NAMA Foundation's Educational Impact: Review of *NAMA International Journal of Education and Development* Volumes 1 & 2

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ABSTRACT

This review synthesizes the studies published across Volumes 1 and 2 of the NAMA International Journal of Education and Development, highlighting the NAMA Foundation's contributions to educational transformation in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania. The research spans four key themes: teacher development, student empowerment and 21st-century skills, financial sustainability in Islamic educational institutions, and stakeholder-driven school quality assessment. Methodologies range from structural equation modeling and classroom observation to stakeholder surveys and case studies, all underpinned by the NAMA Theory of Change. Key findings show that professional development, especially the ROOTS program, has measurably enhanced teacher competency and classroom innovation, while student agency is fostered through integrated academic and extracurricular pathways. Financial sustainability is advanced by Shariah-compliant instruments and community-based funding, though challenges in local capacity and regulatory environments remain. Parental engagement and values-based assessment frameworks emerge as critical to holistic school quality. The studies call for improved demographic and qualitative data, contextualized interventions, and longitudinal research to better assess impact and equity. Collectively, this body of work affirms the strategic role of values-driven, research-informed approaches in advancing equitable, quality education in the Global South.

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INTRODUCTION

In an era where evidence-based policymaking drives educational reform, the NAMA Foundation has distinguished itself by bridging the gap between programmatic impact and scholarly validation. Operating across Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania, the NAMA Foundation commissioned a series of empirical studies not only to assess the effectiveness of its interventions but to complement NGO-driven monitoring and evaluation (M&E) with rigorous academic research. The result is a body of work that aims to validate NAMA's contributions to educational development while contributing new insights to global academic discourse on schooling in low- and middle-income contexts.

Published in Volumes 1 and 2 of the *NAMA International Journal of Education and Development,* these studies can be categorized into four thematic clusters: (1) Teacher Development and Pedagogical Practices, (2) Student Empowerment and 21st-Century Skills, (3) Financial Sustainability in Islamic Educational Institutions and CSOs, and (4) School Performance and Stakeholder Perspectives on Educational Quality. Together, the commissioned studies explore how professional development, ethical finance, school governance, and holistic assessment interact to shape learning outcome.

The studies share a common grounding in NAMA's Theory of Change while being methodologically diverse. In terms of methodology, they range from structural equation modeling and classroom observation to stakeholder surveys and case studies. All seek to document measurable improvements in teacher competency, student agency, financial planning, and parental engagement, while also revealing systemic challenges in leadership, digital readiness, and inclusion—especially in Tanzania.

Ultimately, this review demonstrates how the NAMA Foundation has used academic inquiry not as an afterthought, but as a strategic tool for learning, accountability, and influence. These studies offer not just internal validation but also attempt to contribute to the broader educational development community. They illustrate how context-sensitive, values-driven, and research-informed approaches can drive sustainable change.

METHODOLOGY

This article employed a systematic thematic review to synthesize research published in Volumes 1 and 2 of the *NAMA International Journal of Education and Development.* First, all full-text articles from both volumes were downloaded from the official journal repository. Each article was read in its entirety to understand its research questions, methodologies, and key findings. Data extraction tables were created to document study contexts, participant groups, methodological approaches, and major outcomes.

A thematic analysis approach was used, involving open coding of the

text to identify recurring themes and categories, such as teacher professional development, student empowerment, governance, financial sustainability, and qualitative research quality. Themes were refined through iterative reading, constant comparison, and discussion among the review team. For each theme, findings were compared and contrasted across country contexts and research designs to highlight similarities, differences, and emerging patterns.

To ensure analytical rigor, direct quotations and results were cross-checked against original articles, and any ambiguities were discussed among reviewers. The synthesis process emphasized triangulation of perspectives, linking the reviewed studies to NAMA's Theory of Change where possible. This approach enabled a comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of trends, gaps, and opportunities within NAMA-supported education research.

RESULTS

This review of the studies published in Volumes 1 and 2 of the *NAMA International Journal of Education and Development* is structured around four thematic clusters that reflect the NAMA Foundation's holistic approach to educational transformation in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania. The first theme, Teacher Development and Pedagogical Practices, comprises five studies examining how professional development programs, co-teaching models, and school climate influence the adoption of 21st-century instructional strategies. Central to this theme is the ROOTS program, which demonstrates measurable gains in teacher competency and classroom innovation, though challenges in digital literacy and assessment persist across contexts. The second theme, Student Empowerment and 21st-Century Skills, includes four studies that explore how pedagogical practices, extracurricular engagement, and school support systems contribute to students' development of critical thinking, leadership, and self-efficacy. These studies affirm that student agency is best cultivated through integrated academic and non-academic pathways, with significant variation in outcomes across the three countries.

The third theme, Financial Sustainability in Islamic Educational Institutions and CSOs, focuses on the role of Islamic social finance, community-based funding models, and infrastructure investment in ensuring long-term institutional viability. The studies in this cluster highlight innovative uses of waqf, zakat, and revenue-generating tools, while also identifying persistent challenges related to regulatory environments and organizational capacity. The final theme, School Performance, Stakeholder Perspectives, and Assessment Frameworks, presents insights from stakeholder-driven evaluations of school quality. These studies emphasize the importance of parental engagement, inclusive assessment tools, and the integration of values-based indicators in educational quality metrics. Together, these four clusters offer a comprehensive view of NAMA's strategic interventions and their measurable impacts. What follows is a detailed analysis of each thematic area, highlighting key findings,

methodological strengths, and implications for policy and practice. Here is the first theme, Teacher Development and Pedagogical Practices.

Teacher Development and Pedagogical Practices in NAMA-Funded Schools

The professional development of teachers and the refinement of pedagogical practices are crucial in the transformation of education systems, particularly in developing contexts. Within this landscape, the NAMA Foundation has supported several empirical studies examining teacher capacity and instructional effectiveness in Islamic secondary schools across Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania. This review synthesizes findings from five key papers under the theme of Teacher Development and Pedagogical Practices, with particular focus on professional development programs, classroom strategies, and collaborative teaching models. Collectively, these studies shed some light into how teacher competencies can be nurtured to promote 21st-century learning outcomes.

