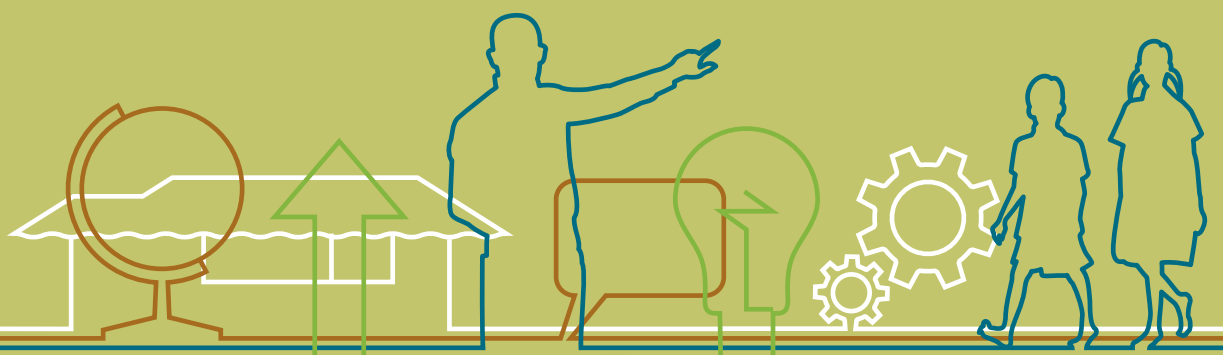


Serena Rossignoli and Anna Riggall

# Innovation and achievement: the work of four not-for-profit school groups





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## Welcome to Education Development Trust

At Education Development Trust, we improve school systems at scale and provide empowering employability and careers services to young people and adults. We own and manage a portfolio of schools and, as a not-for-profit, we invest annually in our programme of education research that informs policymaking around the world as well as our own work.

We operate in low- to high-income countries and our work starts with the design of distinctive, evidence-led solutions. We use our expertise, informed by international as well as our own best practice and research, to find ways to reform government schools and careers guidance services. Our people are supported by efficient project management, tried-and-tested processes, a rigorous review cycle and enabling technology. This means that we are able to ensure effective and adaptive at-scale delivery in our work. Impact matters to us and we deploy robust internal evaluation systems and metrics to measure what works. We will adapt our programme delivery accordingly and use our findings to inform future programme design so that we achieve positive learning outcomes. We are committed to effecting sustainable change and so we foster responsive and proactive relationships with our clients. We not only design, but also show and enable to ensure a lasting legacy of success.

We are a not-for-profit and we are driven by our values of integrity, accountability, excellence and collaboration.

## About the authors

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## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Fe y Alegría in Peru for providing the photographs that have been used in this report.

### How to cite this report:

Rossignoli, S. and Riggall, A. (2019) *Innovation and achievement: the work of four not-for-profit school groups*. Reading: Education Development Trust

# Overview





# This report examines four not-for-profit school chains, run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in low-income contexts.

These are *Fe y Alegría*, the *Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee* (better known by its acronym BRAC), *Gyan Shala* and *Zambia Open Community Schools*. Three of these organisations offer education at no cost (*Fe y Alegría*, BRAC and *Zambia Open Community Schools*), while the other charges very low fees (*Gyan Shala*).

All four examples are large-scale operations running multiple schools, sometimes in multiple countries. All reach large numbers of pupils.

- **Fe y Alegría schools** provide education in 19 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela. It runs 1,423 schools and operates as a faith-based NGO providing education to 1.7 million students, of which about 700,000 are primary level.
- **BRAC schools** operate in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Uganda and Liberia. They deliver primary and pre-primary education to 1 million students, of which about 748,910 are at primary level.
- **Zambia Open Community Schools** runs 665 schools delivering primary education for about 130,000 students, taught by 250 volunteer teachers.
- **Gyan Shala** operates 1,688 elementary schools in India in the states of Gujarat, Bihar and West Bengal, reaching 45,000 students. This is the only fee-charging school included in our report, though it is important to note that fees are equivalent to just US\$0.70 per month.

In writing this report, we intend to provide insight for policymakers and others preoccupied with fulfilling: (a) the continuing and still urgent need to achieve Education for All; and (b) the pressing quest for improved quality and learning opportunities for those in school. The evidence is clear: huge numbers of children and young people still do not have access to education. Increasingly, it is apparent that even when they are in school, many students are not learning and are not leaving with even the most fundamental skills of reading, writing and basic calculation. Certain groups remain particularly vulnerable – those in rural and challenging geographical locations, girls, children with disabilities, and children from ethnic minority groups.

Each of the four school groups we focus on offers its own interesting story. Collectively they provide an important and optimistic perspective on the apparently intractable challenges of achieving universal access and enhancing quality in education in developing countries. The literature in this specific area is small. Previous studies, most notably, the rigorous review commissioned by the

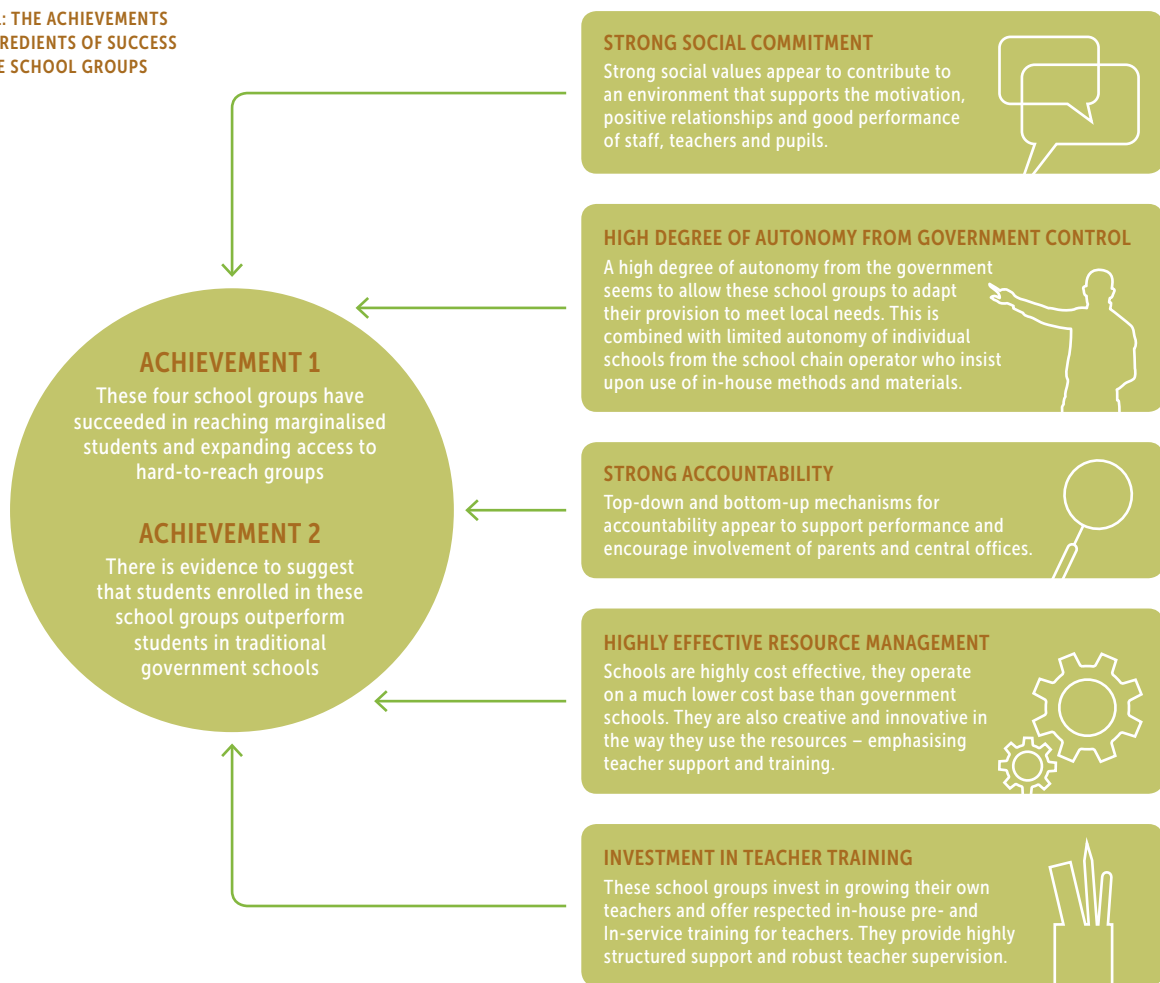
The evidence is clear: huge numbers of children and young people still do not have access to education

Department for International Development (DfID) on the topic of philanthropic and religious schools by Wales et al.,<sup>1</sup> is particularly relevant. Wales and colleagues noted what we also see – that the world is showing a growing interest in ‘the potential role of non-state providers of education to meet international goals’.<sup>2</sup> They also note that much of the literature ‘has focused on low cost private schools’.<sup>3</sup> This report does not cover low-cost private schools; as fee-charging, profit-making organisations, they are beyond our scope.

