a [blog series](#).

This *Policy Insights* is divided into five sections. The first section presents global educational philanthropy trends, focusing on new philanthropies. The subsequent sections present perspectives and experiences from regional philanthropies in Africa; Latin America, the Caribbean and Lusophone Countries; India; and the Middle East and North Africa.

This publication deliberately collates a number of diverse perspectives on the context-specific needs and approaches to – as well as outcomes of – philanthropy in education. While the authors may not agree on whether these changes are unreservedly positive or negative, they all agree that philanthropies make a significant difference.

1 GLOBAL TRENDS IN NEW PHILANTHROPY

The last two decades have seen the emergence of new philanthropic actors or existing philanthropies using new approaches to tackle perceived challenges within the education sector. There is a growing emergence of incorporating corporate business practices to address social challenges and of private actors engaging increasingly in public education systems.

The authors in this section provide an analysis of such new philanthropies and new approaches to philanthropy. Several authors discuss the role and practice of philanthropies associated with Silicon Valley technology companies

within the education ecosystem in LMIC. Others examine the merger of philanthropic giving with private finance approaches through models such as philanthrocapitalism or social impact investing. The section concludes with the International Education Funders Group (IEFG) highlighting global trends and the potential for harnessing philanthropic engagement to improve educational outcomes.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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GLOBAL TRENDS IN NEW PHILANTHROPY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

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Key takeaways:

- High-net-worth individuals and their associated firms control vast resources needed to respond to critical gaps in education worldwide, but increasingly favor philanthropic approaches using business methods and leveraging business relationships.
- Legitimately harnessing these resources requires efforts to ensure the transparency and accountability of education philanthropy practised in a business-inflected fashion to ensure that priorities for public goals remain subject to public scrutiny, input and contestation.

High-net-worth individuals and their associated firms are emerging as a distinct class of education-focused donors who use mechanisms drawn from business to achieve their philanthropic goals. As these methods gain traction, the distinct donor and institutional agendas they reflect offer opportunities to increase scale and innovation. They also create transparency, accountability and legitimacy risks.

Social and development impact bonds pioneered in the UK and deployed in settings as diverse as India and the US draw on models from finance. Impact bonds tap private investors to secure the capital that service providers need for social or development interventions. Governments, development institutions and donors pay returns on investment only if an intervention achieves the predetermined results. For bonds offered through Social Finance India, education outcomes serve as key metrics. This model can unlock resources to meet social and development goals, but its private contracting regime is difficult for the public to observe and challenge. It also gives private funders – including, but not limited to, philanthropic players – input into the metrics for educational success.

Alternative forms for organizing philanthropic activity introduce business practices and players

into the philanthropic sector. For example, the US Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) is dedicated “to solv[ing] some of society’s toughest challenges – from eradicating disease to improving education and addressing the needs of our local communities,” using a for-profit, limited liability company (LLC) rather than a non-profit, tax-exempt private foundation. CZI employs traditional grant-making, along with in-kind assistance, impact investment and political advocacy, many details of which it voluntarily discloses. This suite of approaches would be impossible under tax regulations governing private foundations, which must also produce standardized public disclosures.

Unlike tax-deductible contributions to private foundations, which are irrevocable, contributions to philanthropy LLCs can be withdrawn at any time and offer donors no immediate tax advantage. Only when LLCs transfer assets to a qualifying charitable organisation will LLC founders be able to claim tax deductions. US donors willing to make irrevocable contributions, however, can obtain immediate tax deductibility along with total privacy and limited regulation using donor-advised funds (DAFs) offered primarily by charitable affiliates of for-profit investment companies.

The work of the Tencent Charity Foundation (TCF) and its leader, Charles Chen Yidan, illustrates how Chinese companies combine profit-making and charitable objectives. While his creation of an innovative education prize also fits the for-profit philanthropy mold, Chen’s work spearheading the TCF has been of even greater impact. Together with Tencent, TCF added the Tencent Charity platform donation site to Tencent’s WeChat messaging and payment app. This platform allows over 1 billion users to make and publicize charitable donations and benefit from Tencent’s matching contributions. TCF also imposes transparency requirements for charities receiving donations on its platform, generating accountability protections that Chinese donors would otherwise lack.

Donors drawing on business lessons to inform their philanthropy command huge wealth and transformative technologies. Combining business and philanthropic endeavours, though, risks conflating corporate and donor priorities with development objectives and obscuring education choices and outcomes. Philanthropic donors can choose to use their platforms to model transparency commitments and seed accountability. Governments and education sector organizations should encourage them to do so.



WHERE DOES PHILANTHROPY BEGIN AND END? THE PANDEMIC, EDTECH AND DIGITAL HUMANITARIANISM

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Key takeaways:

- It is unclear where philanthropy begins and ends, particularly when businesses present themselves as philanthropic agents. For example, the “pandemic strategy” in which big Information Technology (IT) corporations offered a wide range of highly specialised education services for free for a short period in 2020.
- Such digital humanitarianism positions the private sector for capital accumulation while increasing feelings of solidarity with the recipients, effectively de-politicising and de-economising their market behaviours.
- Soft privatisation through these donations allows private actors to craft a space for themselves in the education policy sphere of voice and influence.

One of the many problems faced by commentators and analysts interested in the global upswell in philanthropy in all its forms is the simple and basic question: What is not philanthropy? This is particularly the case where businesses present themselves as philanthropic agents.

Take, for example, the “pandemic strategy” of big IT corporations in the education sector offering a wide range of highly specialised services for free. In many countries, for a short period in 2020, Google and Microsoft offered, respectively, G-Suite for Education and 365 for Education to school systems at no charge, alongside an enormous range of teaching and learning resources and training packages. Blackboard, Coursera and FutureLearn products, resources and training were also made available for free.

Burns (2019) considers these apparently benevolent gestures as forms of “digital humanitarianism,” which merge private sector logic with elements of humanitarian rationality. Burns argues that these gestures both serve to make different spheres of life amenable

to capital accumulation imperatives and to channel feelings of closeness and solidarity to recipients. Furthermore, digital humanitarianism de-politicises and de-economises market behaviours, detaching products from their direct relation to profit.

In addition, this pandemic strategy opened new spaces for the participation of private sector actors in public education and education policy, both bringing into play “new ways of understanding the world” (Junemann & Olmedo, 2019, p. 3) and positioning wealthy individual philanthropists and EdTech businesses as “experts in ‘reimagining’ education for the future” (Williamson & Hogan, 2020, p. 29). The private sector, through its donation of digital platforms, contributed to a significant restructuring of public education delivery, governance and policy, which Cone and Brøgger (2020, p. 384) identify as forms of “soft privatisation”. While securing acceleration of the use of their products and services, companies such as Google and Microsoft crafted a space for themselves in the education policy sphere of voice and influence.

In all this, then, the beginning and end of philanthropy and what is not philanthropy are unclear. The form of analysis we might bring to bear here is equally unclear.



TECHNOLOGY PHILANTHROPY: DISRUPTION, INNOVATION, IMPACT

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Key takeaways:

- Institutions of public education must systematically evaluate technology influence, offerings, and agendas to monitor the extent to which they align with the needs of education systems, teachers and students.
- Technology philanthropists must be transparent and accountable to their mission, those governing the communities they serve and the wider public to establish legitimacy.
- The policy objective should be to ensure legitimacy, transparency and accountability on the part of all stakeholders, alongside the growth of philanthropic and other private sector involvement in educational development.

Introduction

A new style of philanthropy has emerged from Silicon Valley with new actors, funding mechanisms and approaches to philanthropic giving. With technological innovation as the core influence that created much of the wealth driving the new philanthropic enactment, it is no surprise that disruption, innovation and impact are at the center of an [emerging “giving code.”](#) These emerging donors often [apply market-based strategies borrowed from their own success in the industry](#) and apply the mindset and language of business. The innovative mechanisms utilized by technology philanthropists to advance business and social agendas are not typically captured in global philanthropic indicators. Technology philanthropists are likely to be far more powerful global development players than reported financial flows indicate. This [new philanthropy impacts and disrupts global education.](#)

Contours of technology philanthropy

Technology philanthropists share common patterns, both in motives and styles of giving, which reflect theories of change that are

markedly different from the more traditional styles of philanthropy. The emerging approaches tend to be techno-determinist, to be living and hands-on, to utilize new funding mechanisms and models and to focus on metrics, data-driven results and policy. This contribution briefly explores technology philanthropy and provides examples of emerging approaches and impacts.

Techno-determinist

Techno-determinist approaches, which focus on engineering solutions to problems, address social challenges by presenting a technology solution. For an emerging technology philanthropist, a technology innovation is the solution. In turn, a new or transformed social structure is expected. Thus, giving patterns of emerging technology philanthropists tend to focus on strategies that are technology-enabled and focused on networks and systems. Traditional philanthropic giving has tended to be “civic” and place-based (e.g. building and strengthening institutions such as libraries, universities and arts programs), “low technology” (i.e. reliant on subject matter

experts) and influenced by institutional models with traditional hierarchies.

Living and hands-on

Donors are increasingly engaging in philanthropy at much younger ages to disburse their fortunes while they are still alive. [The Giving Pledge](#), a campaign that encourages wealthy individuals to direct most of their wealth to philanthropic causes in their lifetime, and [Pledge 1%](#), a campaign to encourage corporations of all sizes to consistently donate 1% of their corporate equity, 1% of their corporate profits, 1% of their corporate products and 1% of their employees’ time, fuel this trend. These living philanthropists tend to prioritize an active role with grant recipients, which involves contributions of time and talent. Traditional philanthropists tend to write checks, rely on subject matter experts and outsource programs, maintaining low engagement with grantees beyond funding.

New funding mechanisms and models

[For-profit philanthropic models](#), such as limited liability companies (LLCs) and donor-advised funds (DAFs), underlie many technology



philanthropy approaches. These models were largely pioneered in the US technology sector as an alternative to the highly regulated traditional US 501(c)(3) private tax-exempt foundation structure. Freedom of investment, direct access to corporate resources, the ability to engage in political activities, as well as privacy and control are all factors that motivate the decision to incorporate philanthropic goals into creative for-profit structures. Emerging approaches tend to focus on multiple new funding vehicles to enact philanthropic agendas. Traditional philanthropic practices typically use a single vehicle for giving: private foundations or estates and trusts.

Focus on metrics, data-driven results and policy

Whereas traditional philanthropic approaches tend to focus on charity and meeting immediate local needs, emerging philanthropic approaches tend to focus on impact through metrics and data. Technology philanthropists tend to focus on measurable impacts, addressing the root causes of big problems that are often simultaneously local and global in scope. [Policy influence](#) is a common priority to create leverage and boost return on investment – and is often viewed as a multiplier for foundations' relatively small contributions.

Implications

Technology philanthropists are powerful new actors who enact new philanthropic mechanisms that elicit new forms of global governance and modalities of the state. These new philanthropic actors bring new players into the education policy sector and reshape existing policy networks. Scholars argue that these new strategies [use multiple and overlapping networks to mobilize knowledge and influence for education agendas](#) and, to some degree, systematically weaken the [public sector, democratic processes, as well as the voice of civil society](#). Further examples of recent studies highlight the ways in which emerging philanthropic approaches increasingly use [policy advocacy](#) as a strategy for cost-effectively enacting their philanthropic agendas, [effectively push through national learning standards, capitalizing on disaster](#) to enact changes in public education based on their distinct donor and institutional agendas and how standardization, which is often efficient and good for business, has controversial implications for the education sector, such as the narrowing of the educational experience and debates regarding the ownership of large datasets.



NEW PHILANTHROPY: EFFECTS OF INTRODUCING BUSINESS SENSIBILITY IN EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

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Key takeaways:

- The trend of new philanthropy in education represents an acceleration of the neoliberal move away from the state as a solution for social issues. It elevates private wealth rather than for-profit business models as the primary mechanism for addressing education issues.
- The increasing importance of new philanthropy in education associated with the retreat of state activity raises questions about authority and governance in education, especially regarding representation and expertise.
- New philanthropy complicates education policy analysis by elevating a plethora of actors, networks, governance mechanisms, values and influences in education policy processes, requiring the use of new education policy analysis tools.

While philanthropists have been active in education and development for some time, “[new philanthropy](#)” is characterized by moves towards more intensive oversight, a focus on impact metrics and a [strategic congruence](#) of agendas (Figure 1). Variations of this movement include [effective](#) and [venture philanthropy](#), which seek to quantify a “return on investment,” to build organizational capacity to address targeted social needs and to leverage business sector acumen, such as entrepreneurialism, innovation and technology enhancement in the non-profit sector. Thus, this movement has also been [labelled “philanthrocapitalism,”](#) and critics have noted that much new philanthropy emerges from newly wealthy individuals – often from the technology sector – who derived their fortunes through [predatory](#) business practices and tax avoidance. However, its application to education development is apparent and influential across the globe, with education as a [primary area](#) of “new philanthropic” activity.