A recurring theme across these studies is the central role played by professional development in advancing innovative, student-centered teaching. The paper by Ssekamanya, Nalubega, and Kassim (2024) explores the relationship between teacher professional development, school climate, and innovative pedagogy, using a cross-sectional design and structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) on data from 383 teachers. The study finds that professional development significantly contributes to student-centered teaching, with collaborative planning and community engagement acting as key mediating variables. These findings highlight the importance of integrating professional learning within broader institutional and community support systems. It should be noted that while the overall patterns of influence were consistent across Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania, the strength of relationships varied by country. This suggests that contextual responsiveness is of great importance in professional development design.

In parallel, the impact of NAMA's ROOTS (Roadmap of Outstanding Teachers) training program is analyzed in a study by Ahmad, Sahari, and Sahari (2024). Their study utilizes data from direct classroom observation of 558 lessons across the three countries. This methodological approach adds an objective lens to teacher evaluation, capturing changes in the use of nine core indicators of 21st-century teaching. The study reports positive shifts in teacher practices, particularly in Kyrgyzstan where improvements were observed in formative assessment, problem-solving, and differentiation. Indonesia and Tanzania also demonstrated progress, albeit with challenges in technology integration and higher-order thinking. While the study is limited by its cross-sectional nature and the lack of longitudinal tracking, its reliance on classroom data rather than self-report surveys enhances its credibility and provides concrete evidence of ROOTS' influence on instructional practice.

The ROOTS program's broader impact is further examined in a study by Preece (2024), which draws on performance data from 2021 and 2022 to show

that teachers across all three countries improved in their competencies, particularly in content knowledge and classroom engagement. However, progress in pedagogical design and peer collaboration remained limited, highlighting areas for further capacity building. The study recommends strengthening teachers' skills in formative assessment and integrating reflection and peer observation into professional learning structures. The author advocates for culturally relevant approaches that acknowledge the specific developmental needs of each country, rather than a uniform intervention model.

Complementing these findings, the study by Mai (2024) investigates teachers' self-reported application of student-centered instructional strategies. This study adds depth to the conversation by examining how familiar teachers are with modern pedagogies and to what extent they apply them in the classroom. The results reveal a moderate level of implementation, with wide disparities in the use of differentiated instruction, digital tools, and active learning methods. Teachers in Kyrgyzstan and Indonesia reported higher adoption rates of innovative practices, while Tanzanian teachers lagged behind. These disparities mirror those found in observational studies and emphasize the need for targeted support in specific domains, such as digital pedagogy and instructional design. Although the reliance on self-report data introduces potential biases, the study offers a useful exposition of areas where instructional capacity needs to be enhanced.

One of the more innovative contributions to this theme is the exploration of co-teaching models by Preece, Hameed, and Juperi (2024). This study introduces six co-teaching strategies—including One Teach, One Assist; Parallel Teaching; and Station Teaching—and examines the readiness of Islamic school teachers to adopt collaborative instructional practices. Using a mixed-methods approach, the authors find a generally high level of teacher willingness to engage in co-teaching, with qualitative data suggesting that professional development initiatives like ROOTS have fostered a more open and collaborative professional culture. While no statistically significant differences in readiness were observed across countries, Tanzanian teachers displayed slightly higher levels of enthusiasm for co-teaching, especially in domains related to school culture and values. The study recommends formal integration of co-teaching models into professional development programs and emphasizes the role of professional learning communities (PLCs) in sustaining collaborative teaching practices.

Across all five studies, a number of cross-cutting themes emerge. First, there is consistent evidence that professional development is a powerful lever for pedagogical change. This is especially so when it is embedded within supportive school environments and strengthened by collaboration (Ssekamanya et al., 2024; Ahmad et al., 2024; Mai, 2024; Preece, 2024; Preece et al., 2024). The ROOTS program, in particular, has shown measurable impact across multiple dimensions of teacher performance, although contextual variation remains. Second, while there is clear progress in areas such as student

engagement and collaborative learning, more work is needed to enhance teachers' capacity for differentiated instruction, technology integration, and higher-order thinking. Third, the readiness of teachers to adopt innovative models like co-teaching points to a promising shift toward more collaborative and reflective teaching cultures in Islamic schools.

From a methodological standpoint, the studies vary in rigor and scope, but together offer a balanced perspective. The use of classroom observations, large-scale surveys, and structural modeling provides strong empirical grounding. Nevertheless, most studies acknowledge limitations related to cross-sectional design and self-reporting. Future research would benefit from longitudinal approaches that can more accurately track changes over time and isolate the effects of specific interventions. Moreover, the inclusion of student outcomes alongside teacher practices would provide a more holistic picture of the impact of professional development on learning.

This body of research on teacher development and pedagogical practices in NAMA-supported schools offers very strong evidence of transformation and ongoing challenge. The findings reinforce the notion that teacher quality is central to educational reform, particularly in under-resourced contexts. They also highlight the importance of tailoring interventions to the unique cultural and institutional landscapes of each country. As education systems globally strive to equip learners with the competencies needed for the 21st century, the lessons drawn from these studies offer useful guidance to NAMA Foundation and similar organizations. They affirm that investing in teacher development is not merely a technical solution but a strategic imperative. For its success, however, it must be rooted in collaboration, context, and a commitment to continuous learning.

Student Empowerment and 21st-Century Skills

The acquisition of 21st-century skills—such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy—has become a central goal of education reform efforts globally. In the context of developing countries, the path to achieving these competencies is complex, often mediated by factors such as access to resources, instructional quality, extracurricular engagement, and the broader socio-cultural environment. The NAMA Foundation, operating in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania, has invested substantially in programs aimed at cultivating such skills among students. Four empirical studies falling under the theme of Student Empowerment and 21st-Century Skills provide valuable insights into how student empowerment is shaped by various institutional and community-based mechanisms. These include: (1) extracurricular activities, (2) pedagogical practices, (3) access to higher education, and (4) school support and self-efficacy.

