"A Bandage on a Large Wound": Analyzing the Role and Strategies of Transnational Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) in Advancing SDG 4.

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Student **declaration to accompany the submission of written work**
School of Transnational Governance

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ABSTRACT

The failure of several international development and transnational governance mechanisms in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) since the turn of the century has called for the need to re-invent global governance architecture. Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) have been touted as a panacea in this regard and as a result, multiple MSPs have been forged over the last three decades within the purview of several global issues such as the health crisis, food insecurity, and education. Multi-Stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) bring together different stakeholders to dialogue and pool resources together to achieve a common goal. But MSPs also face several criticisms such as rigid top-down approaches, insufficient domestic representation, and sustainable funding issues (Hazlewoord 2015: 4). As the world strives to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, especially SDG 4, MSPs within global education have also become more prominent. However, research specifically on global education MSPs is limited, hence this research aims to fill this gap. Utilizing qualitative research in the form of document analysis and semi-structured interviews, this research analyzes the role that global education MSPs play in achieving the SDGs. Findings show that global education MSPs are responsible for providing vital resources, particularly global education financing which strongly help to advance SDG 4. However, their impact is limited due to how intersectional and complex the problem of global education is, hence, "a bandage on a large wound" as pointed out by a respondent. It further highlights that while country ownership is strongly promoted, discussions and activities are still very much "north led" (especially at the board level) despite attempts at increasing the inclusion of beneficiary countries.

Keywords: Multi-Stakeholder partnerships, global education, stakeholder management, sustainable development, inclusion.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWS	Alliance for Water Stewardship
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EiEPC	Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises
EFA	Education for All – Fast Track Initiative
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FER	First Emergency Response
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GWP	Global Water partnership
HLFC	High Level Financing Conference
HLSG	High Level Steering Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LEG	Local Education Group
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Partnership
MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SCA	Standard Contribution Agreement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WEF	World Economic Forum

1. Introduction

"No single country or organization can tackle the challenges of demographics, conflict, unequal access to education, radicalization or climate change. Partnership is the only way." - Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, UNESCO, 2018.

The road to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has refocused attention on finding long-term remedies to the "global issues" (George et al., 2016) that the world is currently confronting. Increasingly, there have been expert suggestions that multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) involving governmental, corporate, civil society organizations, financial institutions, donors, and academic institutions are essential to achieve the SDGs (Clarke and MacDonald, 2019; MacDonald et al., 2019; Pattberg and Widerberg, 2016). As a result, the United Nations Agenda 2030 has pledged to "Goal 17 - Global Partnership for Development" to support the effective execution of the Sustainable Development Goals and "reinvigorate the global partnership for sustainable development" (UNGA, 2016).

With a focus on a broad spectrum of international objectives and goals, the SDGs "possibly offers a novel way ahead for development policy and practice." (Scheyvens et al., 2016). However, despite increasing expectations for the SDGs, realizing this possibility through improved partnerships is debated. "Partnerships are new types of governance that can bring together varied knowledge and resources from civil society, government, and private sector" Backstrand (2006: 303). They entail exchanging information, pooling resources, and harmonizing the skills of many sectors, which is expected to lead to efficiencies that produce favorable sustainable outcomes (Bendell et al., 2010; Weitz et al., 2019; Selsky and Parker, 2005). In brief, partnerships are essential structures that bring different actors' objectives into line with a single goal and act as an indispensable organizer and facilitator for advancing sustainable development.

In line with this ideal, several transnational MSPs have been designed to tackle global

education challenges. Against this backdrop, and considering that in recent times, different transnational governance models (of which global education MSPs fall under) are criticized and scrutinized for their structural inadequacies such as lack of representation of all 'stakeholders' (Hall, 2014), it is important to analyze to what extent are MSPs shaped to positively impact development outcomes and the SDG goals based on the field or sector they are operating.

1.1. Research Question(s)

The main research question is thus presented: What role do global education MSPs fulfill, and how are they designed to effectively support SDG 4?

The question is further broken down into the following sub questions:

i. Why are global education MSPs formed and what role do they fulfill?
ii. How are they set up to effectively advance the SDGs?

The literature on MSPs and how they operate is thoroughly examined to answer a portion of the questions above. Thereafter, two case studies of MSPs in global education are analyzed by using four criteria developed from the literature. To achieve this, this research is conducted through semi-structured interviews and a thorough examination of documents and reports on the activities of the partnerships.

This paper argues that global education MSPs are crucial for the advancement of the SDGs as they play a role of providing (mostly financial) resources to alleviate global education problems. This is different from some MSPs in other sectors responsible for program implementation, setting norms or sharing information. It further contends that global education MSPs are formed in a way that recognizes problems of inclusion, country representation and sustainable funding and they actively try to deal with these issues in their quest to achieve the SDGs. However, several problems persist. For instance, discourses at the top level of global education MSPs are still very much "north led," hence, the problem of agenda setting and exclusion. Other issues are also observed: i.e., there are constraints on what global education MSPs can achieve since the problem of education is intersectional and

cuts across other problems such as political instability and a pandemic situation.

1.2. Research Methodology

Using two cases of MSPs within global education, a qualitative method in the form of document analysis and semi-structured interviews is used for this research. Qualitative research, according to Denzin (2001), explains participants' ideas, perceptions, and reactions and clarifies the implications of their actions. Inductive reasoning, or simply developing a theory from observed evidence, is the foundation of the qualitative method (Mohajan, 2018: 1).

GPE (Global Partnerships for Education) and ECW (Education Cannot Wait) are the two cases selected for this research. These two were selected because they are some of the foremost MSPs within global education and their work has been pivotal in recent years within the field. GPE is the largest global partnership for education and ECW, created 7 years ago, is the only partnership that solely exists to fund education in emergency situations. With these cases, a document analysis of their charters, other documents from their websites (e.g., their organizational structure documents, monitoring and evaluation processes and their strategic plans for the next few years), peer-reviewed journals, and reports produced by the organizations and external organizations are analyzed. The documents used were carefully chosen to answer the question on why they exist, what functions they perform and how they deal with internal issues of inclusion, country ownership and sustainable funding. Thereafter, semi-structured "elite" interviews are conducted with a total of 5 employees within these organizations (3 from ECW and 2 from GPE) to understand their perspectives on the research questions. Elite interviews are interviews conducted with experts or with those close to power in the context of qualitative research (Lilleker, 2003: 207). They are typically helpful when expert opinions are needed as in the case of this study. Most of those interviewed have been working with their organizations since their founding. For those with less than a decade experience with the partnerships, they have been active in the international development field in other organizations including UNICEF and the World Bank.

