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New UK parliament report finds Bridge`s model problematic and raises questions about UK funding

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In a milestone new [inquiry](#) report revealed today, members of the UK parliament have raised serious questions about UK Government funding of the American chain of schools Bridge International Academies due to concerns regarding the quality of education, relationship with governments, alleged lack of compliance with governments' regulations, and high cost of fees. These findings highlight how a [number of governments](#) have [invested](#) into the company in the last years despite repeated warnings that this could lead to serious breaches of human rights standards.

Confirming [previous concerns](#) raised by civil society, and contrary to Bridge's own claims, some members of the parliamentary [Committee](#) observed that the quality of teaching "was notably poor in the Ugandan Bridge schools". The report equally notes the [concerns](#) raised about Bridge's operations in Liberia, where Bridge's slightly better learning outcomes were only achieved through [spending a significantly higher amount of money per pupil](#) compared with other providers, firing teachers on a large scale, and mass-expelling of pupils.

The members of the inquiry committee found that the evidence they gathered raised "serious questions about Bridge's relationships with governments, transparency and sustainability." This finding comes against the background of Bridge Academies being ordered to improve their standards and comply with the law, or close their schools in [Uganda](#) and [Kenya](#), after it was found that the company had operated schools [for years without registration](#) and offering unknown education curriculum in the respective countries. Last week, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights again [raised concerns](#) about Bridge's compliance with regulations.

The report also questions Bridge's sustainability, cost-effectiveness, scalability and learning outcomes, and recommended that no more investment be made unless these questions are cleared, and a "compelling case for any further support, including evidence to prove that Bridge was providing education to the very poorest and most marginalised children which was not being provided elsewhere" be made.



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“These findings confirm the many independent inquiries and evidence collected by journalists, U.N. officials, civil society organisations, and other bodies, that raise exactly the same issues”, reacted Delphine Dorsi, of Right to Education Initiative.

“Now that the UK parliament, which cannot be accused of bias against Bridge Academies, has confirmed so many of the concerns raised previously, we hope that both private and public investors, will take steps to remove themselves from supporting a company that could be undermining years of progress in education” said Sylvain Aubry, of Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

“We’ve been asking for years that all private providers, including foreign providers, respect the basic norms and standards in education. We’re glad that the UK parliament has addressed this matter, and we hope that the UK Governments and other investors will cease funding schools that operate illegally in Uganda”, added Salima Namusobya, of the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (Uganda).

“This report shows how support to private actors has failed to deliver on the right to education. We are looking forward to donor States strengthening funding to public education”, concluded Camilla Croso.

In a [statement](#) released in August this year, 174 organisations gathered all independent evidence which revealed extremely serious concerns regarding the operations and impacts of Bridge Academies. That statement called on Bridge investors to fully discharge due diligence obligations and cease support for Bridge as well as redirecting funds to programs that promote high-quality, equitable and inclusive free public education.

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Signatories: Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education; Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education; Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education; East African Centre for Human Rights; Global Campaign for Education; Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Global Justice Now; Initiative for Social and Economic Rights; Right to Education Initiative; Right to Education Forum

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Documents:

- Inquiry from the UK International Development Committee, *DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind?*: <http://bit.ly/2hOueJc>
- August 2017 Civil society call on investors to cease support to Bridge International Academies: <http://bit.ly/biainvestors>