The organizational forms of new philanthropy vary, but indicate an evolution away from traditional models. In addition to established foundations and trusts, new philanthropies

in education include [benefit corporations](#), [CSR](#) programs, and for-profit [limited liability companies](#) (LLCs). They have taken the lead in promoting [public-private partnerships](#) that establish formal relationships between philanthropies and governments to address specific challenges. Overall, these trends indicate a retreat of the state as the singular solution to social issues and the elevation of business sensibilities, reflecting what newly wealthy philanthropists perceive as success factors.

In introducing to education this new philanthropic wealth that is not subject to public accountability, these actors assume [functions of the state](#) by advancing market-style, neoliberal conceptions of education often removed from any public contestation. As self-appointed social problem-solvers, new philanthropists gain legitimacy by [leveraging social and cultural capital](#) in [elite networks](#) that is readily translated into policy currency, which is then used to direct educational agendas. This allows them to gain [power](#) over schooling and education policy agenda-setting, thus becoming legitimate education [governance actors](#).

These new philanthropies in education adhere to the ideology of “[doing good while doing well.](#)” which has been [critiqued](#) as self-serving for failing to address inequitable systems. However, regardless of the impacts, which have been [contested](#), new philanthropy tends to project a social model that reflects the business world in which the philanthropists accumulated their fortunes. For instance, the [Gates and Zuckerberg](#) fortunes have been leveraged to push some countries towards more market-style systems of schooling. This approach projects assumptions regarding [how education is perceived or valued by consumers and delivered by educational organizations](#). This has critical implications for educational [diversity, equity](#) and inclusivity, since market-style education typically [differentiates educational offerings](#), segmenting both providers and [consumers](#) into [distinct groups](#) based on the ability to pay.

In advancing policy agendas that promote a particular conception of education, new philanthropy has also tended to assert its authority over other stakeholders who may have a more immediate claim on education. While new philanthropy has responded to [critiques](#)



of being heavy-handed by seeking more relationships with on-the-ground partners, its overall actions still often supplant other voices in education, including communities, local institutions, and – most notably – democratic governance actors. This trend raises important questions of authority and expertise regarding the appropriate governance of schooling.

Therefore, whether philanthropy in education is “doing good” is problematic and begs the following questions: Who gets to define the “good” of schooling and thus set education policy agendas? How is change measured, and what is desirable change? How can specific change be attributed to philanthropic efforts? How do we make sense of a plethora of configurations of organizations and networks operating as philanthropies? How is education affected by these philanthropies?

Figure 1
New Philanthropy/Philanthrocapitalism

NEW PHILANTHROPY/PHILANTHROCAPITALISM	
<p>CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring business sector sensibilities into social sector • Elevates intensive oversight of outcomes • Focuses on impact metrics • Often exhibit similar agendas 	<p>EFFECTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealth/resources introduced are not subject to public accountability • Promotion of market style, neoliberal conceptions of education not subject to public conversation • Leveraging financial, social, cultural, and political capital to influence educational policy agendas • Increase influence over schooling • Become institutionalized education governance actors
<p>TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit corporations • Corporate social responsibility programs • For Profit LLCs 	<p>CONSEQUENCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes how consumers value education and how it is delivered by educational providers • Leads to segmentations of educational offerings not conducive to diverse, equitable, and inclusive education • Supplanting other voices in education including communities, local institutions and democratic governance

Source: Authors illustration.

HOW NEW PHILANTHROPY IS PARTICIPATING IN EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

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Key takeaways:

- New philanthropy enacts different forms of policy work that put it in a privileged position and allow it to inform education policy with philanthropies' views and evidence.
- At the same time, it can pose a challenge to giving an equal voice to other groups in the educational arena.
- New forms of mediation and regulation of education governance are needed, aimed at democratic participation and accountability.

New philanthropy has had growing participation in public education management internationally, having moved from service delivery to policymaking and being able to advance education agendas and (re)shape education policy. This growing role raises both enthusiastic and critical perspectives. These non-state actors can contribute to improving education, but also create uneven power relations that can be harmful for education governance. Thus, it is important to understand how new philanthropy is participating in education policymaking, through which strategies and how it affects the management of education.

First, new philanthropy funds and produces research and shares policy ideas in many venues and spaces. This can include conducting studies, publishing reports and papers, presenting bills and holding congressional hearings, speeches, public events and informal meetings. Time, money and effort are invested in pushing one's agenda forward. The production of evidence and mobilising knowledge are also essential to constructing an authoritative voice, which forms and shifts discourses in the educational field. Thus, new philanthropy shifts meanings and understandings in and of education while positioning itself as an expert.

Second, foundations invest in the creation and maintenance of networks. Relational efforts may include online and face-to-face events and meetings, creating coalitions and connecting groups, which animate vast networks that connect public and private actors from education and other sectors. Organisations and individuals are brought together by their interests and agendas, creating moral and epistemic communities. New philanthropy is well situated to construct and use network relationships amongst non-profit organisations, for-profit organisations and government representatives, leveraging funding and having access to decision-making spaces or even creating parallel ones.

Third, new philanthropy creates new institutional arrangements. It participates in the management of education through formal partnerships with governments and by offering services directly to schools, teachers and students, with teaching materials, digital platforms and training programmes, for example. This allows for reforming public administration and the institutionalisation of policy ideas and relationships created and developed through discursive and relational efforts.

Thus, in the last few decades, new philanthropy has assembled large amounts of resources that allow for a series of activities that, put together, grant it considerable participation in education governance. With knowledge dissemination, foundations frame policy problems and build legitimacy. They also coordinate efforts, amass influence and resources and open channels between sectors and organisations, creating powerful coalitions and networks that can change practices in management and teaching. New philanthropy's privileged position in governance is constructed through a continuous combination of discursive, relational and institutional elements. As a result, foundations build legitimacy that distances them from their funding sources, reinforcing the image of generosity and expertise. This image also shows them in a more favourable light than many traditional non-profits and social movements, while philanthropies' significant resources and network connections also provide political advantage over grassroots and popular organisations. In these ways, philanthropists deepen their participation in education governance in ways that can exclude other social groups.



RECENT TRENDS IN “GLOBAL EDUCATION” PHILANTHROPY

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Secretariat of the International Education Funders Group (IEFG)

Key takeaways:

- Education philanthropy is dominated by the US and Europe, but significant domestic philanthropy ecosystems now exist in middle-income countries.
- There is a strong desire to “achieve systems change,” defined and pursued in various ways. However, no one foundation can do it all. Many education problems are complex; philanthropies want space and opportunity to learn.
- Like traditional aid actors, philanthropy is interested in scale, sustainability and cross-sector impact, but the modus operandi of foundations often provides an alternative, more nimble approach.
- Philanthropies encourage each other to use their voices to boost policy and advocacy efforts, e.g. signing a joint statement to the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, bringing a collective voice of philanthropy to the global stage for the first time.

NORRAG research and the OECD 2021 data give us the most precise estimates we have of the scale and scope of philanthropy focused on improving education outcomes across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the Middle East. Anecdotal reflections from those in the philanthropy community in these regions add to this. Education is the primary sector focus of domestic philanthropy. It is the second largest philanthropic focus in these regions after health. Governments and education actors around the world value the contribution of philanthropy as a catalyst, a thought leader, an enabler of innovation and evidence use, as well as a funder.

Philanthropy in education is a dynamic and constantly evolving sphere of activity. To better appreciate the role that philanthropy plays in the global education sphere, we need to reflect on both absolute trends across philanthropy and how philanthropy is positioned within the broader global financing and policy space. We are a small team, which enables connection and learning across 100 education philanthropy organisations, members of the IEFG. We see the evolution of philanthropy in our member dashboard and from our unique vantage point of having conversations across our membership.

Even since 2019, when the NORRAG book [Philanthropy in Education](#) (Ridge & Terway, 2019) was published, we have seen significant change.

We believe that “global education” philanthropy is at an inflexion point. While the monetary value of philanthropic contributions remains considerably lower than overseas development assistance (ODA), the philanthropic community has established its relevance as a key stakeholder in national and global education policy debates.

1. Education philanthropy remains US- and Europe-dominated, with European organisations tending to be more active in the network, but the number of foundations based in Africa, Asia, LAC and the Middle East in our network is growing. Significant domestic philanthropy ecosystems now exist in middle-income countries, including Brazil, India and South Africa. The global aspect of our work entails identifying and sharing lessons across these diverse geographies, as well as providing member organisations with the structures and opportunities to pursue more formal collaborations. Everyone in our network is equal, and we celebrate and encourage the

diversity of views and perspectives that our range of members brings to each other.

2. Mature portfolios give a foundation of confidence. The rolling door continues: as some re-strategise away from a global education grant portfolio to focus on other problems or geographies, others start up new education portfolios. However, for the significant majority, commitment to an approach is firmly established – what they fund (e.g. foundational learning, early childhood education, financial education, learning differences and youth skills), who they fund (e.g. girls, refugees, out-of-school children, in-school children and children with disabilities), where they fund and how they fund (e.g. research grants, advocacy grants, unrestricted grants and results-based grants). This means that foundation staff and boards spend less time asking these questions and, on the bed of experience, can look outward rather than inward.

3. A strong desire to “achieve systems change.” This is defined and pursued in a variety of ways, but across all is a common recognition that no one foundation can do it all, that many of these education problems



are complex, that they want space and an opportunity to learn – from each other, from the evidence of education implementation and from policymakers. Like traditional aid actors, philanthropy is interested in questions of scale, sustainability and cross-sector impact. The modus operandi of foundations often provides an alternative, nimble space to contrast with the slow pace of traditional global architectures and bureaucracies.

4. Recognition of the value of collaboration (among those who network) as a philanthropy community and with others.

We see philanthropy encouraging others to use their voices, and different perspectives boost policy and advocacy efforts. It was this desire that led nearly 60 philanthropic organisations to sign a [joint statement to the Transforming Education Summit](#) in 2022. IIEG and OECD's network of foundations working in development (netFWD) collaborated with NORRAG, UNESCO and the Global Partnership for Education to convene a [high-level event](#) in the margins of this summit, bringing a collective voice of philanthropy to the global stage for the first time. This was the beginning of an [effort towards collective action](#), which we, as networks supporting education philanthropy, will sustain. Philanthropy can, for example, use this voice to embed the importance of education into the major policy agendas of our time: climate, food systems and global health.

Philanthropy can coordinate and convene at the country level and bring forgotten or denied voices to the fore in national and global debates.

We see great potential for philanthropic voices and action to contribute to the dramatic improvements in education outcomes that we all want to see around the world. We should see the diversity within philanthropy as something to be harnessed and deploy philanthropy's unique roles as strategic partners in this urgent effort.



2

PHILANTHROPY IN EDUCATION IN AFRICA: A SPACE FOR LEARNING AND COLLABORATION

Africa has a long history of philanthropic giving rooted in the cultural approach to community engagement. Philanthropic actors have been collaborating with diverse actors to address the educational needs of society through local solutions rather than interventions conceived and designed outside the community. In this section, the authors highlight the initiatives and approaches in the region to facilitate substantive collaboration between the community, government, philanthropies and service providers. The authors provide reflections to actors in the global North on the nature of philanthropic collaboration in Africa, which is rooted in the local ecosystem and approaches.

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TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN PHILANTHROPY

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Key takeaways:

- African philanthropy has created spaces for learning and collaboration, best contextualized within the African philosophy of Ubuntu, in which you care for others because caring for their well-being also translates to your own well-being.
- Ubuntu philanthropy is an act of giving to support others through the lens of our own humanity.
- Rather than any form of top-down power dynamic, philanthropic funders from outside the African context should consult on the African-based grantees' priorities and respect the context and worldview of the areas where they work.

Philanthropy has been discussed and studied more from the global North perspective, with limited voices from the global South, particularly from Africa. As Tade Aina (2013) demonstrated in his book *Giving to Help, Helping to Give*, the evolution of African philanthropy can be traced from the pre-colonial and colonial eras through the post-colonial era to current developments. To understand educational philanthropy within the African context of today, it is important to go beyond the colonial past and take into account the new ecology of funders, including the African diaspora, the emerging African philanthropy sector and pan-Africanism, as the foundation for Africa's development (Moyo & Ramsamy, 2014).

It is equally important to understand the motivational framework from which the spirit of philanthropy has emerged on the continent. Ubuntu is the African philosophy of caring about others, not only for their well-being, but also with the understanding that their well-being translates to your own well-being. What is Ubuntu philanthropy? In this context, it is defined as an act of giving to support others through the lens of our own humanity or, as Precious Moloi-Motsepe (2019) phrased it, it is "to consider our individual power through the lens of humanness and aim for the achievement

of oneness. Through philanthropy, as in Ubuntu, we reimagine the world as a place of peace, compassion, respect, and justice." It is from this angle that we should aim to make sense of how African philanthropy is to be understood.