Semi-structured interviews are particularly chosen because of their flexibility and possibility of having a two-way interaction which allows for follow-up questions. According to Bryman (2008) this method is more adaptable than any other qualitative method. LinkedIn and email invitations were used to seek potential participants who could contribute to the research topic. However, it was difficult to schedule a time that worked best for potential participants as is common when dealing with elites as they are "unlikely to accommodate the researcher's schedule, and in some cases no amount of effort will result in an interview" (Conti & O'Neil, 2007). Emails were sent to 25 people from both organizations which resulted in 5 interviews. Since it was difficult to get the attention of some people, snowball sampling mechanism was used to find more people willing to participate in the research. Snowball sampling is a non-probabilistic method that involves selecting a small number of participants who fit the requirements for the study, and then asking the participants to nominate other people they know who fulfill the researcher's selection criteria (Bhattacherjee, 2017: 70). This was helpful in getting more participants.

2. Dissecting the Rise, Role, and Responsibilities of MSPs in Contemporary Times

The prevalence of several global issues plaguing the world today constantly calls for better institutional models of transnational governance to attempt at solving these issues. However, problems that go beyond national borders are not easy to solve. Some scholars such as Stone (2019: 1) have termed these problems "wicked" due to their complexity. The problems are often challenging to solve due to several factors, such as conflicting understanding that causes ambiguity, and the interconnectedness of several global issues (Head and Alford, 2013). Over the years, different transnational governance models involving several intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations have been created to address some of these wicked problems. While the United Nations has made several strides in achieving its aim of "peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet," several scholars (Medhat, 2020, Bertrand, 2005, Taylor & Curtis, 2008) have criticized its functionality and argued that it has failed in delivering its objectives. Frustrating bureaucratic processes, western-oriented ideals, hypocrisy in enforcing international human rights principles, and a lack of inclusion of global south countries in salient decision-making processes are some criticisms that have been highlighted against the United Nations (Medhat, 2020; Nile, 2007).

As the efficiency of global governance and international development mechanisms such as the United Nations are questioned, this leaves room for the re-imagining of the development architecture. Over time, traditional development organizations have been viewed as ineffective and incapable, which has resulted in a lack of trust. They also have extreme bureaucratic needs, global unanimity needs, and an inability to achieve outcomes (Berman, 2017). Secondly, there is a growing understanding that working with private organizations was essential to addressing global issues (ibid). They give resources, frequently in the form of money, information, and skills that governments lack but rely on. Thirdly, MSPs are also seen as strengthening democratic legitimacy because they involve parties that are impacted by development policy (Lie, 2021). Thus, this is where the potency of analyzing the role of MSPs in addressing global problems becomes relevant.

2.1. Defining Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs), Roles and Structure

Momen (2019) defines MSPs as a "new type of partnership governance system that brings together various actors, including civil society, governments, international organizations, media, and academic or research establishments for the purpose of exchanging knowledge, information, technologies, and financial resources while working toward solving a common issue." This definition extrapolates the idea of MSPs into three: the actors involved, what they do, and what goal they seek to achieve. Actors within MSPs are people, parties, or institutions that can significantly impact the primary concern at hand through their activities or those that are directly impacted by the actions of those trying to address the problem. Five main stakeholders (the government, businesses, international organizations, NGOs and Civic Society Organizations) participate in MSPs. Furthermore, scholars like Pauwelyn (in Berman, 2017) have referred to the rise of MSPs as a transition from formal to informal institutional frameworks and legislature. In the era of global governance, states collaborate with non-governmental actors through unofficial organizations like trans-governmental regulatory networks and multi-stakeholder partnerships, rather than just with other governments or intergovernmental organizations. So, it is appropriate to view the rise of partnerships in this perspective as a trend that is a component of a larger transformation in how the world system operates.

The activities of MSPs are varied based on their different goals. However, according to Beisheim and Simon (2016: 3) MSPs within the purview of the sustainable development goals achieve three functions based on their activities: for sharing knowledge, for providing services, and for setting standards. Knowledge sharing hovers on sharing best practices, technical information, and expertise within the partnership on how to achieve an aim. An example of this is Global Water partnership (GWP), a coalition of over 3000 water organizations to promote efficient, sustainable water resource management. MSPs that provide services are active in developing programs and implementing projects that address specific concerns, such as GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance which is a public–private global health

partnership that aims to increase access to immunization and vaccines in developing countries. Resources can also involve financial resources to stimulate development programs in various contexts. Setting standards deals more with enacting policies and norms that other initiatives can adopt to address global issues. An example is the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), an association comprising corporations, non-profit organizations, and the government. By adopting the AWS Standard, AWS members help ensure the sustainability of local water resources. However, while MSPs can be differentiated through the above groupings, their activities can also overlap across these three areas depending on the goals and actions of individual MSPs.

The goals of MSPs within sustainable development usually take cognizance of development issues and align their visions and missions with those of the SDGs. The examples given above of GAVI, GWP and AWS can be said to be in line with goals 3 and 6 of the SDGs, respectively. MSPs serve as interactive venues where help can be consolidated and organized into a single combined fund, as opposed to conventional aid, which was dominated by bilateral financing to a single recipient country. The Paris Declaration principles, which emphasize the concept of country ownership, and views recipient nations as partners with equal participation into the organization's operations and strategies, serve as the foundation for MSP objectives and practices (Buse and Tanaka 2011). It is also important to highlight that MSPs are usually non-binding, hence, different from international treaties in which countries are usually a signatory (UN, 2016). MSPs depend on the commitment and willingness of stakeholders to actively engage, especially when the partnership can agree on a comprehensive goal and when individual institutional goals are aligned with each other.

2.2. Effectiveness and Legitimacy of MSPs

According to Backstrand (2006), legitimacy stems both from two logics: firstly, "a procedural logic (that rules are predictable and determined by legitimate actors)" and secondly, "a consequential logic (that rules and institutions lead to collective problem solving)." She termed this input and output legitimacy. Input legitimacy refers to the nature of the decision-making process (transparency, representation, and accountability) while output legitimacy

is the ability of the institution to solve problems (Scharpf, 2001).

Input legitimacy pertains to formal requirements like fair representation of different stakeholders, a forum for debate and interaction between those in the public sector, the private sector and civil society, as well as transparency, access to data, information exchange, and processes for oversight and tracking. To address the "participation gap" and disenfranchisement in global governance, MSPs have been promoted since the 1992 Rio summit. It aims to increase multilateralism's inclusivity and responsiveness to marginalized groups (such as women and indigenous people) (Elliot, 2004; Fisher and Green, 2004). Multilateral financial institutions have established consultative mechanisms with civil society in response to accusations that they lack a democratic framework (Mason, 2004). This presupposes that the inclusion of marginalized groups and affected communities will create better collaborative problem solving.