Despite our purposeful avoidance of low cost private schools, perhaps the most contentious alternative to state-run education provision, there will be readers who are sceptical about the extent to which we can transfer learning from the four non-state examples we have selected to state provided education. There will be others that find it hard to accept any suggestion we should look to examples of non-state provision for inspiration. We are keenly aware that the topic of non-state or private education, in any form, is highly contested. We are also keenly aware that the body of literature upon which our analysis presented in this report is based is modest in size. However, for us, the scale of the access and quality challenge

The world is showing a growing interest in ‘the potential role of non-state providers of education to meet international goals

FIGURE 1: THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND INGREDIENTS OF SUCCESS OF THESE SCHOOL GROUPS



<sup>1</sup>Wales et al. (2015) <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4 <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4

requires a creative and inclusive approach to evidence collection. We believe that as educators there is much we can learn from the systematic analysis of the work of effective schools of different types and the approaches and policies used by improving education systems. If we can learn something from the successes of these school groups, we should.

So, what can we learn? Figure 1 summarises the contribution these school chains have made to education improvements and suggests some of the key reasons behind their achievements.

### **Achievement 1: Facilitating access to education**

These school chains have succeeded in reaching marginalised students and expanding access to hard-to-reach groups. They appear to have achieved this by:

- ensuring the cost-effective use of resources
- expanding provision of education in under-served, often rural areas
- increasing flexibility of school scheduling, timetabling and enrolment processes to adapt to the needs of learners and their families

Evidence from studies of some of these school chains suggests that the factors above have also supported reduction in dropout and improvements in girls' attendance rates.

### **Achievement 2: Improving education quality and learning outcomes for pupils**

This report highlights evidence that students enrolled in not-for-profit schools outperform students in traditional government schools. Studies of Fe y Alegría and Gyan Shala schools have shown better outcomes in mathematics and literacy compared with government schools.

Given the continued global focus on access and quality, these achievements are important and remarkable, particularly given the challenging contexts in which these school chains operate. This success is interesting and worthy of further investigation.

So how have these schools achieved such promising results? Our analysis of the evidence provisionally points to some ingredients for success.

#### **Social commitment**

These school chains and their schools often have a distinct ethos that affects the behaviours of their staff and communities. It seems possible that their strong social values may contribute to the building of an environment that supports the motivation, positive relationships and good performance – of staff, teachers and pupils.

This report highlights evidence that students enrolled in not-for-profit schools outperform students in traditional government schools

**Autonomy**

The performance of these school chains also appears to be influenced by a combination of high autonomy and effective accountability mechanisms. A high degree of autonomy from government control allows the schools flexibility to adapt their provision as they see fit and to hire and train teachers their own way with a focus on in-house methods.

**Governance and accountability**

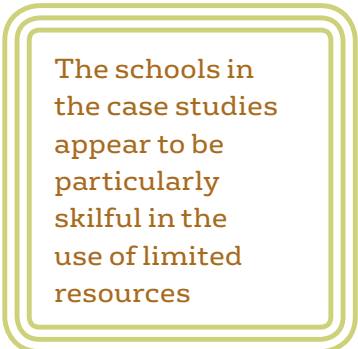
Governance models differ between the school groups, but the analysis highlights common features. These include a two-way accountability mechanism which involves central offices, parents and communities. The accountability mechanism of the schools focuses on improving the quality of teaching, innovating and addressing weaknesses.

**Flexibility to 'engineer' the approach to school effectiveness**

The schools in the case studies appear to be particularly skilful in the use of limited resources. They have freedom to adjust their operating models, often spending less on teacher salaries and infrastructure and more on in-service teacher support and instructional materials.

**Teacher training**

Interestingly in the case of these four school groups, the low operating costs they achieve by 'engineering' their models enables them to reinvest in their own immersive models of teacher preparation and in-service training. They retain a strong emphasis on *growing their own* teachers. They are also able to invest in developing their own distinct materials, resources and approaches.



The schools in the case studies appear to be particularly skilful in the use of limited resources



Chapter 1

# Introduction



# This report is framed by some of the biggest educational challenges of our time – access and equity, quality and relevance.

In 2017, about 262 million children and youth were still out of school.<sup>4</sup> Despite the progress made toward providing access to education for all children, certain countries in the poorest regions of the world have continued to struggle with expanding access to education for all children and young people. Quality of education is an issue in many countries. Globally, 6 out of 10 children and adolescents are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics.<sup>5</sup>

This failure to achieve Education for All (EFA) targets and the failure to provide those in school with a good education has complex and multifaceted causes. Significant among them is one of limited finance. In 2015, the Global Monitoring Report identified an annual financial gap equal to US\$39 billion between 2015 and 2030 for meeting key targets of the post-2015 education agenda.<sup>6</sup> It is unrealistic in many countries to imagine that the combination of international aid and a country's own contribution could cover the financial needs of education in the forthcoming years. This depressing and uncomfortable situation has encouraged consideration of other solutions, including short- and long-term alternative models of educational provision to fill public education gaps. In this context, non-state or private education is one such alternative. According to UNESCO, by definition, private education, refers to 'education that is provided in an educational institution that is managed by a non-state actor'<sup>7</sup>; it includes for-profit and not-for-profit actors, including NGOs.

One group or type of school has received much attention in recent decades – low-cost private schools. There is an important distinction between schools operating outside government control, that charge fees (even low ones) and operate **for profit**, and those that offer free education on philanthropic grounds for **no profit**. A few years ago, DfID set out to conduct a rigorous review of the evidence on non-state education provision. They later split this into two parts: one on the role and impact of private schools in developing countries, and another on non-state providers of education whose 'foundational ideology is religious [...] and those founded as philanthropic organisations [...]'.<sup>8</sup> The separation of the two reviews underlines some important differences in non-state education provision.

The nomenclature is complex and confusing and there is plenty of room for semantic argument. Wales et al. experienced similar issues in their reporting of the DfID review on religious and philanthropic school provision:

Globally, 6 out of 10 children and adolescents are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics

<sup>4</sup> UIS-UNESCO (2019) <sup>5</sup> UIS-UNESCO (2017) <sup>6</sup> UNESCO (2015b) <sup>7</sup> UNESCO (2015c, 1) <sup>8</sup> Wales et al. (2015, 4)

*Precisely defining and classifying this group of schools and education providers presents a significant challenge. It includes a wide range of actors outside the state and not classified as private, implementing education in a variety of ways and involved in a spectrum of relationships with the state. Within the literature itself there is not one agreed typology that currently captures this diversity and there are ongoing definitional debates.*

Testament to this complexity, it is interesting to note that UNESCO and DfID differ in their views as to whether the types of schools we consider in this report might be described as private or not. UNESCO would say yes and DfID would say no. While this definitional challenge is important to solve, it is not what we are trying to do in this report. What is really important is that in recent years, these non-state and NGO-operated schools have attracted the attention of many academics, practitioners, and policymakers – even those opposed in general terms to any type of schooling not provided by the state.<sup>9</sup> The philanthropic NGO-run schools are often free to attend. This sets them apart from the high-fee, elitist associations of many private schools and even the complex debate surrounding the low-cost versions that have expanded rapidly in recent decades. United Nations (UN) organisations have stated that in the context of severe financial constraint and persistent access and quality issues, the appeal of NGO-run philanthropic school provision on a not-for-profit basis is driven by a very real need to find alternative or complementary models of public education that can be used as an interim solution.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the growing attention that not-for-profit non-state or NGO schools have received, there are few studies that investigate their effectiveness, analyse the different types of non-state school, and assess how they meet the needs of the most marginalised students.<sup>11</sup> In the context of great challenge and great need for quality education for all, this research explores four examples of NGO-run school groups that achieved successes in both these arenas (access and quality in low-income contexts).

## **Fe y Alegría, BRAC, Zambia Open Community Schools, and Gyan Shala**

The four examples of school groups we are using are Fe y Alegría, BRAC, Zambia Open Community Schools, and Gyan Shala. There are of course many more examples. The four we have selected are a particularly interesting group of schools worthy of close analysis and accompanied by some respectable literature. We seek to share insights into how they have succeeded in providing education for hard-to-reach groups and achieving better learning outcomes for the children in their schools. The school groups have different origins, geographical locations and evolutionary paths (see Table 1). Despite this, the evidence suggests some common and interesting features, including:

- capacity to reach under-served and marginalised populations in poor areas (both urban and rural)
- capacity to contribute to greater equity of education, by delivering free education

**The philanthropic NGO-run schools are often free to attend. This sets them apart from the high-fee, elitist associations of many private schools**

<sup>9</sup> United Nations (2014); United Nations (2015); UNESCO (2015a) <sup>10</sup>Ibid. <sup>11</sup>Wales et al. (2015)



- ability to achieve good learning outcomes, in some cases exceeding those achieved in public schools
- ability to deliver education at lower operational costs when compared with conventional government schools
- capacity to operate robust accountability mechanisms.

## The literature

This study is based on a review of literature on the four school groups. The available materials were analysed, looking for:

- evidence of innovation and achievement, particularly relating to access and equity, and quality and relevance
- common features and trends.

There is a small but good-quality literature available about these four school groups, though it lacks breadth and depth. Areas where evidence is lacking include any comparative analysis about the implications of the different forms of public–private agreements regulating these schools; the role of governments in monitoring the performance of these schools; any comparative analysis of their performance in terms of students' learning outcomes and the reasons behind variance; the distinct features of community/parents' committees in these schools compared to those in public schools; and the financial sustainability of the different models adopted by the selected sample. In addition, very few studies compare these schools and their *modus operandi*.<sup>12</sup> There is, of course, a substantial literature on some of the related topics – for example, low-cost private schools.