The study titled Enhancing Student Empowerment through Extracurricular Activities focuses on the role of non-academic engagement in

shaping student agency and skill development. Drawing on data from NAMA-supported schools in the three target countries, this research emphasizes how participation in structured extracurricular activities (ECAs)—such as student councils, sports, debate clubs, and community service—can substantially improve students' self-confidence, communication skills, leadership capacity, and sense of responsibility (Ahmed, Khiati, & Al-Hidabi, 2024). The study employs a quantitative survey approach, supplemented by qualitative interviews, to assess students' reflections on how ECAs have contributed to their personal and academic growth. Findings indicate that students who regularly participate in ECAs report significantly higher levels of self-efficacy, collaborative skills, and critical thinking. Importantly, the impact is not uniform across all contexts; Indonesia demonstrates the highest ECA participation rates, attributed to more established school programs and greater parental support, while Tanzanian schools face structural limitations such as inadequate facilities and limited funding. This paper positions ECAs not as supplemental activities, but as essential platforms for developing the full spectrum of 21st-century competencies.

Similar to this is the study by Ssekamanya & Mahmood (2024) which builds a more comprehensive framework for understanding student empowerment. This research empirically examines how multiple inputs—ranging from classroom practices to civic engagement—contribute to skill acquisition. Utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the study analyzes data from 864 secondary school students and finds that positive pedagogical practices—such as project-based learning, real-life lesson integration, and peer collaboration—serve as powerful mediators between school support and the acquisition of 21st-century skills (Abdallah & Mahmood, 2024). The study also underscores the role of community and school citizenship, which includes student participation in decision-making, school initiatives, and community outreach. Students who perceive their schools as supportive environments, and who experience autonomy and recognition, are significantly more likely to display advanced communication, leadership, and problem-solving abilities. Cross-country comparisons reveal that students in Kyrgyzstan reported the highest levels of perceived school support, while Tanzanian students, despite lower support levels, scored relatively high on advocacy and self-efficacy—an indication of potential resilience and self-driven motivation. The interplay between institutional support and individual agency presented in this study enhances our understanding of how empowerment is both structured and emergent.

Another paper also led by Ssekamanya, binti Khalid, and Ramli (2024) explored the psychological and institutional determinants of student empowerment. This study deepens the findings of the previous research by isolating three core constructs: school support, student self-efficacy and advocacy, and positive pedagogical practices. Using structural equation modeling, the authors confirm that both school support and self-efficacy are significant predictors of 21st-century skill acquisition. Notably, positive

pedagogical practices are identified as mediating variables, underscoring the mechanism through which empowerment is translated from perception into tangible competencies. For instance, students who feel confident in expressing disagreement with teachers or advocating for fairness in assessment are also more likely to thrive in environments that encourage collaborative problem-solving and inquiry-based learning. This finding is especially relevant in contexts like Tanzania, where systemic challenges persist, yet individual student agency can still flourish when pedagogical practices are adapted accordingly. One of the main contributions of this study is its validation of the NAMA Foundation's Theory of Change, which posits that improvements in school climate, instructional quality, and student advocacy form a virtuous cycle of empowerment and achievement.

The final study under this theme, "Advancing Student Empowerment via Higher Education Access", addresses empowerment from a structural and aspirational perspective. Unlike the preceding papers which focus on school-based interventions, this study interrogates the barriers and enablers of access to higher education—a critical aspect of empowerment. The study draws on survey responses from NAMA beneficiaries across the three countries, identifying financial constraints, geographical limitations, lack of information, and cultural factors as primary barriers to tertiary education (Zeki & Wasiq, 2024). One of the main findings of this study is the strong emphasis students place on technology and digital literacy as facilitators of access. Respondents consistently highlighted the role of the internet, online platforms, and virtual communities in providing information and building confidence about higher education pathways. However, the small sample size (n = 20) and the absence of rigorous inferential analysis limit the generalizability of the findings. Despite these methodological constraints, the study's qualitative insights enrich the broader conversation on student empowerment by linking it to systemic structures such as equity of access and digital inclusion.

Across all four studies, several thematic convergences can be observed. First, student empowerment is multidimensional, involving emotional, cognitive, social, and systemic domains. It cannot be reduced to individual agency alone but depends on the enabling conditions provided by schools, communities, and policy frameworks (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ssekamanya & Mahmood, 2024; Ssekamanya et al., 2024; Zeki & Wasiq, 2024). Second, pedagogical practices play a central mediating role, acting as the bridge between institutional support and skill development. Teachers who employ active learning strategies not only improve academic performance but also contribute to students' self-worth and confidence. Third, the findings affirm the importance of extracurricular and civic engagement as platforms for nurturing holistic development, with implications for curriculum design and school resource allocation. Fourth, while all three countries show progress, contextual disparities remain evident. Indonesia consistently benefits from more structured programs and higher stakeholder involvement. Kyrgyzstan excels in school support and classroom practices, whereas Tanzania, despite infrastructural limitations,

exhibits strong student advocacy and resilience.

Methodologically, the studies show good diversity, ranging from structural modeling and multivariate analysis to qualitative inquiry. This allows for triangulation of findings and strengthens the overall evidence base. However, limitations such as self-reporting biases, small sample sizes (in some cases), and the absence of longitudinal data restrict the ability to draw causal conclusions. Future research would benefit from tracking student trajectories over time, incorporating objective performance measures, and exploring how these empowerment frameworks perform under varying socio-political conditions.

The research under this theme affirms that student empowerment is not a byproduct of isolated interventions but a composite outcome of coordinated, inclusive, and context-sensitive strategies. By covering instructional reform, community engagement, and access to higher education, the NAMA Foundation's multi-level approach offers a replicable model for stakeholders aiming to embed 21st-century skills in underserved educational systems. Ultimately, the studies illuminate a powerful truth: students do not merely absorb empowerment; they enact it, as long as the systems around them are built to sustain and amplify their potential.

Governance and Leadership in Education

Effective school governance and leadership are increasingly recognized as foundational pillars of educational improvement, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where systemic challenges often hinder school performance and equity. The NAMA Foundation has positioned school leadership development as a strategic priority, funding a range of empirical studies across Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania. Four key papers under the theme of School Governance and Leadership examine various dimensions of leadership practice, governance structures, and capacity-building models, particularly within the context of Islamic secondary schools and educational non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This review critically synthesizes the findings of these studies, evaluating their contributions to the discourse on school leadership and offering insights into contextual dynamics, methodological strengths, and policy implications.

