

Malawi



Engaging the Private Sector in Education

SABER Country Report
2015

Policy Goals for Independent Private Schools

Status

1. Encouraging Innovation by Providers

Policies allow schools to make their own decisions on appointing, deploying, and dismissing teachers; determining teacher salary levels; and setting class size standards. Schools are restricted in their ability to determine teacher certification standards and methods for delivering the curriculum.



2. Holding Schools Accountable

Standardized exams are administered annually to select grades of students; however, results are not disaggregated. Policy dictates that schools be inspected based on need and requires schools to submit action plans to district or divisional offices. No sanctions are administered based on the results of inspections or exams.



3. Empowering All Parents, Students, and Communities

Examination results are published in terms of pass and fail percentages. There is no systematic way of reviewing the whole school such as school report cards. Parents and students participate in focus groups as part of the inspection process. The government does not provide tax subsidies or cash transfers to parents for their child to attend private independent schools.



4. Promoting Diversity of Supply

No provider types are prohibited from operating private schools. There are no standardized school fee schedules and no explicit restrictions on tuition. Public and independent private schools have relatively equivalent operating standards; however, guidelines for school registration are not publicized. Independent schools are able to operate without paying regulatory fees.



Policy Goals for Government-Funded Private Schools

Status

1. Encouraging Innovation by Providers

Policies allow schools to make their own decisions on appointing, deploying, and dismissing teachers; determining teacher salary levels; setting class size standards; and determining operating budgets. Schools are restricted in their ability to determine teacher certification standards and methods for delivering the curriculum.



2. Holding Schools Accountable

Standardized exams are administered annually in select grades; however, results are not disaggregated. Policy dictates that schools be inspected regularly based on need and requires school to submit action plans to district or divisional offices. No sanctions or rewards are administered based on the results of inspections or exams. Schools are not required to report on the use of public funding.



3. Empowering All Parents, Students, and Communities

Examination results are published in terms of pass and fail percentages. There is no systematic way of reviewing the whole school such as school report cards. Parents and students participate in focus groups as part of the inspection process. Schools are not prohibited from selecting students based on academic performance or geography. Schools are not prohibited from charging compulsory or voluntary fees.



4. Promoting Diversity of Supply

Public and government-funded private schools experience relatively equivalent operating standards and receive equal funding. Schools do not receive initial funding to open. No policy requires government to inform schools of upcoming funding in advance. Registration guidelines are not made public.



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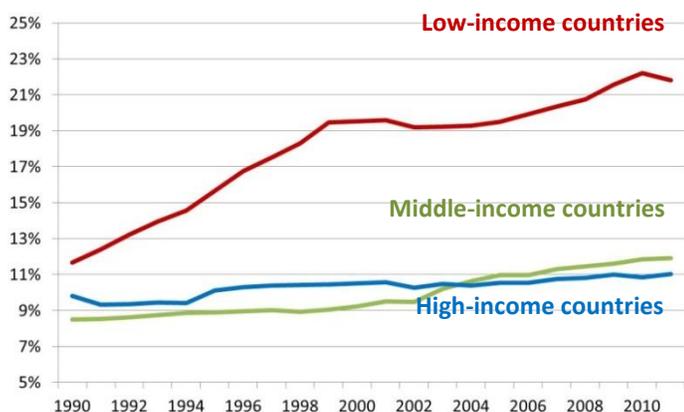
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Introduction

In recent years, private sector engagement in education—which includes a vibrant mix of non-profit, for-profit and faith-based organizations—has grown significantly around the world. **In the last two decades, the percentage of students in low-income countries attending private primary schools doubled, from 11 percent to 22 percent** (figure 1). This growth in private provision is closely connected to the boom in access that has taken place in low-income countries over the same two decades: primary net enrollment increased from 55 percent to 80 percent between 1990 and 2010.

As countries redouble their efforts to achieve learning for all at the primary and secondary levels, the private sector can be a resource for adding capacity to the education system. By partnering with private entities, the state can provide access to more students, particularly poor students who are not always able to access existing education services (Pal and Kingdon 2010; Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Guáqueta 2009; Hossain 2007). Additionally, evidence shows that governments have been successful at improving education quality and student cognitive outcomes in many countries through effective engagement with private education providers (Barrera-Osorio and Raju 2010; French and Kingdon 2010; Barrera-Osorio 2006).

Figure 1. Private Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Primary Enrollments, by Country Income Level



Source: Baum et al (2014).

This report presents an analysis of how effectively current policies in Malawi engage the private sector in primary and secondary education. The analysis draws on the Engaging the Private Sector (EPS) Framework, a product of the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). SABER collects and analyzes policy data on education systems around the **SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR BETTER EDUCATION RESULTS**

world, using evidence-based frameworks to highlight the policies and institutions that matter most for promoting learning for all children and youth.

SABER-EPS research in Malawi found that the net enrollment rate for primary education has increased significantly, to 89 percent, while secondary net enrollment rate remains low, at only 11 percent as of 2013 (the latest available data). At both the primary and secondary levels, quality and equity are challenges. The private sector plays an increasingly significant role in education at both levels. Based on a review of existing policies, SABER-EPS offers the following recommendations for enhancing private sector engagement in the education sector in the country in order to meet the challenges of access, quality, and equity:

- 1) Concentrate on improving the quality of learning outcomes by encouraging continuous improvement at the school level by means of school improvement planning and incentives.
- 2) Empower parents by ensuring that they are given information on school quality that enables them to make informed choices and b) are not hindered by restrictive school selection criteria.
- 3) Create a regulatory environment that encourages greater supply of school places to help overcome constraints, particularly at the secondary level.

The rest of the report provides an overview of SABER-EPS, followed by a description of the primary and secondary education system in Malawi with a focus on the private sector and government policies related to the private provision of education. The report then benchmarks Malawi's policy environment utilizing the SABER-EPS Framework and offers policy options to enhance access and learning for all children in primary and secondary school.

Overview of SABER-Engaging the Private Sector

In many countries, the extent and activity of the private sector in education is largely undocumented and unknown. SABER-EPS is working to help change that. SABER-EPS assesses how well a country's policies are oriented toward ensuring that the services of non-state providers promote learning for all children and youth.