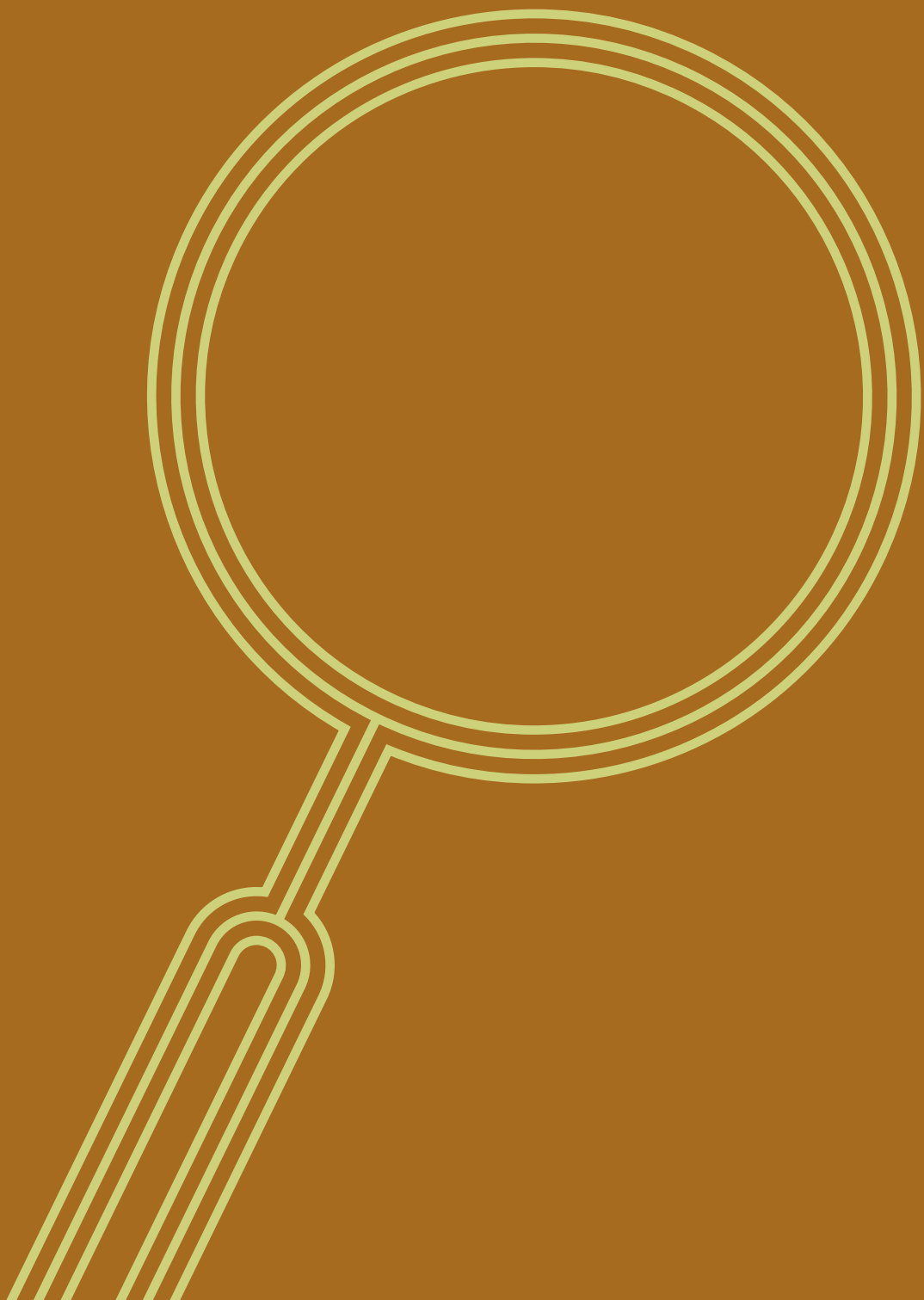
Despite shortcomings in the breadth and depth of the body of literature, the studies that are available can bear the weight of the analysis we have proposed as long as the findings are presented in a correspondingly modest manner. With this study we make a diffident but valuable addition to the evidence base. The evidence suggests that the four school groups have made some notable achievements and a common set of 'ingredients for success' emerge. These commonalities provide food for thought and features that we believe will be of interest to policymakers.

The evidence suggests that the four school groups have made some notable achievements and a common set of 'ingredients for success' emerge

<sup>12</sup> Wales et al. (2015)

Chapter 2

# Overview of the four school groups



## The following section provides an overview of the four school groups and an analysis of their historical development, geographical location, enrolments and partnerships with government.<sup>†</sup>

All four school groups work directly toward the goal of getting children into school, with a specific focus on marginalised and the most vulnerable youth and children. Indeed, to serve the poor and the poorest, three out of the four school groups (Fe y Alegría, Zambia Open Community Schools and BRAC) do not charge fees, while one (Gyan Shala) charges low fees that are affordable to many within even the poorest sectors of the population. All the school groups operate at primary level. BRAC also offers pre-primary education programmes, Fe y Alegría also offers secondary level education, and both run tertiary education programmes too.

Unlike for-profit schools that are typically 'devoid of government involvement',<sup>13</sup> these four schools groups implement state-set curricula and are allowed room for innovation to support students to learn and to transition to public schools. The degree to which these school groups are able to run in parallel and even support government school provision, curricula and assessment models varies, but is a clear feature – for example, of Gyan Shala, where the schools are able to support government schools by providing training to teachers and learning materials.

Unlike for-profit schools that are typically 'devoid of government involvement', these four schools groups implement state-set curricula and are allowed room for innovation to support students to learn and to transition to public schools

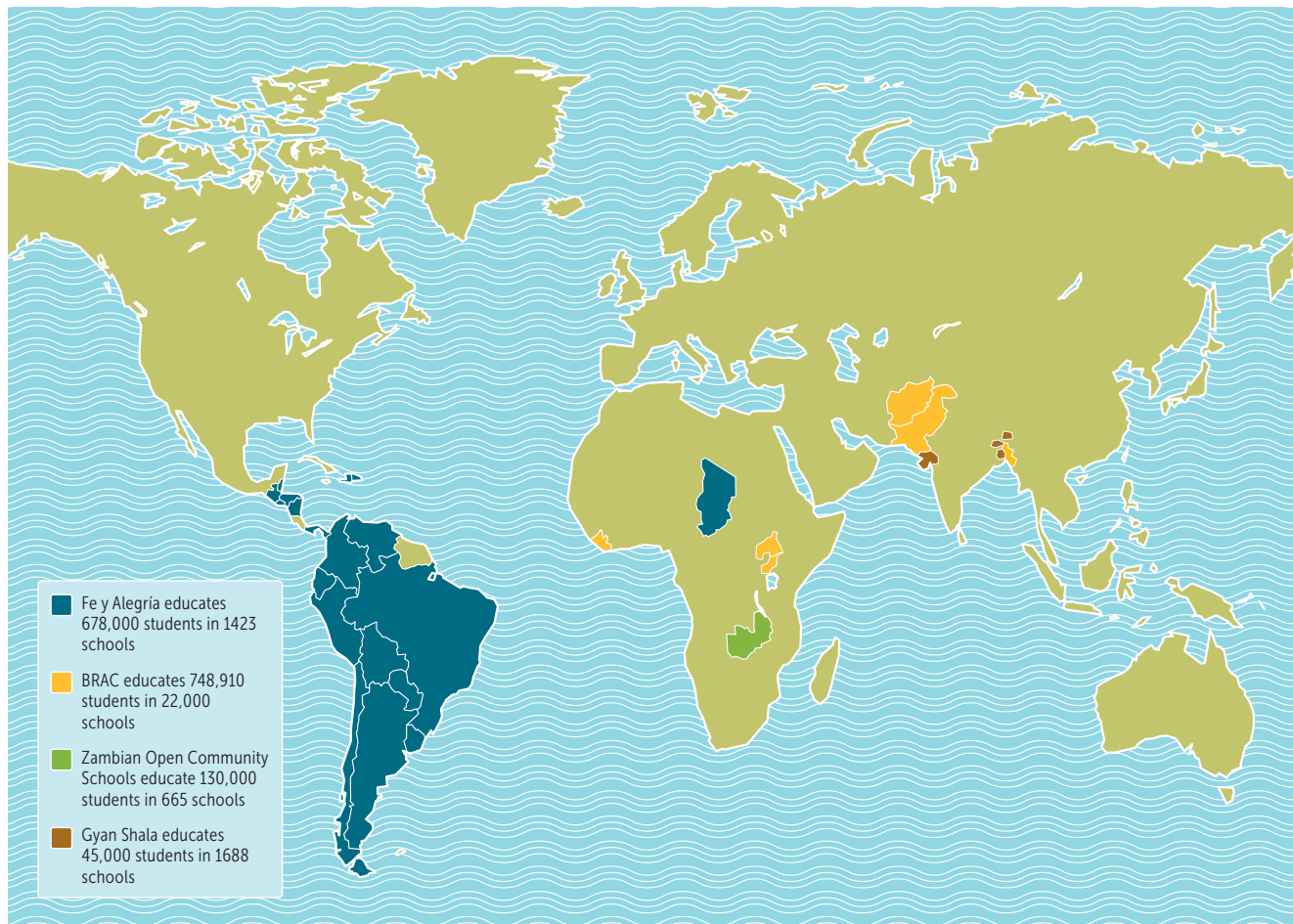
### Fe y Alegría

Fe y Alegría is a federation of schools organised by the Jesuit Catholic religious order. It was founded in 1955 in Venezuela to create a network of educational services in the slums around Caracas.<sup>14</sup> Over the past 60 years, the federation has expanded and now provides education in 19 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain,<sup>15</sup> Uruguay and Venezuela. The federation runs 1,423 schools and operates as a religiously inspired NGO. It provides education for 1.7 million students,<sup>16</sup> of which more than 700,000 are enrolled in primary schools.