In some African countries, philanthropic activities made learning accessible to groups that would otherwise have been unable to access education. However, funders from the global North have needed constant reminders of the importance of consultation so that the grantors' own agendas did not alter their African-based grantees' priorities, and power dynamics did not mold the relationship. In this regard, we make the case that philanthropy in the grantor-grantee relationship should not be top-down but should rather be truly consultative as the asymmetry of power remains active. While the dynamics of these funders encouraged collaboration and paid attention to their African beneficiaries' input, they maintained an agenda close to their own worldview of democracy, liberal economics and gender equality. Legitimacy was determined by relative social, political and economic power (Jaumont, 2016; Moja & Jaumont, 2019, 2020).

We believe that African philanthropy, particularly in the education sector, has created spaces for learning and collaboration and therefore needs to be understood from that perspective. This approach would provide a useful roadmap for funders from the global North when they want to impact a sector like education in Africa and gain legitimacy in doing so.



COLLABORATION BETWEEN PHILANTHROPY AND GOVERNMENT: LESSONS FROM THE ZENEX FOUNDATION

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Key takeaways:

- Collaborative efforts must develop a shared understanding of the purpose, advantages and disadvantages and added value of the collaboration above individual efforts.
- Philanthropy–government collaboration, at a minimum, requires a dedicated champion in a senior role within the government bureaucracy.
- Power relations must be actively managed to promote active contribution and participation on both sides.
- When governments contribute their human or financial resources to a project/intervention, the chances are higher that they will ensure participation, ownership and sustainability of policy and practices.
- Accountability mechanisms, governance structures and performance measures must accompany responsibilities.

Over the past 10 years, the Zenex Foundation has worked collaboratively with the South African government to achieve systemic change in education. The focus on collaboration is particularly relevant to LMIC, where governments assume the primary mandate for public education. Governments need to work more closely with philanthropies in these socioeconomic contexts to achieve their goals. Drawing on our experience in South Africa, we explore the role of philanthropy in fostering collaboration, specifically the nature of collaboration between state actors and philanthropy in order to maximise the efforts of both stakeholders.

While education in LMIC is underfinanced, countries like South Africa spend a significant proportion of their gross domestic product (GDP) on education (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). However, the bulk of funding is for core costs, such as salaries and infrastructure, leaving very little for interventions and resources to improve quality. Moreover, resources are not used efficiently to improve systemic outcomes. This is largely the result of poor capacity within

bureaucracies to lead and manage effective education change. While it is important to augment existing financial resources, it is even more important to play an active role in building capacity and promoting the effective use of these resources. Education economist Nic Spaull states that the best use of private money is to influence how public money is spent (Spaull, 2021). At the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022, philanthropies pledged to play a more substantive role in brokering relationships between public and private actors towards evidence-based systemic change (International Education Funders Group, 2022).

Most philanthropies are committed to working collaboratively with education stakeholders to achieve systemic change. That said, the term “collaboration” has many different meanings and forms across the sector, representing a continuum of engagement (Dialogue, 2022). Collaborations can be understood through the matrix of high and low financial investment versus high and low participation. For example, some philanthropies provide financial support with limited active involvement. Others provide

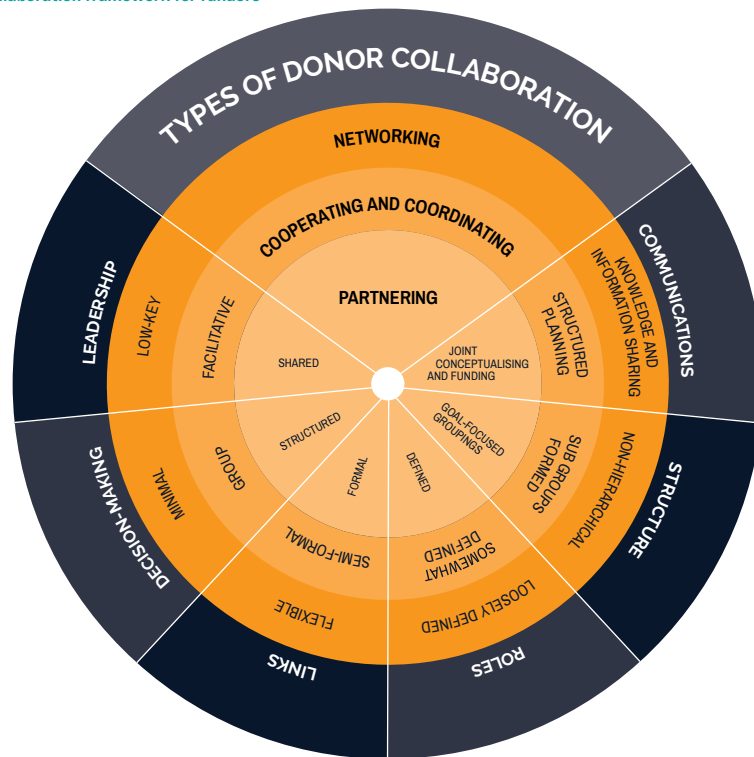
high levels of involvement, including technical support, with low levels of funding. Each of these collaborations has specific traits around roles, structure, leadership and decision-making. It is important to adopt the model that is best suited to the context and intended outcomes of programmes (See Figure 2).

In our experience, collaboration driven by high levels of funding and high participation is better able to meet the strategic imperative to influence education policies and practices and promote evidence-based systemic change. Active engagement by philanthropies brings diversity in skills and thinking, viewpoints from outside the system and flexible decision-making opportunities. In this approach, philanthropy actively participates in robust engagements to find solutions and provides additional much-needed capacity.

Based on Zenex’s collaboration with the government, the following are some of the key lessons about the conditions for successful high investment, a high-participation [model](#)



Figure 2
Collaboration framework for funders



Source: Zenex Foundation. (2016). *Learning and working together: A framework for donor collaboration.*

of collaboration between the government and philanthropic actors:

1. Collaborative efforts must develop a shared understanding of the problem, vision and outcomes. This takes time and requires financial and human resources to facilitate engagements to achieve a common purpose. Many collaborations assume a common purpose, which can raise challenges during the programme. It is

important to outline explicitly the purpose of collaboration and what advantages and disadvantages it brings and agree that the collaboration will result in better outcomes than individual efforts.

2. Collaboration works best if there is a dedicated champion in a senior role within the government bureaucracy – this is a minimum factor. This is particularly important given the lengthy

bureaucratic processes within government structures, especially with regard to the procurement of services and goods. Often, governments delegate change, which creates inconsistency and stagnation and results in an even lengthier advocacy and stakeholder buy-in process.

3. Understanding and acknowledging that different organisations have different identities and come with different mandates. These differences can be productive, but they can also result in challenges. Collaborations must create a middle ground where all stakeholders can co-exist without having to fundamentally alter their various identities and mandates. The compromises must be palatable and fair to all parties.

4. Government–philanthropy collaborations have a complex power dynamic. Strong governments can exert power over philanthropy actors who then attempt to be compliant in non-critical ways. However, weaker governments may be at the mercy of philanthropies and serve as passive and obedient recipients. Neither of these extreme situations is useful. Instead, collaborations should strive for a middle road to ensure that power relations are managed to promote active contribution and participation from philanthropy as well as government representatives.

5. Make clear the contributions, roles and responsibilities of each party. Ensure

that the contribution of philanthropy goes beyond financial giving and that the contribution by the government goes beyond “financial taking.” If governments contribute their human or financial resources to a project or intervention, the chances are higher that they will ensure participation and ownership and increase possibilities for embedding and sustaining policy and practice. Responsibilities must be accompanied by accountability mechanisms, governance structures and performance measures. If roles and responsibilities are not explicit, large programmes can fail, blame is high and trust breaks down.

In LMIC in the global South, education is a priority for domestic philanthropy and plays a critical and primary role in system change. This requires collaboration between the government, philanthropies, academic/research institutions and non-governmental implementing agencies. The Zenex Foundation considers that multi-stakeholder collaborations, while complex, offer the best opportunity to provide quality education for all children.

PHILANTHROPY IN EDUCATION IN AFRICA: A SPACE FOR LEARNING AND NEW FORMS OF COLLABORATION

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Key takeaways:

New models of public–private partnerships that include citizens and civil society provide a number of opportunities:

- accountability structures that are more transparent and tamper-proof;
- empowered government agencies;
- citizens at the decision-making table; and
- smart contracts programmed into delivery mechanisms.

Of course, there are also challenges:

- the use of technological solutions that are short-term and less impactful;
- a strong technical partner is needed but it may be costly and difficult to find;
- undue influence of the private sector globally; and
- governments and philanthropic organisations may be reluctant to test a new model.

The majority of governments collaborate with philanthropic organisations in one way or another to improve education systems. In the post-pandemic context, characterised by the negative impacts of the pandemic on countries across the world (Moffat, 2022) but proportionally more so on LMIC (OECD, 2020), such collaborations are needed more than ever. Public purses are increasingly stretched to breaking point, necessitating closer collaboration with both corporate and philanthropic funders. However, the role of philanthropy in education in Africa is complex, often misunderstood and certainly not uncontested (Gastrow, 2022; NORRAG et al., 2019). This brief contribution reflects on the potential for philanthropy to be more involved in new forms of PPPs in Africa in the post-COVID-19 context by drawing on innovation underway in South Africa.

Civil society organisations, more often than not, act as implementing agencies and partners within this nexus between governments and philanthropic agencies (Fleet, 2011). However, civil organisations and citizens seldom feature in

forms of collaboration in any significant manner, perhaps beyond being passive beneficiaries. There is, however, a recognition that this may change: “The complexity of wicked problems may drive philanthropies to supplement government at their discretion by increasing unheard voices on the ground and detecting social demands” (Strachwitz et al., 2021, p. 454). A new governance model currently being explored in South Africa offers some hope (See Figure 3). The model involving citizens, civil society, government and private agencies is being elaborated on as part of the development of an interoperable data platform that aims to connect all post-school data systems in the country (West & Beukes, 2021). The intention is for the “CC x PPP” model to be realised through a combination of existing national legislation and more futuristic decentralised models based on immutable technologies, currently better known as decentralised autonomous organisations (DAOs). The thinking is not unique to South Africa, with many complementary initiatives underway in other parts of the world linked strongly to digital citizenship, data

privacy and credentialing, as well as to “crowd in” innovative finance (Rose et al., 2013).

These new models provide a number of opportunities:

- accountability structures can be more transparent and are by and large tamper-proof;
- government agencies can be empowered with the “resources, information, and skills needed to design, develop, and manage the complex contracting processes that underlie PPP programmes” (Patrinos et al., 2009, p. 54);
- power relations are equalised (Ostrander, 2007), with even citizens given a seat at the decision-making table; and
- building on learnings from results-based financing, smart contracts can be programmed into the delivery mechanisms.

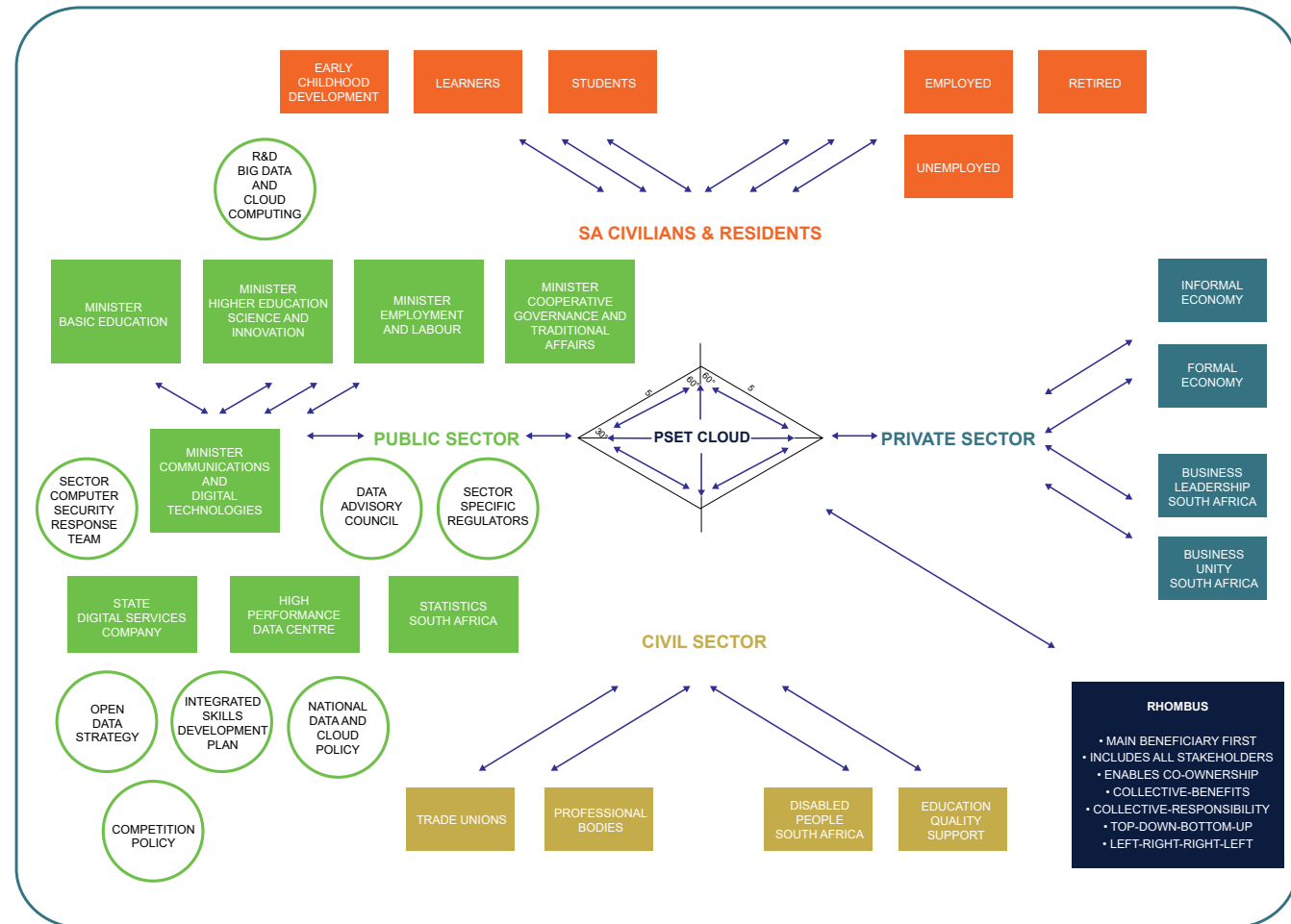
Of course, there are also challenges:



- technological solutions that are short-term and less impactful may be implemented as quick wins, but with limited impact;
- a strong technical partner is required to develop and oversee the CCxPPP model, which may be costly and difficult to find;
- undue influence of the private sector globally (Ridge, 2019a); and
- governments and philanthropic organisations may be reluctant to test a new model that may appear too abstract and fluid.

Technology can be a distractor. Technology also has the potential to face “wicked problems” head-on through new forms of collaboration that were not possible even five years ago. Time will tell who has the courage to test these alternative models (OECD, 2019). Time will, however, not be so kind to us if we do not try.

Figure 3
Citizen-civil-public-private partnership



Source: West, P. G., & Beukes, C. J. (2021). *Digital governance advisory note*. JET Education Services; merSETA.

BUILDING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP MODELS FOR A SHIFT IN AFRICA

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Key takeaways:

- Build platforms for sharing new ideas with marginalised communities, since communities with higher levels of connectedness yield more collaboration.
- Expand the way we think with participants from a wider circle within and outside the ecosystem.
- Prioritise ensuring inclusion and have a principal purpose while co-creating solutions that move us forward.

Introduction

New beginnings and renewed hope at the beginning of each year are commonplace, and 2024 will be no different, especially with the reality of the aftermath of a pandemic, forced migration due to conflict, persecution, and environmental factors that contribute to social and political challenges. Despite the notion that the economic impact of COVID-19 is expected to last well into the medium term – with economies in Sub-Saharan Africa contracting and an anticipated “26 million people across the African continent being pushed into extreme poverty” (Mitra & George, 2020, p. 31) – humanity remains optimistic and innovative in exploring new approaches to continued problems. The global emergency has raised the urgency for new frameworks, fresh approaches and solutions designed to help the most vulnerable and marginalised of our society.

There seems to be a shift, not only in how we think and act in the face of life-threatening challenges, but also in how we address newly perceived threats of a technological kind. Artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, the ethics

and governance of data privacy and a widening skills gap are presenting major hurdles. People who are driving change are ensuring that it happens rapidly to avoid self-destruction. There is a need for an approach or a scaffold to guide the thinking, engagement, and exploration of those wanting to make a meaningful difference. A shift in Africa cannot happen without mobilising human resources and paying attention to education, empowerment and building community ownership models. But where and how does one start to think innovatively about new approaches to old problems amid new technologies? This article proposes a multi-layered approach for systems change in education, in which building the agency and involvement of communities are key.

Current trends

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) (2019), two major trends became clear as Africa approached the fourth Industrial Revolution: 1) there is growth in the number of models through which philanthropy can take shape and 2) there is economic growth through innovation across the continent. The WEF (2019) further advocates

that when these two trends are combined, collaborative philanthropy can transform in a way that brings international donors and local philanthropists together to solve pressing issues with better insights and a more meaningful impact. Insights that come from local philanthropists provide a better idea of what the problems are closer to the ground and nearer to the affected people. This avoids assuming that a model or solution developed outside a specific situation will solve the problem.

The recent global crisis has also made traditional ways of approaching development work impractical. Current global challenges create a situation that questions the core assumptions and worldview underpinning most socioeconomic development initiatives. It deepens the disparities between privileged and marginalised communities and indirectly creates the space and opportunity to explore new possibilities. In fact, it creates the urgency for systems shifts. Pirson et al. (2019) make the case that solutions and approaches creating social change often come from innovations championed by social entrepreneurs. However,



what is necessary is the negotiation of a solution space without compromising the agency of marginalised or vulnerable communities to ensure lasting transformation. Through collaboration and frequent consultation, philanthropists must become more aware of the need for people to take ownership of their own problems before assuming that funding can solve a problem. Therefore, as a collective, we should be questioning the following:

1. How can people and communities gain more sovereignty over the capital they need for investment in what matters to them?
2. How can the voices of people, perspectives and priorities influence decisions about investments which affect their lives?
3. How might this lead us towards new and better systems that are so urgently needed?

Creating lasting change

A common mistake philanthropists make is to view a problem through a narrow lens, find a solution and then try to take the solution to scale for impact. In reality, what is needed for lasting change is to apply a more holistic view, consult widely to understand the problems on the ground from multiple perspectives within the ecosystem and come up with a common vision or end goal as a collective. The aim is for all stakeholders within the ecosystem to agree on a common strategy. This does not stop individual social entrepreneurs from pursuing their areas of speciality on a local level while still working

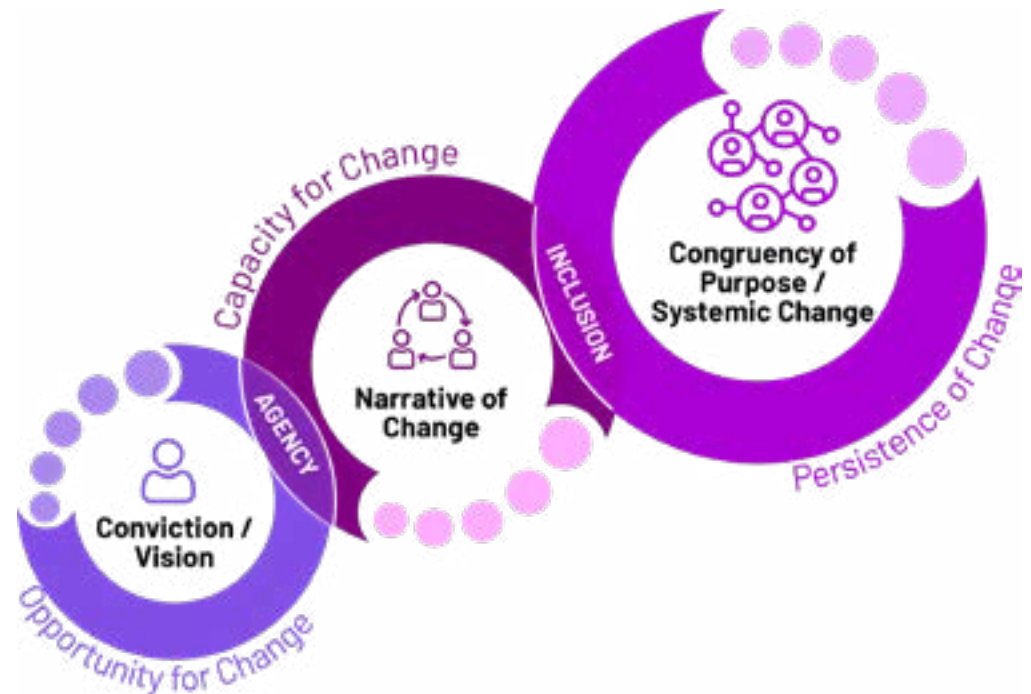
towards the common vision with a congruency of purpose that was set collaboratively.

A green paper on system innovation, *Building Better Systems*, explores the way that change at different levels, from the micro to the macro, can affect systems. Habisch and Adau (2013) also claim that building social capital happens at three levels: at a personal level, where an individual recognises the value of the community and brokers' connection to specific opportunities through their personal network; at an organisational level, where new ways of collaborating and cooperating are developed to provide more opportunity; and at an institutional level, where governance and support processes are changed to provide enduring support and recognition to vulnerable communities to help them participate in society more equitably.

There is a strong argument that people would feel a sense of power shifting away from governments and philanthropists if the focus was on building a supportive network instead. Finding a balance between technology integration and human capital investments will be critical to enhancing productivity (WEF, 2019). The proposed community ownership model in Figure 4 would see a congruency of purpose that could lead to systemic change.

The community ownership model shifts the opportunity for change to the capacity for change needed. Empowerment and creating agency must be part of the education policy framework so that those at the margins of society are brought into the conversation. This

Figure 4
Building a community ownership model for systems change



Source: Author illustration

PHILANTHROPY IN EDUCATION IN AFRICA: AN EVER-DEEPENING RESPONSE

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Key takeaways:

- In searching for education solutions, focus on people's needs in context by engaging carefully and listening deeply to them from their perspective.
- Philanthropies should approach their involvement in education with a focus on holistic education, striving to educate and value the individual child's whole needs and potential.
- Multiple African initiatives already engage in holistic education. They could be used as models as other philanthropies move to support collaboration from all elements within each system to emerge naturally rather than be externally imposed.

If salvation and help are to come, it is from the child, for the child is the constructor of man [sic] and so of society. The child is endowed with an inner power which can guide us to a more enlightened future. Education should no longer be mostly imparting of knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking the release of human potentialities.

Maria Montessori

After nearly three decades of ever-deepening personal engagement in the field seeking appropriate and enabling approaches to education, the paradigm is clear. Within education, educators and philanthropists tend to look and engage in the wrong places. We look from the outside with our lenses. We engage on our terms with our mindsets and historical programming. We offer responses using tools – of technology and systems – that we believe will provide the shifts required to “educate at scale” and “meet the needs of the most marginalised.” Yet, the challenges and depth of need continue to escalate and deepen. The fact is that the people in each system are generally forgotten. Who the people are, where they are and what

everyone's individual needs and worldviews are must be taken into account. Until we do so, we will continue to find ourselves falling further and further behind.

Fortunately, there are answers in plain sight. There is growing discussion and action in the realms of listening, learning and engaging with the field to allow the emergence of more holistic approaches. Philanthropies should approach their involvement in education with a focus on holistic education, striving to educate and value the whole child's needs and potential rather than a narrow external perspective.

Already, many exciting initiatives follow and espouse approaches that could shift the system to meet the ever-deepening needs. These approaches focus on the human being as the first, second and third port of call. They focus on people's needs for deep nurturing and the need to slow down, engage carefully and listen deeply to them from their perspective. It is critical to meet “their” needs prior to initiating responses that we, with our modern-day lenses, believe will “solve the intractable issues of our time.”

The original meaning of the word “education,” according to its Latin roots, is to lead out or bring forth that which lives within the human being. To truly educate is to nourish the unique and unfathomable possibilities that each individual introduces into the world. Teachers and parents who know this seek to encourage the distinct potentials of the children in their care.

Historically, this approach has been utilised with meaningful and relevant success. Wise leaders with deep insight, such as Rudolph Steiner, Maria Montessori and others, understood the need for children and pupils to be appreciated, nurtured and held with deep reverence for their individual selves. The education of young human beings should involve much more than simply moulding them into future workers or citizens. Education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child.

Genuinely holistic education, as espoused by Montessori and Steiner, amongst others, is based



on the principle that each person finds their identity, meaning and purpose in life through connections to others, to nature, and to values such as compassion and peace. All this must also be underpinned by a reverence for life and an enthusiastic love of learning. This is done not through an academic curriculum that reduces the world into instructional bundles, but through direct engagement with each child. Vital, too, is the realisation of the diverse learning styles and needs of each developing human being.

Philanthropy has a direct and powerful role to play here. Through its broad ecosystems and networks, it can unearth, support and highlight the work of those who embody this type of approach and then promote the lessons and outcomes widely. The reality is that these systems are over a century old, with well-proven responses to many of the current challenges available to policymakers and educators.