The study "A Preliminary Comparison of Leadership Practices at Select Educational NGOs in Indonesia, Tanzania, and Kyrgyzstan" by Paramboor (2024) investigates leadership challenges and opportunities within the NGO sector. Drawing on a qualitative research design, the author utilizes interviews and document analysis to compare leadership practices in educational NGOs across the three countries. The paper identifies several leadership constraints, including limited human capital, weak succession planning, and inadequate policy clarity. At the same time, the study highlights emerging opportunities, such as the use of digital tools for remote management, the potential for cross-sector partnerships, and a growing awareness of strategic

planning. A central argument of the study is the need for NGO leaders to adopt more adaptive and context-responsive leadership models. The findings underscore the unique pressures faced by civil society actors in educational development—pressures that differ from, but are interlinked with, the public-school sector. Although rich in contextual insight, the study's exploratory design and relatively small sample limit the generalizability of its findings. Nevertheless, it provides an important foundation for subsequent empirical work on NGO leadership in education.

Expanding the lens to formal school systems, the study "The Effect of School Governance on Human and Financial Capital Performances" by Amzat (2024a) presents a quantitative analysis of how governance structures influence the performance of Islamic secondary schools in the three focus countries. Utilizing survey data from school leaders and employing regression analysis, the study identifies a statistically significant positive relationship between governance quality and both human capital (e.g., teacher competence, staff development) and financial capital (e.g., budgeting, resource allocation). The author reports that Kyrgyz schools outperformed their counterparts in Indonesia and Tanzania across both domains. Among the governance factors analyzed, three emerged as the most influential: reputable partnerships, policy implementation, and transparency. The study's empirical rigor is a notable strength, with its use of inferential statistics enhancing the validity of its claims. Importantly, the findings illustrate that governance is not a peripheral administrative concern but a central determinant of school performance and sustainability. However, the study's reliance on self-reported data from school leaders may introduce bias, particularly in the evaluation of financial performance.

Building on the discourse around effective leadership, the paper "A Comparative Study of Effective School Leadership Among Islamic Schools" by Yusuf and Mai (2024) investigates the interplay between governance, human capital, and financial sustainability in shaping leadership effectiveness. Drawing on a comparative design, the study employs ANOVA and Pearson correlation analyses to examine differences and relationships among leadership variables across the three countries. The results suggest that Kyrgyzstan again leads in terms of effective governance and leadership, with Indonesia in second place and Tanzania trailing. The study emphasizes the importance of integrated leadership approaches that align governance with the recruitment and retention of skilled personnel and sound financial practices. Interestingly, the paper reports a strong statistical correlation between governance and leadership outcomes, although it contains some ambiguity in its interpretation of correlation coefficients—highlighting a methodological inconsistency that warrants caution. Nevertheless, the paper's multi-dimensional conceptualization of leadership—bridging structure, people, and resources—offers a useful analytical framework for future studies. It also aligns with international evidence suggesting that leadership quality is closely tied to both school inputs and outcomes.

The most comprehensive model-oriented contribution among the four studies is presented in "School Leadership Capacity Building Model for School Development and Best Leadership Practice" by Amzat (2024b). This study adopts a quantitative approach to develop and validate a conceptual model of school leadership capacity, drawing on data from principals and deputy principals in 31 Islamic secondary schools. Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the study examines four leadership capacity factors: school life, learning success, culture and values, and parent and community engagement. The analysis identifies "Culture and Values" as the strongest predictor of overall leadership capacity. This finding is particularly salient in the context of Islamic schooling, where moral education and value-based leadership often intersect with administrative duties. The model demonstrates good fit indices (e.g., CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.078), lending statistical credibility to its structure. The paper contributes a validated model for understanding and improving leadership in faith-based education settings. However, the model's empirical validation is limited to schools within the NAMA Foundation's network, raising questions about its applicability to broader educational systems. Furthermore, while the study acknowledges the importance of context, it does not offer country-specific recommendations, potentially overlooking the nuanced realities of leadership in diverse socio-political environments.

Collectively, these four studies offer a deep understanding of school governance and leadership in resource-constrained and culturally diverse contexts. Several common elements and thematic insights emerge. First, effective governance is consistently linked to better human and financial capital outcomes, suggesting the need for schools to institutionalize transparent policies, develop strategic partnerships, and cultivate accountability mechanisms (Amzat, 2024a; Yusuf & Mai, 2024). Second, leadership is portrayed not merely as positional authority but as a dynamic capacity influenced by organizational culture, stakeholder engagement, and institutional resources. The integration of value-based leadership, particularly in Islamic schools, is an important cultural nuance that these studies propose (Amzat, 2024b). Third, country-level differences are evident, with Kyrgyz schools generally outperforming those in Indonesia and Tanzania in terms of leadership effectiveness and governance capacity (Yusuf & Mai, 2024; Paramboor, 2024). These differences point to the influence of national policy environments, institutional histories, and resource allocation practices.

Methodologically, the studies display a good range of approaches—from qualitative exploration and comparative surveys to structural modeling. This methodological pluralism enhances the credibility and depth of the collective findings. However, there are notable limitations. The frequent reliance on self-reported data, particularly from school leaders, may skew assessments of governance and leadership quality. In addition, cross-sectional designs dominate the corpus, limiting the capacity to capture the evolution of leadership practices over time. Few studies incorporate perspectives from teachers, students, or external stakeholders, creating a potential blind spot in understanding how

leadership is experienced at different levels of the school ecosystem.

In terms of policy implications, the evidence strongly supports investments in leadership capacity building—not only through training programs but also through institutional reforms that empower school leaders to act with autonomy and accountability. The development of tailored models, such as the leadership capacity framework proposed by Amzat (2024b), provides a roadmap for designing context-sensitive interventions. Importantly, the studies highlight the need for systemic alignment between school governance structures and broader educational goals. Fragmented or weak leadership is shown to undermine both human capital development and financial sustainability, whereas strong leadership facilitates not only operational efficiency but also moral purpose and community trust.

The research under this theme shows the centrality of governance and leadership in driving school improvement. The findings reveal that while technical competence and resource management are critical, they must be embedded within leadership practices that are responsive, collaborative, and ethically grounded. The NAMA Foundation's efforts to strengthen leadership across multiple levels of the education system serve as a compelling case of how structured, evidence-based interventions can catalyze long-term educational transformation. Moving forward, further research is needed to explore how these leadership models adapt over time, interact with shifting policy landscapes, and influence student learning outcomes in a sustained manner.

