

Box 2.9. Investing in teachers and school principals**Professional development and mentoring for public school teachers, in India**

The Learning Links Foundation in India supports public school teachers through its Student and Teacher Empowerment Program (STEP) across four Indian states.

STEP seeks to increase the effectiveness of teaching-learning practices through a mixture of professional development and continuous mentoring. Teacher training helps teachers improve classroom management and environment and hone their subject-specific pedagogy skills. This is followed by classroom observation and onsite mentoring to ensure regularity in the use of professional learning. Teachers receive direct support from an expert, who observes classroom teaching and mentors the teachers in challenging areas accordingly. The resource person also reviews teachers' lesson plans and provides feedback.

In addition, the programme trains school leaders to provide guidance and support to teachers in their school and engages with parents and the community to build a supportive home environment.

Continuous professional development for school principals, in Argentina

In Argentina, the Varkey Foundation's Programme on Leadership and Innovation in Education equips school leaders with the knowledge to create a friendly, safe and stimulating working environment for school personnel and students.^{xiii}

The project stemmed from the Ministry of Education's belief that school principals are a crucial driver for institutional improvement. Traditionally in Argentina, school principals focused primarily on administrative tasks, at the expense of leadership on pedagogy. There were no in-service opportunities for principals to hone their leadership skills, and their recruitment and career promotion did not consider their managerial and leadership capacity and track record.

Seeking to address this shortcoming, the National Ministry of Education partnered with the Varkey Foundation to deliver a comprehensive training programme for school leaders. Facilitated by local tutors, the six-week workshop emphasised teaching-learning processes, curriculum innovation, teacher professional development, information technology systems for schools and community engagement. Participants also analysed the challenges in their schools and conceived a project to address them. Since its launch in 2016, the programme has trained over 3 800 principals and teachers from more than 1 900 schools, en route to its goal of reaching 15 000 school leaders.

The foundations that have primarily invested in teachers and school leaders can expect to see important payoffs for students. One competent school leader and strong teachers can translate into better learning for the thousands of students that attend his/her school over the years. However, there is limited rigorous evidence on which approaches for teacher training are most effective. In addition, philanthropic funding cannot bridge the shortfall of national in-service training opportunities, and of government monitoring and coaching support to schools. Foundations must continue their quest for cost-effective and scalable strategies to help strengthen government-led teacher training and mentoring systems in low-resource settings.

Moving up the ladder: Working with education authorities and new school governance models

Successful stewardship of the education system relies on competent education practitioners, but in many contexts, technical capacities are low (World Bank, 2018^[56]). Some foundations have opted to partner with governments and build institutional capacities to plan, implement and assess education policies. In Brazil, for example, Fundação Itaú Social launched a programme to help develop the technical competencies of school system leaders, teachers and principals in high-need municipalities and regions (Box 2.10).

Box 2.10. Investing in municipalities' technical capacities in Brazil

The Improvement of Education programme, launched in 2019 by Fundação Itaú Social, provides professional development opportunities for public education managers and educators.

The programme stemmed from two observations. First, piecemeal strategies, which addressed only one aspect of the education system, did not allow the foundation to take a more holistic approach, that is, to help support various dimensions of the school system simultaneously. For example, weak financial planning at the municipal level could curtail the implementation and long-run sustainability of a new pedagogy.

Box 2.10. Investing in municipalities' technical capacities in Brazil (Cont.)

Second, the foundation decided to prioritise municipalities where the need was greatest and where low technical capacity undermined outcomes. Through the programme, the foundation directly trains municipal teams to assess education needs and develop a strategic plan based on the assessment's results. Municipal education managers and educators also receive professional development in four key areas. The first is financial planning and operational support to schools, including supply of materials and school meals. The second is pedagogy, including curriculum development and implementation, and teacher and school leadership training. The third is communication and collaboration with other education stakeholders, such as community members, families, other municipalities and state agencies. The fourth is monitoring and evaluation, aimed at improving equity and quality in education.

The partnership spans four years. Following the initial assessment and strategic planning phase, the foundation helps municipalities identify and connect with relevant partners (non-governmental organisations, other municipalities and government agencies) that have the technical capacities and mandate to help implement the municipal plan. Part of the selected non-profit organisations receive financial support from the foundation in order to provide customised training and technical assistance to municipal teams. Additionally, the foundation provides an online portfolio of resources, such as self-instruction courses, guides, tools and other support materials, that non-participating municipalities can also access. The programme will be piloted in eight municipalities between 2019-20, and will scale to around 20 municipalities in 2021.

Partnering with municipalities is a strategy to address the lack of capacity of the education system in a more systemic way. At the same time, by working with the government, the initiative faces an indisputable challenge: political cycles and changes in leadership, ownership of reforms and priorities can reverse or weaken investments in public capacities. With this in mind, sustainability requires engaging and training a mix of elected officials with political legitimacy to build buy-in around education policy, alongside non-elected cadres, teachers, school and community members who will stay regardless of election results.

