

# AN ASSESSMENT OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION IN SUBSAHARAN AFRICA IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Lawan Abba Babamaragana**

Department of Public Administration, Yobe State University, Nigeria

[babamaragana@gmail.com](mailto:babamaragana@gmail.com)

+254798281649

And

**Wilson Muna (PhD)**

Department of Public Policy and Administration, Kenyatta University, Kenya

[wmunah2007@gmail.com](mailto:wmunah2007@gmail.com)

+254725998405

## **Abstract**

Despite decades of heightened calls for global cooperation presented by the advocates of globalisation, power asymmetry between the Global North and Global South continues to define the policy agenda on education to the detriment of Sub-Saharan Africa. In this regard, Africa has emerged as lacking agency in policymaking on issues of global concern such as health and education. Emerging evidence related to COVID-19 response has exposed deep rooted systemic vulnerabilities amongst developing economies. This study is guided by critical globalisation and interdependency theories. Using desk review method, it interrogates the effectiveness of global efforts, with a particular bias on Global Partnership for Education –a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding initiative that attempt to mobilize international support for education in developing countries. It particularly assesses interventions with a focus on vulnerable children and youths. It also examines the effectiveness of assistance accorded to governments in the South as an attempt to improve on dispensation of equity in learning through strengthening their education systems in the times of COVID-19. The study questions why, little, if any, impact on education has been realized -despite the establishment of the GPE evidenced by continued high levels of dependency on solutions emanating from the Global North. The findings suggest that the speed with which GPE responded to the challenge has enhanced the net gain of its

commitment beyond its face value. It also established that timing of a response is a more critical factor than the intervention itself. Thus, whenever there were delays in processing GPE, the amount expended ends up recording lesser successes than the timely meager sum invested. However, agency and adequacy have not matched the success of the timing. We recommend broadening of SSA countries' agency on interventions that target their citizenry.

**Keywords: COVID-19, GPE, Globalization, SSA,**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The third decade of twenty first century is defined by a unique event. Engagements between and among nation-states and international actors has come to be dominated by COVID-19. The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 [SARSCoV-2] (Coker et al, 2021; United Nations, 2020) has wreaked havoc of mammoth scale, with significant negative effects on education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The world is in the grip of a crisis that stands unprecedented in living memory (Adam, Henstridge & Lee, 2020; Weible et al, 2020). The economic shock associated with the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be significantly larger than anything seen since the financial crisis of 2008/09 (World Bank Group, 2020a).

Although COVID-19 pandemic is urgent, global in scale, and massive in impacts (Anifowoshe, et al., 2020; Weible et al, 2020), it has particularly confronted the education system, not least in Africa, with a new and massive crisis (Adarkwah, 2021; d’Orville, 2020). This is largely characterized with the largest form of disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents (Kaisara & Bwalya, 2021; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020; United Nations, 2020). Ironically, the overwhelming need to give priority to responding to the public health emergency and to strengthening safety nets has reduced the amount of funding that is available for other public investments, including education (USAID, 2020; World Bank Group, 2020a).

Closure of schools and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94 per cent of the world’s student population, with up to 99 per cent located in low and lower-middle income countries (United Nations, 2020). Selected reports indicated that high levels of hardships were experienced in Kenya (Mbii, Koskei & Mutungi, 2020), Cameroon (Béché, 2020), Namibia (Kaisara & Bwalya, 2021), Ethiopia (Kebede & Tafesework, 2021), Uganda (Tumwesige, 2020), Nigeria (Oluka, Ezech & Okotie, 2020) and South Africa (Francis, Valodia & Webster, 2020).

Even before the advent of COVID-19, the world was experiencing a learning crisis. About 258 million young people of primary- and secondary-school age were out of school, and the Learning Poverty rate in Low Income Countries (LICs) and Middle Income Countries (MICs) was at 53 percent—meaning that over half of all 10-year-old children could not read and understand a simple text. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the figure was close to 90 percent (World Bank Group, 2020b) owing to already existing challenges like poor infrastructure, underdevelopment and weak institutions (Ettang, 2021). Indeed, Kremer et al (2013) argued that improving education infrastructures as well as building accountable delivery education systems continue to pose major future challenges (Kremer, et al., 2013) to the continent, of course, characterized by weakened

administrative institutions (Muna & Babamaragana, 2021).

This otherwise public health emergency has affected children’s education and safety in several ways (Tumwesige, 2020): exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults – those living in poor or rural areas, girls, refugees, persons with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons – to continue their learning (Francis, Valodia & Webster, 2020; United Nations, 2020). The effects felt so far to include; closure of school, educational inequalities due to the digital divide, high cost/lack of computer and internet to parents, anxiety and emotional distress, heightened cases of domestic violence, potential increase in school drops out, child marriage and teenage pregnancies (Mbii et al., 2020), and, extremely great uncertainty in the education sector (Lugonzo, 2020): hence, severe learning losses for students (OECD, 2020).

Instead of the current crisis to serve as an opportunity for stronger international collaboration, which might provide a better focus and deliver solutions (d’Orville, 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in a new climate of uncertainty which is fuelling protectionism and playing into nationalist narratives (Muna, Babamaragana & Lawan, 2020; Yaya, Out, & Labonté, 2020). This research seeks to explore the adequacy and timing of GPE response to the needs of sub-Saharan African countries as well as the agency of the latter.