Financial Sustainability in Islamic Educational Institutions and CSOs

The sustainability of educational institutions—particularly in low- and middle-income countries—depends not only on pedagogical quality or governance structures but also on stable and ethical financial management. This is especially the case in faith-based settings, where Islamic principles inform both the purpose of education and the mechanisms through which it is supported. Under the NAMA Foundation's strategic umbrella, three key studies examine financial sustainability in Islamic secondary schools and affiliated civil society organizations (CSOs) across Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania. These studies approach the subject from multiple angles: the structural challenges facing CSOs, the role of Islamic social finance in education, and the link between financial sustainability and the quality of school facilities. Together, they provide a layered, context-sensitive understanding of how Islamic educational institutions can maintain and enhance their financial viability in an increasingly complex global landscape.

The most foundational of these contributions is "A Qualitative Inquiry into Financial Sustainability of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)", which investigates how NAMA-affiliated CSOs in the three countries navigate financial constraints (Thaker & Akbar, 2024). Using a case study approach, the authors present in-depth interviews with CSO leaders to identify barriers to and

enablers of sustainability. The study reveals that many organizations rely heavily on international donors, leaving them vulnerable to funding volatility. In addition, weaknesses in grant writing capacity, poor financial management practices, and limited diversification of income streams are recurrent challenges. One of the more salient findings is the underutilization of local fundraising and community-based financial models, often due to inadequate public engagement or perceptions of dependency. The study further notes that regulatory environments—particularly in Tanzania and Kyrgyzstan—pose bureaucratic hurdles that restrict the financial agility of CSOs. Despite these constraints, the research identifies innovative practices such as social entrepreneurship, service-based revenue models, and training consultancies as emerging sources of resilience. Although rich in insight, the study is limited by its small sample size and lack of comparative financial metrics. Nonetheless, it provides a vital foundation for understanding the broader ecosystem within which Islamic education operates.

In "Financial Sustainability in Islamic Secondary Schools: Diversifying Financial Resources through Islamic Social Finance Mechanisms", the focus shifts from CSOs to formal school settings, with particular attention to Islamic principles that govern economic behavior (Zain, Sidek, & Hasbullah, 2024b). This paper critically reviews the potential of Islamic social finance (ISF) instruments—such as waqf (endowment), zakat (almsgiving), sadaqah (voluntary charity), and qard hasan (benevolent loan)—as sustainable funding sources for Islamic secondary schools. The authors argue that conventional models of financial sustainability, which often mimic for-profit enterprise logic, are misaligned with the mission of Islamic education. Instead, they propose a Shariah-compliant financial framework grounded in the objectives of maqasid al-shariah (higher aims of Islamic law), which prioritizes communal benefit, equity, and justice.

The study introduces a conceptual model comprising four core dimensions: (1) Shariah-compliant resource accumulation and preservation, (2) earning adequate income, (3) repaying obligations, and (4) maintaining and renewing educational assets. Drawing from literature reviews and examples from NAMA-affiliated schools, the paper advocates for a hybrid financial strategy that blends traditional philanthropy with innovative instruments such as Islamic microfinance, sukuk (Islamic bonds), and charitable crowdfunding. The strength of this study lies in its integration of religious, financial, and educational discourses, offering a culturally resonant alternative to mainstream funding models. However, the analysis remains largely conceptual, with limited empirical data on implementation or outcomes. The authors themselves acknowledge the absence of detailed case-based evaluation, which would enhance the model's operational credibility. Even so, the paper makes a valuable theoretical contribution by challenging prevailing assumptions about how Islamic schools should finance their operations.

The third study, "Exploring Financial Sustainability in Islamic

Secondary Schools: Importance of Good Facilities in Improving Learning Process", establishes a more tangible link between finance and educational outcomes (Zain, Sidek, & Hasbullah, 2024a). Through a qualitative meta-analysis of existing documents, NAMA reports, and secondary literature, the authors examine how financial sustainability translates into the provision of adequate school facilities, which in turn enhance the teaching and learning environment. The paper argues that financial sustainability is not simply about budget stability but about a school's capacity to consistently provide infrastructure that supports student development and teacher performance. While it acknowledges that lavish facilities are not necessary, it stresses the importance of having well-maintained, functional spaces—classrooms, laboratories, libraries, sanitation facilities—that uphold the dignity and safety of both learners and educators.

The study outlines how the NAMA Foundation's Institutional Development Programme (IDP) facilitates this process. Under the IDP, selected Islamic schools receive grants in three sequential phases: (1) charitable funding for core expenses, (2) support for revenue-generation tools such as school management software, and (3) resources for infrastructural renewal or development. This phased approach reflects a strategic alignment between immediate relief and long-term investment. The authors draw on Shariah legal maxims to reinforce their argument, positioning facility provision as an extension of hifz al-mal (protection of wealth) and hifz al-aql (protection of intellect). This theological grounding elevates the discussion beyond administrative efficiency to one of moral imperative. Still, the study would benefit from greater specificity regarding which types of facility investments yield the most educational returns. Moreover, the reliance on documentary analysis limits the ability to assess causal impact or generalize findings beyond the NAMA ecosystem.

Taken together, these three studies illustrate the multi-dimensional nature of financial sustainability in Islamic educational contexts. First, sustainability is not merely about securing revenue but about aligning financial practices with the spiritual and communal values that underpin Islamic education (Zain et al., 2024a, 2024b). This emphasis is particularly important in settings where donor fatigue, weak local economies, and socio-political instability create constant fiscal pressure. Second, diversification of funding sources emerges as a core strategy, with Islamic social finance mechanisms offering both legitimacy and flexibility (Thaker & Akbar, 2024; Zain et al., 2024b). The integration of instruments such as waqf, zakat, and qard hasan enables schools to tap into historically rooted, community-based modes of support, while also encouraging public participation and trust. Third, all three studies highlight the importance of organizational capacity—including financial literacy, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement—as a determinant of sustainability. Even the most robust funding model can fail without the institutional systems and leadership capacity to manage resources responsibly and transparently.