Also, the issue of accountability is central to the discussion on the legitimacy of MSPs. For an MSP to be successful, all actors must be accountable with one another to promote mutual trust and genuine understanding. However, this is usually a challenge for transnational MSPs because of their weakly institutionalized cooperative platforms that do not clearly define a principal-agent relationship and are not solely responsible to an electoral base (Benner et al., 2003: 3). In contrast to state-centered or International Organization structures of accountability, MSPs face difficulties with accountability because there are numerous sites of governance and authority that is spread among various actors (Keohane and Nye, 2003: 401). In addition, since MSPs are usually decentralized and adaptable, a top-down accountability framework is less appropriate for partnerships. According to studies on partnership accountability, horizontal accountability methods are more effective (Steets, 2004).

The efficacy of partnership agreements can be expressed as output legitimacy in the context of MSPs. The ability to solve problems is a key component of performance. Hence the question: does the partnership meet its own objectives? Backstrand (2006) further argues that within the purview of the SDGs, effectiveness has two aspects: first, how well the agreement

achieves the stated developmental objectives and secondly, the MSP's institutional architecture and foundation, which are necessary for achieving desired results. This "institutional effectiveness" includes leadership, clearly defined goals, and cogent policies. While implementation and compliance with norms within an MSP can be seen as a positive outcome in measuring the efficiency of an MSP, effectiveness refers to the outcome of the MSP in terms of whether aims and objectives are being met. However, due to the lengthy process involved in implementing the sustainable development goals, it is sometimes difficult to evaluate "outcome effectiveness" hence, why MSPs usually have target indicators and periodic goals within a specific period.

To conclude, legitimacy of MSPs within their structures (inward legitimacy determined by representation, transparency, and accountability) and in relation to their implementing capacities (outward legitimacy) can help us understand their effectiveness.

2.3. Criticisms of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

Although the governance of MSPs has only been the subject of a few studies, several significant criticisms have been made. MSPs have struggled with uncertain funding, a lack of voices from the so-called "global south", accountability, and worries about the expanding private sector's domination. A lot of criticism (Menashy, 2017) has also been directed against the characteristics of constituency-based governance, such as board member conflicts and a corresponding failure to pay close attention to significant policy-related issues. A common argument within the literature on MSPs is based on a "functionalist" explanation which states that MSPs are "created by rational actors who are interested in solving complex transboundary problems" (Reinicke and Deng, 2000) that governments and international organizations are not able to efficiently solve. Thus, the need for MSPs to help fill governance gaps in those places. However, this theory has been debated by scholars like Andonova and Levy (2003: 23) who posit that partnerships are supply-driven rather than demand-driven because they are not found in places where governance gaps are rampant such as in the developing world or so-called global south, but rather in places where the goals of the partnerships align with the interests of northern donors. A different study by the German

Development Corporation shows that partnerships are in global south countries that are friendly for investments instead of the countries that are most in need of better governance infrastructure (Hoering cited in Utting and Zammit, 2009: 45).

These findings cast a dim light on the goals and functionalities of MSPs in that while they have been centered as a crucial need for providing public goods and thus advancing the SDGs, their existence is sometimes at odds with the noble cause of advancing the SDGs. This points to the need to critically analyze how they are constructed and what their attempts are in addressing concerns such as the prevalence of "northern interests." If MSPs are meant to be a panacea for global governance (Gray and Purdy, 2018), a repetition of traditional models of global governance and development approaches would render it ineffective, hence a proliferation of the conventional order. But solving the problems of "northern-led interests" becomes even more complicated with MSPs curated to address financial gaps within international development. This is because funding for development MSPs is still very much provided by the global north (OECD, 2019) due to the differences in economic standing in contrast to the global south, hence, they are a big stakeholder in the functioning of MSPs. Thus, their voices can sometimes be the loudest in key decision-making processes.

Another school of thought in the creation of MSPs is the "rational choice perspective" which argues that MSPs are formed when the interests and goals of actors intersect and thus, they can get one benefit or the other from the partnership (Witte and Reinicke, 2005: 46). Hence, the common argument of a win-win situation for every actor in an MSP. While this is tenable as all stakeholders share risks and benefits, it is problematic in that the locus of the formation of partnerships hinges on what actors can get out of it and not necessarily what goal (in terms of filling governance gaps) is being achieved. Different actors have different expectations or incentives for participating in an MSP: Governments hope to gain greater control of policy design and implementation; NGOs want to influence policies of government and private actors to increase their public profile, the private sector wants to access public tenders and subsidies and boost their goodwill; and international organizations want to have access to skills and technical expertise of the private sector (Andonova and Levy, 2003). Hence it is important to question to what extent the SDGs can be achieved through MSPs when their

formation is based on what stakeholders expect to get out of it. This concern is further buttressed by anti-capitalist proponents who oppose the involvement of the private sector in development activities citing that their involvement may seek to take advantage of the partnership to advance their own interests and goodwill (Parvu and Voicu-Olteanu, 2009: 197). Whilst sharing risks and benefits is part of being in an MSP, it is important for MSPs to take cognizance of the kinds of partners that they bring on board. Having a specific goal, requirements for joining and documents that outline ways of engagement helps to filter the kinds of partners MSPs utilize to avoid future problems or scandals.

2.4. MSPs within Global Education and the road to 2030—Presentation of Cases

As MSPs have become a crucial pathway for the advancement of the SDGs in various fields, several global education MSPs have also been created overtime to address challenges within the global education system. Several challenges in the last few years such as the climate crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and the War in Ukraine which has disrupted education systems and thus, hampered the progress towards the achievement of the SDGs. Key resources such as funding are needed to tackle these issues but despite this, not all governments, especially in the so-called global south, have the resources to address them (Georgieva et al., 2022). Thus, the involvement of international organizations like Save the Children, UNICEF and CARE in solving these issues through curated program implementation. Other organizations such as the World Bank, WEF and the IMF provide the much-needed financial resources to address challenges. It is within this discourse that analyzing two global education MSPs responsible for global education financing is plausible. The two cases are thus presented below:

2.4.1 Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

Formerly known as Education for All – Fast Track Initiative, GPE was founded in 2002 by the World Bank and other partners with the main goal of helping developing nations meet the EFA's and the MDG's for education, which state that by 2015, all children of primary school age must be registered in school and capable of completing the primary school lifecycle. GPE was established to ensure that nations with excellent educational policies and

approved educational objectives could rely on sufficient and consistent donor financing. Their strategy involves working with governments to develop credible education plans to hasten the realization of these goals and to assist nation-states in financing and implementing those strategies. With an initial membership of 30 countries, the GPE's membership has expanded to over 90 countries and has disbursed over 100 billion USD in the last 2 decades in the bid to achieve SDG 4 (GPE Annual Report, 2021). It is the largest global fund that addresses education problems in developing countries (ibid).