## **THEORETICAL CONCEPTION**

In educational research, globalisation is a relatively new concept, and there is no agreement on its essence (Parjanadze, 2009). As an inevitable integration of nations and other international actors (Muna, Babamaragana & Lawan, 2020), it is both a concept and phenomenon of global governance (Wulff, 2021) that may be applicable in the education.

Historically education played vital role in the formation of nation states and national identity. However, there is strong support to the assumption that globalisation poses a threat to developing nations, and ensures the dominance

of Anglo-Saxon culture over the others (Parjanadze, 2009). Notably, the education sector, like in many other countries, seeks to actualise the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in line with the United Nations and the Education for All (EFA) movement lead by UNESCO (Ngari & Ndung'u, 2020). Since 2000, when the international community pledged that no country seriously committed to achieving Education for All (EFA) would be left behind for lack of funding, the importance of using aid to construct classrooms, distribute textbooks, pay teachers, and assess learning has increased (Benavot, 2010).

Thus, the conceptualization of partnerships between Northern and Southern development organizations are established, they are a particularly powerful vehicle for development. In fact, some would argue that they are the most potent tool (Hatton & Schroeder, 2007). The ultimate financial responsibility for improving educational access, participation, and quality lies with national governments. However, for many countries, particularly the poorest and most conflict affected, educational progress depends, to a significant extent, on aid coming from bilateral, multilateral, and philanthropic agencies (Benavot, 2010). The World Bank, other affluent nations and other agencies have in recent years examined the educational needs for Africa and, in effect, initiated programmes for the enhancement of local capacity with an aim to encouraging national policy and management development (King, 1992; London, 1993). Yet existing evidence in the field increasingly suggests that genuine partnerships, those based on equality, mutual benefit, and accountability, are rare. Essentially, the potential that the concept of partnership holds remains hypothetical, and has not been fulfilled in the real world (Hatton & Schroeder, 2007).

This study therefore suggests that interdependency theory is a useful lens in understanding dyadic relations. Van Lange and Balliet (2015) extend Kelly and Thibaut's level of dependence as indicative of the degree to which one party relies on an interacting partner, in that party 'A' is influenced by party B's actions. Mutuality of dependence depicts

whether two parties are equally dependent on one another. In this regard, thus, Non-mutual dependence entails differential power. Similarly, dimension of dependence points to precisely how partners influence one another's outcomes: the relative importance of partner vs. joint control as source of dependence (Balliet, Tybur & Van Lange, 2016). This implies dominance [leading] versus submissiveness [following] assertiveness versus passivity (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). Covariation of interests describes whether partners' outcomes correspond versus conflict—whether partners' joint activities yield similarly gratifying outcomes.

So, what might be the marker of a successful partnership? Different disciplines have different models of measuring success of partnerships. In public policy, the leading argument is that a policy is specifically successful if: a) it captures the inputs of its stakeholders, and b) if it achieves the goals its adopters set out for it (Marsh & McConnell, 2010). Broadly, political scientists refer to this as input and output validity (Kundnani, 2021). However, although success and failure of public policies have been established on the ground of the twin criteria (Marsh & McConnell, 2010), grey areas exist to murk the water (McConnell, 2010). In this paper, we draw inspiration from the McConnell and Marsh model to advance that success of GPE is best captured by timing, adequacy and agency.

## **THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION**

The Global Partnership for Education is a global fund and a partnership focused entirely on education in developing countries (GPE, 2020a). Formerly the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI), it is a 'transnational public-private partnership' of donor and developing country governments, multilateral organizations, civil society, private companies and foundations, dedicated to increasing access to quality education worldwide (Menashy, 2016). Created in 2002 to deliver on global education commitments made at the Dakar World Education Forum and the Millennium Summit, the GPE is the only global partnership

for education that brings together representatives of all education stakeholder groups including partner countries, donors, international organisations, civil society groups, foundations and the private sector (European Union, 2020). The partnership has a unique role: agreeing standards for education planning and policy-making and mobilizing development financing from public and private donors around the world to support and monitor the implementation of those plans (GPE, 2020a).

GPE is an embodiment of structural changes in the global policy environment. Specifically, globalization forces pushed global governance models to include private and civil society actors. This spurred organizational changes to the Board of the GPE (Menashy & Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Indeed, over just a six-year period from 2005-2011, five aid effectiveness initiatives were launched: the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the International Health Partnership plus (2007), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), the Busan Partnership for Effective Cooperation (2011), and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC, 2011; Ogbuoji & Yamey, 2019). GPE's principles apply and uphold the former three (GPE, 2020a). In 2015, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) was signed at the third international conference on financing for development and the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) 2030 Global Compact was signed in 2017 (Ogbuoji & Yamey, 2019). In particular, the 13-16 July 2015 Addis Ababa conference affirmed strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity (United Nations, 2015). However, both documents espouse principles of aid effectiveness and would most likely guide financing decisions in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) era (Ogbuoji & Yamey, 2019). Hence, these are indicative of the proliferation of transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) in the domain of education and development (Knutsson & Lindberg, 2019).