The aim of SABER-EPS is not to advocate private schooling. The intention is to outline the most effective evidence-based policies specific to each country's current approach toward non-state provision of education. SABER-EPS assesses the extent to which policies facilitate quality, access, and equity of private education services. Data generated by SABER-EPS can further the policy dialogue and support governments in engaging private providers to improve education results.

Four policy goals for engaging the private sector

SABER-EPS collects data on four key policy areas that international evidence has found effective for strengthening accountability mechanisms among citizens, policymakers, and providers (box 1). These policy goals were identified through a review of rigorous research and analysis of top-performing and rapidly improving education systems.

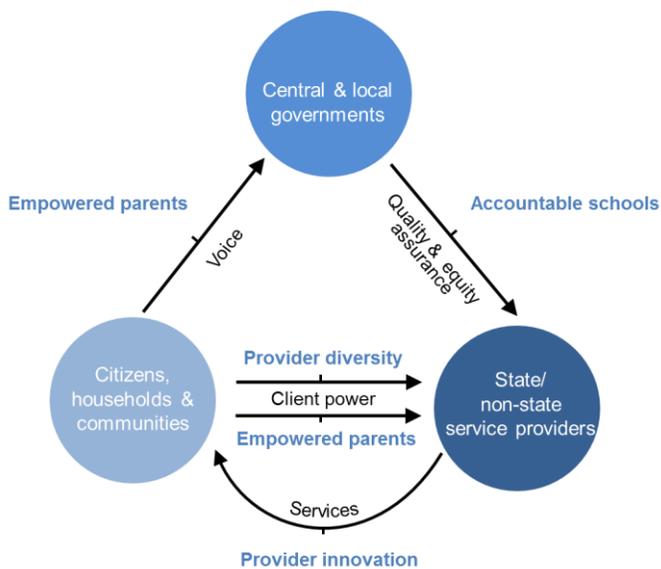
The four policy goals enable a government to increase innovation and strengthen accountability among the critical actors in an education system (figure 2). Empowering parents, students, and communities enhances the ability of parents to express their voice and hold policymakers accountable for results. Additionally, when parents are empowered, in most contexts, they can have greater influence over provider behaviors. Increasing school accountability strengthens the quality- and equity-assurance mechanisms between the state and education providers. Encouraging innovation and promoting diversity of supply can allow providers to respond to local needs. Increasing school-level autonomy in critical decisions improves the services provided to students. Allowing a diverse set of providers to enter the market can increase client power and enable citizens to choose from a wider range of models. By developing these policy goals, a government can improve the accountability of all providers in an

education system and, subsequently, have a positive impact on educational outcomes.

Box 1. Key Private Sector Engagement Policy Goals

1. **Encouraging innovation by providers.** Local decision making and fiscal decentralization can have positive effects on school and student outcomes. Most high-achieving countries allow schools autonomy in managing resources (including personnel) and educational content. Local school autonomy can improve the ability of disadvantaged populations to determine how local schools operate.
2. **Holding schools accountable.** If schools are given autonomy over decision making, they must be held accountable for learning outcomes. Increases in autonomy should be accompanied by standards and interventions that increase access and improve quality. The state must hold all providers accountable to the same high standard.
3. **Empowering all parents, students, and communities.** When parents and students have access to information on relative school quality, they can have the power to hold schools accountable and the voice to lobby governments for better-quality services. For empowerment to work equitably, options for parents and students should not depend on wealth or student ability.
4. **Promoting diversity of supply.** By facilitating market entry for a diverse set of providers, governments can increase responsibility for results, as providers become directly accountable to citizens as well as to the state.

Figure 2. Relationships of accountability for successful service delivery



Source: Adapted from the World Bank (2003).

SABER-EPS recognizes that the four policy goals outlined in box 1 can assist governments in raising accountability for the education services provided in their countries. The tool allows governments to systematically evaluate their policies and implement practices that are effective across multiple country contexts.

Four types of private provision of education

Across the world, governments can implement numerous strategies to improve educational outcomes by supporting non-state education provision. SABER-EPS benchmarks key policy goals across the four most common models of private service delivery:

1. Independent private schools: schools that are owned and operated by non-government providers and are financed privately, typically through fees.
2. Government-funded private schools: schools that are owned and operated by non-government providers, but receive government funding.
3. Privately managed schools: schools that are owned and financed by the government, but are operated by non-government providers.
4. Voucher schools: schools that students choose to attend with government-provided funding; these schools can be operated by the government or non-government providers or both, depending on the system.

SABER-EPS analyzes laws and regulations to: (1) identify the types of private engagement that are legally established in each country and (2) assess each education system's progress in achieving the four policy goals. **The aim of the SABER-EPS Framework is to provide policy guidance to help governments establish strong incentives and relationships of accountability among citizens, governments, and private education providers, with the goal of improving education results.**

Benchmarking Education Policies: The SABER-EPS Methodology

The World Bank has developed a set of standardized questionnaires and rubrics for collecting and evaluating data on the four policy goals for each type of private school engagement established in a given country.

The policy goals are benchmarked separately for each type of private engagement. A point of emphasis here is that **these tools only assess official and established policies governing private education provision. Additional tools determine on-the-ground implementation of these policies.** The SABER-EPS information is compiled in a comparative database that interested stakeholders can access for detailed reports, background papers, methodology, and other resources; the database details how different education systems engage with the private sector.

For each indicator associated with the respective four policy goals, the country receives a score between 1 and 4 (figure 3), representing four levels of private sector engagement: 1 (latent), 2 (emerging), 3 (established), or 4 (advanced).

Figure 3. SABER rubric benchmarking levels



Source: Baum et al. (2014).

The overall score for each policy goal is computed by aggregating the scores for each of its constituent indicators. For example, a hypothetical country receives the following indicator scores for one of its policy goals:

- Indicator A = 2 points
- Indicator B = 3 points
- Indicator C = 4 points
- Indicator D = 4 points

The hypothetical country's overall score for this policy goal would be: $(2+3+4+4)/4 = 3.25$. The overall score is converted into a final development level for the policy goal, based on the following scale:

Latent:	1.00 – 1.50
Emerging:	1.51 – 2.50
Established:	2.51 – 3.50
Advanced:	3.51 – 4.00

The ratings generated by the rubrics are not meant to be additive across policy goals. That is, they are not added together to create an overall rating for engaging the private sector.