2.4.2. Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is popularly known as the UN's global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises (EiEPC). Founded in 2016, ECW uses a multilateral framework to both quicken crisis response times and link short-term aid with longer-term solutions through a multiyear programming system. ECW comes at a time when global crises such as the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic are threatening education systems which are vital to the growth and wellbeing of future generations. To improve efficiency and eliminate compartmentalized solutions, ECW collaborates closely with governments, public and corporate donors, UN agencies, grassroots organizations, and other stakeholders in the humanitarian and development aid sectors. ECW is hosted by UNICEF and regulated by the Standard Contribution Agreement (SCA) operationalized in ECW's operating manual. A 2022 report by ECW states that they have impacted about 7 million children in emergency situations globally (ECW, 2022) but despite this achievement, over 222 million children are still impacted by crisis situations and the activities of ECW hope to reduce this number during the implementation of their periodic strategic plans.

3. Theoretical and Analytical Underpinnings of the Structure of Effective MSPs for the SDGs

Eweje et al (2021) proposes a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of MSPs that contribute to advancing the SDGs. This conceptual framework is hinged on two perspectives, namely stakeholder engagement and institutional theory. Stakeholder management emphasizes that stakeholder management processes must be "efficient" for an MSP to contribute to the SDGs. Efficient stakeholder management processes require transparency, ongoing communication, information exchange, inclusion, and cooperation in addition to the capacity to think systemically to manage challenging sustainability concerns (Rhodes et al., 2014). The institutional theory model is based on increasing shared institutional pressures via normative and coercive governance structures to advance the achievement of the SDGs (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). In its most basic forms, institutional theory shows how actors within the MSPs platform enhance their "legitimacy" by adopting similar formalized SDGs implementation practices in response to three types of corresponding tendencies: seeking credibility through compliance with clearly written laws (coercive); alignment with best practices (mimetic); and alignment with elaborate standards upheld by professional and academic authorities (normative) (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Since MSPs are non-binding, it is impossible for MSPs to be coercive as this would contravene the basis on which partnerships are formed. However, alignment with best practices or standards is ideal since these enhance the efficiency of MSPs. Most development MSPs align their goals with the SDGs which forms a basis for their existence. Concisely, Eweje et al. (2021) are saying that while it is impossible to force a partnership through coercive means, stakeholder management practices must be collaborative, transparent, and inclusive for an MSP to be effective.

The literature also points to some analytical frameworks. Jansen and Kalas (2020) employ inductive reasoning in assessing the effectiveness of an MSP by proposing that successful MSPs can be evaluated by considering their enabling internal and external conditions. They grouped internal conditions into the following: Cost, building trust and

representation/power imbalances. External conditions are grouped as follows: transparency and accountability, the knowledge transfer of learnings, system-wide capability building, policy consensus, and reliable institutions. According to this qualitative framework, an MSP without critically considering the above external environment and internal conditions will prevent the achievement of the shared goal and vice versa.

A more popular analytical framework is proposed by Pattberg and Wilderberg (2014) that lists 9 conditions for success for MSPs. It is a meta-governance framework that is broadly grouped into three: actors, process, and context. They highlight nine indicators that are commonly mentioned in the MSP literature. The significance of the stakeholders and their unique assets, affiliations, and experiences comes first; the importance of process management comes second; and the usefulness of the problem-structure and wider "contextual environment" comes third (Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2007). Based on the literature observed, this framework is widely cited by several scholars as an effective means of evaluating the impact of MSPs.

This research utilizes a synthesis of the above literature (Eweje, 2021; Jansen and Kalas, 2020, Young, 2002; Pattberg and Wilderberg, 2014) to develop 4 criteria that are used to answer the research questions and analyze the cases in terms of their contribution towards the achievement of SDG 4: 1) Goals and Objectives; 2) Stakeholder Management 3) Sustainable Funding and Resource Allocation 4) Monitoring and Evaluation.

Criteria	Guiding Question
Goals and Objectives	Are the MSP goals aligned with the SDGs? What role does the MSP play in global governance (norm setter, providing resources or program implementation)?
Stakeholder Management	What is the leadership structure like, and how does the MSP ensure the inclusion of global south voices at the top level of the decision-making process?

	How does the MSP promote local or country ownership?
Sustainable Funding and Resource Allocation	How does the MSP ensure a sustainable funding mechanism? Is there a diverse range of funding options? How does the MSP allocate funds? What determines their funding priority?
Monitoring and Evaluation	How does the MSP evaluate the impact of their work? How do they ensure transparency in their evaluation processes?

Figure 1: Four Criteria for analyzing how MSPs advance the SDGs

The frameworks observed in the literature are not directly used for this research because whilst the frameworks provide a means to directly "measure" how effective an MSP, this research is more about critically analyzing how global education MSPs are designed to address the SDGs by considering their stakeholder management practices and how they mitigate common partnership challenges. Although, the popular framework proposed by Pattberg and Wilderberg, (2014) could be ideal to answer this question. However, with its nine conditions for success, it would be impossible to conduct a robust and thorough analysis based on the time and word limit for this research. Thus, a synthesis of the frameworks, teasing out aspects that come out strongly (such as stakeholder management and sustainable funding) is made to answer the proposed question and sub-questions.

4. Analysis of Case Studies

This section utilizes data gathered from the interviews and available documents, together with the four criteria above to answer the research questions while comparing both MSPs simultaneously. A simultaneous analysis is done because both MSPs are similar in nature but with slight differences. Future research could utilize two different MSPs to conduct a comparative analysis. Against this backdrop, the following paragraphs present an analysis of the research data gathered.

4.1. Goals and Objectives

	GPE	ECW
Are the MSPs goals aligned with the SDGs?	Yes, through broader organizational goals and periodic strategic objectives	Yes, through broader organizational goals and periodic strategic objectives
What role does the MSP play in global governance (norm setter, providing resources or program implementation)?	Providing financial resources and, and some knowledge sharing	Solely providing financial resources

Figure 2: Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of MSPs have been highlighted in the literature as an important aspect in understanding how MSPs contribute to the SDGs. Patterberg and Wilderberg (2014) posit that precise and ambitious targets are imperative for a successful outcome for MSPs. Jansen and Kalas (2020) also contend that for an MSP to be effective, it must have "an inclusive goal-setting process with clear roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders, and transparent communication." Thus, the process used to reach this point of having a shared or mutual goal should give voice to vulnerable and marginalized groups, which are typically left out of decision-making processes.