The Global Partnership for Education is designed to overcome education challenges (GPE, 2020a) through its 2020 strategy: Goal 1, improved and more equitable student learning outcomes; Goal 2, increased equity, gender equality and inclusion; and Goal 3, effective and efficient education systems (Zuijderdijn, 2020). As the only global development organization solely focused on education (GPE, 2020a), GPE is duty-bound to focus on these goals. However, observations of all global goals –GPE included have two questions begging for an answer. The first is whether goals, such as universal access to healthcare, education, safe water, and clean energy, are achievable by 2030, which includes issues of technical and operational feasibility as well as affordability. The second is whether such goals are likely to be achieved given the failure of more wealthy nations to honor the goal of international partnership (SDG 17), coupled with weak international cooperation and in domestic governance of many countries (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, & Lafortune, 2020). Researchers have responsibility to find answers to these concerns (Appadurai, 2006).

### **GPE AND RESPONSES TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA *TIMING OF RESPONSES***

The element of time has not been given much attention by both policy experts and political scientists while responding to the pressures of COVID-19 to education. However, Scheduler and Santiso (1998) challenged the field by pointing out that time, with its many roles and faces, is a major player in the field of politics. But up to now, political science has not taken explicit and systematic notice of it (Scheduler & Santiso, 1998). Should researchers devote attention to it, they have potential to uncover its instrumentality to the explanation of actions and events. Indeed, when something happens, in its order and rhythm, can be so critically important in determining the outcome than whether something happens or what happens (Schmitter & Santiso, 1998). To begin addressing this, ideas of political time, policy time and 'chronological' time can help explain a range of

...policy outcomes in education (Dolowitz, 2020)

This call for different dimensions of temporality (Schmitter & Santiso, 1998) brought scholarly attention, albeit limited, to timing, sequencing, long-term processes (Bulmer, 2009) as well as “fast-policy” formation (Peck, 2002) in the study of public policy. These are conceived as time, timing, and tempo (Schmitter & Santiso, 1998). Thus, in application, Goetz and Meyer-Sahling (2009) found that the manner in which time is institutionalized is critical to how a geo-policy system, such as GPE, works. Terms, time budgets and time horizons of collective and individual political actors; rights over timing, sequencing and speed in decisionmaking; and the temporal properties of policy are key determinants to the distribution of power; efficiency and effectiveness of policy-making; and democratic legitimacy (Goetz & Meyer-Sahling, 2009).

The logic of time discourses in democratic polities (Scheduler & Santiso, 1998) is equally imperative. Even if some political actors might prefer temporal plurality as opposed to linear political time (Goetz, 2009), the weight of time constraints, and the force of institutional time rules (Scheduler & Santiso, 1998) are real features of political institutions in the choice of time strategies.

Thus, the critical concern here is the timeliness of GPE interventions to the education needs of developing countries at the critical period of the COVID19-imposed vulnerability? This study has reviewed germane documents published as an outcome of GPE and related interventions.

GPE (2020e) indicated that by acting at the right time and scale, the GPE provided dedicated funding of over half a billion U.S. dollars to partner countries, making GPE the single largest source of grants to education as part of the worldwide response (GPE, 2020e). This claimed was weighed with evidence from international institutions. Thus UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank (2020) seem to have concurred. It was pointed out that GPE swiftly allocated initial funding through UNICEF to support DCP planning and preparedness for the

COVID crisis, which is now extended through the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window. As part of this window, a Consortium of Grant Agents is proposed by UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank to address the impact of COVID-19 on learning in 67 GPE EPSIG-eligible countries (UNESCO, UNICEF & World Bank, 2020).

GPE’s own records show that by March 25, it has provided \$8.8 million to UNICEF to kickstart education systems’ response in 87 countries, supporting planning and coordination; by April 1, it has unlocked \$250 million to help partner countries mitigate both the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on education. The decision came just three weeks after the outbreak was declared a pandemic; by June 1, after receiving more than 40 applications, a further \$250 million were added to the COVID-19 funding window, bringing the partnership’s total response to \$509 million; and by October 30, the GPE has allocated \$467 million in COVID-19 accelerated grants to 66 countries and another \$25 million for a global grant to UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank (GPE, 2020e). We tested the impacts of these GPE programs and projects by examining evidence from one of the Sub-Saharan African countries: Malawi.

According to the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2020) the government applied for the GPE grant worth \$10m on April 30th 2020. The country expected to receive the grant by June 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 (GPE, 2020b) to implement its plan of strengthening the resilience of education systems, with a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable children (Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2020).

This swift call for application by the GPE as well as the pace of its scrutiny to culminate in granting Malawi the needed fund (GPE, 2020e) is crucial to successful policy action (Scheduler & Santiso 1998; Schmitter & Santiso, 1998) of overcoming the threat of the situation. However, although the GPE responded to the COVID-19 education crisis with unprecedented speed and scale many challenges were recorded, as countries struggled

to keep schools opened depending on the spread of the virus” (GPE, 2020e).

### **AGENCY OF PARTNERS**

At its base, this section interrogates the extent to which countries in the Sub-Saharan region exercise agency toward GPE policy outcome. The role power plays in the... [policy] process cannot be ignored (Dolowitz, 2020). This study therefore aims to trace interactive and dynamic effects that occur between agents attempting to shape policy (Dolowitz & Plugaru, 2019).