There are, however, notable gaps across the body of work. Empirical data remain sparse, particularly in terms of cost-benefit analysis, long-term financial performance, and educational outcomes linked to funding practices. The absence of longitudinal data further limits the ability to assess sustainability over time. Moreover, while the studies touch on regional variations, they do not fully explore how national policy environments, tax frameworks, or banking regulations may facilitate or hinder Islamic finance in education. For instance, the role of government in recognizing waqf-based institutions or regulating zakat collection is not discussed in depth. Addressing such gaps would strengthen the generalizability and applicability of the findings.

In terms of practical implications, the research suggests several ways forward. Policymakers and educational leaders should consider formalizing partnerships with Islamic finance institutions to create sustainable, Shariah-compliant funding channels. Educational NGOs and CSOs should be supported in developing financial management competencies, including training in budgeting, forecasting, and impact reporting. At the same time, school leaders should be equipped to align infrastructural investment with pedagogical priorities, ensuring that financial inputs lead to measurable educational improvements. Donors and philanthropic actors must also recognize that sustainability requires a shift from one-off funding to systemic capacity-building, including support for data systems, governance, and community mobilization.

The theme of financial sustainability, as explored in these three NAMA-funded studies, underscores the need for a values-driven, structurally sound, and contextually relevant financial model for Islamic education. These studies collectively remind us that education is not merely a pedagogical project but also an economic and ethical one—requiring institutions to steward resources wisely, remain accountable to their communities, and uphold the spiritual ethos that serves as the foundation for their mission. While challenges persist, the integration of Islamic social finance, community-based models, and strategic institutional support presents an important framework for sustainable education in Muslim-majority and faith-based school systems.

Assessing Quality in Education: Stakeholder Perspectives, and Assessment Frameworks

As education systems globally shift toward accountability, transparency, and data-informed improvement, the question of how to define, measure, and improve school quality has come to the fore. In the context of developing countries, where resource constraints often intersect with cultural and systemic diversity, the challenge becomes even more acute. The NAMA Foundation's efforts in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania include a strong focus on school assessment and stakeholder-driven indicators of educational quality. Under Theme 5, three studies explore school performance and excellence from

multiple perspectives: Parental Satisfaction and Engagement with School Quality Indicators, Understanding School Comprehensive Excellence from Teachers, Parents and Students' Perspective, and Evaluation of Self-Reported School Assessment Index. Each study adds a unique lens to the understanding of what constitutes school excellence, how it is experienced, and how it can be measured.

The study Parental Satisfaction and Engagement with School Quality Indicators: A Comparative Study provides critical insight into one of the most underrepresented stakeholder groups in educational evaluation—parents (Khiati, Ahmed, & Al-Hidabi, 2024). Utilizing data from NAMA-supported schools before and after program implementation (2021–2022), the study assesses parental feedback on three core dimensions derived from the NAMA Theory of Change: School Life, Learning Success, and School Values and Culture. The findings reveal a consistent upward trend in parental satisfaction across all three countries, with Indonesia recording the highest satisfaction scores, followed by Kyrgyzstan and Tanzania. The research suggests that increased parental engagement is closely linked to improvements in school communication, inclusive practices, and community involvement. Particularly noteworthy is the finding that parents consistently held more favorable views of school life and values-based education than teachers and students. This discrepancy highlights the differentiated expectations and evaluative lenses that various stakeholders bring to the concept of educational quality. Although the study relies on self-reported Likert-scale responses, which are subject to bias, its large sample size and longitudinal design lend weight to its conclusions. Moreover, it provides a powerful case for integrating parental feedback mechanisms into school improvement plans and national quality assurance frameworks.

The second study, Understanding School Comprehensive Excellence from Teachers, Parents and Students' Perspective: A Comparative Study, takes a more holistic approach by comparing perceptions across three key stakeholder groups within the school community (Mai & Yusuf, 2024). The authors define "comprehensive excellence" as a multidimensional construct encompassing School Life, Learning Success, and Cultural and Values Education. Using a cross-sectional survey of 1,715 respondents (including 923 students, 406 teachers, and 386 parents) from 63 schools, the study employs two-way ANOVA to examine how perceptions vary by respondent type and national context. The results underscore significant variation, both between countries and among stakeholder groups.

For instance, parents consistently rated school life and cultural education more positively than students and teachers. This optimism is particularly pronounced in Indonesia, where school-community relations are often more established. In contrast, Tanzanian participants—across all groups—expressed the lowest satisfaction, highlighting deep-seated challenges in infrastructure, leadership, and resource allocation. Notably, "Culture and Values Education" emerged as the strongest perceived dimension of excellence, reinforcing the

importance of integrating moral and spiritual dimensions into school ethos, particularly in Islamic school contexts. The study's methodological strength lies in its large, multi-stakeholder sample and its comparative design. However, its reliance on perception-based data leaves room for subjectivity, and its cross-sectional nature does not allow for tracking change over time. Still, it makes a critical contribution by demonstrating how different stakeholder groups conceptualize "quality" differently, with implications for policy and school-level decision-making.

The most technical of the three studies is "Evaluation of Self-Reported School Assessment Index: A Comparative Study of Secondary School Performance", which evaluates school performance using the NAMA Foundation's Theory of Change as a measurement framework (Hamed, Preece, & Juperi, 2024). This study introduces a School Assessment Index composed of four indicators: School Life, Learning Success, School Culture and Values, and Parent and Community Engagement. Data are collected through self-report questionnaires completed by school staff across selected schools in the three countries. The findings indicate that Indonesia had the highest overall performance on the index, followed by Kyrgyzstan and then Tanzania. The study further disaggregates performance into individual indicators, revealing nuanced strengths and weaknesses. For instance, while Kyrgyzstan scored high in literacy and teacher quality, Indonesia excelled in enrollment and parent involvement, and Tanzania, though lower overall, showed some resilience in cultural values and community trust.

A particularly valuable component of the study is its analysis of instrument validity and reliability, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.57 to 0.92, indicating generally acceptable internal consistency. Furthermore, the study engages with debates around the validity of self-report instruments, noting that while expert respondents are more likely to provide accurate assessments, self-reported data can be influenced by social desirability and contextual bias. The authors also acknowledge the importance of contextual variables—such as geography, policy environments, and leadership capacity—in shaping school performance. Despite these insights, the study is limited by its exclusive reliance on internal perspectives, without triangulating data through external evaluations or student learning outcomes.