It aims to provide education to students who have limited access due to socioeconomic disadvantage or other discrimination<sup>17</sup> in order to 'empower them in their personal development and their participation in society'.<sup>18</sup> Its schools are located in areas where there is no provision of public education or public educational services are dysfunctional and 'where parents are willing to

<sup>†</sup> See figure 2 for a summary <sup>13</sup> Werker and Ahmed (2008) <sup>14</sup> Osorio and Wodon (2014) <sup>15</sup> In Spain, Fe y Alegría has established a support platform. <sup>16</sup> Osorio and Wodon (2014) <sup>17</sup> Ibid. <sup>18</sup> Ibid.

FIGURE 2: WHERE THE FOUR SCHOOL CHAINS OPERATE



actively cooperate with the school.<sup>19</sup> The interest of parents and the community is demonstrated during the start-up phase. Indeed, a school is only established when a community living in a marginalised area explicitly requests that Fe y Alegría opens a school there. The network examines the request and appoints a religious congregation, which is available to operate a school.

Its schools operate under a public–private partnership (PPP) model and are recognised by the state. The state covers the costs associated with teacher salaries, and teachers are subject to the same labour scheme and pension system as their public school counterparts.<sup>20</sup> Fe y Alegría runs its own curriculum, which complements the government curriculum.<sup>21</sup> Given the alignment between the state’s mission and its own, Fe y Alegría schools define themselves as part of the public education system.

Operational costs are covered by different funding sources: as already noted, the government covers teachers’ salaries, the community contributes in-kind through helping with construction and maintenance of the buildings, and fundraising activities (e.g. lotteries) are run by the Fe y Alegría Central National Office.

A school is only established when a community living in a marginalised area explicitly requests that Fe y Alegría opens a school there

<sup>19</sup> Alcázar and Valdivia (2014) <sup>20</sup> Ibid. <sup>21</sup> Ibid.

## BRAC primary school programme

BRAC is one of the largest NGOs in the world providing a range of services for people living in poverty and humanitarian response for those in need.<sup>22</sup> Its primary school programme, providing non-formal community primary schools, started in Bangladesh in 1985 with 22 one-room schools that offered three years of schooling. Today, the programme covers the entire primary school curriculum and runs more than 22,000 primary schools in multiple countries: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Uganda and Liberia. Impressively, BRAC delivers primary and pre-primary education to 1 million students. (748,910 students at primary level and 362,000 students in preschools).

The main objective of BRAC primary schools is to provide primary education to underprivileged and out-of-school children.<sup>23</sup> The programme offers the typical five-year primary school programme compressed into four years. All BRAC primary schools are single-classroom and single-teacher schools.<sup>24</sup> The compressed programme has allowed BRAC to catch children who were not previously enrolled as well as early dropouts.

BRAC primary schools operate a philanthropic model and the programme does not charge tuition fees. Books and other learning materials are provided free of cost. In Bangladesh, BRAC schools operate independently of the government without any partnership agreement with the state.<sup>25</sup> They develop their own curriculum and books (which include elements from the national curriculum) and their own certification. As a result of its scale and reputation, BRAC has been able to negotiate, with the government of Bangladesh, the transition of students from BRAC primary schools into public secondary schools. BRAC students are required to pass the grade V national examination to obtain the governmental certification and make the transition to public schools.

In terms of funding, BRAC relies on external support from international and national donors. In 2016, BRAC launched an initiative in Bangladesh called Shishu Niketon, which aimed to increase the financial sustainability of the free education programme.<sup>26</sup> The initiative consists of a chain of low-fee schools located in areas where parents are financially able to afford to cover tuition fees. The revenues it raises are allocated to cover or subsidise the operational costs of BRAC's free education programme. This is a relatively new diversification strategy to raise funds and has not gone uncriticised. The main pro-poor programme has not changed.

BRAC also runs a programme called the Mainstream Secondary Schools Support programme, which aims to build the capacity of rural secondary school teachers and improve classroom pedagogy and school management.<sup>27</sup> The programme is implemented in collaboration with the government to enhance the capacity of secondary schools and teachers.

The main objective of BRAC primary schools is to provide primary education to underprivileged and out-of-school children

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.brac.net/> for more details <sup>23</sup> BRAC (2016a) <sup>24</sup> Ibid. <sup>25</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) <sup>26</sup> BRAC (2018) <sup>27</sup> BRAC (2016b)

## Gyan Shala

Gyan Shala was established in 2000 by a group of members of the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad and the Institute of Rural Management, aiming to provide quality education to poor students through a 'replicable and scalable' education model.<sup>28</sup> The programme was initially piloted in the city of Ahmedabad in the state of Gujarat. Today, Gyan Shala operates 1,688 elementary schools in Gujarat, Bihar and West Bengal, providing education for 45,000 students.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike the other case studies, Gyan Shala does charge low tuition fees, equal to approximately US\$0.70 per month. The tuition fee is used to cover, in part, the cost of hiring and maintaining classrooms. It supplies free curriculum material and stationery to students. The monthly contribution from students' families allows Gyan Shala to cover 30 per cent of its operating costs. The remaining costs are covered by a PPP with the government, which funds students from Grade 1 to Grade 3.<sup>30</sup> For higher-grade students, Gyan Shala has a mixed financial strategy, combining corporate and philanthropic activities. Among the corporate activities are services to municipal schools, such as teacher training and educational material. These commercial activities bring in a modest income, roughly 8 per cent of costs. Meeting other costs relies on philanthropic donations and fundraising activities.

Gyan Shala implements a mixed curriculum with key elements derived from the state system. This allows students to receive an official certificate and recognition by the government and to transition to public schools.

Unlike the other case studies, Gyan Shala does charge low tuition fees, equal to approximately US\$0.70 per month

## Zambia Open Community Schools

Open Community Schools in Zambia started during the early 1990s in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Initially, they were set up to support children orphaned by AIDS and students with special needs. The scale of the need of children orphaned by AIDS was, and remains, immense. In 2017, a report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimated that there were 380,000 orphans in Zambia and almost 72,000 children aged 0–14 living with HIV or AIDS.<sup>31</sup>

In 1995, all the community schools were joined under one not-for-profit NGO called Zambia Open Community Schools. This NGO supervises all school operations and development. Its growth has been impressive. From a class of 50 girls run in an open space, the number of open community schools has expanded over the years such that today, it runs 665 schools, providing primary education for 127,516 students (62,717 boys and 64,799 girls). The schools are staffed by 250 volunteer teachers.

The schools are established by communities where there is no provision of public education nearby.<sup>32</sup> Education is provided free to students. There are no charges for tuition fees or any other indirect costs associated with education (for example, books, uniforms, etc.).

<sup>28</sup> Bangay and Latham (2013) <sup>29</sup> Gyan Shala (2019a) <sup>30</sup> Ibid. <sup>31</sup> UNAIDS (2019) <sup>32</sup> DeStefano and Schuh (2010)

The Zambian government sees Zambia Open Community Schools as a key mechanism to support the achievement of EFA goals due to the success of its scaling up. In order to optimise the contribution made by the NGO, the government developed policies to legally recognise the schools. Since 2005, the Zambian government has been providing community schools with a US\$600 grant to support their operation.<sup>33</sup> The Education Act of 2011 legalised community schools.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, every year the government reserves a predetermined number of places in teacher training colleges for qualifying community school teachers.<sup>35</sup> While the government supports the operation of community schools and recognises their strategic role as an education provider in Zambia, its support is not sufficient to guarantee the financial sustainability of Zambia Open Community Schools. Indeed, the schools are underfunded and to some extent depend on the capacity of the poorest communities to mobilise resources.<sup>36</sup> The community, through Parent Community School Committees, is responsible for setting up the infrastructure and securing resources to pay teachers' allowances (teachers work on a voluntary basis, 'with promises for occasional in-kind compensation').<sup>37</sup>

As a result of the good relationship between the government public school system and Zambia Open Community Schools, these schools are able to deliver the national curriculum and students receive government certification on completion of each level.<sup>38</sup>

Since 2005, the Zambian government has been providing community schools with a US\$600 grant to support their operation

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education of Zambia (2014) <sup>34</sup>Ibid. <sup>35</sup> DeStefano et al. (2007) <sup>36</sup> DeStefano and Schuh (2010) <sup>37</sup> DeStefano et al. (2007) <sup>38</sup> Ibid.