Unlike time in policymaking, there is a great deal of knowledge on agency as a tool of understanding power dynamics. Indeed, probably, few areas received as much scholarly attention on power asymmetry in the relations between the Global North and the Global South. Education sector is not different: research in international and comparative education demonstrates that conflicts and power asymmetries continue to characterize education aid (Knutsson & Lindberg, 2017) in the nature of structural power. This exposes historically constituted inequities that continue to exist in the global education policy arena. While managing the implementation of GPE programs, the dominance and disproportionate influence of donor countries and organizations reflect colonial legacies and reinforce structural power through the preservation of economic roles that are not mutually constructed –donors and recipients embody structural positions that exist only in relation to one another. The maintenance of these traditional international financing relationships within the GPE allows for the reproduction of structural power (Menashy, 2017a).

Analysis of power relations aims to show that power flows and that these flows alter the shape and outcome of public policy (Dolowitz & Plugaru, 2019). But because, for far too often, the process has remained driven by the agendas and procedures of the funding and technical assistance agencies, with constrained national participation, limited national control, and very little sense of national ownership (Samoff, 1999), the inevitable result is an absence of dialogue which reflects broader GPE

governance issues, where policy-related debates are rare (Menashy, 2017b).

There has been general allegations among donor countries and agencies that African leaders are associated with poor management, corruption and inefficient administration (Samoff, 1999) of the international education aid. This has bolstered their justification in engaging top managers and consultants from the Global North (Khan, 2021) most of whom are non-state sector actors on the GPE Board (Menashy & Dryden-Peterson, 2015). These are also policy entrepreneurs who contributed to problem recognition and highlighted normative shifts concerning interests. In spite of efforts to create a more equitable environment via the GPE, bilateral donors and the World Bank in particular retain their hierarchical positions through the maintenance of structures that reproduce their dominant status, thereby countering the principles that underpin the GPE’s mandate (Menashy, 2017a).

Due to the proliferation of actors and the rise in complex collective action targeting educational development over recent decades, power is arguably less directly coercive than in the structural adjustment era of the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, the identification of structural power exposes the reproduction of inequities that clearly conflict with the concept of partnership (Menashy, 2017a) in the form of how the power of actors interacts in the policymaking processes to influence outcomes (Dolowitz & Plugaru, 2019) and development cooperation (Samoff, 1999).

After a period of conscious neglect and dramatic deterioration education in Africa is again attracting external attention, with an emphasis now on "partnerships" rather than "aid" (Samoff & Carrol, 2004). In this regard, the African actors are able to exert assertive agency in their various encounters with external partners although the level of agency they are able to exert is determined by a variety of factors including; the type of governmental regime in place, possession and control of strategic commodities by the regime in place and the willingness of the governmental regime to work with civil society in its engagements with

external partners (Chipaike & Knowledge, 2018).

However, looking beyond face value when scrutinizing policy arrangements (Knutsson & Lindberg, 2017), it is obvious that power is retained by those in the Global North (Menashy, 2017a) as the managers, implementers, intermediaries and monitors of aid (Khan, 2021). The challenges around power relations are laid bare as Development Partners seem to be either unwilling or unable to comply with the principles and partnership model prescribed in the Paris Declaration (Chirwa, 2012).

In recognition of the need to compensate the Sub-Saharan African countries in terms of agency in the international affairs, the GPE - narrowly, and other international avenues, broadly- have recently been granting symbolisms. The July 13-16 2015 Addis Ababa conference (United Nations, 2015) and the February 2018 Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Financing Conference in Dakar, Senegal, (Albright & Bundy, 2018) are signals of the Global North's attempts to elevate relations with its Southern counterparts, whose impact is yet to be comprehensively evaluated.

Another important symbolism is in the form of utilizing African leaders as hosts of the GPE summits along with a leader of G7 country: President Emmanuel Macron of France, and President Macky Sall of Senegal (Albright & Bundy, 2018) in 2018, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson co-hosting the summit with Kenya's president, Uhuru Kenyatta (Williams, 2021) for the 2020 summit that was hosted in 2021 owing to COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the establishment of the GPE has altered power arrangements in educational aid away from the traditional approach (Menashy, 2017a), there is still no adequate agency for Sub-Saharan Africa. The absence of a solid ground for 'the political' agency ultimately haunts the stability of partnerships (Knutsson & Lindberg, 2019). Indeed, while it is obvious that the GPE comprises a range of post-political strategies, it is, at the same time, a venue for serious contestation. Hence, although it is imperative to critically expose strategies for depoliticisation in global governance, it is

equally important to realise that post-political arrangements convey something more than merely post-politics (Knutsson & Lindberg, 2018b). Another critical element in the mix of international cooperation on global governance is the potential for collaboration between countries of the south in economic and social resource exchange, some of which is already visible through new emerging donors such as Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa (Khan, 2021).

### **ADEQUACY OF RESPONSES**

Here, the study aims to interrogate whether commitment of the GPE was adequate in supporting Sub-Saharan African countries respond to the education crises exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is worth noting that there has been a longstanding neglect of education in development finances from the international donor community (Tilak, 1988). Similarly, attempts to change the trend did not fare better: current donor approaches targeting policy and budget may not adequately build the capacity required to improve quality and create sustainable reform of education systems (Smith, 2005). This is chiefly because funding constituted the main source of power relations among international actors (Chirwa, 2012) with players from the Global North dictating actions and choices to their counterparts in the Global South (Khan, 2021).