ECW's vision states that they envision "a world where all children and youth affected by crises can learn free of cost – in safety and without fear – to grow and reach their full potential (ECW Strategic Plan, 2022). For GPE, it follows a similar line: "to accelerate access, outcomes

and gender equality through equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century" (GPE Annual Report, 2021). In addition, the two MSPs have periodic strategic objectives for 3-5 years which help to align and refocus their activities on contemporary global education issues, ensure relevance and renew their credibility for donors. ECW's recent strategic plan from 2023 – 2026 stresses their commitment to meeting the needs of learners with disabilities affected by crises, inclusion of forcibly displaced refugees into the national curriculum of their host countries and prioritizing support for teachers (ECW Strategic Plan, 2023). For GPE, their latest plan from 2021 – 2025 highlights their priority areas which are on gender equality, quality teaching, strong organizational capacity and inclusion of refugees, people with disabilities and internally displaced persons in national education systems (GPE Strategic Plan, 2022).

From the research data gathered through interviews and review of documents of both MSP cases, it can be determined that the goals of the cases for this research are in line with SDG 4: "ensuring an inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." In addition, the strategic plan goals of the two organizations highlighted above are connected to specific SDG target indicators of the SDGs such as 4.1-universal primary and secondary education, 4.5- gender equality and inclusion and 4.6-universal youth literacy. While the MSPs identified for this research are solely focused on filling funding gaps in education financing and not necessarily exclusively implementing projects, their existence makes financial resources available to fund some of these projects which advance the goal of achieving SDG 4.

Regarding the role that global education MSPs fulfil, they provide resources (mostly financial) rather than sharing information or setting standards. Thus, it is not coincidental that the two MSPs analyzed in this research mostly fill global education financing gaps and there are two reasons for this. Firstly, it was difficult to find global education MSPs that solely focus on project implementation as NGOs, governments, and local CSOs are usually utilized to fulfill that role. Therefore, MSPs do not need to proliferate these activities but rather fill a different gap such as education financing. Secondly, on financing, research shows that it is a recurring issue within global education further heightened by the COVID crisis and the war

in Ukraine (Patrinos, et al., 2021). This makes a case for the existence of global education MSPs like GPE and ECW. In addition to providing resources, GPE fulfils a knowledge exchange and information sharing goal through its KIX (Knowledge Information Exchange) platform. This is an innovation exchange hub created in collaboration with the International Development Research Center (IDRC) to encourage knowledge exchange among education stakeholders to improve education systems utilizing pertinent data and useful research (GPE Annual Report, 2022).

In terms of goal setting, the involvement and representation of all stakeholders in this process is also important for the cases studied for this research. Participants point to the involvement of all stakeholders in the goal setting phase.

"We have a board structure that decides on the strategy of GPE... And in the goal setting, the countries that benefit from GPE support have a very active voice and participate in this. By signing up to the Charter as a GPE member, you commit to all these principles which includes broad participation by all the partners." - Participant D, GPE.

Literature on MSPs point to the fact that for a partnership to thrive, there must be mutual collaboration and trust between all stakeholders (Jansen and Kalas, 2020) and for this mutual trust to be achieved, thus, it is important that all stakeholders are in alignment and that they understand what the goal of the partnership seeks to achieve. This is evident in the two cases considered for this research in that they both have a charter in which all stakeholders must comply by to be involved in the partnership. The charter explains the key requirements for being a part of the partnership. For instance, the GPE charter speaks to country ownership, mutual accountability, and inclusiveness (GPE Charter, 2023). It also describes what the responsibility of each stakeholder is in the process. This means that for any partner involved with GPE, they must have agreed to abide by the charter's rules and regulations. This is buttressed by a participant from ECW (who does not want to be quoted) who stressed that there is a good feeling of mutual trust and accountability amongst partners.

4.2. Stakeholder Management

	GPE	ECW
What is the leadership structure like, and how does the MSP ensure the inclusion of global south voices at the top level of the decision-making process?	Constituency-based model (equal number of representations between partner and donor countries) Problems of overburdening of stakeholders	Constituency-based model (Unequal number of representations between partner and donor countries)
How does the MSP promote local or country ownership?	Utilization of Local Education groups (LEGs) appointed by the government- specific country priorities are set by this group.	Utilization of (mostly) international NGOs at the local level – specific country priorities depend on the type of crisis

Figure 3: Stakeholder Management

ECW has a three-level governance structure: The High-Level Steering Group (HLSG), the Executive Committee and the Director. The HLSG provides strategic guidance to ECW's activities. Held at the ministerial level, it is made up of representatives of leaders from partner countries, donor countries, civil society groups, UN agencies and the private sector. The Executive Committee is comprised of representatives of all stakeholders listed above. The Executive Director is the third arm of ECW's governance structure that oversees the ECW Secretariat housed at UNICEF's HQ in New York.

Data from governance documents depicts that out of 31 members involved in the HLSG, only 2 are representatives of beneficiary countries. Constituency representatives serve for a term of two years, renewed once, and are chosen by the members of the relevant constituency through a method designed by that constituency. ECW's terms of reference state that representatives are chosen in an honest, open, and participatory manner and the secretariat receives submissions of the internal procedures for review and oversight (ECW Terms of Reference, 2020). Thus, while there is some form of representation, there is not a balanced representation of key stakeholders at the board level. Although a respondent noted that this area requires more work, there is an active understanding of this issue, and they are working closely to involve more voices.

"One of the things that we're doing this year is we're looking at how we can and better coordinate, and better represent organizations from the global South in that executive committee structure... Whilst we've made some efforts, there's more to do on including those voices in those meetings and making sure they're properly represented." - Participant A, ECW.

While this may be seen as a criticism of ECW, it is also critical to keep in mind that ECW is a global fund, and most of its funding comes from donor nations in the global north, who wants to know how their money was used and want a voice in crucial decisions being made at the top level. Hence the question: how can the HLSG be expanded to accommodate more beneficiary countries? Another counterargument to the issue of inclusion is on a point by another participant who stressed that a more comprehensive inclusion of beneficiary countries is challenging as countries they work with are either ravaged by conflict, political instability, and corruption. For these countries the education system is rendered almost impossible to coordinate, hence, it is difficult to find a representative at ECW's board level from there. However, how they curb this is by utilizing representatives from other similar but more "stable" countries to represent the partnering countries' constituency.