Responses from early childhood development to high schools must meet these needs and focus deeply on each individual and their requirements for context, nourishment and support in this increasingly ever-challenging world. Technology has a part to play, but cannot be the first (or second!) response. For instance, meeting climate change demands extends beyond actions or technologies that alleviate or lessen the current impact. A mindset shift is required across the board, and conscious education has a deep and vital role to play.

Beginning in early childhood, education and perspectives can be provided through simple

stories and actions that engender lifelong learning.

- At an unsung three-decade-old pre-primary school in South Africa, [The Birches](#), simple, time-tested ideas and actions are employed that not only raise the awareness of each child, but also materially impact the understanding and future shift of responses in the parents and the family at large.

Assisting high school students to find solace and inspiration that dramatically improves their daily responses and performances in the classroom and beyond is similarly simple.

- [Tomorrow's Leaders in Training](#) programme is growing in depth and value to the South African system and has risen to meet these needs, with increasing demand for their engagement based on the shifts they enable through their programmes led by alive-conscious young facilitators.
- In Morocco, the [Tamkeen Community Initiative](#), a story of growing a shared understanding of governance and change in social ecosystems that realises the magnitude of silent transformation, is underway. It is a story of the co-reflected experience of deep human relationships.

The way forward will be clear if we allow collaboration from all elements within each system to emerge naturally rather than be constructed externally. To support this, philanthropy must urgently engage in support

of co-facilitation and enquiry, learning and understanding – all embedded in humility and trusting the human potential that will allow genuine co-creation and ultimately realise and embody love as the core.



3

PHILANTHROPY IN EDUCATION: ADDRESSING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Various actors in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are tackling the challenge of high levels of inequality within the education sector. New philanthropies, especially ones that bring business principles into education development, are increasingly engaging with public education systems in the region. The authors in this section argue that while many address the right to education and the equity challenge, they may redefine the issues through their approaches. The articles showcase examples of philanthropic engagement in Argentina, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Peru and examine the new techniques, networks and relationships being formed within the education system.

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PHILANTHROPY AND EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: BETWEEN NEW QUESTIONS AND STRUCTURAL TRENDS

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Key takeaways:

- Further understanding of new forms of private actors' influence in education and their impact is needed in the region to avoid reproducing historical inequities and assuming that philanthropy is "neutral" in terms of power relations.
- Cross-sector collaboration presents interesting opportunities to mobilise financial and technical resources into public education systems.
- Strong accountability frameworks are needed to ensure transparency and balanced participation in education governance.

Philanthropy in education gathers a minority group of actors "willing to give" resources in societies with growing inequities and pressing challenges. This entails a set of tensions that question the extent to which philanthropists can be conceived as potential social "saviours" as merely the incarnation of structural inequities and forms of power and wealth concentration. It is particularly relevant to understand philanthropic influence in education across LAC. The region shows the greatest inequity in the world combined with political instability and "new" challenges (e.g. climate change and humanitarian crises). In this context, it is worth asking who these philanthropic actors are; how their philanthropic activities connect with other social realms (industry, politics, etc.); what their agendas are; who they partner with; and how they mobilise resources, values, reforms, programmes and agreements with the public sector.

One of the most relevant issues is how philanthropy relates to states and public systems. LAC show divergent policy landscapes in what is referred to as the consolidation of nation-states, education systems and the role of private actors, including philanthropy. In one type of education policy landscape, states have kept a central role in education policies (regulation, provision,

management, financing and innovation) after early development of education systems embedded in a strong "social progressiveness" imaginary (Tedesco, 2012). Here, philanthropic actors find marginal opportunities for their development, although these have increased in the last two decades. This is the case, for example, in Argentina and Uruguay. However, philanthropy in education has majorly developed in the region based on another type of policy landscape. Here, nation-states historically faced significant difficulties in establishing robust education systems across the 20th century, and local elites played a more central role in economic, political and social structures, including education. In this landscape, philanthropic actors have found more opportunities to mobilise their resources, ideas and connections with states and other non-state actors. These opportunities were formalised and intensified, especially after the consolidation of democracies and state reforms during the 1980s and 1990s. These are the cases, for example, of Brazil, Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

Another central issue in this field is how philanthropy enables a "natural" reconciliation of private actors' resources, ideas and initiatives with public welfare. Critical perspectives warn that philanthropy can work as a form of power concentration threatening

democratic fundamentals (e.g. checks and balances) or enhancing mechanisms for exploiting private interests (e.g. profit-making, marketing and lobbying). For example, in Argentina, a philanthropic foundation created by a global edu-corporation was funded by Argentina's national state to implement a teacher training programme (Matovich & Esper, 2023). These blurred boundaries between the public and private sectors are embedded in the mobilisation of philanthropic financial resources, the circulation of ideas and the authority gained across policy networks. Again, these questions are particularly relevant in a region like LAC, where inequities and elite discourses can potentially mark the pace of societies' political, economic and social lives and gain influence over other education stakeholders.

Philanthropy can potentially offer an opportunity to bring financial and technical resources into education systems. This is attractive in the LAC countries dealing with budget constraints and frequently insufficient technical capacities to implement reforms, monitor systems and support teachers. Yet, education policy analysis needs to assess the opportunities, risks and implications of philanthropic actors' participation in education policies.



CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY JEOPARDIZES PUBLIC EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES

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Key takeaways:

Three challenges face LAC and Lusophone countries:

- inducing business philanthropy to the democratic management of public education involving all actors of educational policy, especially students, teachers and school communities;
- regulating the role of the for-profit and non-profit private sectors in public education, as proposed in the Abidjan Principles (2019; Frank et al., 2021); and
- strengthening South–South cooperation in state education policies and the democratic management and public financing of education.

The phenomenon of expanding the role of philanthropy in education manifests itself in different degrees and modalities in LAC and Lusophone countries. However, some characteristics and general trends already identified will be developed in this article.

Public education systems in the region are relatively recent compared to the reality of the global North. Practically no Latin American or Lusophone countries have achieved universal access to compulsory and free education. Additionally, serious inequalities in educational provision and deficiencies in educational administration exist in the region. In such contexts, corporate philanthropy in education ends up assuming a substitutive role for state action without this being perceived as a transfer of previously consolidated responsibilities. On the other hand, educational philanthropy finds a wide field of experimentation in applying managerial approaches from corporate governance, disseminated as solutions to management deficits in the public sector.

This aspect is dealt with in the report *Mapeo sobre Tendencias de la Privatización de la Educación en América Latina y el Caribe*. In 10 of the 12 countries analyzed, outstanding business networks and coalitions have been created in the last two decades with the explicit purpose of offering corporate governance projects and technical staff to the public management of educational systems at national and local levels (CLADE, 2014). In 2011, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil por la Educación (REDUCA) was created. By 2022, they had reached 17 countries through the creation of national-level networks for business philanthropy in education.

Another accentuated trend in such countries concerns the funding gap and its relationship with emerging innovative mechanisms for funding public education. During the 1990s and 2000s, a managerialist view of the underperformance of educational systems was predominant among government actors and multilateral organizations. Many corporate philanthropists strongly denied the reality of

underfinancing public education. They claimed that education problems were management problems rather than due to under-resourcing. Nonetheless, since the creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), governments and development agencies agreed there was a “funding gap” to reach these goals. After failing to fulfill the MDGs, countries again committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, with the accumulation of compelling longitudinal data on state expenditures on education, few still deny the underfinancing of social services and education. Since the mid-2010s, public recognition of insufficient state funding for public education has been gradually accompanied by the defense of mixed (public–private) or purely private financing mechanisms for public education. They would allow tackling the scarcity of state resources (considered insurmountable by these actors), as well as experimentation and “innovation” in the ways of planning and executing public education expenditures.

The use of such mechanisms has occurred amid two main wider social shifts. First is the



movement towards network governance, in which market actors and philanthropy have become co-participants in the management of public services with the state (Ball & Junemann, 2012). Second, a blurring of the market–philanthropy divide – between for-profit and non-profit – involves the economic rationalization of donation (Saltman, 2010) along with a “moralizing of economic action” (Shamir, 2008, p. 1). Together, these trends have led to a growing use of business and business models in philanthropy and public finance. This has hindered the understanding of how social and financial elites are part of the very creation and maintenance of social problems they aim to address with their “social investments.”

In this direction, a profusion of new relationships and engagements between public and private actors (from the for-profit and non-profit sectors) has emerged internationally. Several terms with business and corporate origins have flooded public education and modified meanings and practices, such as “impact,” “innovation,” “impact investment,” “venture efforts,” “venture philanthropy” and “social impact bonds,” among others. These developments often implicate new models of social services financing, including education, which generally rely on private financing and some kind of return to the private entities (financial or social). Considering these aspects, we indicate three challenges faced in LAC and Lusophone countries:

1. submitting business philanthropy to mechanisms of democratic management of public education involving all actors of educational policy, especially students, teachers and school communities;
2. regulating the role of the for-profit and non-profit private sector in public education, as proposed in the [Abidjan Principles](#) (2019, Frank et al., 2021); and
3. strengthening South–South cooperation organizations in the promotion of state educational policies, the dissemination of knowledge of public and democratic management of education and the construction of robust mechanisms of public financing of education.

Figure 5
Latin America, the Caribbean and Lusophone Countries



FROM THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION TO THE RIGHT TO LEARN: IMPACTS OF NEW PHILANTHROPY ON EDUCATION POLICYMAKING IN BRAZIL

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Key takeaways:

- New philanthropy, led by business associations and foundations, established an effective discourse to implement neoliberal reforms in education in Brazil, reducing the right to education to the “right to learning.”
- New philanthropy used the “right to learning” discourse to affect legislative and public management staff at all federal levels, taking advantage of the reactivation of formal participation spaces and the “political renewal” movement.
- Tackling this “right to learning” discourse is critical if we are to address the rapid advance of the new philanthropy agenda and redress its neglect of a deeper understanding of education and its role in democracy and social justice.

New philanthropy in Brazil has found an effective way of presenting its agenda: reducing the right to education to education’s main objective, “learning,” overcoming the barriers of federalism and taking advantage of the blockage of social participation. As a result, their agenda has advanced quickly, abandoning a deeper understanding of education and its role in democracy and social justice and instead moving the country towards a structural privatization process.

Several countries and regions around the globe have experienced increasing privatization processes in educational reforms (Verger et al., 2016). In the case of Latin America, the region has led regional rankings with the largest private educational participation and the highest growth in recent decades (UNESCO-UIS, 2016, as cited in Moschetti et al., 2019). The region has also seen more complex, multifaceted and endogenous and exogenous processes (Ball, 2009; Ball & Youdell, 2008).

Moschetti et al. (2019) recently reviewed these policies and processes between 1990 and 2016. In doing so, they categorized the “paths” by which educational privatization has advanced on the continent. In Brazil, they found that privatization has advanced through incremental

reform, with the emergence of “new public management” and the conception of education as a service accompanied by high rates of territorial inequality (Pellanda & Cara, 2020). The authors add that civil society’s resistance to more structural privatization has made Brazil likelier to adopt more moderate reforms. They further describe Brazil as a very decentralized country, so it is difficult to promote deep educational reforms at the national level.

However, since Dilma Rousseff’s removal from office in 2016, we argue that with philanthropy actors’ deepening participation in formulating and implementing educational reform, Brazil is moving to another category: educational privatization is becoming part of state structural reform (Moschetti et al., 2019). The two central axes that have characterized resistance to incremental privatization have also been systematically weakened. Philanthropists are now taking advantage of the recrudescence of formal spaces for civil society participation (Da Silva et al., 2018) and training human resources that work in public administration at the federal, state and municipal levels.

The promotion of a structurally-based model for state reform is related to the recent growth in philanthropy’s participation in educational

policy formulation. Philanthropies support groups that develop staff training and create an environment for strengthening operational human resources that can compose legislatures and executives at all federal levels. The discursive strategy is to extract learning from the right to education, curb the demand for better salaries for teachers and conditions for schools and reduce funding for education and other social spending (Figure 5).

Figure 6
New philanthropies and the right to education



Source: Authors’ illustration



NEW PHILANTHROPY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT: LESSONS FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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Key takeaways:

- Inicia Educación, formerly Fundación Inicia, is an example of the shift from traditional to new philanthropy, shifting towards adopting a business mindset and a clearer involvement with policymaking.
- As an example of new philanthropy, Inicia Educación holds significant influence on shaping education policy and now seeks to use its leverage to generate profit through an associated for-profit consulting firm.
- The task going forward is to examine how political-economic considerations have facilitated the emergence and strengthening of these organizations and contributed to the weak position of states vis-à-vis such actors.