This power asymmetry is present even among the donors. Donors that donate more money to African nations created an imbalance of power and influenced the interactions of other actors, which adversely influenced the decision-making process, including policy design and implementation. This in turn affects the participation of government officials, civil society and those Development Partners that donated less money (Chirwa, 2012).

However, despite negative experiences, international education aid has the potential of helping the recipient (Tilak, 1988): a) access adequate aid, and, b) build capacity among recipients countries. Indeed, building capacity is likely to be more critical than ownership (Smith, 2005).

The GPE is designed to ensure that inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all is extended through its three main goals of improved and more equitable learning outcomes; increased equity, gender equality and inclusion; and efficient and effective education systems (European Union, 2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, financing of key education priority areas originate from a mix of internal and external sources, including reallocations from within government budgets, revisions to programming, and assistance from development partners — mainly GPE, the World Bank, UNICEF and Education Cannot Wait (ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, & APHRC (2021b). Still, the United Nations, civil society and the private sector have potential to initiate broad-based partnerships on education (Xiaolan, 2021). The EU and its Member States together account for more than half of all contributions to the GPE. Only the Commission provided €457 million for the period 2014–2020, which represents around 8% of the total funding for the partnership (European Union, 2020). Similarly, the UK government has promised £430m over the next five years (Williams, 2021).

These were complemented by local capacity. The African Development Bank has provided grants or loans to several African countries in response to COVID-19, but such funds are not necessarily earmarked for the education sector. Most received funding to plan for emergency responses to COVID-19 in the education sector from GPE and other external agencies (ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, & APHRC, 2021b).

GPE funding is arguably very weak compared to what is needed to provide quality education for all globally, including in settings of fragility. At the 2015 replenishment event, GPE bilateral donors pledged less than targeted, calling into question the efficacy of the organization to truly “galvanize” actors to improve education (Menashy & Dryden-Peterson, 2015). The 2018 Conference recorded a rise in the initial donor commitments from \$1.3bn to \$2.3bn (2018–20) (Albright & Bundy, (2018). However, the London Summit off 2021 targeted \$5bn to

support 1.6 billion children out of school children across the world (Williams, 2021), the target was not met. Part of the failure of the most recent summit to achieve its target is the action of the host nation: the UK slashed its international aid from 0.7% of its GDP to 0.5%. This cut reflects more than £2.9bn (Wintour, 2020), a move that does not seem to support the broad global commitments on education (Williams, 2021).

The GPE fund initially made US\$250 million available to the new COVID-19 accelerated funding window on March 31, 2020. Due to high demand from developing country partners, on May 29, 2020 the GPE Board increased the total funding window to US\$500 million (GPE, 2020b). When compared with the magnitude of education crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, and compounded by the pandemic, the prospective impact of this fund remains inadequate compared to the billions of dollars the World Bank encouraged affluent nations to invest in the social security of the Global South (Muna, Babamaragana & Lawan, 2020).

The terms of qualification poses another barrier to the SSA countries in accessing the available fund. Owing to attached conditions, for example, of funds quantity tied to number of pupils in school, most SSA countries received meager amount: chiefly because of the relative sizes of these nations. Thus, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Djibouti, Lesotho, Mauritania, and Somalia qualify for only \$3.5m of the revised \$500m compared Afghanistan, Nepal, Yemen, and Myanmar that qualified for upto \$11m (GPE, 2020b). Thus, the sharing formula remains unfavorable to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa as compared to other beneficiaries in the global south.

A total of 66 grants worth \$467.22m have been granted to beneficiary countries (GPE, 2021b). Across all countries, three quarters of the GPE grants support equity and learning initiatives, with the remainder supporting reopening efforts and systems resilience. Over half of the grants specifically supported girls (GPE, 2020e). However, recipient countries stressed that GPE should offer more flexibility in the grant processing and in the selection of activities that could be

financed; for instance teachers' salaries and incentives, as well as funding of infrastructural development. Some countries noted that overlaying of bureaucratic procedures and complexity of grant requirements towards grant application constrained applicants to complete applications within tight timelines (GPE, 2020d).

Major challenges include communication among partners, access to resources, and uncertainty given the rapidly changing conditions (Xiaolan, 2021). Also, efficient responses were further hampered by a lack of credible and timely data on violence against school children due to inadequate monitoring and reporting (ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, & APHRC, 2021a).

However, over-reliance on external funding for emergency responses, especially in hard-hit economies (ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, & APHRC, 2021b) has exposed the limits of the GPE as access to key resources was beyond the SSA at the critical time of need (Xiaolan, 2021). Indeed, top-down approach to aid, no matter how well-intentioned, shall usually fall short of fully achieving its desired outcomes (Smith, 2005) owing to lack of local ownership and stretched limited capacity, as well as racketeering in fund processing and implementation. This points to the political dynamics that pervade this global governance arrangement (Knutsson & Lindberg, 2018b). There is a need to rethink procedures deemed necessary for viable partnerships (Xiaolan, 2021).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study sought to interrogate the extent to which GPE has enhanced agency among local partners; provided relevant, adequate and timely response to education in the context of COVID-19. The study established that the GPE's success hinges on the temporality of its response, the shared agency among the partners to decide on its responses, and the adequacy of interventions in tackling the problem. The obvious observation is that it has succeeded in its time, timing and tempo of the response. However, the amount expended (\$500m) to support the 66

qualified countries, many of whom are SSA countries, is grossly inadequate. Similarly, the absence of any agency by SSA countries in GPE decisions points to a troubling partnership. In conclusion, this study argues that the speed with which GPE responded to the challenge has enhanced the net gain of its commitment beyond its face value. We also established that timing of a response is a more critical factor than the intervention itself. Thus, whenever there were delays in processing GPE, the amount expended ends up recording lesser successes than the timely meager sum invested. Therefore, despite failures in agency and adequacy, GPE's timely support to SSA countries was germane. We recommend that for any meaningful international partnership to be achieved, donor nations and institutions should regard SSA countries as equal partners in international policymaking and execution.