TABLE 1: THE FOUR SCHOOL GROUP CASE STUDIES IN BRIEF

	BRAC	Zambia Open Community Schools	Gyan Shala	Fe y Alegría
<b>Geographical spread</b>	Started in Bangladesh in 1985 with 22 schools, now has more than 22,000 one-room primary schools in 6 countries (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Uganda, Liberia)	First school established 1992, today runs 665 primary schools in Zambia	Operates in India (Gujarat, Bihar, West Bengal), set up in 2000, now runs 1,688 primary schools	Created in 1955 in Venezuela, now operates 1,423 schools in 19 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Uruguay, Venezuela)
<b>Number of students</b>	748,910 primary students plus 362,000 students in preschools	127,516 students (62,717 boys and 64,799 girls), targets marginalised students (orphans, children with special needs)	43,153 students in primary schools	1.7 million students – 678,000 in primary schools
<b>Level of education provided</b>	Pre-schools, primary schools, learning centres, and one university	Primary schools	Primary schools	Primary, secondary and tertiary education
<b>Tuition fees or other costs</b>	Free of charge	Free of charge (except for parents' / community in-kind contribution to set up school infrastructures and teachers' compensation)	Low-fee school (50 INR – US\$0.71 a month)	Free of charge (except form parents' in-kind contribution to set up school infrastructure and school maintenance)
<b>Legal status</b>	NGO (BRAC is the biggest NGO in the world)	NGO	NGO	NGO – Federation of Jesuit Schools
<b>Relation with the state</b>	BRAC schools are fully independent. Students are required to pass the governmental Grade V examination. Although BRAC uses its own books and curriculum, they are based on learning outcomes and skills of the government curriculum	Open Community Schools legally recognised since 1998. Since 2005, the government has given community schools a grant of US\$600. Schools use the national curriculum. Government reserves places in teacher training colleges every year for qualifying community school teachers	Operates under a public–private partnership agreement. Mixed curriculum (government and Gyan Shala)	Teachers are paid by the state. Fe y Alegría schools follow the national and regional curriculum, but develop their own curriculum to meet students' needs
<b>Fundraising</b>	Funding is provided by international donors. Programme sustainability has been strengthened by the new initiative Shishu Niketon (2016)	Resources come from the community itself, the government and/ or international and private donors	The government funds on a per-student basis for grades 1–3. Other sources of income include private or philanthropic donations, services provided to municipal schools (e.g. teacher training, educational material)	Teachers' salaries are paid by the state, the community contributes to construction and maintenance of buildings, other sources include national fundraising events (e.g. lotteries), international and private donors





## Chapter 3

# The achievements of these four school groups



If we analyse the achievements of these school groups there is some common ground. They have all supported, to some extent, the drive for access to education – in some cases, targeting particularly hard-to-reach and marginalised groups.

### Expanding access to education

Access to education remains an issue in the countries where the four school groups operate. For example, in 2016, Venezuela and Bolivia (where Fe y Alegría operates) had one of the highest rates of out-of-school students of primary school age, at 11 per cent and 9.15 per cent respectively, compared to the regional average of 4.99 per cent.<sup>39</sup> In the same year, in Zambia, 12 per cent of primary school age students were out of school.

All the school groups that we look at here aim to reach marginalised students by reducing the barriers to participation in education. For instance, DeStefano and Schuh Moore<sup>40</sup> highlighted that 25 per cent of primary students in Zambia were enrolled in community schools and that 30 per cent of community school enrolments are children who have lost at least one parent because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.<sup>41</sup> BRAC provides free education to a large portion of students living in rural areas in Bangladesh.<sup>42</sup>

The ability of these schools to expand access to education to marginalised students relies on the combination of different elements:

- reduced costs associated with schooling, including direct and indirect costs, which eliminate economic barriers to education and expand access to the poorest segments of the population
- expanded provision of education in under-served and rural areas, to decrease distance to school, eliminate transport costs and reach those who live in marginalised and hard-to-reach areas
- increased flexibility of education provision – for example, to adjust timetabling and make it more adaptable to the needs of students and families.

Below, we explain how the four school groups translated these elements into practice.

Poverty remains the most important factor in limiting access to education. According to UNESCO estimates, in 2014 in Chad (one of the countries where Fe y Alegría operates), 55 per cent of out-of-school students at primary level came from the poorest segments of the population.<sup>43, 44</sup> Poor families cannot afford to cover costs

All the school groups that we look at here aim to reach marginalised students by reducing the barriers to participation in education

<sup>39</sup> UIS-UNESCO data. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/news/263-million-children-and-youth-are-out-school> <sup>40</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) <sup>41</sup> DeStefano et al. (2007) <sup>42</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) <sup>43</sup> <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> <sup>44</sup> The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) calculates household survey-based education indicators, such as students' wealth indicators, using data from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

associated with education. While the abolition of school fees has increased access to education, indirect costs (e.g. uniforms, stationery, books, other learning materials, transport to school) still impact on children getting to or remaining in school. 'Hidden fees' associated with education particularly restrict the participation of children from poor families, causing non-enrolment or dropout; in many countries, low-income households cannot afford the indirect costs of sending their children to school, as well as the opportunity costs (the lost wages or household contributions of their children).<sup>45</sup>

As an example of this phenomenon, it was estimated that indirect costs of education in Zambia are more than four times the direct costs.<sup>46</sup> Research conducted by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection shows that elements such as inadequate clothing and lack of money to buy school supplies are some of the reasons for non-enrolment and dropout in Zambia.<sup>47</sup>

In order to facilitate access to education of the poorest children, three out of four of the examined school groups do not charge tuition fees. Additionally, all of them provide students with learning materials to remove all the indirect costs associated with education. BRAC primary schools ensure that students receive slates, stationery, and a complete set of textbooks prior to starting each new grade,<sup>48</sup> accounting for 27 per cent of the total programme budget.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Zambia Open Community Schools provides pencils and books, sport and leisure facilities for the children, and uniforms are not required.<sup>50</sup> Even in Gyan Shala schools, which is the only case study group charging tuition fees, students are provided with learning material, 'including learning aids for individual and group activities, and a worksheet for each stream every day'.<sup>51</sup> Given the poverty and poor health that many students experience, Zambia Open Community Schools and Fe y Alegría offer school feeding programmes to improve student health, incentivise attendance, support attainment in schools and reduce dropout.<sup>52</sup>

To keep operational costs low and increase the level of ownership among parents and the community, these school groups frequently rely on parents' in-kind contributions. In the case of BRAC and Fe y Alegría, communities contribute labour to building and maintaining schools.<sup>53</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore<sup>54</sup> note the issue of in-kind contributions across a range of contexts and philanthropic providers too (including countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Zambia).

The ability to expand access to education largely depends on the geographical proximity of schools in poor or under-served areas. Improved geographical proximity serves two purposes: to complement the provision of public education and to reach underprivileged students. Indeed, inadequate numbers of schools and the consequent distance from home to school remains an important barrier to education for many children. In such contexts, the schools provided by these school groups fill an important void. As part of their educational programmes, Wales and colleagues conclude that schools 'are purposely located in areas that enable them to reach marginalised groups and operate flexibly to reach these communities'.<sup>55</sup> Among others, one of the main criteria adopted for BRAC school location is the number of boys and girls who need education in rural areas.<sup>56</sup> Asadullah<sup>57</sup> conducted a study on the location choices of not-for-profit schools in Bangladesh. The research demonstrated that there was a positive correlation between the location of BRAC schools and local poverty rates, where poor and marginalised students are clustered.

To keep operational costs low and increase the level of ownership among parents and the community, these school groups frequently rely on parents' in-kind contributions

<sup>45</sup> Guarcello and Rosati (2015) <sup>46</sup> Petrauski and Nkunika 2006, cited in UNICEF (2014) <sup>47</sup> UNICEF (2014) <sup>48</sup> Chabbott (2006) <sup>49</sup> Ibid. <sup>50</sup> Mwalimu (2011) <sup>51</sup> CfBT (2011) <sup>52</sup> UNICEF (2001); Friends of Fe y Alegría in the United Kingdom (2019) <sup>53</sup> Epstein and Yuthas (2012) <sup>54</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) <sup>55</sup> Wales et al. (2015, 36) <sup>56</sup> Khatun et al. (1998) <sup>57</sup> Asadullah (2016)

According to a comparative analysis exploring the location of Fe y Alegría schools in marginal areas,<sup>58</sup> ‘a higher incidence of urban marginality was found in Fe y Alegría schools (41.4 per cent) compared to public schools (27.5 per cent)’.<sup>59</sup> The study demonstrated that its schools in Venezuela and Colombia are more likely to be located in disadvantaged areas (both rural and urban), compared with public schools. Similarly, DeStefano and Schuh Moore<sup>60</sup> noted that ‘in Zambia, communities formed their own schools when no public school was nearby or when families could no longer afford the costs associated with government schooling’.