Inicia Educación is the most recent manifestation of the philanthropic history of the Vicini Group, controlled by the wealthiest family in the Dominican Republic. Having engaged in traditional philanthropy for decades, in 2010, its philanthropic focus and modus operandi changed from traditional to new philanthropy. This conversion is symbolized by the name change from Fundación Inicia to Inicia Educación in 2016. By dropping the label of foundation and projecting an image of itself as an investment fund, the philanthropy left behind traditional assistance (e.g. donation of school supplies) and shifted towards adopting a business mindset and a clearer involvement with policymaking.

Several actors characterize Inicia Educación as a prominent ally of the Ministry of Education that has had a significant influence on shaping education policy due to its technocratic working style and ability to mobilize expertise and resources. However, beyond shaping policy, Inicia Educación now also seeks to use its leverage to generate revenue. Having operated exclusively with funding from the Vicini Group until 2016, the name change also brought a new funding strategy: to generate its own income through a new entity

called “512,” which functions as a for-profit consulting firm that is legally independent but which, in practice, is completely linked to Inicia Educación. As a non-profit entity, Inicia Educación can continue to work with the Ministry of Education, collaborating free of charge and providing donations while, at the same time, generating revenue through other activities for which it has been contracted through 512. The implication is that a philanthropy is directing, if not formally controlling, a for-profit entity. Ultimately, although the (stated) intention of reinvesting profits in additional education projects exists, there is nothing to stop project revenue from being treated as profit, either retained by 512 or repatriated to the Vicini Group.

Having briefly explored the case of Inicia Educación, the task going forward is to examine how political-economic considerations have first facilitated the emergence and strengthening of these organizations and, second, contributed to the weak position of states vis-à-vis such actors.

Such an analysis would highlight how the global economy and domestic politics have consistently rewarded those who control exports (e.g. those from which the Vicini family

has benefited, such as sugar and coffee) while also incentivizing those in charge of the state to use their powers in self-serving and clientelistic ways, rather than building the power and independence of the state apparatus.



PHILANTHROPISTS, COALITIONS AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN LATIN AMERICA: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPEN QUESTIONS OF A DYNAMIC AND EVOLVING TREND

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Key takeaways:

- To fully capture philanthropists' potential to contribute new ideas, financial resources, and technical capabilities to education, we need transparent partnerships over financial flows and resource exchange between the public and private sectors.
- To foster PPP's sustainability, it is crucial to count on participatory mechanisms involving relevant education-sector stakeholders and accountability instruments to enable public-sector oversight.
- Designing and implementing continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms is necessary to strengthen implementation and to provide robust final impact evaluation to PPPs.

New philanthropy has gained relevance in Latin America's education policy in recent years by becoming a key partner for governments at different levels in the region. Among the novelties brought about by new philanthropy's involvement, establishing PPPs with state actors has been one of its distinctive features (Avelar & Patil, 2020). Through these partnerships, philanthropic actors undertake policy functions that replace the state or exploit vacant areas due to a lack of state capacity or inefficiency. Among the many functions philanthropists perform, foundations are behind program development and implementation for teachers and principals (Matovich & Cardini, 2019), financing the expansion of charter schools (Au & Lubienski, 2016) or leading national school curriculum reforms (Avelar & Ball, 2019). In any case, private involvement in public education and state policy always raises questions about its implications, making room for discussions on potential benefits, concerns and issues to pay attention to.

In this context, the Varkey Foundation has been one of the leading examples of the

expansion of PPPs in the region. Founded by the Indian philanthropist Sunny Varkey and with headquarters in the United Kingdom, the Varkey Foundation's work focuses on teachers as drivers of educational change. Without prior experience in the region, Varkey landed in Argentina in 2017 with an invitation from the federal government and established a PPP with five provinces to start its flagship program on school leadership for principals and teachers (Matovich & Cardini, 2019). Since then, the Foundation has consolidated as a key policy actor in education in Argentina and across borders, starting initiatives in Ecuador and Uruguay (Esper & Matovich, 2023). However, its work through coalition partnerships distinguishes the Varkey Foundation from other philanthropists in Latin America, such as the Lemann Foundation in Brazil or the Slim Foundation in Mexico (Diaz Rios, 2019). In this way, foundations can expand their influence by having a shared agenda with other non-state actors, such as private corporations or civil society organizations, with whom they join forces and resources to work towards their goals. A recent and relevant example was

the Lemann Foundation's advocacy behind curriculum reform in Brazil through the work of the national coalition Todos Pela Educacao (Avelar & Ball, 2019). Hence, new philanthropists seek to push forward their own educational agenda via coalitions while mobilizing different means, such as knowledge generation, political advocacy and financial resources.

Undoubtedly, the new wave of philanthropic involvement in public education brings both opportunities and challenges. As civil society organizations, foundations can express interests and priorities that are not always on politicians' agendas, such as valorizing teachers via development opportunities, seeing them as spokespeople of community needs or raising awareness of unheard social groups. Philanthropists' influence is amplified when they work in coalitions with other non-state actors, as Varkey does through *Argentinos por la Educación* and the *Coalición Latinoamericana para la Excelencia Docente*. However, philanthropists also look for their own interests, push forward their own values and priorities and seek benefits of various types (i.e. to influence



policymaking or to have financial returns) (Adhikary, 2019). To put it differently, private philanthropists' priorities, values or practices might collide with public sector ones, creating tension when establishing PPPs among these actors. This is, in fact, one of the most common critiques of PPPs, which often suffer from a lack of transparency regarding their revenue streams, how priorities are settled and who partakes in the decision-making process (Verger et al., 2020).

Therefore, to fully exploit the potential benefits of philanthropic participation in public education, some considerations are needed to make them sustainable, transparent and effective:

- Philanthropists can bring to the fore not only important ideas and issues that are neglected by the public agenda, but also financial and technical resources from which the public sector can benefit. To fully capture this potential, it is paramount to ensure a transparent partnership process regarding financial flows and other resources involved from both the public and private sectors.

- PPPs have the potential to involve different actors in public policymaking, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), grassroots organizations and philanthropists. However, creating a participatory and transparent mechanism that enables public sector oversight while including all relevant actors, such as teachers' unions, is crucial for their sustainability.
- Lastly, partnerships and their resulting goals, programs or interventions, as with any other public policy, need to be assessed both throughout and once finalized. Hence, designing and implementing continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms is necessary to strengthen implementation and to provide a robust final evaluation.

HOW CAN PHILANTHROPIES IN LATIN AMERICA BUILD CAPACITY TO CLOSE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAPS?

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Key takeaways:

- Education philanthropy boards in Latin America should have well-defined functions and selection mechanisms and include members who can professionalize the organization’s management while leveraging their own networks for co-financing and implementing educational interventions.
- Effective internal management requires a sustainable source of income to allow the execution of a consistent operational strategy guided by well-defined information management systems.
- Transparency and accountability are a function of media presence and public disclosure and, in LMICs, require calibration between being more open and the risks inherent in disclosure when operating in unstable political environments.
- External oversight can be built through collaboration with peers and the government and validated via various types of evaluations.

Over half of the foundations in Latin America and the Caribbean were founded in the first two decades of the 21st century (Berger et al., 2019). Yet, this growth also created what we consider a middle-income social investment trap (Bird & León, 2019). While recent macroeconomic growth generated new philanthropic capital, it also led to the reclassification of many countries in the region as middle-income, which prompted a reduction in overseas development

assistance (ODA). (León & Bird, 2018). The challenge facing the region’s new philanthropies is how to substitute for reduced ODA to close a persistent educational gap further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although half of the region’s total philanthropic investment targets education, the absolute amounts are minuscule compared to state education budgets. The strategic task for

these organizations is how to maximize the effectiveness of available funds. For this reason, we developed an Organizational Capacity Index (the “index”), which considers the operational context found in lower- and middle-income countries (LMIC). The index accounts for political instability, weak state capacity and less elaborate policy ecosystems and identifies what constitutes optimal organizational capacity in the region (Bird & León, 2020, 2021; León, 2022).

The index includes four pillars: governance, internal management, transparency and accountability and external management. Each consists of indicators, as depicted in Figure 6. Indicator weights were specified based on a regional survey and interviews with pacesetter organizations.

- The effective **governance** of education philanthropies in Latin America implies having a board with well-defined functions and selection mechanisms. Compared with boards in high-income countries, these boards should also include members who have the skill sets to professionalize the organization’s management and can leverage their own networks for co-financing and implementing educational interventions.

Figure 7
Organizational Capacity Index – pillars and indicators

PILLAR	GOVERNANCE	INTERNAL MANAGEMENT	TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY	EXTERNAL MANAGEMENT
INDICATORS	Selection	Human resources	Public disclosure	Peer collaboration
	Continuity	Financial sustainability	Accessibility	Government collaboration
	Size	Financial management	Feedback	Evaluation policies
	Function	Operational strategy		Use of evaluations
	Meeting frequency	Internal evaluation		External information management
	Participation	Information management		
	Diversity	Theory of change		

Source: Bird, M. & León, V. (2022). “Strengthening Global Institutional Philanthropy: Insights from an Organizational Capacity Index in Latin America,” Voluntary Sector Quarterly.



- Given economic and institutional uncertainty in developing countries, effective internal **management** requires a sustainable source of income that will enable execution of a consistent operational strategy, which often includes the implementation of philanthropies' own education programs guided by well-defined information management systems.
- **Transparency and accountability** are a function of media presence and public disclosure. In LMICs, they require calibration between being more open and the risks inherent in disclosure when operating in unstable political environments, especially given the potential for controversy in the education sector.
- **External management** is critical for establishing the legitimacy and impact of the philanthropic organization. Both can be built via collaboration with peers and the government and validated through various types of evaluations. However, collaboration can also generate risks in LMIC, while high costs and logistics may limit the use of evaluations.

Insights from the index may be relevant to many philanthropic organizations in LMICs where young, vibrant and emerging philanthropic ecosystems wrestle with inconsistent government policies, uncertain funding and legal frameworks and the challenges posed by developing economies. Better guidance on which organizational elements foster effective philanthropy would help foundations, their board members and philanthropists improve evaluation of their organization's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Instead of relying on findings and best practices from high-income countries, the index helps identify better context-specific practices and accelerates the understanding of what constitutes the ideal implementation of education philanthropy in Latin America and beyond.

4

PHILANTHROPIC AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN INDIA

Philanthropy in the Indian subcontinent is deeply rooted in the cultural ethos of all major Indian religious philosophies that giving back to society is an essential duty of an individual. Education has always been a prominent sector for philanthropic giving, and this trend has continued within government-mandated CSR funding from private companies. The articles in this section analyse the trends in both philanthropic and CSR contributions to education in India. The authors challenge the philanthropic and CSR community to further engage with the education ecosystem, especially in supporting the National Education Policy 2020, and go beyond financial support for the sector.

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Key takeaways:

- In 2014, India implemented a CSR policy, mandating firms meeting certain fiscal parameters to spend 2% of their net profit on social, economic and environmental projects.
- While significant, CSR expenditure is still dwarfed by government and out-of-pocket expenditures on education, limiting its impact.
- CSR spending faces several additional challenges, including highly inequitable distribution, fragmented investment and the volatility of corporate profits, all contributing to problems of scale.
- We recommend that firms capitalise on their management skills and technological know-how to provide novel solutions to existing challenges in India's education sector.

Historically, several Indian corporate groups and companies have been involved by way of voluntary measures in activities that benefited society. However, the enactment of Section 135 in the Indian Companies Act of 2013 marked an important turn in corporate philanthropy in India, one of the world's fastest-growing economies. With this act, India became one of the world's first countries to bring legislation on CSR for firms. The legislation, which came into effect on 1 April 2014, made it mandatory for companies satisfying any of three criteria – net worth of INR 500 crore (5 bn) or more, turnover of INR 1000 crore (10 bn) or more or a net profit of INR 5 crore (50 mn) or more – to spend 2% of the average net profit made in the preceding three financial years on social, economic and environmental projects. The legislation requires the company's CSR activities to fall within the framework of a set of 12 activities prescribed by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. The allowed CSR interventions are broad in nature and range from projects related to health, education and women's empowerment to environmental sustainability, rural development, preservation of natural heritage, contribution to disaster relief and research in government-funded public universities.

Our work focuses on CSR contributions to education. During the four years analysed (2014–2018), education was the biggest recipient of CSR funds. Even in absolute terms, CSR expenditure on education has been considerable, amounting to around INR 45 bn per year on average. However, the scale of this expenditure is dwarfed by government and private out-of-pocket expenditures on education. CSR expenditure is only 16% of the central government budget expenditure, 1.5% of total state government expenditure and 2.4% of private out-of-pocket expenditures on education (Chadha & Nandwani, 2020). Thus, while CSR funds expended on education are large in absolute terms compared to what the Indian economy invests in education, their scale is, understandably, quite small.