## References

- Adam, C., Henstridge, M. & Lee, S. (2020). After the lockdown: macroeconomic adjustment to the COVID-19 pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 36:1, 338–358
- Adarkwah, M. A. (2021). An Outbreak of Online Learning in the COVID-19 Outbreak in Sub-Saharan Africa: Prospects and Challenges *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology: H Information & Technology*, 21:2,
- ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, & APHRC (2021a). *The Well-being of School Children in Africa during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Abidjan, Ouagadougou, Nairobi: ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, APHRC.
- ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, & APHRC (2021b). *Financing Education in Africa during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Abidjan, Ouagadougou, Nairobi: ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, APHRC.
- Albright, A. & Bundy, D. A. P. (2018). The Global Partnership for Education: forging a stronger partnership between health and education sectors to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals *Lancet Child Adolescent Health* May 24,

- 2018 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(18\)30146-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(18)30146-9)
- Amponsah, I. K. V., Anarfi, H. A., Ankamah, S. & Malor, C. L. (2019). Effect of COVID-19 on Education in Ghana: Narratives from Primary, Junior High and Senior High School children 2019 *International Conference on Mechatronics, Remote Sensing, Information Systems and Industrial Information Technologies (ICMRSISIT)* DOI: 10.1109/ICMRSISIT46373.2020.9405905
- Anifowoshe, O., Aborode, A. T., Ayodele, T. I., Iretiayo, A. R. & David, O. O. (2020). *Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* doi:10.20944/preprints202007.0027.v1
- Appadurai, A. (2006). 'The right to research', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 4:2, 167 – 177 DOI: 10.1080/14767720600750696
- Balliet, D., Tybur, J. M. & Van Lange, P. A. M. (2016). Functional Interdependence Theory: An Evolutionary Account of Social Situations, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 1–28
- Béché, E. (2020). Cameroonian responses to COVID-19 in the education sector: Exposing an inadequate education system *International Review of Education*, 66:755–775 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-020-09870-x>
- Benavot, A. (2010). International Aid to Education *Comparative Education Review*, 54:1, 105-124
- Bulmer, S. (2009). Politics in Time meets the politics of time: historical institutionalism and the EU timescape, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16:2, 307-324, DOI: 10.1080/13501760802589347
- Chipaike, R. & Knowledge, M. H. (2018). The question of African agency in international relations, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4:1, 1487257, DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2018.1487257
- Chirwa, C. S. (2012). Partnership for Education in Malawi: Power and Dynamics within the Education Sector Wide Approach *PhD Thesis*, University of Sussex
- Coker, M., Folayan, M. O., Michelow, I. C., Oladokun, R. E., Torbunde, N. & Sam-Agudu, N. A. (2021). Things must not fall apart: the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in sub-Saharan Africa *Pediatric Research* (2021) 89:1078–1086; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-020-01174-y>
- Congressional Research Service (2020). *U.S. Assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa: An Overview* May 20, 2020 The US Congressional Research Service
- Dolowitz, D. P. (2020). Missing conceptual links in the international environmental policy debate: power, time and transfer, *Environmental Politics*, 29:4, 569-588, DOI:10.1080/09644016.2020.1743422
- Dolowitz, D. P. & Plugaru, R. (2019). The process of transfer: The micro-influences of power, time and learning *Public Policy and Administration*, 0:0 1–20 DOI: 10.1177/0952076718822714
- d’Orville, H. (2020). COVID-19 causes unprecedented educational disruption: Is there a road towards a new normal? *Prospects*, 49:11–15 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09475-0>
- Ettang, D. (2021) New Opportunities and Threats: Reimagining Africa’s International Relations in the Midst of COVID-19, *Politikon*, 48:2, 312-330, DOI: 10.1080/02589346.2021.1913801
- European Union (2020). Education: EU increases its commitment to Global Partnership for Education with a pledge of €700 million for 2021-2027 *European Commission - Press release*, Brussels, 10 June 2021
- Francis, D., Valodia, I. & Webster, E. (2020). Politics, Policy, and Inequality in South Africa Under COVID-19 *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy*, 9:3, 342–355