Use of the SABER-EPS tool

SABER-EPS is not intended to be used as a prescriptive policy tool, but rather, as a tool to generate an informed assessment of a country's policies vis-à-vis current knowledge about effective approaches. The results of this benchmarking exercise serve as a good starting point to discuss potential policy options that could be considered, based on the nuances of the local context and national education system. Education systems are likely to be at different levels of development across indicators and policy goals. While intuition suggests it is probably better to be as developed in as many areas as possible, **the evidence does not clearly show the need to be functioning at the advanced level for all policy goals.** National education priorities lay at the center of recommended policy options; countries may prioritize higher levels of development in areas that contribute most to their immediate goals.

For more information on the global evidence underlying EPS and its policy goals, see the SABER framework paper, "What Matters Most for Engaging the Private Sector in Education" (Baum et al. 2014).

Education in Malawi

Malawi is a low-income country in Sub-Saharan Africa.¹ Gross domestic product per capita (current US\$) in Malawi is US\$ 223. The country's average annual growth rate from 2002 to 2012 was 5.1 percent, although growth in 2012 was much lower, at 1.9 percent (World Development Indicators).

Malawi recognizes education as a catalyst for socio-economic development and industrial growth. The mission of the education system is to provide quality relevant education to the Malawian nation (MEST 2008–17). Education in Malawi is regulated by the Education Act of 1962, although a new draft education bill is currently under consideration by its parliament. The education system in Malawi follows an 8-4 structure: 8 non-compulsory years of primary (Standards 1–8) and 4 years of secondary (Forms 1–4) schooling (World Bank 2010).

As of 2013 the country had a primary net enrollment rate of 89 percent—a direct result of the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994. After the abolition of school fees, school enrollments increased 50 percent—from 1.9 to 2.9 million—in a single year (Ibid.). The gross enrollment rate in Malawi is 141 percent, suggesting high levels of over-aged children as the result of late entrance and repetition. Primary school completion rates are 68 percent (World Bank 2013); however, the current secondary net enrollment rate is only 11 percent (NSO 2014). Between 1990 and 2010, the average years of schooling for people over the age of 15 in Malawi increased by nearly 2 years: from 2.9 to 4.7 (Barro and Lee 2012). Adult and youth literacy in the country is roughly equivalent to the regional Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average: 61 percent of adults and 72 percent of youth are literate in Malawi, compared to 60 percent (adult) and 70 percent (youth) in SSA, respectively (World Development Indicators).

Malawi spends 5.4 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on education, representing 14.7 percent of total government expenditures (Edstats). This represents a

higher level of investment than the SSA average of 4.3 percent of GDP.

The education system in Malawi faces a number of challenges. A number of factors indicate that the system is over-burdened. The pupil-teacher ratio at the primary level is 74:1 (MEST 2012). Of pressing concern are issues of student advancement and learning. Although schools have maintained high rates of student enrollment since the abolition of school fees, only 51 percent of students reach the last grade of primary schooling (Edstats). Furthermore, the country's secondary enrollment rate dropped from 11.4 percent in 2010 to 10.9 percent in 2013 (NSO 2014).

In terms of the equity of educational access, Malawi has experienced mixed results. Although enrollment in primary schools has increased relatively consistently across household income quintiles, genders, and rural/urban localities, success in the education system has become more dependent on family wealth. Between 2000 and 2010, for example, primary school completion rates for the wealthiest quintile grew by 21 percentage points (from 77 to 98 percent), while the rate for the poorest quintile only grew by 2 percentage points (from 40 to 42 percent) (Edstats). Additionally, males slightly outgained females in primary completion. During this same time period, however, the disparity between urban and rural completion was cut in half (table 1).

¹ This report presents country data collected in 2014 using the SABER-EPS policy intent data collection instrument. It thus offers a specific snapshot in time. Additional data was

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incorporated into the background and context sections at the request of the government, following the data collection exercise.

Table 1. Primary Completion Rate by Income Quintile and Location

<i>Primary completion rate</i>	<i>Difference</i>		
	2000	2010	(%)
Wealthiest quintile	76.9	97.7	20.8
Poorest quintile	39.9	42.1	2.2
Difference	37.0	55.6	
Urban	79.7	79.0	-0.7
Rural	49.6	64.7	15.1
Difference	30.1	14.3	
Male	55.0	70.0	3.1
Female	51.8	63.4	6.6
Difference	3.2	6.6	

Source: Edstats..

Recent data on the distribution of educational spending shows that Malawi has the most inequitable distribution of educational resources of any country in Africa (World Bank 2010). In the average African country, 43 percent of all educational spending goes to the most educated 10 percent. In Malawi, roughly 74 percent of all spending goes to the most educated 10 percent (Ibid.). The wealthiest one-fifth of students in the country benefit from 68 percent of public resources for education.

Student performance on national achievement exams indicates a substantial need for better quality in primary education. In 2007, Malawi was the lowest-performing country in reading and the second lowest in math among the 15 countries whose students took the SACMEQ (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality) III exam. Malawi's grade 6 students performed 0.8 standard deviations below the mean score in reading and 0.6 standard deviations below the mean score in math. Only 27 percent of students reached the upper levels of reading competency in the country, compared with an average of 64 percent across all SACMEQ countries. In math, only 8 percent of Malawian students reached the upper levels of competency, compared with 37 percent in all SACMEQ III countries (SACMEQ 2010).

Private Education in Malawi

The distinction between government and religious schools in Malawi is somewhat opaque. The majority of faith-based schools are owned by the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP) or the Catholic Church. These schools are organized under an umbrella organization known as the Association of Christian Educators (ACEM). Until 1920, these schools were funded completely by missions. Until independence in 1964, they were the major providers of education in Malawi (Kadzamira and Kunje 2002). After independence, the government assumed control of all religious schools. Thus since 1964, the government has officially maintained principal control over most of these schools, and since 1994, provided the funding for these schools (Kadzamira et al. 2004). In recent years ACEM schools have sought to increase their control over school decision making, but the government maintains principal control, given its role in funding the schools. As such, although these schools are owned by faith-based organizations, they operate under funding, management, and regulation mechanisms similar to those of government schools, such as those governing student enrollment; teacher recruitment, deployment, and payment; supervision and inspection; and provision of instructional materials (Kadzamira et al. 2004).