CSR spending is also concentrated in a few rich states and a few rich districts within states, rendering it highly inequitable. The mandate for local investment in the CSR legislation likely drives this concentration of funds. Richer states and richer districts have higher economic opportunities; thus, higher CSR funds are generated and spent. While this provides an opportunity for companies to address regional development challenges and make their

operations in the local area easier, it will likely have implications for widening socioeconomic disparity across already unequal states.

Corporate spending in education is fragmented, with a few companies making very large contributions and many companies making minimal expenditures. This fragmentation, the volatility of corporate profits and the fact that CSR spending is done through individual companies rather than a pooled fund further add to the problems of scale discussed above.

This leads us to question what the best use of these CSR monies really is. We suggest that in addition to monetary contribution, corporates should capitalise on their superior management skills and technological know-how to provide novel solutions to existing challenges that face the education sector in India today. This has the advantage of focusing corporate energies on attributes that are their comparative advantage – innovation and experimentation – rather than the scale of money spent.

ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE, EQUITABLE EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Key takeaways:

- Philanthropic organisations and CSR could help the Government of India to address the challenges India's education system is facing, all exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Non-profits should act as project management units, collaborating with the government to plug gaps in implementing new and existing education programs in similar ways to the Collaborators for Transforming Education (CTE) initiative.
- Philanthropy and CSR have a significant role in building an effective, equitable education system by deploying risk capital for new models of decentralised leadership and innovation, creating opportunities for collaboration for scalable and sustainable change.

Education is one of the most important components of nation-building. Not only does it help to develop human resources, but it also shapes the citizens of the nation for a better future. India is a vast country with more than 1.5 million schools, 8.5 million teachers and 250 million children of school-going age. More than 70% of Indians live in rural areas. According to the 2019 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) rural survey, 70.3% of children in India were enrolled in government schools. Despite schools being made available within a one-kilometer radius of school-age children, there are many challenges, such as high absenteeism, lack of teacher availability and high pupil-teacher ratios.

According to ASER (2019), one out of every four Class 8 students in rural India cannot read even a Class 2 text. The pandemic has amplified this; prolonged school closures not only caused gaps in learning outcomes but also losses in equity, health, and nutrition. To overcome these educational challenges, the Government of India initiated the New Education Policy 2020 and launched the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and

Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat Mission focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy. Addressing these challenges at scale in a country as diverse as India requires philanthropic organisations and CSR initiatives to act as catalysts supporting the government's efforts.

Philanthropy has always been part of India's culture. In 2014, the Government of India made it mandatory by implementing Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013 and the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility) Rules. According to the Dasra-Bain [India Philanthropy Report 2022](#), between the financial years 2018 and 2021, 70% of total CSR spending went to education, healthcare, rural development, environmental sustainability and poverty alleviation. Approximately 60% of these funds went to education and healthcare. This aids in developing India's population and ensuring the implementation of the SDGs.

Traditionally, philanthropic investments in education have focused on infrastructure development, such as providing learning materials, setting up computer labs and improving classroom transactions. It is vital to move beyond these provisions and focus on the

effective implementation of programs on the ground, as well as large-scale impact.

Presently, the education system is faced with a two-pronged challenge. It is trying to provide children with remedial support to close the learning gaps caused by the pandemic while ensuring continued grade-appropriate learning. This puts enormous pressure on teachers, who are operating under limitations of time, resources and individual capacities. Achieving this not only requires building teachers' capacities, but also concerted and collaborative efforts among government bodies and diverse stakeholders to ensure that the vision translates into impact.

One way this can happen is through non-profits acting as project management units, collaborating with the government to plug gaps in implementing new and existing education programs. These non-profits can help to streamline and document processes, build the capacities of government officials at various levels, ensure a smooth flow of information and re-energize stakeholders. This is the model supported by the [Collaborators for Transforming Education \(CTE\)](#) initiative led by the EdelGive



Foundation, which brings together funders and experienced non-profits in collaboration with the government to strengthen the education system. Alongside supporting the government's ongoing efforts, the CTE identify and disseminate best practices that can improve student learning at scale.

Philanthropy and CSR have a significant role in building an effective, equitable education system. They have the power to deploy risk capital to demonstrate new models of decentralised leadership and innovation in education. These transformative investments can help build strong convictions among different stakeholders and open up collaboration opportunities to ensure scalable and sustainable change in the education sector.

PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN INDIA'S EDUCATION

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Key takeaways:

- Even the wealthiest foundation can play only a relatively small role in India's education, and it should complement (not repeat) government action.
- Foundations have more flexibility than governments to carry out innovative pilot experiments and then build capacities to scale up interventions based on lessons learned.
- Philanthropic foundations in India face the choice between funding other implementation partners (like NGOs) or building their own operational organisations.
- Government is not a single entity, and diverse officials may have different interests regarding philanthropies. Even with commitment at the top levels of government, local officials hold discretionary power, which can affect the effectiveness of philanthropies.
- Long-term engagement and efforts are required to make a sustainable change.

India faces major challenges in ensuring that its population gets quality education. Nearly 50% of teenagers do not complete school education. The majority of those who are in school may not have grade-appropriate proficiencies. There are governmental and non-governmental efforts to address these challenges. The work of different kinds of philanthropic organisations is an important part of these non-governmental efforts.

There are two main categories of philanthropic interventions in India's education system. First are those private companies that support education as part of their CSR. CSR is mandatory in India, hence there are pros and cons to these interventions. Second are philanthropic foundations, which spend money from endowments created by individuals or trusts. These endowments are based on contributions from the private wealth of individuals/trusts, although these individuals/trusts have shares in private companies. The CSR mandate does not bind these philanthropic foundations; hence, their efforts are voluntary.

The following challenges and opportunities have been identified through observations of philanthropic engagement in education in India:

1. [Even the wealthiest foundation can play only a relatively small role in India's education.](#) It is the government that can make changes to India's public education at scale. Hence, it is better if foundations use or spend their money without replicating what the government should do.
2. Ideally, foundations are in a position to carry out innovative pilot experiments. Governments may not have the flexibility to carry out similar experiments. Foundations can also make initial efforts to build capacities to scale up interventions based on the lessons from these innovative experiments.
3. Philanthropic organisations (POs) need to work with the government to make sustainable changes in public education. However, working with the government and its different arms can be challenging. Government is not a single entity, and multiple officials may have different incentives and interests in dealing with POs. Even when there is commitment at the top level of the government, getting acceptance at different tiers of government is essential. Moreover, certain local officials, such as district collectors, have much discretionary power, which can make a lot of difference in the effectiveness of the work of POs.
4. Generally, short-term interventions demonstrating some beneficial impact may not make much impact on the public education system as a whole. The governmental system in India is not that effective at learning appropriate lessons from such interventions and making changes in the system as a whole. Those who are interested in making a sustainable change continue to work with the government at different levels over a long period. This may be necessary to bring about cultural/behavioural changes in key actors, such as schoolteachers.
5. One major challenge that philanthropic foundations face is [whether to fund other organisations \(like NGOs\) or have their own operating organisation.](#) This is similar to the "make or buy" challenge that private companies face. The difficulty of the principal-agent relationship between the PO and the NGO may determine this choice. Philanthropic foundations also need to consider the challenges of monitoring and evaluation and achieving alignment regarding the objectives of the PO and the NGO. We have seen a few important POs in India becoming funding-cum-operational organisations due to these difficulties (rather than merely funding NGOs to achieve the PO's goals).



ENVISIONING THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPIC AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Key takeaways:

- Policy debates in India should emphasise the regulatory frameworks and institutional mechanisms for philanthropic contributions to build human capital, which can create an ecosystem that would foster greater philanthropic investment in education.
- Education policies in India should prioritise collecting and disseminating information on CSR and philanthropic partnerships and investment in education to generate new research and evidence to guide policy and practice.
- To achieve SDG 4, India should urge active engagement and collaboration (investment and leadership) with large corporates and philanthropists in ways that do not dilute the “public good” characteristics of education.

India's education sector has expanded considerably since independence. More than 300 million students are enrolled in 1.5 million schools and 55,165 higher education institutions in the country (UDISE+, n.d.a; UDISE+, n.d.b). An essential feature of the current expansion of the education sector in India is the growing visibility of the private sector. About half of school-going children and nearly 70% of students accessing higher education attend privately managed schools, colleges and universities. Public funding for education in India has either declined or stagnated for the last couple of decades, with less than 4% of GDP spent on education. The entry of private players into education and low public funding has led to an increasing burden on households to bear education costs in India (UNESCO, 2022). At this juncture, philanthropic and corporate social responsibility (CSR) support for education in India is critically felt. In fact, one of the fundamental principles of the [National Education Policy 2020](#) (NEP) is to encourage and facilitate genuine private philanthropic and community participation in the education sector. The policy aims to involve non-governmental philanthropic organisations (POs) in several critical areas of

education, such as building schools, funding additional textbook materials, strengthening preschool education, improving information and communications technology (ICT) facilities in schools, offering scholarships to needy students, funding research and expanding access to high-quality higher education. While there is a policy emphasis on more philanthropic and CSR support for education in India, thinner evidence is available on the association between CSR, philanthropy and education in the country. This contribution aims to offer a critical understanding of the role of CSR and philanthropy in education in India and, more importantly, situate this discourse in the changing educational context. Two specific points discussed here are as follows: 1) understanding the changing contours in the growth and expansion of educational philanthropy in India and 2) how the new challenges in the Indian education sector call for a different engagement of philanthropy and CSR, mainly one that goes beyond funding.

Where does India stand in CSR and philanthropic contributions for the expansion and development of the education sector? How much investment is made through these sources in the education

sector? How does public policy integrate the discourse on educational philanthropy?

While some attempts have been made to address these concerns, much more is needed to unpack these perennial questions on philanthropy and education in India. Between 2014 and 2018 (the first four years of mandated CSR), 37% of total CSR expenditure was spent on education (Chadha & Nandwani, 2020). Education has been one of the most prominent areas of CSR activity in India – in 2015–2016, 29% of CSR funds went to education from 5,423 companies (Terway & Chadha, 2018). The latest data from the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs show that between the financial years 2016 and 2021, the education sector received INR 29,918 crore (approximately USD 4.1 bn) in CSR funds (India CSR, 2022). However, there is [significant regional inequality in CSR funding for education](#). For instance, between 2014 and 2021, [around one-third of the total CSR investment was in only five states, located in southern and western parts of India](#): Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. While some evidence is available on CSR funding for education, information on the contributions of philanthropy towards education is sparse.

The Indian education sector has experienced a continuing crisis, with inequality in access, teacher shortages, unavailability of basic infrastructure, a digital divide, declining public budgets, commercialisation, deteriorating standards and quality, poor governance and management and rising household and other private costs. All these bring new challenges for the Indian education sector, which hinders its contribution to human development compared to many other developing and developed nations in the world. For instance, we find striking socioeconomic inequality in access to quality education in India – students from disadvantaged groups are either out of the education system or attend low-quality schools and colleges. The inequality in educational opportunities for the children and youth of the country perpetuates inequalities in their socioeconomic, cultural and political spheres. Here, we see the critical role of CSR and philanthropy in reducing these educational and socioeconomic inequalities. Besides funding, the contributions of CSR and philanthropy are expected in areas such as educational leadership, advocacy, teacher training and connecting education and skills with industry to improve the employability of graduates. For instance, providing trained teachers to schools and colleges is a significant challenge in India, which is connected to providing quality education. By establishing state-of-the-art infrastructure and training facilities through CSR and philanthropic initiatives, India could produce a pool of talented teachers for its schools and colleges. Of course, implementing

such ideas would need meticulous planning and execution, but it is high time to go for it, as laid out in the NEP 2020. Moreover, the increase in domestic wealth through strong economic growth in India calls for greater funding for education through CSR and philanthropy.

Way forward

- With a clear policy focus on philanthropic and CSR support for education in the NEP 2020, it is expected that a new discourse will emerge on the critical role of CSR and philanthropy in improving education in India. Policy debates should also emphasise the regulatory frameworks and institutional mechanisms for philanthropic contributions to build human capital. Such frameworks are needed to create an ecosystem that would foster greater philanthropic investment in education. For example, universities and other higher education institutions should set up a cell responsible for coordinating and promoting CSR and philanthropic activities at the institutional level.
- There is a huge gap in the data and evidence on philanthropic and CSR contributions to the Indian education sector. This creates several challenges for producing evidence-based research and making the right set of policies in this critical area. Thus, education policies in India should prioritise collecting and disseminating information on CSR, philanthropic partnerships and investment

in education, which would help generate new research and evidence in the area.

- To achieve SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, India should urge active engagement and collaborations (investment and leadership) with large corporates and philanthropists in education. Likewise, COVID-19 has caused the gravest global disruption to education, especially in developing countries such as India, where educational resources are distributed unequally. CSR and philanthropic contributions can help minimise the damage. However, it is critical to spell out that contributions from CSR and philanthropy should not dilute the “public good” characteristics of education.