"The whole development paradigm is very much north led, and this is because the region is economically more stable, able to be a donor and thus has the upper hand in providing resources. Then you have a South that is troubled with economic problems, crisis, political issues, and corruption. So how do you establish real and open partnerships? The reality is you have financial processes from donor down to beneficiary that call for accountability because they are afraid money will go to corruption. At the end of the day, those who pay tend to have the upper hand. What we try to do at ECW though is giving equal value to those providing services, for instance, the generosity of host countries (like Lebanon, Uganda, etc.) in opening their borders. We treat them as being equally valuable as those who are paying for it." - Participant C, ECW.

GPE has two levels of operation: the global and the country level. At the country or national level, on-the-ground actors coordinate activities through their respective local education groups (LEGs). GPE's country-level processes are supported by global-level processes, which are overseen by a Board of Directors with a constituency-based structure with 20 voting

members, 6 of which are representatives of developing countries, 6 for donor countries, 3 for CSOs/NGOs, 3 for multilateral organizations and 2 for the private sector (GPE Charter, 2019). The board helps set policies, approve annual goals, make decisions for the trust fund, and provide direction to the secretariat. Decisions are made through a vote based on a majority consensus of the full members on the board.

As stated on their website and strategic documents, the main principle of GPE is based on mutual accountability (GPE Strategic Plan, 2022). The core membership of GPE consists of partners who represent various education actors on a national and international level. It brings together national and international partners in education and encourages inclusive policy dialogue through local education groups (LEGs). Thus, it is logical to argue that GPE's board is inclusive of all stakeholders with a balanced representation. However, the question of how much board members from partner countries can influence decisions came up in one of the interviews which highlights the complexities on representation of voices in an MSP.

"So there are representatives of partner countries that are recipients of GPE funding in the Global South on the board. The question is, how much are they able to make their case and how much are their voices heard?" - Participant E, GPE.

The reason for this is further buttressed by the participant in that sometimes, representatives (who are usually government officials form the ministry of education) of partner countries are overburdened by the partnership commitment and other governmental duties. This is different for donor representatives whose main work is usually liaising between GPE and the said donor country or organization. As a result, stakeholders from recipient countries are sometimes not able to articulate their voices as much as donor stakeholders due to an overload of work.

"Those on the board are people like ministers of education and so on, for whom being on the GPE board is like 100th or 1000th of their job description. If you look at the donor representatives, they're usually a person who's a focal point for GPE within their agency and engaging with GPE is like 1/4 of their job. So, there's a huge imbalance in how much the donors are able to engage and how much donors

understand GPE versus developing country representatives based on that." - Participant E, GPE.

This ties to Thindwa's (2015) argument that one of the risks facing MSPs is the "overburdening of work" by stakeholders. This research has particularly found out that partner countries are the most affected in this regard. Also, when observing organizations such as CSOs and NGOs that engage with GPE, there is a huge imbalance in how much voice that the northern civil society constituencies have compared to the southern ones as indicated by a participant. This is also similar to ECW's mode of operation as they primarily engage international NGOs due to their credibility instead of local NGOs.

"Primarily, we are only a funder. So, we fund organizations like UNICEF, Save the Children and local organizations to do the work on the ground." - Participant B, ECW.

"There's a civil society [sic] which consists of both northern civil societies or organizations like Oxfam and Plan, and so on. And then there is southern civil society as well. There's a huge imbalance in how much voice that the northern civil society constituencies have compared to the southern ones. And you know, so like I said, GPE does some stuff to address that, but that imbalance remains." - Participant E, GPE

However, a point that was noted is that GPE has made a lot of effort to amplify the voices of the global south both at the board level and the country level.

"GPE tries to address this by trying to get them [the representatives] on board with the issues being discussed whilst helping them identify and agree to positions around what they're going to do,… so the board is disproportionately balanced in favor of the donors." - Participant E, GPE.

MacDonald et al (2018) argue that a decentralized, collaborative decision-making process is the most effective for MSPs. This is because it allows for the engagement of all stakeholders, thereby considering their opinions, which gives a form of ownership to all stakeholders. It also allows for stakeholder capacity to be well utilized in achieving the goals of the MSP. In contrast, a centralized decision-making process would be more rigid and inflexible and

would not consider the views of all parties, thus creating a disconnect between stakeholders thereby threatening the sustainability of such a partnership. Thus, it can be inferred that in the two cases studied, their governance structure is decentralized in that they try to include and engage all stakeholders involved. A participant further alluded to this:

"All of our programs are decentralized and are developed by our local partners, especially CSOs. The CSOs are also represented on our Executive Committee, and they are particularly important for us."
- Participant A, ECW.

However, there is still room for improvement. For instance, allocating more membership to partner countries in terms of ECW's structure, and for GPE, having a representative that has other external commitments which affect their work productivity and involvement as a representative at the GPE board may not be the best indicator of an effective MSP for the SDGs. Thus, paying more attention to their board membership requirements can be helpful in deciding who should represent partner countries to mitigate the problem of overburdening.

4.3. Sustainable Funding and Resource Allocation

	GPE	ECW
How does the MSP ensure a sustainable funding mechanism? Is there a diverse range of funding options?	Diverse range of funding options Pooled funding mechanism Periodic fundraising conferences	Diverse range of funding options Pooled funding mechanism Periodic fundraising conferences
How does the MSP allocate funds? What determines their funding priority?	Governments apply for funding after meeting key GPE requirements	Funding is disbursed to NGOs and organizations working in the field

Figure 4: Sustainable Funding and Resource Allocation

Several literatures on achieving the SDGs point to the need for a sustainable mode of financing to implement development projects across the globe to address pressing global

problems (OECD, 2020 Luksic et al., 2022, Ziolo et al., 2020). To achieve the SDGs by 2030, the UN estimates that humanity will need to spend between $3 trillion and $5 trillion yearly (UN Global Compact, 2019). It is for this reason that MSPs such as GPE and ECW exist to bridge the gap in education financing and ensure that there is a constant flow of financial resources to meet education needs, especially in developing countries. Hazlewood (2015) posits that pooled funding arrangements have been crucial to global MSPs and have proven to be effective at attracting private industry and utilizing private capital for development purposes.