The four school groups offer **more flexible forms of schooling** and schools can adapt their practices to meet students’ needs.<sup>61</sup> Greater flexibility in school scheduling makes it possible to adapt provision to suit community needs and local contexts (for example, allowing students to be at home during peak times, contributing to seasonal working or domestic tasks, etc.).<sup>62</sup> As an example, the Gyan Shala school day does not exceed four hours,<sup>63</sup> while the opening and closing times of a BRAC school are decided by the parents and the local community.<sup>64</sup>

The flexibility of these schools is also reflected in their enrolment policies. As an example, both BRAC and Zambia Open Community Schools do not impose age limits for enrolment. Indeed, older learners who have never been enrolled in any formal school or have dropped out of school are the main target group for both programmes.

The strategies applied by these schools contribute not only to expanding access to the poorest students but also help in reducing dropouts. As an example, the average dropout rate in Fe y Alegría schools across nine countries is 8 per cent lower than in public schools (see Table 2). The difference is even more marked in Venezuela, where the dropout rate in Fe y Alegría schools is 22.5 per cent lower than in government schools.

A CfBT study<sup>65</sup> comparing dropout rates in Gyan Shala and public schools found that dropout rates in Gyan Shala schools were substantially lower: 5 per cent for grade 2 compared to 50 per cent in public schools, and 2 per cent for grade 3 compared to 20 per cent in public schools.

Greater flexibility  
in school  
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needs and local  
contexts

TABLE 2: GROSS DROPOUT RATE IN FE Y ALEGRÍA AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS <sup>66</sup>

Country	Gross dropout rate (percentage)		
	Fe y Alegría	Other public schools	Difference (FYA -PSs)
Peru	9.9	25.7	-15.8
Bolivia	9	26.8	-17.8
Venezuela	16.2	38.7	-22.5
Nicaragua	13.8	10	3.8
Ecuador	29.2	38.6	-9.4
Guatemala	22.3	38.2	-15.9
Colombia	10.5	8	2.5
El Salvador	39.7	40.4	-0.7
Paraguay	8.4	5	3.4
Average	17.67	25.71	-8.04

<sup>58</sup> The study was conducted in 298 Fe y Alegría schools and 287 public schools. <sup>59</sup> Borjas and Soto (2014, 83) <sup>60</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) <sup>61</sup> Wales et al. (2015) <sup>62</sup> Sommers (2012); Bangay and Latham (2013); Wales et al. (2015) <sup>63</sup> Bangay and Latham (2013) <sup>64</sup> Sommers (2012) <sup>65</sup> CfBT (2011) <sup>66</sup> Adapted from Swope and Latorre (2000)

Studies demonstrate that girls who face multiple disadvantages (for example, poverty, living in remote or under-served locations, disability or belonging to a minority ethnolinguistic group) are frequently excluded from education. The accessibility policies adopted by these four school groups provide an interesting example of multifaceted policies having a beneficial impact in expanding girls' access to education. Bangay and Latham<sup>67</sup> and the CfBT study<sup>68</sup> found gender parity in enrolments in Gyan Shala schools. In particular, the CfBT study<sup>69</sup> found that 54 per cent of the children attending Gyan Shala schools were female. Two-thirds of the 2.4 million students who had graduated from BRAC primary schools in Bangladesh by 2002 were girls.<sup>70</sup> In Guatemala, Fe y Alegría primary schools have almost reached parity gender, with 47.90 per cent of female students enrolled.<sup>71</sup>

### Improving learning outcomes

There is some evidence that students enrolled in these four school groups regularly outperform students in traditional government schools. Studies have compared the performance of these schools against public schools by using different analytical methods and results from national examinations. The literature does not allow comparison of the results across these schools due to the lack of international standardised assessments.

Allcott and Ortega<sup>72</sup> examined the performance of Fe y Alegría schools in Venezuela and found an average 'treatment effect' of being enrolled in those schools in mathematics of 0.1 standard deviation (SD) compared to public schools. Additionally, the authors examined a five-year database with learning outcomes of secondary schools in Colombia and compared the outcomes of Fe y Alegría and public schools there. They found that Fe y Alegría schools performed worse than public schools during the five-year period. However, after controlling for student socioeconomic background, the study demonstrated that, given similar student characteristics, the performance of Fe y Alegría schools was equal to or better than public schools in language and mathematics over the five years.<sup>73</sup>

Bangay and Latham<sup>74</sup> showed that Gyan Shala Grade 3 students performed better than their peers in public schools in language and mathematics, by more than 100 per cent.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, another study assessed the impact of Gyan Shala pedagogy, curriculum and training applied in state municipal schools. The research showed that 'Municipal treatment schools receiving [Gyan Shala] support recorded improved results in various subjects and in various grades in the range of 35 per cent.'<sup>76</sup>

DeStefano and Schuh Moore<sup>77</sup> demonstrated that 70 per cent of students in BRAC schools in Bangladesh met the learning outcome threshold, compared to 27 per cent in state schools. Other studies corroborate these findings: Nath<sup>78</sup> demonstrated that students in BRAC schools performed equally as well as students in governmental schools, despite the disadvantages faced by BRAC students in terms of socioeconomic background.<sup>79</sup> In Zambia, the difference between public schools and Zambia Open Community Schools is narrower: 40 per cent of students in the latter met the learning outcome threshold compared to 35 per cent in public schools; however, the difference is still in favour of not-for-profit schools.<sup>80</sup>

Accessibility policies adopted by these four school groups provide an interesting example of multifaceted policies having a beneficial impact in expanding girls' access to education

<sup>67</sup> Bangay and Latham (2013) <sup>68</sup> CfBT (2011) <sup>69</sup> Ibid. <sup>70</sup> Farrell and Hartwell (2008, 22) <sup>71</sup> Osorio and Wodon (2014) <sup>72</sup> Allcott and Ortega (2014) <sup>73</sup> Osorio and Wodon (2014); there was fluctuation in results over the five years. <sup>74</sup> Bangay and Latham (2013) <sup>75</sup> Wales et al. (2015) <sup>76</sup> Bangay and Latham (2013, 248) quoted in Wales et al. (2015) <sup>77</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) <sup>78</sup> Nath (2006) <sup>79</sup> Epstein and Yuthas (2012, 106) <sup>80</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010)



Chapter 4

# Ingredients of success





The previous chapter made the case that these four school groups have supported access to education for many children, including those from marginalised groups, and they have, in some cases, also achieved better learning outcomes compared to government schools. The literature offers some insights into the drivers of their apparent success.

### Social commitment

NGO, not-for-profit schools interpret the provision of education in terms of a 'political project, often framed in terms of social justice goals'.<sup>81</sup> They are different from other non-state actors in that they are motivated by 'solidaristic values'<sup>82</sup> and work towards ideological, rather than financial, goals. These schools make a long-term commitment to their communities, and *vice versa* – the community mobilises resources to make schools operational.

The documentation about these school groups suggests that they define themselves as motivated by 'working for good'. For example, Fe y Alegría aims to build equal and democratic social systems by promoting 'integral, inclusive and quality education processes';<sup>83</sup> BRAC's objective is 'to change systems of inequity';<sup>84</sup> Zambia Open Community Schools wants to promote 'open, accessible community schools for disadvantaged children';<sup>85</sup> while Gyan Shala's mission is 'to ensure the quality of basic education to the children from poor rural and urban families on par with what is available to high income or elite social groups'.<sup>86</sup>

It seems plausible that social values may contribute to the building of a conducive atmosphere for good performance and the engagement of students and teachers. Having clear objectives and clarity about the schools' mission is likely to positively influence performance and increase motivation among staff and students alike. Indeed, school staff are selected based on their motivation and commitment. In some cases, such as Fe y Alegría and BRAC, teacher motivation is measured in relation to the social values promoted by the schools.<sup>87</sup> In other cases, such as in Zambia and India, teacher motivation is ensured by their belonging to the community where the school is based.<sup>88</sup> Teacher motivation and commitment are perceived as crucial to ensuring alignment, engagement, and enthusiasm. As a teachers at a Fe y Alegría school declared, 'since there is a clear goal to pursue, it makes sense to devote oneself to work'.<sup>89</sup>

Having clear objectives and clarity about the schools' mission is likely to positively influence performance and increase motivation among staff and students alike

<sup>81</sup> Fennell (2013, 10) <sup>82</sup> Rossignoli (forthcoming) <sup>83</sup> Federación Internacional Fe y Alegría (2016) <sup>84</sup> BRAC (2017) <sup>85</sup> Zambia Open Community Schools (2019) <sup>86</sup> Gyan Shala (2019b) <sup>87</sup> Akiba (2013); Alcázar and Valdivia (2014) <sup>88</sup> Asian Development Bank (2017); Asadullah (2016); CfBT (2011) <sup>89</sup> Alcázar and Valdivia (2014)

Sharing similar social values may create common ground and foster a sense of belonging to the 'school family'. Indeed, interviews with Fe y Alegría staff highlight how the good performance of Fe y Alegría schools largely depends on the 'family culture of the schools'.<sup>90</sup> 'Family culture' is also fostered by the proximity of school staff to the community; most teachers and principals live near the school, which makes it feasible for them to meet the local community even outside the school environment and build good relationships with them.<sup>91</sup> The family feeling and/or community embeddedness is emphasised in relations with families and students. These schools require parents' engagement in their children's education, which results in frequent participation of parents in school life, including building and maintaining the school, everyday management, meetings, and assemblies.<sup>92</sup> Parental support is vital for children's academic success.<sup>93</sup>

In the four school groups, students seem to identify strongly with their school.<sup>94</sup> Literature has suggested that the students' process of identifying with their school occurs due to a close relationship based on mutual respect between students and teachers and high levels of participation in classroom decision-making. In conducting classroom observation of BRAC schools, Hossain et al.<sup>95</sup> noticed that teachers ask the learners about their personal matters before the lesson starts to 'encourage learners' sense of belonging to the classroom'. Students' identification with the school encourages students 'to respect school property more and pay better attention in class'.<sup>96</sup>

### Governance, autonomy and accountability mechanisms

The performance of these four school groups may also be influenced by a combination of a high degree of autonomy from government control and effective accountability mechanisms.