When considered together, these three studies reveal several cross-cutting insights. First, stakeholder perceptions of school quality are not uniform, and effective assessment systems must account for this diversity. While parents may emphasize moral development and safety, teachers may prioritize professional autonomy, and students may value engagement and relevance (Khiati et al., 2024; Mai & Yusuf, 2024). This underscores the need for multi-perspective evaluations that balance technical metrics with experiential data. Second, the studies highlight the context-specific nature of school quality, shaped by national policies, cultural norms, resource availability, and community expectations. The consistent underperformance of Tanzanian

schools across the studies identifies systemic issues requiring targeted intervention—not only in material resources but also in leadership development and pedagogical support.

Third, the integration of values and culture into quality assessment frameworks is one of the key features of the NAMA approach. In contrast to Western models that often prioritize academic outcomes and operational efficiency, the NAMA framework incorporates spiritual, ethical, and communal dimensions. This holistic vision aligns with Islamic educational philosophy and offers an alternative paradigm for quality assurance in faith-based or value-driven school systems. Furthermore, the emphasis on parent and community engagement as a pillar of quality suggests a broader conception of schools as community institutions rather than isolated service providers (Hamed et al., 2024).

Methodologically, the studies collectively employ a strong mix of survey instruments, statistical analysis (ANOVA, reliability testing), and conceptual frameworks (Theory of Change). Their shared use of the NAMA ToC framework creates coherence across studies and allows for comparison and benchmarking. However, limitations persist, particularly in the reliance on self-reported data, absence of objective student learning metrics, and the lack of longitudinal follow-up in some cases. Future research could address these gaps by integrating standardized learning assessments, qualitative case studies, and real-time school monitoring systems.

In terms of policy implications, the studies offer several actionable recommendations. Ministries of Education and educational NGOs should prioritize the development of inclusive school assessment tools that capture stakeholder voices and go beyond test scores. Parental feedback mechanisms should be institutionalized, with regular surveys informing school planning and accountability. Investment in teacher and school leader training should include modules on data literacy and continuous school self-evaluation. Moreover, values education and culture-building activities should be formally recognized as indicators of quality, particularly in Islamic and community-based schools.

The body of work under Theme 5 presents a compelling case for rethinking school quality through a multi-dimensional, stakeholder-informed lens. It demonstrates that excellence in education is not simply about outperforming benchmarks but about cultivating schools that are responsive, inclusive, and aligned with the aspirations of their communities. The NAMA Foundation's integrative approach provides a clear model that is relevant to the cultural context for other educational systems seeking to balance accountability with authenticity. It links parental engagement, cultural values, and comprehensive assessment.

Strengths of the NAMA-Funded Studies

The studies published in *NAMA International Journal of Education and Development* Volumes 1 and 2 reflect a coherent and methodologically rigorous body of research that collectively advances understanding of educational transformation in developing, faith-based contexts. A key strength lies in their thematic coherence and holistic scope, with studies covering teacher development (Ssekamanya et al., 2024; Preece, 2024), student agency (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ssekamanya & Mahmood, 2024), school leadership (Amzat, 2024a, 2024b; Yusuf & Mai, 2024), financial sustainability (Zain et al., 2024a, 2024b; Thaker & Akbar, 2024), and assessment frameworks (Hamed et al., 2024; Mai & Yusuf, 2024).

Rather than examining isolated interventions, the research embraces a systems-thinking approach, highlighting interdependencies, such as how leadership influences pedagogy or how financial models affect school infrastructure. Another strength is the comparative, context-specific lens across Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania (Ahmad et al., 2024; Khiati et al., 2024). This allows for meaningful cross-country insights into why certain reforms gain traction in one context over another, thereby supporting the development of tailored strategies.

The studies also reflect a strong alignment with Islamic and community-based educational philosophies, integrating values-based leadership (Amzat, 2024b) and Shariah-compliant finance (Zain et al., 2024b) into models of school improvement. By doing so, they challenge dominant Western-centric paradigms in education research.

Methodologically, the studies exhibit diversity and rigor, employing structural equation modeling (Ssekamanya et al., 2024; Ssekamanya & Mahmood, 2024), classroom observations (Ahmad et al., 2024), ANOVA and reliability testing (Mai & Yusuf, 2024; Hamed et al., 2024), and qualitative case studies (Thaker & Akbar, 2024; Paramboor, 2024). The consistent application of the NAMA Theory of Change ensures coherence across themes and enables performance benchmarking. Importantly, the research also elevates underrepresented geographies—East Africa and Central Asia—and mid-tier Islamic schools. This helps in expanding the global conversation on education equity.

The emphasis on stakeholder voice, including students, parents, and community actors (Khiati et al., 2024; Zeki & Wasiq, 2024), adds participatory depth, while the studies' practical orientation ensures relevance through actionable recommendations. Finally, the focus on 21st-century skills and the validation of NAMA's flagship programs (e.g., ROOTS, EDULEAD) (Ahmad et al., 2024; Preece, 2024) underscore the Foundation's commitment to modernization and impact. Collectively, these studies provide a culturally grounded, empirically rich framework for advancing equitable, quality education in the Global South.

Suggestions for Future research

The studies published in Volumes 1 and 2 of the NAMA International Journal of Education and Development serve as a strategic milestone in combining academic rigor with field-based development work. They validate the Foundation's flagship programs (Ahmad et al., 2024; Preece, 2024) while offering new pathways for program refinement, policy engagement, and regional replication. The research demonstrates that meaningful educational transformation depends on holistic systems thinking. It addresses teacher practice (Ssekamanya et al., 2024), student empowerment (Ssekamanya & Mahmood, 2024), institutional leadership (Amzat, 2024b), and financial sustainability (Zain et al., 2024b) in tandem.

Notably, the emphasis on Islamic and community-based schooling provides a culturally anchored counterpoint to dominant global discourses and enriches policy dialogues on equity and relevance in education (Thaker & Akbar, 2024; Yusuf & Mai, 2024). Key implications emerge for future action: First, investments in qualitative capacity and demographic tracking are essential for deeper equity analysis and program targeting (Paramboor, 2024). Second, expanding longitudinal research and integrating student learning outcome data will help determine sustainable impact. Third, the triangulation of stakeholder voices with robust metrics strengthens accountability and participatory reform (Khiati et al., 2024; Mai & Yusuf, 2024). Finally, the studies underscore the importance of context—highlighting that solutions must be adapted to local needs, not imposed uniformly.