Data gathered shows that both MSPs' funding mechanisms are similar in that they both have a pooled funding mechanism and depend on donors, especially country donors to commit some funds but they also amplify this by organizing specific conferences periodically to make a case for their initiatives. ECW has a series of donors from countries with Germany being the largest donor of the initiative. Periodically, they organize a High-Level Financing Conference (HLFC) to raise funds to support their activities. The HLFC is a conference that invites political and business leaders to commit funds to deliver on its strategic plan (Mwanza, 2023). The last conference held in February 2023 generated 826 million USD which is about 50% of its goal. These funds are allocated based on two financing windows: Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) to "facilitate joint humanitarian and development multi-year programming and financing"; and First Emergency Response (FER) to promote an immediate and quick response to educational demands in crises that develop suddenly and quickly (ECW, 2020). Over the last 7 years, the partnership has committed over 1.5 billion in investments across countries. What is also important to note is that donors cannot dictate how money collected is spent. This is an important insight because conventional development institutions sometimes have stringent requirements when delivering aid packages. The concept of tied aid (Miquel-Florensa, 2007) for instance alludes to this. This refers to government grants or loans that restrict the purchasing power of recipient countries to firms in the donor nation or a select few other nations (OECD, 2018). Therefore, tied aid frequently prohibits recipient nations from getting a decent return for their money when it comes to their products and services (ibid.). For MSPs within global education, this is different as noted by a participant:

"I think the thing we've been very clear about is that it's a pooled fund mechanism. So you first of all, you can't take attribution from that mechanism. So you can't say, as government X, we have contributed a certain amount to ECW. And so you know this is this is what you've done with our funds in this country." - Participant A, ECW.

For GPE, every year, they release a financial report that publicly displays the donations from contributors in the year before. GPE has obtained several billion dollars since its founding from a total of 29 contributors, the bulk of which have been donors from Western nations. Every few years, funders renew their commitments; therefore, a new fundraising campaign is started to fund new strategic goals. This is necessary for accountability because new donations are, in theory, conditioned on the successful outcomes of the previous strategy. It is important to state however that while ECW allocates funding based on need in relation to crisis response/humanitarian aid, countries must apply for grants from GPE to get access to their funds after meeting certain criteria outlined in their charter. "Grant agent is the term used to refer to any GPE partner assigned to receive GPE grant funds, either on behalf of a partner country or for specific programs" (GPE Charter, 2023). They collaborate directly with the government and other stakeholders to guarantee that grant-funded initiatives are carefully planned, successfully carried out, and in line with the education sector's broad objectives, procedures, and methods. They are appointed by the government through a transparent process in accordance with GPE's selection guidelines and also endorsed by the Local Education Groups (LEGs).

Based on the above, it can be inferred that both MSPs work intensely to ensure that they continue to make a case for donors to continue to fund their initiatives. Having periodic funding conferences inspired by periodic 3–5-year strategies help to ensure their continuous relevance in the global education space. This makes their case convincing for donors to recognize their importance in alleviating global education concerns, thus achieving the SDGs. ECW's name "Education Cannot Wait" itself portrays an urgency in addressing education issues in crisis contexts which makes donors to be more cognizant of not just the need to donate but also the gravity, thus accelerating impact. Also, for GPE, participants

alluded to the governments being encouraged to increase budgetary allocations to education, which helps increase its impact on SDG 4. Raising funds in this manner depicts an efficient way of generating funding which eventually influences the achievement of SDG 4.

4.4. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies

	GPE	ECW
How does the MSP evaluate the impact of their work? How do they ensure transparency in their evaluation processes?	Country led and secretariat led evaluations Utilization of external parties in conducting evaluations	Global and local level evaluations Utilization of external parties in conducting evaluations

Figure 5: Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies

Effective monitoring and evaluation methods constitute an important aspect of a functioning MSPs that contributes to the SDGs. Partnerships must be able to assess how resources obtained are being used to be able to make a case for more funds for the future. Also, they must ensure a high level of transparency and in reporting and documenting progress made no matter how big or small. Kusters et al (2018) argue that an effective monitoring and evaluation framework must be inward looking, reflective and forward thinking. The three elements may be used jointly or separately and can be used to show effectiveness, assist the development of subsequent initiatives, and influence system planning and organizational management.

GPE's evaluation serves three purposes: accountability, decision making and evidence-based learning (GPE, 2021). They carry out both country and secretariat-led evaluations which are in line with their evaluation criteria which advocates independence and impartiality, credibility, transparency and participation of beneficiaries (ibid). These evaluations are designed to assess how funds are spent, especially at the country level where project implementation is taking place. In addition, GPE also outsources its evaluation to external parties as it was observed in one of the interviews that there is a tendency for GPE's secretariat's evaluation to be influenced internally.

"In my experience in GPE, I have not seen the secretariat try to interfere with evaluation findings. But it isn't a fully independent function. I do think there might be room for more independence... you know the way the evaluations are conceived, what questions are asked, how the theory of change for a particular evaluation looks. It's not a major problem, but I think there can be a tendency to... you know... for the programmatic teams and the secretariat to sort of influence those things, which I think would be better if there was a little bit of greater independence. This is why when we do evaluations... these days, we contract them out with third parties who are functionally independent from us." - Participant E, GPE

ECW has two different levels of evaluations: globally and locally.

"We've got global level evaluations of our windows and they're done by external companies... and are publicly available. You know, we have a management response which basically says this is the recommendations and this is our response and we systematically track those responses to make sure that we're closing off those recommendations and taking action. In terms of country level evaluations, the organizations that receive our funding once a year, need to submit a very comprehensive report which shows us what they've done with the financing. So it's both a financial report as well as a narrative report." - Participant A, ECW.

It is also important to note that the two cases above have elaborate websites where different documents such as board meeting minutes, strategic plans, monitoring and evaluation strategies, and so on can be viewed by the public. Therefore, it can be inferred that both organizations understand the role of transparency and making resources available to the public and especially donors who continue to donate and commit to their strategies in solving global education issues.

What is apparent from the cases is that they both contract their evaluation to third parties who conduct evaluations independent from the secretariats. This ties with the argument by (MacDonald and Ferguson, 2016) that allowing third party evaluations allows for the best means of objectivity and transparency when conducting and M&E. Also, since respondents

point to the fact that evaluation of previous strategies influences future strategies and hence, the amount of funding generated, it is logical to conclude that GPE and ECW have strong monitoring and evaluation strategies that are inward looking, reflective and forward looking (Kusters et al. 2018). Data gathered from respondents shows that their evaluation strategies allow them to critically assess their current activities globally and locally which informs how they plan out their next strategic plans for the next years to maintain relevance and boost funding.

5. Discussion and Synthesis of Findings

The research conducted has shed some light into how MSPs within global education function and how their structure and activities pay close attention to the SDGs. It has also highlighted how they deal with specific partnership problems. Whilst global education issues are intersectional, the problem of financing has been identified as a major issue (GEM Report, 2023) thus, the need for actors like GPE and ECW to step in and coordinate financing mechanisms in the bid to alleviate some of the other obstacles which helps advance SDG 4.