- Goetz, K. H. (2009). How does the EU tick? Five propositions on political time, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16:2, 202-220, DOI: 10.1080/13501760802589214
- Goetz, K. H. & Meyer-Sahling, J. (2009). Political time in the EU: dimensions, perspectives, theories *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16:2, 180–201
- GPE (2020a). *Strategic Plan 2016–2020* The Global Partnership for Education
- GPE (2020b). *Guidelines for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window* April 2020 The Global Partnership for Education
- GPE (2020c). *Safe to Learn during COVID-19: Recommendations to prevent and respond to violence against children in all learning environments* The Global Partnership for Education, May 2020
- GPE (2020d). *Simulating the Impact of COVID-19 on Education Systems by 2023: Report: October 2020* The Global Partnership for Education
- GPE (2020e). *GPE and COVID19 [CORONAVIRUS]* The Global Paernership for Education, December, 2020
- GPE (2021a). *COVID19 Accelerated Grants: Implementation Progress Estimates: May 2021* The Global Partnership for Education June 17, 2021
- GPE (2021b). *COVID19 AF Response: Mitigation and Recovery Thematic Grant Allocation: Grants Approved 30/10/2020* The Global Partnership for Education
- G7 United Kingdom (2021). *A Declaration on Girls' Education: Recovering from Covid-19 and unlocking Agenda 2030* London, May 5, 2021
- Hatton, M. J. & Schroeder, K. (2007). Partnership Theory and Practice: Time for a New Paradigm, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 28:1, 157-162 doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2007.9669192
- Kaisara, G. & Bwalya, K. J. (2021). Investigating the E-Learning Challenges Faced by Students during Covid-19 in Namibia *International Journal of Higher Education*, 10;1, 308-318 doi:10.5430/ijhe.v10n1p308
- Kebede, E. & Tafesework, E. (2021). *Education in the time of COVID: Issues facing lower level education institutions during the pandemic in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2021* A REPORT BY ADDIS ZEYBE
- Khan, T. (2021). Racism doesn't just exist within aid. It's the structure the sector is built on *The Guardian* 31 August 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/globaldevelopment/2021/aug/31/racism-doesnt-just-exist-within-aid-its-the-structure-the-sector-is-built-on>
- King, K. (1992). The External Agenda of Aid in Internal Educational Reform *International Journal of Educational Development*, 12:4, 257-263
- Knutsson, B. & Lindberg, J. (2017). Studying “the Political” in International Aid to Education: Methodological Considerations *Comparative Education Review*, 61:4, 701-725
- Knutsson, B. & Lindberg, J. (2018a). The post-politics of aid to education: Rwanda ten years after Hayman *International Journal of Educational Development* xxx (xxxx) xxx–xxx
- Knutsson, B. & Lindberg, J. (2018b). Depoliticisation and dissensus in the global partnership for education: rethinking the post-political condition *Journal of International Relation and Development* <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-018-0141-5>
- Knutsson, B. & Lindberg, J. (2019). On the absent ground of transnational partnerships in education: A post-foundational intervention, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, DOI:10.1080/14767724.2019.1583090
- Kremer, M. et al. (2013). The Challenge of Education and Learning in the Developing World *Science* 340, 297 (2013)
- Kundnani, H. (2021). Europe's technocrats play into populist hands with their bungled Covid response *The Guardian* 28 March

- 2021  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/28/europes-technocrats-play-into-populist-hands-with-their-bungled-covid-response>
- London, N. A. (1993). Why Education Projects in Developing Countries Fail: A Case Study *International Journal of Educational Development*, 13:3, 265-275
- Lugonzo, H. M. (2020). A Research Paper on COVID-19 Pandemic and Status of Basic Education in Kenya *IJO - International Journal of Educational Research*, 3:11, 1-33
- Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2020). *Proposal for GPE Accelerated Funding for COVID-19 Response (Malawi)* The Government of Malawi
- Marsh, D. & McConnel, A. (2010). Towards a Framework for Establishing Policy Success, *Public Administration*, 88:2, 564-583 doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9299.2009.01803.x
- Mbii, M., Koskei, S. & Mutungi, K. J. (2020). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19): Effects on Education with Special Emphasis on Basic Education System in Kenya *The Cradle of Knowledge: African Journal of Educational and Social Science Research AJESSR*, 8:2, 69-76
- McConnell, A. (2010). Policy Success, Policy Failure and Grey Areas In-Between *Journal of Public Policy*, 30:3, 345-362. doi:10.1017/S0143814X10000152
- Menashy, F. (2016). Understanding the roles of non-state actors in global governance: evidence from the Global Partnership for Education, *Journal of Education Policy*, 31:1, 98-118, DOI:10.1080/02680939.2015.1093176
- Menashy, F. (2017a). Multi-stakeholder aid to education: power in the context of partnership, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, DOI: 10.1080/14767724.2017.1356702
- Menashy, F. (2017b). The Limits of Multistakeholder Governance: The Case of the Global Partnership for Education and Private Schooling *Comparative Education Review*, 61:2, 240-268
- Menashy, F. & Dryden-Peterson, S. (2015). The Global Partnership for Education's evolving support to fragile and conflict-affected states *International Journal of Educational Development*, 44 (2015), 82-94
- Molosi-France, K. & Makoni, S. (2020). A Partnership of Un-Equals: Global South-North Research Collaborations in Higher Education Institutions *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society*, 8:2, 9-24
- Muna, W. & Babamaragana L. A. (2021). Governance Without Participation: A Comparative Perspective of the Policies of Nigerian and Kenyan Political Parties. In: O. Tella (eds) *A Sleeping Giant?. Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73375-9\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73375-9_9)
- Muna W., Babamaragana, L. A. & Lawan, A. (2020). Globalization and Protectionists Economic Public Policy Measures in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic: The Limits of Interdependence Theory *Yobe Journal of Economics*, 6:2, 112-136
- Naidoo, V., Lesperance, J., Umar, A. & Ferreira, F. (2012). Value of Partnerships in Building an Education System *Commonwealth of Learning* CC BY SA November 2012 Page 2 of 7
- Ngari, S. M. & Ndung'u, S. W. (2020). Disaster Management Preparedness in the Education Sector in Kenya – A Case of the COVID-19 Pandemic *Editon Consortium Journal of Educational Management and Leadership* 1:1, 86-96. DOI: 10.51317/ecjeml.v1i1.192
- Novelli, M. (2010). The new geopolitics of educational aid: From Cold Wars to Holy Wars? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30, 453-459
- OECD (2020). *A framework to guide an education response to COVID-19 pandemic of 2020*