Our analysis suggests that the schools may benefit from greater autonomy compared with public schools in relation to:

- teachers' selection
- teachers' salary
- class size
- curriculum and pedagogy
- teachers' minimum qualifications.

A high degree of autonomy optimises the flexibility of these schools to deliver education according to the students' needs and their capacity to innovate (such as adapting teaching methods to stimulate enthusiasm and deliver personal learning or the use of new technologies).<sup>97</sup> In all the case studies, the schools were responsible for selecting and managing teachers, but they all did this differently. Selection criteria varied across schools: BRAC, Zambia Open Community Schools and Gyan Shala recruit teachers based on their location within the school community; BRAC enforces distinctive gender criteria, hiring only female teachers; while Fe y Alegría focuses more on teachers with high levels of engagement and

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<sup>90</sup> Osorio and Wodon (2014) <sup>91</sup> Ibid. <sup>92</sup> Ibid.; Institute for Life Long Learning-UNESCO (2016); Simui and Mtonga (2012); DeStefano (2006) <sup>93</sup> Osorio and Wodon (2014) <sup>94</sup> Ibid. <sup>95</sup> Hossain et al. (2003, 6) <sup>96</sup> Allcott and Ortega (2014) <sup>97</sup> Lewis and Patrinos (2011)

motivation. The school groups, even those which adopt the national curriculum, tend to incorporate additional elements of curriculum design to better respond to the local context and students' needs. The schools we studied also use their own pedagogical approach for teaching, which is generally structured around standardised elements that are flexible enough to allow adjustments based on students' needs. As an example, Fe y Alegría schools follow an annual academic programme based on a diagnostic of students' needs and problems, which is conducted at the beginning of the school year.

While autonomy can improve the capacity of a school to answer local needs, without appropriate accountability mechanisms, this might also lead to opportunistic behaviours, poor performance, and inefficiencies. Accountability mechanisms are crucial to ensure that schools meet their objectives and serve the needs of the poorest and the most marginalised.<sup>98</sup>

Several actors are involved in the management of these four school groups, each with their own responsibilities, including supervision and monitoring. Despite the fact that governance models vary across the four school groups, it is possible to highlight two types of accountability:

- upward accountability, making the individual school responsive to the group's central offices
- downward accountability, establishing direct relations between the school, parents and the community.

All the not-for-profit schools are supported and monitored by a central or national office acting as an umbrella organisation or a 'federation of schools'. The role of the central office includes:

- providing/facilitating training to teachers on pedagogical aspects and specific subjects
- supporting the school in learning and innovating through constant monitoring and evaluation of school performance and, consequently, analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

While formal evaluations from the central office occur every year (in the case of BRAC, Gyan Shala and Zambia Open Community Schools) or every two years (in the case of Fe y Alegría), other forms of monitoring are continuous and can occur every week, month or quarter. Monitoring is conducted by supervisors (experienced teachers) or assistant principals who are trained by the central or national office.<sup>99</sup> Supervision includes the examination of the classroom environment and quality of teaching and learning.<sup>100</sup> Although there are differences between the four school groups, there does appear to be a degree of similarity in the broad processes that are used. Across the four, monitoring is followed by action to improve learning and teaching; after each visit, feedback is provided to teachers to improve their performance and a revision of the learning programming is conducted. Monitoring activities are strengthened by the fact that teachers are directly appointed by the school. This empowers schools to constantly and deeply 'monitor' teacher performance. As an example of monitoring in action, Osorio and Wodon<sup>101</sup> noted that teachers in Fe y Alegría are not only evaluated 'on formalities

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid. <sup>99</sup>Alcázar and Valdivia (2014) <sup>100</sup>Ibid. <sup>101</sup>Osorio and Wodon (2014,19)

such as meeting the school's schedule of activities (showing up on time to class, grading exams and papers in a timely fashion, attending faculty meetings, etc.), they are monitored in the classroom every quarter and are coached by their more experienced peers'.

Along with the responsiveness to the central/national office, these school groups emphasise the so-called 'short route to accountability',<sup>102</sup> meaning that schools establish a direct accountability relationship between the school, students' families and the community. A growing literature identifies the innovative character of these schools in their capacity to:

- take advantage of the dynamics of the involvement of grassroots social capital (informal community networks, traditional knowledge, and skills)
- devolve education responsibility at the local level by increased responsiveness of the education service to local stakeholders.<sup>103</sup>

Since these schools are more accessible and closer to local stakeholders, they can be more sensitive and responsive to local needs.<sup>104</sup>

Parent committees and/or school committees are the most common managerial instruments used to guarantee the participation of local communities and parents in the decision-making process and the internal monitoring of 'educational production'.<sup>105</sup> These committees have the role of maintaining the school and overseeing children's and teachers' attendance.

In these four school groups, downward accountability mechanisms are supported by a 'behavioural monitoring approach', which is more effective and convenient in small teams.<sup>106</sup> Given the small size of the community, it is possible for parents to monitor schools' performance closely. Monitoring does not need to be entirely specialised or technical and can be easily realised by assessment of the behaviour of school staff.<sup>107</sup> In other words, parents and/or community committees can directly supervise teachers' and students' behaviour (for example, pupil and teacher absenteeism, and so on). Monitoring based on behaviour supervision is particularly useful in the provision of education since parents do not have enough information and knowledge to judge the quality of education (for example, learning outcomes or teaching methodologies) and gaining such knowledge and information would be time-consuming and costly.<sup>108</sup> The effectiveness of such behavioural monitoring is demonstrated, as an example, by a significant reduction in teacher absenteeism in the schools.<sup>109</sup>

### Flexibility to 'engineer' key resources

The schools in the case studies appear to be particularly cost effective and skilful in the use of limited resources. Their operational costs are significantly lower than those of government schools. Table 3 compares the average cost of schooling per student in public schools compared with the not-for-profit groups. The analysis demonstrates that, on average, the four groups' operational costs are 47 per cent lower than government schools, with variation ranging from 36 per cent (Fe y Alegría) to 66 per cent (Gyan Shala).

Schools establish a direct accountability relationship between the school, students' families and the community

<sup>102</sup> World Bank (2004) <sup>103</sup> Rossignoli (forthcoming); Fennell (2013) <sup>104</sup> Ibid. <sup>105</sup> Rossignoli (forthcoming) <sup>106</sup> Alchian and Demsetz (1972); Rossignoli (forthcoming) <sup>107</sup> Ibid. <sup>108</sup> Alchian and Demsetz (1972) <sup>109</sup> Wales et al. (2015)

TABLE 3: OPERATIONAL COSTS OF THESE NGO-RUN SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS <sup>110</sup>

Fe y Alegria*			BRAC**			Gyan Shala***			Zambia Open Community Schools**		
NFP†	Gov.	Diff (%)	NFP†	Gov.	Diff (%)	NFP†	Gov.	Diff (%)	NFP†	Gov.	Diff (%)
\$440	\$600	36%	\$20	\$29	45%	\$40	\$120	66%	\$39	\$67	41%

†Not-for-profit (NFP)

The relative effectiveness of different schools can be analysed using a conceptual framework that depicts school education as a 'productive system', in which a combination of inputs (such as teachers, instructional materials and school facilities) generates outputs (such as student achievements, equity in access and learning outcomes).<sup>111</sup> Some researchers have highlighted the importance of the 'engineering' of the different inputs and the possibility that school effectiveness can be enhanced through distinctive approaches to planning the use of key resource inputs.

The focus on distinctive resource 'engineering' was highlighted by DeStefano and Schuh Moore in their study of 10 non-state providers, which included BRAC and Zambia Open Community Schools.<sup>112</sup> This study identified how these schools typically spent less on pre-service training and teacher salaries and more on in-service teacher support and instructional materials:

*The inputs being maximised – school-based teacher support, teacher and student attendance, and presence of instructional materials – offset the lower levels of initial teacher training and compensation in ways that yield higher levels of cost-effectiveness in some cases.*

These findings are consistent with Wales et al.<sup>113</sup> who refer, in their wide literature review, to the relative cost effectiveness of not-for-profit, non-state schools, although they caveat this claim with reference to the moderate scale of the supporting body of evidence and limited data.

*Philanthropic schools have lower operating costs than state schools, with lower teacher wages and smaller input costs being widely noted. The few studies that examine cost-effectiveness directly find that philanthropic provision is more cost-effective than state provision. Precise estimates need to be treated with caution, however, due to low data availability in terms of monitoring costs and the hidden costs of donated resources and volunteer time.*<sup>114</sup>

Like DeStefano and Schuh Moore, Wales and colleagues also explored the trade-off between pre-service and in-service teacher development. While BRAC teachers, for example, on average have lower pre-service qualifications than government school teachers, 'their skills have been upgraded through regular refresher trainings and improved systems of monitoring and supervision'.