Overall, faith-based and/or religious organizations operate 58 percent of primary schools and other private organizations, 3 percent (table 2). Secondary education in the country is provided primarily by government providers (69 percent). The remainder of secondary education provision is split between religious and independent private providers. Table 2 also shows that, at the primary level, pupil-teacher ratios are more than 2.5 times higher in government and religious schools than in independent private schools. Pupil-teacher ratios at the secondary level are roughly equal. At the primary level, the average independent private school has 194 students, compared to over 600 in the average public and religious school (World Bank 2010).

Table 2. Distribution of Schools and Students by Ownership Type

	Government	Independent	Religious
<i>Primary</i>			
Schools	39%	3%	58%
Students	37%	1%	62%
Pupil-teacher ratio	73:1	28:1	77:1
<i>Secondary</i>			
Schools	69%	16%	15%
Students	70%	15%	15%
Pupil-teacher ratio	22:1	24:1	21:1

Source: MEST (2012).

In general, there is still much that is not known about the performance of the non-state education sector in Malawi. To date, empirical research on non-government schools in the country remains sparse. Data from the regional SACMEQ III exam show similar performance between grade 6 students in government and non-government schools in both reading and mathematics (table 3). Students at non-government schools score slightly higher than those from government schools; however, these results are cursory and do not account for any systematic differences in student characteristics (table 3).

Table 3. Achievement of Grade Six Students in Malawi's government and non-government schools

	Government	Non-Gov't
Mathematics	444.4	453.8
(Std. Err.)	(1.44)	(2.22)
Reading	431.0	437.6
(Std. Err.)	(1.17)	(1.84)

Source: SACMEQ (2010).

Data from Malawi's 2006 Primary School-Leaving Examination show high pass rates in independent private schools (82 percent), and similar, but lower, pass rates in both government (75 percent) and religious (73 percent) schools (World Bank 2010). These results are robust, controlling for factors such as school location, classroom organization, school conditions, and teacher characteristics (Ibid.). Yet these comparisons do not account for any differences in student characteristics. More rigorous evidence is thus needed to assess the true differences in student performance among schools.

Malawi's Private Education Policies

The constitution of Malawi provides the legal foundation for private schools to operate, so long as they (i) are registered with the government and (ii) do not provide

an inferior standard of education than that provided by the public school system. Many of Malawi's current education policies are outlined in the Education Act of 1962, which was enacted before the country achieved independence. Needless to say, the act needs to be revised in order to adequately address the current needs of the school system. Unfortunately, a revised act has been under discussion for over a decade (Kadzamira et al. 2004) and a more current piece of legislation still awaits enactment.

A number of Malawi's key policy documents recognize the potential role of the private sector in improving access to and the quality of education services. As the Education Sector Implementation Plan 2009–2013 states, the Malawi education system “belongs to everyone” and “reinvigorating it will take the combined efforts of the Government, private sector, development partners, civil society and parents/guardians” (MEST 2009).

The Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) is responsible for developing, administering, and processing national examinations in the country. All public and private school students studying the primary and secondary curriculum take the MANEB examinations. Some independent private schools follow an alternative curriculum and administer international examinations.

The main policies, laws, and official documentation used to benchmark the education system in Malawi include:

- Education Act of 1962
- Policy and Investment Framework (2000)
- Education Sector Implementation Plan 2009–2013
- Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II 2011–2016
- National Education Sector Plan 2008–2017

Benchmarking Malawi's Private School Policies

This section of the report presents the results of the SABER-Engaging the Private Sector analysis of laws, policies, and regulations governing independent private and government-funded private schools, as Malawi has decided to involve these providers in offering education services. The report discusses the benchmarking results against established recommended practices. For more information on the global evidence underlying these policy goals, see the SABER framework paper, "What Matters Most for Engaging the Private Sector in Education" (Baum et al. 2014).

Goal 1: Encouraging Innovation by Providers

The highly particular and contextualized nature of education delivery necessitates decision making at the school level. In order to be aware of and adapt to changing student needs, school leaders require autonomy over the most critical managerial decisions.

The methodologically rigorous studies assessing the impacts of local school autonomy on student learning outcomes generally find a positive relationship (Hanushek and Woessmann 2010; Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos 2011). A few studies find evidence that local autonomy for school leaders is associated with increased student achievement, as well as reduced student repetition and failure rates (King and Özler 2005; Jimenez and Sawada 2003; Gertler, Patrinos, and Rubio-Codina 2012).

Box 2. International Best Practice – Encouraging Innovation by Providers

The following decisions/processes are made at the school level:

- Establishment of teacher qualification standards.
- Appointment and deployment of teachers
- Teacher salary levels
- Teacher dismissals
- The way in which the curriculum is delivered
- Class-size decisions
- Management of the operating budgets

Development level:

Independent private schools:



Government-funded private schools:



In Malawi, education policies allow for a high degree of school-level autonomy in both independent and government-funded private schools. With an overall score of **established**, current policies meet the standards of good practice. These policies enable private schools to make their own decisions on the appointment, deployment, and dismissal of teachers; teacher salary levels; and class size standards (table 3). In addition, government-funded private schools have autonomy over their operating budgets. (Control over budgets is not measured for independent private schools, as they are assumed to have such autonomy.)

There are two restrictions on private schools in Malawi. First, schools are not allowed to set their own teacher standards, and second, the central government determines how the curriculum should be delivered.

Table 3. Goal 1. Encouraging Innovation by Providers

<i>A. Common policies: Independent private schools and government-funded private schools</i>		
Item	Score	Justification
Who has legal authority to set teacher standards?	Latent ●○○○	Central government has legal authority to set minimum standards for teachers.
Who has legal authority to appoint and deploy teachers?	Advanced ●●●●	The school has the legal authority to appoint teachers without government review.
Who has legal authority to determine teacher salary levels?	Advanced ●●●●	The school has the legal authority to determine teacher salary levels without government review.
Who has legal authority to dismiss teachers?	Advanced ●●●●	The school has the legal authority to dismiss teachers without government review.
Who has legal authority to determine how the curriculum is delivered?	Latent ●○○○	Central government has the legal authority over how the curriculum is delivered.