OECD

- Ogbuoji O, & Yamey G. (2019). Aid effectiveness in the Sustainable Development Goals era: Comment on “‘It’s about the idea hitting the bull’s eye’”: how aid effectiveness can catalyse the scale-up of health innovations” *International Journal of Health Policy Management*, 8;3,184–186 doi:10.15171/ijhpm.2018.130
- Oluka, N. L., Ezeh, N. A. & Okotie, A. J. (2020). The Impact of the Wuhan Coronavirus Pandemic on Education in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 4:8, 513-521
- Parjanadze, N. (2009). Globalisation Theories and Their Effect on Education *IBSU Scientific Journal*, 2:3, 77-88
- Peck, J. (2002). Political Economies of Scale: Fast Policy, Interscalar Relations, and Neoliberal Workfare, *Economic Geography*, 78:3, 331-360, DOI: 10.1111/j.1944-8287.2002.tb00190.x
- Rusbult, C. E. & Van Lange, P. A. M. (2008). Why We Need Interdependence Theory, *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 25 2049–2070, 10.1111j.1751-9004.2008.00147.x
- Sachs, J. D., Schmidt-Traub, G. & Lafortune, G. (2020). Speaking Truth to Power about the SDGs *Working Paper 26 August 2020 Sustainable Development Solutions Networks; A Global Initiative for the United Nations*
- Samoff, J. (1999). Education sector analysis in Africa: limited national control and even less national ownership *International Journal of Educational Development*, 19, 249–272
- Samoff, J. & Carrol, B. (2004). The Promise of Partnership and Continuities of Dependence: External Support to Higher Education in Africa *African Studies Review*, 47:1, 67-199
- Scheduler, A. & Santiso, J. (1998). Democracy and Time: An Invitation *International Political Science Review*, 19:1, 5-18
- Schmitter, P. C. & Santiso, J. (1998). Three Temporal Dimensions to the Consolidation of Democracy *International Political Science Review*, 19:1, 69-92
- Smith, H. (2005). Ownership and capacity: Do current donor approaches help or hinder the achievement of international and national targets for education? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25, 445–455
- Tadesse, S. & Muluye, W. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Education System in Developing Countries: A Review *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 159-170 <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.810011>
- Tilak, J. B. G. (1988). Foreign Aid For Education *International Review of Education*, 34, 3, 13-335
- Tumwesige, J. (2020). *COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response: Rethinking e-Learning in Uganda* Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
- UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank (2020). *GPE’s Education response to COVID-19: UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank Joint Proposal for a Consortium of Grant Agents* 21 May 2020
- United Nations (2015). *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) A/RES/69/313* United Nations General Assembly
- United Nations (2020). *Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond* United Nations August, 2020
- USAID (2020). *Education and COVID-19* USAID
- van Lange, P. A. M. & Balliet, D. (2015). Interdependence Theory in M. Mikulincer and P. R. Shaver (Editors-in-Chief) *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology: Vol. 3. Interpersonal Relations*, American Psychological Association
- Weible, C. M., Nohrstedt, D., Cairney, P., Carter, D. P., Crow, D. A., Durnová, A. P., Heikkila, T., Ingold, K., McConnell,

- A. & Stone, D. (2020). COVID-19 and the policy sciences: initial reactions and perspectives *Policy Sciences* (2020) 53:225–241  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-020-09381-4>
- Williams, Z. (2021). Aid cuts make a mockery of UK pledges on girls' education *The Guardian* 29 July 2021  
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/commentisfree/2021/jul/29/aid-cuts-make-a-mockery-of-uk-pledges-on-girls-education>
- Wintour, P. (2020). UK aid budget facing billions in cuts *The Guardian* 17 November 2020  
<https://amp.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/nov/17/uk-aid-budget-facing-billions-in-cuts>
- World Bank Group (2020a). *The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education Financing* World Bank Group May 2020
- World Bank Group (2020b). *The World Bank's Education Response to COVID-19: Overview as of December, 2020* World Bank Group Education
- Wulff, A. (2021). *Global Education Governance in the Context of COVID-19: Tensions and Threats to Education as a Public Good* Society for International Development 2021
- Xiaolan, F. (2021). *Partnerships in Response to Covid-19: Building Back Better Together* A report commissioned by UN DESA, United Nations
- Yaya, S., Otu, A. & Labonté, R. (2020). Globalisation in the time of COVID-19: repositioning Africa to meet the immediate and remote challenges *Globalization and Health*, 16:51, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-020-00581-4>
- Zuijderduijn, M., Alpenidze, I., Ferrari, G., Hill, R. C., Kooijmans, O., Vermeulen, R. & Bergmann, N. (2020). *Independent Summative Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education 2020: Final Report* MDF Training & Consultancy/Ede, May 2020