For NAMA and its partners, this body of work provides not just validation, but a foundation for strategic scaling, adaptive learning, and policy influence. It signals the role that values-based NGOs can play in shaping global education conversations grounded in authenticity, inclusion, and data-driven insight.

Recommendations on Expanding Demographic Data Collection for NAMA Foundation Studies

To further strengthen its evidence-based approach to educational development, the NAMA Foundation is encouraged to enhance its demographic data collection strategies across Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania. While existing studies have effectively segmented data by country and school, they have not consistently captured individual-level variables—such as gender, age, or socioeconomic status—that are essential for analyzing equity, targeting interventions, and designing context-sensitive solutions. A more nuanced demographic framework would enable the Foundation to assess disparities in access, performance, and participation more accurately.

For students, recommended data points include gender, age, grade level, disability status, socioeconomic background, and boarding versus day status.

Additional indicators—such as religious affiliation, home language, and involvement in extracurricular activities—can shed light on identity formation, inclusion, and leadership potential. For teachers, demographic variables such as gender, teaching experience, academic qualifications, subject specialization, and participation in NAMA programs (e.g., ROOTS, EDULEAD) can support competency tracking and inform professional development. Collecting information on ICT proficiency and leadership roles (e.g., department head) would further enhance analysis of capacity and growth.

At the school level, contextual variables such as school type, urban/rural classification, language of instruction, student-teacher ratios, and access to ICT are critical for interpreting variation in outcomes and resource needs. Community and family-level data—such as parental education, household income, and transportation access—can help explore external barriers to learning.

To operationalize this, NAMA should integrate a standard demographic module into baseline and endline instruments, adopt anonymized IDs for tracking, and train enumerators on ethical data practices. Future reports should disaggregate and analyze findings through these demographic lenses. Ultimately, such enhancements will uphold NAMA's commitment to equity and allow for more inclusive, responsive, and effective educational programming.

Recommendations for Qualitative Data

To enrich its evidence base and enhance the impact of its interventions, the NAMA Foundation is urged to adopt a more rigorous, context-sensitive approach to qualitative research and demographic data collection. While current quantitative studies capture broad trends, qualitative methods offer essential insight into the lived experiences of stakeholders—yet are often underutilized or under-analyzed. NAMA should contextualize quotes by including respondent metadata (e.g., stakeholder role, country, gender, program involvement) and present narratives as structured case studies that illustrate transformative journeys.

Qualitative data collection should also diversify beyond interviews and open-ended surveys, incorporating methods like focus groups, reflective journals, PhotoVoice, and participant observation. Reports should transparently document how qualitative samples were selected, how data were analyzed, and how findings triangulate with quantitative trends. Presenting themes with frequency markers, contradictions, and visual tools (e.g., quote matrices or storyboards) will further elevate clarity and usability.

Simultaneously, demographic data collection should be significantly expanded across students, teachers, schools, and communities. For students, this includes gender, age, disability status, socioeconomic background, home language, and extracurricular involvement. For teachers, data should cover

teaching experience, qualifications, subject expertise, ICT proficiency, and participation in programs like ROOTS and EDULEAD. At the school level, variables like type, size, location, student-teacher ratio, language of instruction, and digital infrastructure must be recorded. Community and family data, such as parental education and transport access, provide further insight into systemic equity issues.

To implement these improvements, NAMA should standardize demographic modules in all surveys, ensure anonymized IDs for data privacy, and train local teams in ethical, high-quality qualitative and demographic research. These enhancements will not only increase the rigor and utility of NAMA's work but also uphold its mission of inclusive, contextually grounded educational transformation.

SUMMARY

The NAMA Foundation's commissioned volumes present 19 rigorously designed studies focused on educational transformation in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania. Organized across four themes—teacher development and pedagogy, student empowerment and 21st-century skills, financial sustainability of Islamic educational institutions and CSOs, and school performance and assessment frameworks—the research offers a holistic examination of interrelated dimensions of education. The studies apply diverse methods, including PLS-SEM, classroom observation, thematic analysis, and stakeholder surveys, to ensure depth and reliability. A unifying element is the NAMA Theory of Change, which anchors the research in shared conceptual benchmarks such as school life, values, leadership, and learning success. The research highlights the efficacy of interventions like ROOTS and EDULEAD, explores the lived realities of teachers and students, and reflects faith-based values across Islamic institutions. Strong comparative insights are drawn from the three-country model, revealing contextual variations and universal challenges, such as the persistent need for professional development, inclusive pedagogy, digital readiness, and stakeholder engagement. Emphasis is also placed on improving research design—particularly the need for better demographic data, qualitative depth, and longitudinal tracking. Together, these studies contribute a culturally grounded, methodologically robust evidence base that strengthens the Foundation's strategic planning and sectoral influence.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

The studies published in Volumes 1 and 2 of the NAMA International Journal of Education and Development serve as a strategic milestone in combining academic rigor with field-based development work. They validate the Foundation's flagship programs while offering new pathways for program refinement, policy engagement, and regional replication. The research

demonstrates that meaningful educational transformation hinges on holistic systems thinking—addressing teacher practice, student empowerment, institutional leadership, and financial sustainability in tandem. Notably, the emphasis on Islamic and community-based schooling provides a culturally anchored counterpoint to dominant global discourses and enriches policy dialogues on equity and relevance in education.

Key implications emerge for future action: First, investments in qualitative capacity and demographic tracking are essential for deeper equity analysis and program targeting. Second, expanding longitudinal research and integrating student learning outcome data will help determine sustainable impact. Third, the triangulation of stakeholder voices with robust metrics strengthens accountability and participatory reform. Finally, the studies underscore the importance of context—highlighting that solutions must be adapted to local needs, not imposed uniformly.

For NAMA Foundation and its partners, this body of work provides not just validation, but a foundation for strategic scaling, adaptive learning, and policy influence. It signals the role that values-based NGOs can play in shaping global education conversations grounded in authenticity, inclusion, and data-driven insight.

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