A. Common policies: Independent private schools and government-funded private schools		
Who has legal authority to determine maximum class size?	Advanced ●●●●	The school has the legal authority to determine class sizes without government review.
B. Policies for government-funded private schools		
Item	Score	Justification
Who has legal authority over the management of school operating budgets?	Advanced ●●●●	The school has the legal authority over the management of school operating budgets.

Based on the benchmarking results for Encouraging Innovation by Providers, the suggested policy options for Malawi include:

- Allow both independent and government-funded private schools to set teacher standards at the school level and tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of the local community, once capacity within both types of schools meets a minimum quality standard that is monitored and verified in a clear regulatory environment.

Goal 2: Holding Schools Accountable

On average, students perform better in schools with higher levels of accountability to the state (Abdulkadiroglu et al. 2011; Carnoy and Loeb 2002; Woessmann et al. 2007; Hanushek and Raymond 2005). For non-state providers, when government funding is tied to accountability standards, schools are incentivized to perform more efficiently (Barrera-Osorio and Raju 2010; Patrinos 2002). A strong accountability system requires that the government, parents, and educational professionals work together to raise outcomes. The government must play a role in ensuring that superior education quality is delivered by schools. SABER-EPS assesses multiple policy indicators to determine non-state provider accountability. A list of the key indicators is provided in box 3.

Box 3. International Best Practice – Holding Schools Accountable

- The central government sets standards regarding what students need to learn, including deadlines for meeting these standards.
- Students are required to take standardized examinations; exam results are disaggregated by school, socioeconomic status, gender, etc.
- Schools are required to report on the use of public funds as a condition of continued funding.
- The central government or an external agency performs school inspections as determined by school need.
- Schools produce school improvement plans.
- School performance is tied to sanctions and/or rewards.

Development level:

Private independent schools:



Government-funded private schools:



Malawi's policies for holding both independent and government-funded private schools accountable demonstrate systematic instances of good practice, with a score of **established** on the benchmarking procedure. Policies pertaining to standardized exams and school inspections demonstrate good practice.

The Malawi National Education Examinations Board (MANEB was created by an Act of Parliament in 1987 and today serves the following functions:

- Conducts academic, technical, and other examinations at the conclusion of any approved course, as considered desirable in the public interest
- Accurately processes and analyzes examination results
- Awards certificates and diplomas to successful candidates in such examinations
- Devises, develops, and implements systems of tests to facilitate the proper selection of pupils /students for secondary, university, and other tertiary institutions
- Formulates policies on educational assessment
- Organizes training courses for examiners, markers, supervisors, invigilators, and item writers so as to ensure proper management of examinations and tests conducted by the Board

Specifically, MANEB is responsible for administering the three school-level examinations: the Primary School-

Leaving Certificate of Education (PSLCE), the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE), and the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE).

MANEB is now working with the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to create a forum that will analyze the Chief Examiners' reports and provide feedback to subject teachers and schools. Till now, these reports have not been used adequately to inform improvements in classroom teaching and testing.

The inspection framework covers private independent schools, religious schools, and public schools. Schools are inspected once every two years. In addition, Malawi has inspections based on need, using the following criteria for targeted schools:

- a) Schools with poor examination results
- b) Schools which are poorly managed
- c) Schools which have not been inspected for more than two years
- d) High-performing schools in order to learn the good practices

Malawi also has four different types of school inspection (table 4). The inspection report includes information on the type of school visited, enrollment, staffing, ratings of various aspects of school performance, as well as a listing of strengths and weaknesses.

After the inspection school staff members and the head teacher are briefed on the findings. This discussion gives the staff and head teacher a chance to start working on the weaknesses identified in the school.

Table 4. Types of School Inspection in Malawi

<i>Type of Inspection</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Who does it</i>	<i>Duration of visit</i>
Full inspection	Evaluation of all aspects of the school: curriculum, organization of teaching and learning, general school administration, documentation, provisions of buildings and grounds, equipment.	Team of inspectors: 3–6 inspectors depending on size of school	Full day
Follow-up inspection	Evaluation of extent to which recommendations made in full inspection report have been implemented.	1–2 advisors	2 hours
Partial inspection	Examination and evaluation of one or a limited number of aspects of school life.	1–2 advisors	Depends on gravity of the aspect(s) being inspected
Block inspection	Improving inspection coverage of schools over a specific period of time.	6–8 supervisors from different districts	1–2 weeks

School reports are sent to individual schools, district education offices (for primary schools), divisional offices (for secondary schools), education authority of a religious education agency (for religious schools), and to the proprietors (for private schools).

Schools are required to submit an action plan to the district education office (for primary schools) and the divisional office (for secondary schools). However, no specific unit is responsible for following up on these reports, although each department in the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) follows up on the area that is within their own remit. There are no sanctions for underperformance. Additionally,

government-funded private schools are not required to report on the use of public funds for continued financial support (table 5).

Table 5. Goal 2: Holding Schools Accountable

<i>A. Common policies: Independent private schools and government-funded private schools</i>		
Item	Score	Justification
Does government set standards on what students need to learn and by when?	Established ●●●○	Government sets standards on what students need to learn and by when.
Are students required to take standardized exams, with results disaggregated?	Established ●●●○	Standardized exams are administered annually in select grades, but policy does not require disaggregation of results. Data are accessible for analysis based on a reasonable set of student and school-level attributes.
Are school inspections performed as determined by school need?	Advanced ●●●●	Government requires schools to undergo needs-based inspections based on previous performance.*
Does the inspection report outline the strengths and weaknesses of the school?	Established ●●●○	Inspection reports include strengths and weaknesses of the school, plus specific priorities for improvement. Following the inspection, schools are required to submit a school improvement plan to the district or divisional office. However, there is little follow-up on the action plan, as no MEST department is responsible for monitoring its implementation.

<i>A. Common policies: Independent private schools and government-funded private schools</i>		
Are sanctions administered based on the results of school inspections or performance on standardized exams?	Latent ●○○○	There are no sanctions in place for underperformance.
<i>B. Policies for government-funded private schools</i>		
Are schools required to report to the government on the use of public funds as a condition of continued funding?	Latent ●○○○	Government does not require schools to report on the use of public funds as a condition of continued funding.