In addition to savings relating to salaries, the not-for-profit schools tend to spend less on infrastructure than conventional government schools. They generally operate using a simple and basic approach to school buildings. BRAC, Gyan Shala and Zambia Open Community Schools classes are delivered in one-room buildings with only essential and basic furniture. And as already noted, parents contribute to

The not-for-profit schools tend to spend less on infrastructure than conventional government schools. They generally operate using a simple and basic approach to school buildings

<sup>110</sup> Data is taken from \*Alvarado and Muñiz (2013); \*\* DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010); \*\*\* Bangay and Latham (2013) <sup>111</sup> Scheerens (2004) <sup>112</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) <sup>113</sup> Wales et al. (2015) <sup>114</sup> Ibid.

building and maintaining the schools by providing in-kind contributions, thereby reducing costs further.

The strategy of these not-for-profit schools would, therefore, seem to be to reduce the two most expensive inputs – salaries and infrastructure – and ‘re-invest’ savings in other inputs such as teacher support and in-service training.

There are, of course, risks associated with adopting these strategies. These include issues concerning quality of education associated with poorly qualified teachers and inadequate, possibly dangerous school infrastructure and buildings.

The school groups have a different model of teacher development to that typically found in government school systems. It is important to note that these school groups do provide training and support to their teachers and support their journey to becoming effective educators. By doing this, they are also providing employment opportunities for young people living in remote areas. They are able to provide support to less experienced or less qualified teachers because they have freed resource to invest in ‘on-the-job’ support and development. The ‘engineering’ of resources creates capacity to provide training and supervision for teachers as well as improved learning materials.

In order to provide teachers with limited prior qualifications with the necessary skills and knowledge and ensure a good quality of teaching, the four school groups support teachers with an intensive and continuous coaching system. At Gyan Shala, for instance, every teacher receives 1–2 hours of one-to-one coaching every week.<sup>115</sup> This approach to teacher training, it seems, helps teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge and competencies for teaching, but also to understand and adopt the pedagogical approach promoted by the provider. Even in the case of Fe y Alegría, where teachers typically hold the same qualifications as government school teachers, in-service training is recognised to be crucial to school performance. Indeed, several teachers stated that during Fe y Alegría training, ‘they have learned more than in college’.<sup>116</sup> Zambia Open Community Schools have established concrete training links for their teachers with government teacher training colleges.<sup>117</sup> Those teachers who are under-qualified for entry to government colleges are supported by Zambia Open Community Schools to obtain the necessary qualifications for entry.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, Zambia Open Community Schools organises workshops for teachers where, besides the core area of teaching methodology, teachers are also given thorough training on HIV/AIDS education, life skills and peer counselling for pupils.<sup>119</sup>

Another element of cost effectiveness appears to relate to the efficient use of time. The majority of not-for-profit schools keep the school day shorter than public schools. As an example, BRAC runs schools for 3–4 hours compared to the 6-hour public school day. Yet despite the reduction of instructional time, BRAC is able to achieve better results than public schools.<sup>120</sup> This is possible thanks to the reduction in student and teacher absenteeism and more effective use of time. It is reported that teacher absenteeism in Bangladesh government schools is close to 16 per cent, while in BRAC schools it is below 10 per cent. Lessons are highly structured, with 30-minute units, each based on a clear learning objective,<sup>121</sup> by making the instructional process intensive and outcome-focused. Every day,

The ‘engineering’ of resources creates capacity to provide training and supervision for teachers as well as improved learning materials

<sup>115</sup> Whelan (2014) <sup>116</sup> Alcázar and Valdivia (2014) <sup>117</sup> UNICEF (2004) <sup>118</sup> Ibid. <sup>119</sup> Ibid. <sup>120</sup> DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) <sup>121</sup> Whelan (2014)

teachers are expected to introduce the lessons of the day with daily goals, and feedback for improvement is provided to students at the end of the school day.<sup>122</sup> Class work is generally alternated between individual and group work, with teachers acting as mentors 'who train the students less in an analytical/explanatory sense but more by repeated demonstration of expertise'.<sup>123</sup> Group activities and co-curriculum tasks (e.g. songs, dancing, drawing) keep children engaged and their attention high during the whole learning cycle.<sup>124</sup>

In the case study not-for-profit schools, teachers are supported also by specific teaching material, which is produced by the central/national office, such as teachers' guides, instruments for lessons planning, and learning materials (e.g. textbooks and learning aids). In this way teachers are provided with substantial guidance on how to perform their daily professional tasks.<sup>125</sup> There is an awareness that guidebooks and lesson plans need to be used in a flexible way, with teachers having the possibility to adapt the teaching strategy to students' needs. Consistent assessment and monitoring processes are used to verify whether students are learning appropriately.<sup>126</sup> BRAC provides lesson plans for every day and Gyan Shala uses similar materials (teacher guides, learning materials and corresponding textbooks).<sup>127</sup>

**Group activities and co-curriculum tasks (e.g. songs, dancing, drawing) keep children engaged and their attention high during the whole learning cycle**

<sup>122</sup> Hossain et al. (2003); Bangay and Latham (2013) <sup>123</sup> Bangay and Latham (2013, 248) <sup>124</sup> Ibid. <sup>125</sup> Osorio and Wodon (2014); Whelan (2014); DeStefano (2006) <sup>126</sup> Whelan (2014) <sup>127</sup> Ibid.

Chapter 5

# Final thoughts





## As educators, there is much we can learn from the systematic analysis of the work of effective schools and the policies used by improving education systems.

Our global programme of education research has this focus on 'bright spots' at the levels of both the school and the national system. The examples we have focused on in this report are worthy of study.

Despite controversy and definitional issues, philanthropic, NGO-run school groups are attracting increasing attention. In this context, this paper has analysed the contributions of four specific examples: BRAC, Fe y Alegría, Gyan Shala and Zambia Open Community Schools – all of which appear to have realised some impressive achievements around access and equity, quality and relevance.

Despite their promise, there is a need to be cautious, as there is still much that we do not know about these apparent successes. Respected scholars, including Rose, have warned against being overly positive on the strength of the current modest evidence base.<sup>128</sup>

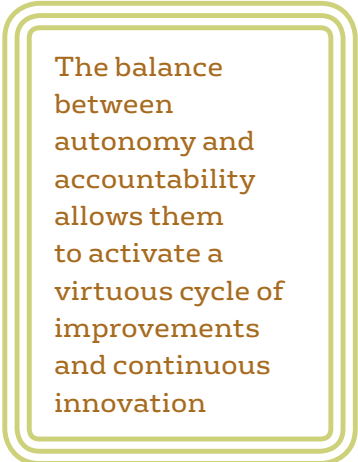
While bearing this important note of caution in mind, our analysis of the literature on the work of these four school groups raises some interesting points for policymakers:

- The topic of philanthropic, NGO-run schools brushes up against some of the more contentious debates connected to non-state education provision. In this context, it is important to be mindful of the differences between types of non-state provision and also the range of opinion concerning non-state provision of education and the need to strive towards access to good education for all.
- The scale of the challenges around access and quality of education in the global South, particularly for the most marginalised children and families, is vast. The availability of financial support globally to address this challenge is insufficient to meet the need. In this context, philanthropic, NGO-run, not-for-profit school groups appear to have a place in provision – be that in the short or long term.
- These types of school can work to support state-provided education, and need not create a parallel system. The four examples in this report appear to play a significant role in partnering with governments and contributing to reaching the targets of the post-2015 education agenda in the locations where they operate. Their educational models are aligned with national curricula and often allow students to transition and progress to public secondary schools. More broadly, however, good examples about exactly how states can ensure that providers are supporting the bigger mission to ensure quality education for all needs further scrutiny and documentation.

Despite controversy and definitional issues, philanthropic, NGO-run school groups are attracting increasing attention

<sup>128</sup> Rose (2007); Wales et al. (2015) also note the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence.

- There are some interesting insights highlighted in the literature underpinning this report that call for an intelligent nuancing of the arguments concerning any mechanistic relationships between investment in infrastructure and teachers and the quality of schooling. Of course, both are important, and here we see examples of cost effectiveness and targeted investment in teacher support and training. Professional development – particularly effective in-service training – is key and lies at the heart of their educational models.
- These four school groups also appear to be successful in motivating teachers. This is a topic receiving greater attention within the wider global challenge of teacher supply. They appear to achieve this through the use of non-monetary incentives, social values and strong community ties. Their selection methods for hiring teachers also connect to teachers' motivation and commitment to the social values promoted by the schools.
- Accountability in these four school groups may represent an interesting comparative case when reviewing public school accountability mechanisms, particularly in decentralised systems where a similar structure is put in place, with central offices overseeing the performance of single schools. It appears that for these school groups, the balance between autonomy and accountability allows them to activate a virtuous cycle of improvements and continuous innovation.
- These schools seem to be driven by an understanding of the power of parental partnership. The proximity of the schools to their communities and the parental contribution in making the school operationally functional create the conditions for local stakeholders to actively participate in school life and supervise teachers' and students' behaviour.



The balance between autonomy and accountability allows them to activate a virtuous cycle of improvements and continuous innovation

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