In terms of goals and objectives, both organization's goals are similar. They both have periodic strategic plans, and they mirror their priorities to the SDGs and contemporary education issues to maintain their relevance and importance in the global education space. This builds credibility in the eyes of donors and other stakeholders willing to commit to their goals.

Both organizations' governance structure and stakeholder management processes pay close attention to the issue of inclusion at the board level. Inclusion for this research is described as the representation of voices of partner (developing/beneficiary) countries at the top level of the organizational structure. ECW's board structure only allows for two representatives for partner countries at the board level, signaling the need for potential expansion. For GPE, there is an equal number of representations between partner countries and donor countries of 6 each. However, partner country representatives are usually swarmed with other governmental duties which makes them not as efficient as they can be. A reassessment of the selection process of representatives at the top level by GPE could help mitigate this issue. However, the question that remains to be answered is if representatives fully understand the needs of countries represented and articulate these concerns effectively. In addition, on the issue of inclusion, it is worth mentioning that the current board chair of GPE is an African and the vice chair is a woman. Also, the executive director overseeing the affairs of the ECW secretariat is a woman. This points to a shift in narrative when it comes to the leadership of international institutions which have historically sidelined people of color and women in

top-level positions (Shalal, 2023).

In addition, both MSPs have similar ways of engaging all stakeholders. Mutual trust and accountability came out strongly in data collected through interviews and charters of the organizations. ECW engages local and international NGOs working in contexts where their funding goes to while the GPE utilizes LEGs and grant agents curated by the governments of beneficiary countries according to GPE's criteria. This solidifies the argument that both MSPs prioritize country ownership in their involvements, thus, eliminating a problematic top-down approach in their approach. However, the prevalence of global north NGOs in this approach further calls for a reform in the development space to include more local NGOs.

On sustainable funding and resource allocation, both initiatives utilize a pooled funding mechanism and depend on key donors whilst also organizing periodic conferences to attract donor funding and stimulate their interests in education financing through their partnerships. However, allocation of funds is different as ECW utilizes its yearly funding windows to allocate funding according to a country's needs. This is tenable because since ECW focuses on education in crisis situations, they are mandated to commit some of their funds to an emergency response plan for the said country. While GPE also has a channel in which it prioritizes funding for crises situations, GPE funds broader education issues. Thus, its funding allocation strategy requires governments, after following certain conditions highlighted in the charter, to apply for funding to receive grants. However, it has been found that this process takes more than 40 months on average which is slow considering the time limitations in achieving agenda 2030 (Zuijderduijn et al., 2020).

To ensure transparency, both organizations utilize external, independent actors in monitoring and evaluating their activities even though GPE also has secretariat led evaluations. However, a participant mentioned that since there is a tendency towards influencing evaluation methods, they utilize external actors in mitigating that. Furthermore, the two organizations recognize the importance of having a thorough M&E process because without this, their credibility would be tarnished, which would have a negative impact on the amount of funding they receive.

6. Conclusion, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This research has contributed to the scholarship on MSPs by conducting a critical analysis of two global education MSPs to understand what role they fulfill, how they are structured for impact and how they mitigate challenges of exclusion, country ownership and sustainable funding. By observing the conceptual and analytical frameworks in the literature, four criteria (goals, stakeholder management, sustainable funding, and monitoring and evaluation strategies) were developed to answer the research question, whilst using the two cases. The use of four criteria was deemed to be more efficient than relying solely on the frameworks found in the literature, as doing so would have made it practically impossible to conduct a thorough analysis given the constrained time and word count for this study. Thus, a synthesis of the 4 criteria was made to present an approach that is more incisive for gathering findings.

The findings point to the fact that global education MSPs play a crucial role in advancing SDG 4 especially through global education financing. These MSPs have an efficient funding model which is sustainable and country priorities are led by country experts, governments, and NGOs. However, the inclusion of local NGOs at this level is still lacking as large international NGOs (mostly from the global north) are usually utilized for country-level implementation due to their relevance and credibility. Also, the goals and strategic priorities of the MSPs considered for this research are strongly in line with the SDGs and they have a constituency-based model that allows for the representation of all stakeholders at the board level. But an "equal inclusion" of partner countries at the board level and dealing with "overburdening of stakeholders" would help mitigate the problem of persistent "north led" voices highlighted in the research. However, this is a challenge for MSPs solely focused on education financing considering that a lot of this finance comes from the global north who would *justifiably* want to have a say on how their donations are used.

In terms of limitations, the number of respondents was small. However, documents from the

MSP cases' websites were used to further make the research more robust, as suggested by participants who pinpointed relevant documents. Future research could expand the number of participants to get more qualitative data from respondents. At the beginning of this research, the plan was to compare different MSPs with distinct roles but similar pedigree and reputation. It was difficult to strike a balance between MSPs that fund global education and those that carry out program implementation at the local level. This is because NGOs instead of MSPs are usually used at the implementation level, hence program implementing MSPs within global education are difficult to find. This is why an analysis of two similar and popular education financing MSPs was made instead. Future research could compare different MSPs within global education that fulfil divergent functions. Thirdly, employees of the secretariats of both organizations were the primary respondents of this research. Future research could speak to other stakeholders such as NGOs, the private sector, LEGs, and grant agents within the same MSP to get diverse views on the topic.

As global education MSPs try to solve global educational challenges, their work is sometimes set backward due to the complex global problems faced in the world today such as the COVID crisis, political instability, and the refugee crisis (Popov et al., 2021). For instance, a respondent stressed that at the time of ECW's founding, there were 75M people in crisis situations that needed access to education. However, after the COVID pandemic and Russia's war on Ukraine, this number skyrocketed to 222M (Sherif, 2022; May 2022).

In summary, global education MSPs are a reliable way to raise funds to alleviate the concerns within global education, thus advancing SDG 4. Despite challenges of beneficiary countries' inclusion at the board level, their strategies strive to promote country ownership, and mutual accountability among partners. However, they are just a tiny piece of the entire puzzle since global education issues are intersectional in nature and sometimes raising money is important but not enough as a respondent rightly puts:

"We are like a bandage on a very large wound that needs an entire surgery." - Participant C, ECW.

Thus, despite the importance of global education MSPs in advancing SDG 4, their impacts are still limited considering how the plethora of global issues that we face affect the education sector. Their existence, however, serves a pivotal purpose that continues to alleviate problems within the global education space, albeit slowly.

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