*It is worth noting that while Malawi received an advanced ranking in this category, according to the evidence-based SABER EPS Framework and the review of existing laws and policies available at the time of data collection, country discussions have indicated that is important to include the number of inspected schools during a certain period. That data can offer further insights into this item and a more nuanced discussion of this particular issue.

Informed by the results of the benchmarking procedure, the following **suggested policy options** help Malawi increase the accountability of private schools:

- Ensure that one agency is responsible for monitoring school action plans. The agency should have functional lower-level structures to enable regular outreach to schools, permitting it to follow up on the existence, resourcing, and implementation of school action plans.
- Establish standards for disaggregating standardized exam results by key characteristics, such as type of school, socioeconomic background, gender, and other types of disadvantage.
- Establish appropriate sanctions for private schools’ underperformance on standardized exams and/or school inspections.
- Require government-funded schools to report on the use of public funds as a condition of continued funding.

Goal 3: Empowering all Parents, Students, and Communities

Empowering parents, students, and communities is one of the foundations for creating quality learning opportunities for all students. Poor and marginalized children, together with youth, disproportionately lack

access to quality education services. To overcome this obstacle, governments need to increase providers' accountability to all clients, particularly underserved groups. Educational access and the performance of schools and students can be substantially impacted by openly disseminating comparable school performance information (Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja 2009; Pandey, Goyal, and Sundararaman 2009; Björkman 2007; Reinikka and Svensson 2005); increasing parental influence in the school (Skoufias and Shapiro 2006; King and Özler 2005; Jimenez and Sawada 1999; Gertler, Patrinos, and Rubio-Codina 2012; Di Gropello and Marshall 2005); and implementing demand-side interventions, such as scholarships, vouchers, or cash transfers, to help the most vulnerable students (Orazem and King 2007; Filmer and Schady 2008; Lewis and Lockheed 2007; Patrinos 2002; Barrera-Osorio 2006). Effective policy practices for non-state providers include some of the indicators listed in box 4.

Box 4. International Best Practice—Empowering All Parents, Students, and Communities

- Information on standardized tests and school inspections is made available by multiple sources.
- Parents and students are included in the inspection and improvement-planning processes.
- Admission processes for entry into publicly funded schools are not based on student background; a lottery is used in cases of oversubscription.
- School choice is not hindered by mandatory financial contributions.
- Tax subsidies, scholarships, or cash transfers are available to families whose children attend independent private schools.

Development level:

Private independent schools:



Government-funded private schools:



In Malawi, the policies toward independent private schools to empower parents, students, and communities are **emerging**, that is, they exemplify some good practice, but additional policies could increase the client power of parents and allow them to hold providers accountable for results. For government-funded private schools, policies for empowering parents, students, and communities are **latent** (table 6).

For both independent and government-funded private schools, standardized examination results are approved by the Board of Directors of MANEB, and submitted to

the Ministry of Education, which in turn seeks final approval from the presidency before official release. These results are published in the media through a press release. For all three school examinations, MANEB produces and distributes a pass/fail list to all schools. For selection examinations, such as those at the primary level, the Ministry of Education conducts its own selection process and publishes a selection list made available to all districts and selected schools, where students can access the results.

Parents and student participate in the inspection process by taking part in focus groups as follows:

- Parents through their governing bodies, such as the Parents Teachers Associations and School Management Committees, participate in focus group discussions on issues pertaining to school improvement using the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) process.
- Students are involved in focus group discussions regarding issues that they feel would improve their school.

Focus group discussions are used to triangulate the findings with classroom visits and assessment results.

The government does not provide tax relief or cash transfers to students who attend independent private schools. Government-funded private schools are allowed to set admission criteria, which may restrict the ability of students to access high-quality schooling regardless of their background. A household's choice of school is also hindered by these schools' compulsory financial contributions.

Table 6. Goal 3: Empowering all Parents, Students, and Communities

<i>A. Common policies: Independent private schools and government-funded private schools</i>		
Item	Score	Justification
Are standardized exam results and inspection reports provided regularly to parents?	Emerging ●○○○	Examinations results are released to schools, but there is no policy which guarantee parents access to these results or to inspection reports on the school as a whole.
Are parents and students interviewed as part of the inspection process?	Advanced ●●●●	Students and parents focus groups form part of the inspection process.
<i>B. Policies for independent private schools</i>		
Does the government provide tax subsidies or cash transfers for families whose children attend independent private schools?	Latent ●○○○	The government does not provide tax relief or cash transfers for students who attend independent private schools.
<i>C. Policies for government-funded private schools</i>		
Are schools allowed to apply selective admission criteria when admitting students?	Latent ●○○○	Schools are allowed to select students based on academic performance and geography.
Are schools allowed to charge additional fees or accept contributions from parents?	Latent ●○○○	Compulsory contributions restrict parental choice.

Informed by the results of the benchmarking procedure for Malawi, the following **suggested policy options** are intended to help empower parents and students to influence the quality of education services provided by private schools:

- Guarantee parents access to comparable information on the quality of schools, such as standardized exam results and school inspection reports disaggregated by important characteristics, such as type of school, socioeconomic background, gender, and other types of disadvantage. This goal could be accomplished through school report cards.

- Restrict student selection by academic ability and geography in government-funded private schools in order to ensure equal opportunity for all students.
- Offer targeted cash transfers to low-income families for their children to attend private schools.

Goal 4: Promoting Diversity of Supply

By opening education to a more diverse set of providers, governments can increase client power and make providers directly accountable to students and parents for results. Although the public sector will always remain an important (and, in most cases, the predominant) provider of education services, educational choice can be used as part of a package of reforms to improve education access and quality in both the public and private sectors (Hoxby 2003; Levin and Belfield 2003; De la Croix and Doepke 2009; Carnoy and McEwan 2003; Himmler 2007; Angrist et al. 2002; World Bank 2003). In order to facilitate quality improvements through increased school competition and choice, governments can (i) allow multiple types of providers to operate; (ii) promote clear, open, affordable, and unrestrictive certification standards; and (iii) make government funding (and other incentives) available to non-state schools. This policy goal aims to increase the ability of diverse providers to provide education services. In order to do so, a number of policy indicators are suggested, as outlined in box 5.

