

Global goal setting: partnerships and innovative resourcing in education

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Introduction

It is a truism that the public sector will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) alone. With regard to Education for All (EFA) targets and literacy, many policy-makers agree that conscientious, concerted and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders are the only solution, and that public-private partnerships (PPP) have a major role to play.¹ And so, over the last three decades, there have been policy changes all around the globe to involve the private sector in extending access, equity and quality in education. The idea is to ensure trust-based synergy and synchronisation in order to bring about a win-win situation.²

PPP programmes are generally successful where there is political will and when national governments play a supportive role in relation to private sector delivery of education.⁵ Governments are endeavouring to fully exploit the potential of the private sector to ensure value for money and quality education for the less affluent and disenfranchised sections of society. The World Bank has presented a complex array of schooling partnerships and diversity in service delivery, categorised by resources of financing of education provision around the globe.⁶ Global experiences have shown that PPP arrangements and decentralisation can deliver positive outcomes, but still there are challenges in developing countries, particularly with regard to implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.⁷

Examples from developed economies

Charter schools in the USA emerged due to incessant demand by the local communities for quality education of the students from less-privileged sections of society. Charter schools have successfully ensured quality education and access for the marginalised communities; today, these schools comprise more than five per cent of the country's public schools. American experience of charter schools has demonstrated that quality education institutions can be successful in PPP since the private management is more effective and the important aspects of tuition and discipline are decentralised.⁸ Charter schools have provided parents with the freedom to select the best institution for their children, and the initiative has partially ensured equity, productive efficiency and social cohesion.⁹ US charter school chains include Rocketship, KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) and Carpe Diem schools.

Sweden has also launched successful initiatives to reform education through private sector partnerships, the objective being to provide freedom of choice for students and their parents. Before the early 1990s, public schools were the only option, but the Swedish Government took a bold initiative and introduced school vouchers

Box 1

PPP: where is it happening?

The service delivery in PPP for affordable quality education by private entrepreneurs and non-state service providers gained momentum in the early 1980s. Some of the most successful models of innovative financing through contracting of services and management include:

- Education Service Contracting Scheme and PPP for School Infrastructure, Philippines
- Universal Secondary Education, Uganda
- Concession Schools, Bogota, Colombia
- Independent Schools, Qatar
- Contract schools and charter schools, USA
- Khazanah Trust schools, Malaysia
- British Academy Initiative, UK
- Private School Finance, Australia, Canada and New Zealand
- Build, Transfer and Lease Scheme, South Korea
- PPP Initiative, Punjab, Pakistan, through Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS) by Punjab Education Foundation (PEF)³

The cost-effective private service delivery has other successful PPP models through education vouchers. For example:

- Voucher programmes, Colombia and Chile
- Private School Subsidies, Côte d'Ivoire, the Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand and Canada
- Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, USA
- Voucher Scheme, Qatar
- Education Voucher Scheme, Pakistan
- State tax credit programmes, USA
- Senior Secondary School Voucher Program, Rajasthan, India
- Training Assistance Voucher Program, Laos

Other examples of PPP in policy, strategy and education support services are private sector school review in the UK, Dubai, Thailand and Abu Dhabi; private sector accreditation in the Philippines; and school testing services in the USA and the Philippines.⁴

for compulsory years of schooling with decentralised funding and financing on the basis of per child enrolled. It has since been established that student learning outcomes and average performances of these schools are relatively better.¹⁰

The UK's free schools benefited greatly from the US and Swedish experiences. The British 'academy' model was introduced in 2000 by Tony Blair's government, and is one of the major initiatives of decentralisation in the education sector, with partnership from private service providers. The initiative has significantly improved the standards of education. School leadership has been one of the most significant factors for success of the UK's academies, with many failing schools having been successfully turned around. The Education Act 2011 provided a statutory mandate to effectively respond to and meet the demands of parents for quality education, thereby promoting freedom of choice for the parents. The

Box 2

The Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS) programme, Punjab

PEF introduced its FAS programme in PPP mode in 2005. The pilot project included 54 schools with 2,227 students and a funding of PKR5 million.¹⁷ The financing of education is by PEF through the exchequer, and service delivery is through the private sector. The hallmark of the model is that funding follows the students and not the schools.

Private schools are selected through a competitive transparent process and enter into partnership with PEF through a contract with specified terms and conditions. PEF pays a sum of PKR450 as tuition fee to the private schools on the basis of per-child enrolled, and the school is not allowed to charge anything to the students. The private schools are relieved of the onerous task of fee collection and at the same time parents' disposable income is increased. The chief determinant of the continuation of the partnership is the Quality Assurance Test (QAT), which is conducted by PEF through an independent third party. It is mandatory that 66.6 per cent of the students score more than 45 per cent of the marks in the QAT. If the school fails the QAT, it is given another chance and a second QAT is conducted after six months. Two consecutive failed attempts of QAT lead to termination of the contract, as per the terms and conditions of the PPP agreement. In order to avoid the contract being terminated, many of the private schools have not only hired quality staff for mentoring assignments but have also upgraded the school infrastructure to improve the teaching-learning environment.