Finally, the autonomous public school model has drawn the attention of foundations as an alternative approach to traditional school governance (Box 2.11). Autonomous schools are independently managed public schools. They operate under a contract that holds them accountable for meeting certain outcomes, such as student learning. Proponents of this model believe autonomous school leaders have greater incentives to perform better than traditional public school managers. This, in turn, can lead to positive impacts on student learning.

Box 2.11. Innovating with school governance and the enabling environment

New Generation Schools (NGS) is a programme that establishes and manages charter schools in developing countries in Asia. NGS transforms existing schools to achieve new levels of performance, particularly in key departments like STEM and English. NGS facilitates the enhancement of school facilities, teaching standards and teacher training and incentives to create a positive in-school culture that is rewarding for both teachers and students.

The NGS programme was a response to a chronically underperforming school system both in terms of learning and attendance. In the early 2000s, secondary net enrolment in Cambodia ranked among the lowest in Asia, at around 38% (UNESCO, 2008^[57]). NGS, then called "Beacon" schools, was originally devised by a local NGO, Kampuchean Action for Primary Education as a local initiative. In 2013, the Franks Family Foundation (FFF) started engaging with KAPE to develop a plan that could allow the programme to grow from a local to a national scale. With start-up funding and support from the FFF, KAPE was able to overcome initial opposition and gain support from the Ministry of Education to expand to Phnom Penh. In 2017 KAPE and the FFF signed an agreement with the Cambodian government to expand the NGS network across the country. Following an adapted version of the charter school model, New Generation Schools are in the public sphere, receiving hybrid funding from the state, external donors and parents. They are granted flexibility over financial management, staffing and curriculum, but must report to an oversight board established by the Ministry of Education (MOEYS).

Box 2.11. Innovating with school governance and the enabling environment (Cont.)

In the context of corruption, the NGS model may improve school transparency. For instance, public schooling should be provided for free. However, some charge unofficial enrolment fees, as well as other irregular fees for practice exams or private tutoring (UNESCO, 2008^[57]; MoEYS and UNICEF, 2005^[58]). Through their charter, NGS institutions are required to implement high standards of accountability and governance. If they do not meet benchmarks, they may lose their NGS status. They select staff through a competitive process; teachers can no longer ask students to pay for private tutoring or mock exams; and principals are held accountable for achieving educational results. The programme also emphasises equipping students with transferable skills through extended hours of instruction in English, science and technology, and encourages leadership skills and a commitment to civil society. To ensure the financial sustainability of NGS, the model put in place a scale for school fees. Low-income students can enrol at no charge, while middle-class parents may pay a voluntary fee of around USD 65 per year.

There will be 15 NGS schools by 2019, and the programme is expected to keep growing. The government plans to establish two schools in each of Cambodia's 25 provinces. Building on its initial experience with NGS in Cambodia, the FFF signed a letter of intention with the government of Laos in 2018 for the launching of an NGS pilot.

Autonomous publicly funded schools may create positive benefits such as better performance and management standards, and greater choice for parents (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009^[59]; CREDO, 2015^[60]). They can also help the education system leverage additional private investments, and can serve as a blueprint for the government to learn from new administrative and accountability frameworks (Zimmer and Buddin, 2007^[61]; Bulkley and Fisler, 2003^[62]).

Despite its benefits, the autonomous school model's quality and financial viability may be compromised in countries where the government has limited regulation and experience in contracting out education services (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio and Guaqueta, 2009^[63]; Rose, 2007^[64]; Bjarnason et al., 2008^[65]). Indeed, the contracts that frame these PPPs may be complex and need to evolve over time, while allowing the government to retain stewardship and build its own capacity. Their benefits largely depend on government's capacity to design, oversee and enforce the accreditation of schools effectively (UNICEF; Asian Development Bank, 2011^[66]; Hanushek, Link and Woessmann, 2013^[67]). More research is warranted on the impact of autonomous schools on school governance, educational practices and, ultimately, student outcomes.^{xiv}

Teachers and principals are essential human capital for the quality of public education. Foundations are increasingly partnering with governments to conceive new training modules, and deliver continuous professional development. Foundations are also experimenting with new school models to match autonomous school management with high standards of performance and accountability.

Looking ahead, there is still much room to explore how foundations can best invest to strengthen existing government training and mentoring systems. Foundations could help develop new models using technology, such as "blended learning", or mentoring via SMS, to expand professional development and coaching opportunities for principals, teachers and education managers. They could also support rigorous evaluations to see if or how these technologies complement or substitute for human interaction with traditional school mentors. Finally, foundations could invest in rigorous evaluation (e.g. randomised field experiments) to test the effectiveness of new school models in low-resource settings – compared with traditional public schools – and identify the ingredients driving these effects.