Box 5. International Best Practice—Promoting Diversity of Supply

- The central government allows different types of providers to operate schools.
- Certification standards do not prohibit market entry.
- Information on market-entry requirements is available from multiple sources.
- Regulatory fees do not prohibit market entry.
- Publicly funded non state schools and public schools receive equivalent student funding; funding is increased to meet specific student needs.
- The central government provides incentives for market entry, such as access to start-up funding, public land, and public buildings.
- Schools are able to plan budgets six months in advance of the academic year.
- Privately managed schools are not restricted by student numbers, school numbers, or location.
- The central government does not restrict tuition levels at private independent schools.

Development level:*Private independent schools:**Government-funded private schools:*

In Malawi, the policies in place to promote diversity of supply for independent private schools are **established**—representing systematic good practice. For government-funded private schools, these policies are **emerging**—representing some instances of good practice.

Overall, government policy supports entry and relatively unburdened operation of multiple private education providers into the market. Schools are free to set their own tuition fees. All types of providers (community, not-for-profit, for-profit, and faith-based) are allowed to operate private schools. Private and public schools are subject to equivalent operating standards. Schools are able to operate without paying operating fees to the government. The government does not, however, make clear regulatory guidelines available in order for new schools to become registered.

In government-funded private schools, academic and additional budgets are equivalent to those of public schools. However, these schools do not receive targeted funding to meet individual student needs (e.g., students from marginalized groups or who have special educational needs). Government-funded private schools also do not receive start-up funding, nor do they receive information on funding amounts and timelines for delivery of this funding.

Table 7. Goal 4: Promoting Diversity of Supply

<i>A. Policies for independent private schools</i>		
Item	Score	Justification
Who has legal authority to determine tuition fee standards?	Advanced ●●●●	Schools are free to determine their own tuition fees.
Does the government allow multiple types of providers to operate a school?	Advanced ●●●●	The government allows community, not-for-profit, faith-based, and for-profit providers to operate schools.
Are operating standards less stringent for private than for public schools?	Established ●●●○	Private and public schools are subject to equivalent operating standards.
Are there guidelines clearly publicized by multiple sources outlining the requirements for school registration?	Latent ●○○○	Registration guidelines are not officially outlined.
Are schools able to operate without paying fees?	Advanced ●●●●	Schools are able to operate without paying fees.
<i>B. Policies for government-funded private schools</i>		
Does the government provide equivalent funding of budgets for public and government-funded private schools?	Established ●●●○	Academic and additional budgets are equivalent to per student amounts in public schools.
Do government-funded private schools receive any start-up funding?	Emerging ●●○○	Government-funded private schools do not receive any start-up funding.
Is information on the amount of government funding provided in a timely manner?	Latent ●○○○	Policies do not require government to provide information on funding.

For government-funded private schools:

- Outline the funding amounts schools will receive in a timely manner.
- If the government seeks to support additional government-funded private schools, take initial costs of opening a school into consideration.
- Consider increasing funding for marginalized groups.

Informed by the results of the benchmarking procedure for Malawi, the following **suggested policy options** are intended to help better promote diversity of supply for independent private schools:

- Publish clear registration guidelines to encourage new schools to enter the market.

From Analysis to Action: Policy Options for Malawi

Malawi has nearly achieved universal primary enrollment, with a net enrollment rate of 89 percent. However, primary schools have large class sizes and access to secondary education has remained stagnant. The quality of learning outcomes also requires improvement. Based on the results of the benchmarking exercise, this report offers three suggested policy options to strengthen the government's engagement with both independent private schools and government-funded private schools in order to ensure learning for all:

1. Concentrate on improving the quality of learning outcomes at the school level through improvement planning and the use of incentives.
2. Empower parents by ensuring that they receive information on school quality that enables them to make informed choices, and are not hindered by restrictive school selection criteria.
3. Create a regulatory environment that encourages greater supply of school places to help overcome supply constraints, particularly at the secondary level.

These policy options are supported by international evidence, best practice, and examples of countries that have used innovative interventions to improve their education systems from a variety of starting points.

Policy Option 1: Concentrate on improving the quality of learning outcomes through school improvement planning and incentives.

Current education policies in Malawi outline student standards, facilitate an assessment framework (including standardized exams), and mandate inspections. However, there are limited incentives and support structures to ensure that schools improve. Inspection frameworks should outline strengths and weaknesses of schools, with the school system then supporting priorities for improvement. Improvement planning can facilitate positive change as a school strives to deliver better educational outcomes for all students. School improvement plans have been an important part of multiple successful education programs in developing countries (Bruns, Filmer, and Patrinos 2011). Improvement plans traditionally outline the goals that a school desires to achieve, the strategies to achieve those

goals, and the practical actionable steps needed to be taken by each individual within the school. Research has shown that improvement plans can be successful when they clearly define goals; pursue simple actions with consistency; align standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and create a culture of achievement (Schmoker and Marzano 1999, Reeves 2006; Collins 2005). Changes at the school level, however, will only occur when relationships in the school are also strengthened. School leaders must ensure that improvement plans are meaningful to all stakeholders and purposeful actions are taken throughout a school (Fullan 2007). Incentives at the school level can also help strengthen buy-in and raise accountability. For non-state providers, when government funding is tied to accountability standards (e.g., via vouchers or subsidies), it creates an incentive for schools to perform more efficiently (Patrinos 2002).

Country examples

Western Cape, South Africa requires schools to submit individual school improvement plans. Particular attention is given to those schools that did not achieve the required pass rate on the state examinations. The number of underperforming schools has declined every year, from 85 in 2009 to 26 in 2012 (Western Cape Government 2013). Western Cape is also cited in a study that reviewed how the most improved schools continue to improve (Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber 2010).

In Brazil, the Ministry's Plano de Desenvolvimento da Escola (PDE) project required schools to identify their most serious problems and develop their own school improvement plans. The PDE also required schools to focus their plans on two or three Effectiveness Factors (EF), one of which must be effective teaching and learning; the other EFs are chosen from a list of general areas detailed in the PDE manual. Students in PDE schools saw greater increases in grade passing rates than students in non-PDE schools (Carnoy et al. 2008).