5

PHILANTHROPY IN EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION

The nature of Philanthropic Organisations originating in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region presents some interesting variations. They range from small family-funded entities, typically working within the country of origin, to larger corporate-funded or state-funded entities operating in the entire MENA region or other regions. They provide financial and non-financial support for education initiatives, ranging from school infrastructure development and providing scholarships to teacher training and policy dialogue. Contributions in this section examine these variations and critically analyse the type of engagement that philanthropies have in education ecosystems in the MENA region.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Ridge, N., Kippels, S., & Bruce, E. R. (2019). [Education and philanthropy in the Middle East and North Africa](#). In N. Ridge & A. Terway (Eds.), *Philanthropy in education: Diverse perspectives and global trends* (pp. 70–89). Edward Elgar Publishing.
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EDUCATION AND PHILANTHROPY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: LEVERAGING EXPERTISE FOR THE GLOBAL GOOD

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Key takeaways:

- Compared to Europe and North America, educational philanthropy in the MENA region is nascent (Ridge et al., 2019) but growing and is well-positioned to tackle educational challenges that governments may not address.
- Greater collaboration between philanthropic entities in different MENA countries would contribute to more effective and sustainable regional education development.
- Foundations in the MENA region also have the opportunity to expand their circles of influence to contribute to both domestic education policymaking and international education policy in the wider region.

Philanthropy in the education sector in the MENA region has been rapidly expanding over the past two decades. This growth has been particularly noticeable in the Gulf region, with the addition of large philanthropic foundations such as the Qatar Foundation (and its various subsidiaries), Dubai Cares and Saudi Arabia's MiSK Foundation (Dickinson, 2017). These and other larger MENA foundations have played a considerable role in shaping international education development through their involvement as members and funders in various global networks, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women, among others. Supported by their respective governments, these POs exemplify the growing role of state-funded philanthropic efforts in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. In contrast, other philanthropic actors working in the education sector outside of the GCC in the wider MENA region tend to be smaller and more domestic in their focus. They are also likelier to be privately funded. Thus, there is a distinct difference in how these two sets of philanthropic actors engage with education policy at the local

and international levels (See Figure 7, Ridge et al., 2019).

In the GCC, most philanthropic actors, with the exception of a few smaller ones, tend to focus their policy advocacy abroad. They support vulnerable populations in Africa and Asia and refugee education in the MENA region (e.g. the [Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund](#), and [Alwaleed Philanthropies](#)). In this capacity, they are found on various international steering committees and host an array of international education events, such as the [RewirEd Global Education Summit](#) and the [Global Educational Supplies and Solutions \(GESS\)](#) summits held in Dubai. However, they have largely left domestic education policy unexamined. While advocating various educational interventions abroad, their involvement in local educational discussions is limited or non-existent in a region where education policymaking is largely state-driven (OER Live, 2020). This is despite local educational systems that still need improvement and which could potentially benefit from their research and expertise (Peddada & Alhuthaifi, 2021).

In contrast, philanthropic actors working in education in North Africa and the Levant tend to have a far more domestic focus (e.g., the [King Hussein Foundation](#), the [Queen Rania Foundation](#), and the [Sawiris Foundation](#)). While some actors, such as the Queen Rania and King Hussein Foundations in Jordan, are state-funded, there are also several private sector foundations, such as Egypt's Sawiris and [ALAlfi foundations](#). Whether state-funded or private, these foundations have played a far greater role in shaping domestic education policies and are closely linked to or work with their respective ministries of education. However, they are typically less active in international circles and in international steering groups in which they might be able to share valuable experiences.

Challenges and opportunities

Compared to other regions, such as Europe and North America, the educational philanthropy sector in the MENA region is small and nascent (Ridge et al., 2019).

However, opportunities exist for:

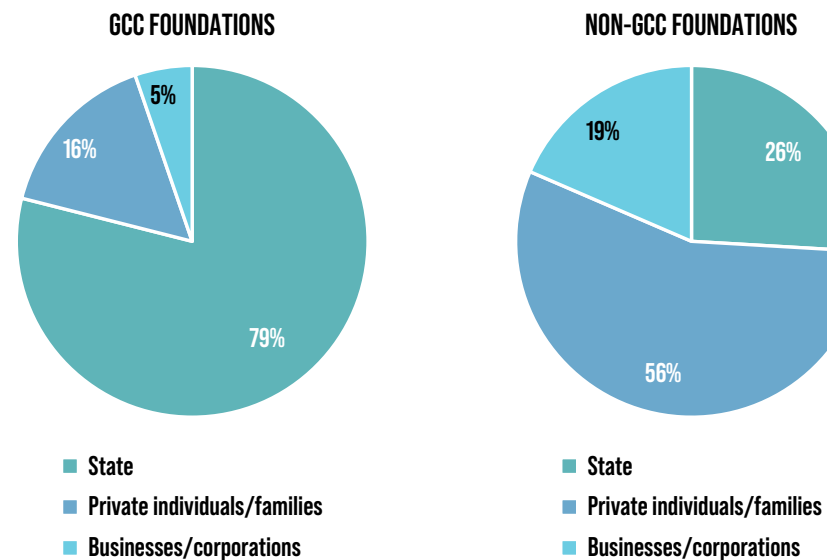
- The growing and well-positioned philanthropic sector in the MENA region to



tackle educational challenges that regional governments may not have the resources or capacity to address (Ridge et al., 2019).

- Greater collaboration and knowledge sharing between philanthropic entities in different MENA countries – especially between GCC and non-GCC countries – would contribute regionally to more effective and sustainable educational development.
- Foundations in the MENA region expanding their circles of influence to contribute to both domestic education policymaking and international education policy circles in the wider region.

Figure 8
Funding of foundations in the MENA region: state, private individuals/families or businesses/corporations in GCC countries versus non-GCC countries, by percentage (%)



Notes:
GCC countries are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE (38 foundations).
Non-GCC countries are Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine (27 foundations).
The total percentage for non-GCC foundations adds up to 101% due to rounding.

Source: Ridge, N., Kippels, S., & Bruce, E. R. (2019). *Education and philanthropy in the Middle East and North Africa*. In N. Ridge & A. Terway (Eds.), *Philanthropy in education: Diverse perspectives and global trends* (pp. 70–89). Edward Elgar Publishing.

PHILANTHROPY IN EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA – A CASE FOR CLIMATE EDUCATION

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Key takeaways:

- Funding for the climate and nature crisis needs to be prioritized, and these issues need to be embedded in education curricula at all academic levels.
- Donors need to be innovative in funding solutions to effect long-term impacts on curricula development to address climate and nature.
- Donors need to be purposeful in creating strategies to fund the experts who will design effective educational interventions.

In the aftermath of [COP27](#) and [COP28](#) – both hosted in the Arab region, in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, respectively – it seems an opportune moment to consider the role of education vis-à-vis the climate and nature crisis in the MENA region and the impact philanthropy can have.

From our vantage point at the [Arab Foundations Forum](#) (AFF), as the only regional network of foundations, donors and other philanthropy actors, we find ourselves in a position to bring the climate and nature crisis into focus for the region's philanthropy sector. As such, we must recognize that very little attention has been paid to this issue to date. The Arab region boasts a [high proportion of youth population where 50% of the region's 445 million people are under the age of 25](#). The youth population stands to inherit the crisis and its consequences with limited resources to address it. One way to contribute to this is to ensure that adequate funding is made available to prioritise the issue of climate and nature and to embed it within the curricula for education.

As we develop our strategic priorities at AFF for the next five years, we have included the climate and nature crisis as a key component of our agenda. This means that, as we inform and engage our network around critical issues, both regionally and

globally, we will feature the climate crisis because we recognize its importance and the importance of ensuring that enough funding is directed to this issue.

AFF represented its network in Sharm El-Sheikh at COP27 in November 2022 and plans to represent its network again at COP28 in the UAE in 2023. One of the observations we gleaned from COP27 was the lack of representation by Arab philanthropic actors who strategically and purposefully address the climate and nature crisis. We recognize that for any meaningful progress to be made in this area, it will require a long-term strategic focus from Arab philanthropic actors.

Part of the challenge we face in addressing the climate and nature crisis is the fact that the region has many other seemingly more urgent priorities, including rising unemployment, civil unrest and wars, a global economic crisis and fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, to name a few. As we have tried to find ways to engage our network in the conversation around philanthropy's role in tackling the climate and nature crisis, we have found it useful to point out that, in fact, all the funding priorities already being addressed are related to the crisis. Whether a donor is focusing their funding on health, education, social justice, agriculture, arts and culture or any other myriad issues that require third-sector

support and intervention, they are providing funding towards alleviating the climate and nature crisis, either directly or tangentially. We hope to impress upon the sector the importance of designing more strategic, purposeful and impact-driven funding for this issue.

Funding for education by Arab philanthropy has tended to remain confined to more traditional curriculum areas: early childhood development (ECD), girls' empowerment, STEM, higher education and scholarships for gifted students to study abroad or at regional private universities. While this funding fills many critical gaps, space remains for more innovative funding avenues to be explored, whether that is funding curriculum innovation or using innovative funding mechanisms.

We suggest that Arab philanthropies should prioritize funding for education on the climate and nature crisis at all academic levels. The seemingly daunting task of mitigating the impending catastrophes brought about by the climate crisis should not prohibit philanthropic actors from addressing them. Instead, let us look at the opportunity to enhance current programs by including the climate agenda, rather than viewing this as a pivot away from current funding priorities. The proposition becomes far less overwhelming.



NEW PHILANTHROPY AS A BRIDGE OR A DOUBLE-EDGE SWORD? IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

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Key takeaways:

- New philanthropy can function as a bridge between private ventures and education institutions, allowing for greater collaboration to identify challenges collectively and to come up with potential solutions to address those challenges.
- Philanthropies need to engage with those who will be implementing solutions and the specific context in which they are working.
- Participatory philanthropy requires the participation of multiple sectors and organizations, as well as the engagement of all those involved in the education process, especially teachers and students.

New catalytic philanthropy can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, philanthropy has the potential to be a bridge across sectors that catalyze collaborative partnerships, allowing for coordinated efforts to address complex education challenges on a larger scale (Callahan, 2017; Romero & Sandefur, 2022). On the other hand, philanthropy's ability to influence education priorities and solutions as bridge-builders and conveners of collaborative partnerships could result in situations in which the resources and/or solutions brought into communities may be inappropriate or irrelevant to the local context (Reckhow, 2016; Verger & Curran, 2014). In the latter case, the collaborative partnership driven by philanthropy may prefer standardized, universal solutions under the umbrella of scalability and large impact. This can result in ambiguity for those in the field who may not know how to translate universal solutions into their diverse, specific student contexts. It may also be the case that philanthropy may recommend a particular education solution, such as education technology (EdTech), based on a presumed belief in the solution or having seen evidence of traction elsewhere to realize belatedly that the solution is inappropriate for a certain context.

Consider the experience of a philanthropic effort in an Arab Gulf country that aimed to encourage innovative teaching and learning through EdTech solutions (Lee & Basma, 2022). The underlying logic behind this effort was as follows. The philanthropic effort would identify and supply an EdTech solution to schools based on identified education challenges. The philanthropic organization would serve as a bridge between the EdTech venture and the schools, fostering collaborative partnerships between the venture, schools and philanthropy to achieve the shared goal of improving teaching and learning in the classroom. Although there appeared to be collaborative will and alignment to employ and adapt the EdTech tool in the classroom, the effort faced challenges on the ground. The teachers who were to employ EdTech were not adequately oriented and equipped, given the top-down approach taken during the implementation phase. The challenges were further accentuated by when and how this effort was implemented without deep consideration of the overall school year cycle, school curricula and the roles and responsibilities of teachers. A flaw of this philanthropic effort was that it assumed that once the "resource need" was met, teachers could swiftly pick up and incorporate

the EdTech tool into their classrooms, resulting in improved student engagement and learning.

Learnings from this philanthropic effort lend a few recommendations to address challenges and leverage opportunities for education policy and development:

- New philanthropy can function as a bridge between private ventures and educational institutions, allowing for greater collaboration to identify challenges collectively and come up with potential solutions to address those challenges. However, it is important not to presume that an education solution can be readily implemented without considering those who actively engage with and implement the solutions and the specific context in which they work.
- Participatory philanthropy requires not only the participation of multiple sectors and organizations, but also the engagement of all those involved in the education process, especially teachers and students, who are often directly influenced by philanthropic efforts to address education challenges and improve education outcomes.

THEME ONE
GLOBAL TRENDS IN NEW PHILANTHROPY

THEME TWO
AFRICA: A SPACE FOR LEARNING AND COLLABORATION

THEME THREE
THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

THEME FOUR
PHILANTHROPIC AND CSR SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN INDIA

THEME FIVE
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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