In addition to the QAT testing, it is mandatory for students at the PEF-financed private schools to sit the state examinations conducted by the Punjab Examination Commission and Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education. Comparative analysis of the learning outcomes and test scores in all subjects between public schools and PEF-assisted schools show that the private schools do better, despite the fact that government schools require double the resources to educate a child compared to private schools.¹⁸ The model has been a huge success so far, and today 1.6 million children are being educated through the FAS programme in 36 districts of Punjab.

converted schools performed much better than government schools in terms of quality service delivery and learning outcomes of the students.¹¹

Developing world experiences

Fe y Alegría (FyA), a Latin American non-governmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to improving educational services in slum areas, is providing primary, secondary and technical education programmes in poor parts of the region. The mission of FyA is to empower poor students with knowledge and quality education, and by now a large number of national governments in Latin American countries have entered into contracts with the NGO. Teachers, who are central to the organisational structure, are approached through a competitive recruitment process, and good management ensures discipline and continuous professional development of the teachers.¹² FyA seeks funding from national and internal donors but the organisation has complete financial autonomy. It strives to enhance the didactic resource base of the teachers through professional development, and qualified teachers in return impact the learning outcomes of their pupils. Together with the Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS) of the Punjab Education Foundation (see below), FyA is currently the largest PPP programme in the developing world.

Colombia Concession Schools (CCS) started in Bogota as a result of growing demand from parents for primary and secondary schools. CCS opened to provide opportunity of access with quality education to the poorest of the poor areas of Colombia's capital city. The Education Department engaged private service providers through a transparent and competitive selection process. After entering into contractual arrangements, the private sector was provided with a level playing field and were given complete administrative and financial autonomy. CCS is a successful initiative currently confined to the urban metropolis, but the potential to scale up are obvious in terms of learning outcomes of the students. In addition, the programme is less expensive per learner than public schools.

In Pakistan, the provision of education is a constitutional responsibility of the state. The government has been partially successful in providing access to education to school-age children, but affordable quality education remains a serious concern. There are many reasons for the deterioration in the service delivery in public schools: lack of resources, low motivation, poor training and inadequate opportunities for continuous professional development, limited capabilities and weak didactic resource base, absenteeism, teacher unions, lack of monitoring and evaluation, and a lack of incentive-based performance.¹³ In search of quality education for their children, many parents opted for low-cost private schools. Those who could afford it, sent their children to expensive elite schools or to fee-charging district public schools. The less affluent started looking for private schools in urban and rural areas that charge lower tuition fees, and this trend is reflected in the statistics. In 2001, the proportion of private schools in Pakistan up to the secondary level was 21 per cent. By 2006, it stood at 33 per cent in the country as a whole and 42 per cent in Punjab, the largest province in Pakistan. The pattern has continued and today expenditure for private education has exceeded that for public education.¹⁴

Between 2000 and 2005, the number of private schools grew from 32,000 to 47,000, and by the end of 2005, one in every three children enrolled at the primary level was studying in a private school.¹⁵ The unenviable performance of the public education system has resulted in an incessant demand for a system that promises and provides affordable quality education for all.¹⁶

Conclusion

It has been successfully demonstrated, both in developed and developing countries, that better and less expensive education is possible with PPP, and that this can lead to improved learning outcomes and ensured quality education standards. For the success of any PPP initiative, especially to promote affordable quality education and better access on a sustainable basis, the mutual trust of the partners – i.e. the state institutions and partner schools – is essential.

As the success stories show, there must be good design of PPP instruments, political ownership, secure cash flow, viable implementation models, regular monitoring and evaluation, and an inbuilt institutional mechanism of integration of results if PPP initiatives are to flourish and serve the goals of education and development.

Endnotes

- 1 Literacy Trends in Pakistan; Compiled from Population Census (1998) by UNESCO; Islamabad; 2003. The literacy rate is estimated at 54 per cent for 2004–05 (Economic Survey; Government of Pakistan).
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- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 LaRocque, N. Senior Education Specialist, Asian Development Bank (2012). Voting With Your Feet: Alternative financing for the delivery of education services.
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- 6 Patrinos, H. A., Barrera-Osorio, F. and Guaqueta, J. (2009). The Role and Impact of Public-Private Partnerships in Education.
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- 14 Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division, Federal Bureau of Statistics, The National Education Census, 2006.
- 15 Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, Asim Ijaz Khawaja, Tara Vishwanath and Tristan Zajonc (2007). Learning and Educational Achievement in Punjab Schools (LEAPS). Pakistan: Insights to Inform the Education Policy Debate.
- 16 Asian Development Bank (2010). Public Private Partnership in Education: Lessons learned from the Punjab Education Foundation, Manila, Philippines.
- 17 PKR is the ISO code for Pakistani rupee. USD 1 = PKR 106 on 1 August 2013.
- 18 *Ibid.*

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