In Pakistan, Punjab Education Foundation's Assisted Schools (FAS) program provides monthly per-student cash subsidies and free textbooks to low-cost private schools. The program grew exponentially from 8,573 students and 54 schools in 2005 to over 1 million students and 3,000 schools in 2012. Participation in the program requires that schools achieve a minimum student pass rate in a semi-annual multi-subject exam – Quality Assurance Test (QAT). At least two-thirds of tested students must score above 40 percent on the

QAT. If a school fails to achieve the minimum pass rate on two consecutive QATs, it is permanently disqualified for funding.

A rigorous evaluation of the program found a positive causal impact of the threat of program expulsion on student learning. Schools threatened with losing access to subsidies were nearly always successful in raising student scores to meet the minimum pass rate on subsequent exams; where only 49 percent of schools in the study met the minimum pass rate in November of 2007, nearly 100 percent of these same schools met it in March of 2008. The program also offers two cash bonus benefits. The first is a teacher bonus for a high level of school test performance: once every academic year, a maximum of five teachers, in each program school where at least 90 percent of students in tested classes obtain a score of 40 percent or higher in the QAT, receive an award of 10,000 rupees (US\$118) each. The second is a competitive school bonus for top school test performance: once every academic year, the program school in each of the seven main program districts which has the highest share of students with a score of 40% or higher in the QAT is awarded 50,000 rupees (US\$ 588) (Barrera-Osorio and Raju 2010).

Government-funded private schools

Government-funded private schools need to strengthen their accountability for use of public funds. This need is highlighted as a priority in the National Education Sector Plan, particularly at the secondary level, where lack of financial prudence, poor management and insufficient information systems currently compromise standards (MEST 2008). Greater transparency and more rigorous compliance would improve the efficiency with which these providers use government funding.

Country examples

In Uganda, a survey in 1991 showed that only 13 percent of funds were reaching schools. This led the Government of Uganda to disseminate information on monthly transfers to the districts via newspapers and radio. Schools were also required to show use of the intended funds per student. By 1999, around 90 percent of funding had reached schools and was being used to support student learning (Reinikka and Svensson 2005).

Policy Option 2: Empower parents by ensuring that they are: 1) given information on school quality that enables them to make informed choices and 2) not hindered by restrictive school selection criteria.

Based on current policies, the government of Malawi could increase the information provided to parents on school quality. Central governments ought not to be the only monitors of school performance. Access to comparative school information would enable parents and students to influence school quality through increased choice and direct voice to providers. This information could include school report cards, classroom assessment results, examination results, and/or inspection reports. Evidence from Pakistan found that school report cards improved learning by 0.1 standard deviations and reduced fees by almost 20 percent. The largest learning gains (0.34 standard deviations) were for initially low-performing (below median baseline test scores) private schools, with the worst of these more likely to close (Andrabi, Das, and Khawja 2009).

Government-funded private schools

The ability of parents to use information on school quality is also hindered by selective admissions practices. Schools are currently free to select students based on academic ability and location. Malawi needs to focus not only on making information available to parents, but also on ensuring that students, regardless of background, have access to good-quality schooling.

Country examples

An early adopter of school report cards was Parana state in Brazil. Between 1999 and 2002 report cards were introduced to inform school communities and stimulate greater involvement in the school improvement process. The report cards were disseminated to a wider range of stakeholders including all schools, PTAs, municipal education authorities and all 70,000 state education employees including 46,000 teachers. Overall results were reported in the state education secretariat's monthly newsletter, used in teacher and PTA workshops, and disseminated via press releases and press conferences (EQUIP2).

In the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, a USAID-funded program – Civic Engagement for Education Reform in Central America (CERCA) – implemented a school report card that focused on indicators in four areas:

1. **Context:** basic profile information (number of students in each grade, etc.) and access to services at the school (sanitation, electricity, etc.)
2. **Inputs:** class size, access to resources (notebooks, pens, etc.), and access to social services (school meals, health programs, etc.)
3. **Processes:** student and teacher attendance, school plan implementation, and parent participation
4. **Results:** coverage and efficiency (repetition and retention)

The results of the school report card are used by communities to develop and monitor implementation of school action plans (CERCA 2006).

In Andhra Pradesh, India, the Vidya Chaitanyam intervention used citizens to monitor and advocate for higher quality service delivery from government and non-government basic education providers. This was intended to strengthen the oversight function in the state due to the lack of capacity at the Local Education Offices whose responsibility is to carry out school inspections. The program included members of Women's Self Help Groups, who were often illiterate and semi-literate, to assess the quality of basic education provision through the use of school scorecards. The results of the scorecards were shared with district officials, the local School Management Committee and at local women's Self Help Group meetings (CFBT 2013).

Policy Option 3: Create a regulatory environment that encourages greater supply of school places to help overcome supply constraints, particularly at the secondary level.

In Malawi, pupil-teacher ratios are well above the African average — over 70:1. Expansion of the private education sector is hampered by a lack of transparency regarding official guidelines on how new schools can become registered.

Country example

In the UK, the government clearly outlines the guidelines for setting up a new publicly funded, privately managed school, Free School. A Separate NGO, the New Schools Network, was also established to provide advice and guidance on how to successfully set up a new free school (Department for Education, UK 2013).

In the Malawi context, current restrictions on teacher standards and curriculum could be eased to encourage more diverse suppliers to enter the market.

Country example

In Burkina Faso, a public-private partnership was set up in order to increase enrollment in lower secondary schools from 20 percent in 2004 to a projected 33.5 percent by 2009. Under the partnership, the government supported the construction and equipment of 80 private schools and hired and paid for two teachers per school. The schools aimed to reduce disparities in the choice of secondary schools in the provinces. The 18 provinces with the lowest coverage benefitted from 70 percent of program funding. These schools then operated at a lower cost than typical private schools. No recurrent costs were incurred by the government.²

Government- funded private schools

Ensure that information on funding amount is given to schools in a timely manner to facilitate planning at the school level.

² World Bank, n.d., "Burkina Faso: Projects & Operations," webpage accessed November 15, 2013. World Bank, Washington, DC.

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The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) initiative collects data on the policies and institutions of education systems around the world and benchmarks them against practices associated with student learning. SABER aims to give all parties with a stake in educational results—from students, administrators, teachers, and parents to policymakers and business people—an accessible, detailed, objective snapshot of how well the policies of their country's education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

This report focuses specifically on policies of engaging the private sector in education.

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