

Exploring New Dimensions in Public-Private Partnership in Education

Israr Ahmed (Corresponding author)

Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

E-mail: israrconsult@yahoo.com

Prof. Dr. Mohammad Iqbal (Co-author)

Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Address: LandiAkhun Ahmad, Hayatabad Link, Ring Road, Peshawar, Pakistan

Abstract

The study conceptualized Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in education and reviewed current research in this area to identify and analyse PPP programmes in global perspective. The review of literature provided experiences and lessons learnt from different programmes. Objectives of the study were to clarify the concept and current status of PPP in education and analyse the existing initiatives of Public-Private Partnerships in education, before exploring new dimensions and models of PPP that could be integrated into the mainstream education system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The study was carried out in five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Population of the study consisted of 240 teachers associated with PPC programme, 240 experts on PPP subject, 120 government boys' secondary school principals/heads and 120 principals/heads of PPC institutions. The study chose stratified random sampling technique. The sample was divided into four groups: principals/heads boys' secondary schools, principals/heads of PPC institutions, PPC teachers and experts on PPP subject. The primary source of data collection was a uniform opinionnaire for all the respondents. The secondary sources of data included study of office documents, dissertations, internet and library sources and literature review. The analysis of data was given both quantitative and qualitative treatment. The results were validated with the help of statistical measures. The current PPP initiatives in Pakistan were reviewed. The study found a wide range of PPP in education provision the world over, each with different characteristics, design features and country context. It was discovered that there is a dire need for introducing PPP in education. The study made three dimensional recommendations: firstly, recommendations for improving and reforming the PPP initiatives; secondly, recommendations regarding new dimensions in PPP; and thirdly, suggestions for integrating them in the mainstream education system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Keywords: Dimensions, Public-Private Partnership (PPP), Education Provision, Public-Private Collaboration Programme

Introduction

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) could be conceptualized as joint collaboration in which the stake of the partners is involved on the basis of reciprocal understanding of objectives of public and private sectors. It is generally based on a contract between state, organization and private agency. It could be a relationship based upon mutually agreed terms and conditions between public and private partners to achieve predetermined objectives. This is a reflection of the uniform and flexible collaboration. The Canadian Council for PPP (CCPPP) (2012) documented that PPP is based on mutual cooperation between government and private agencies with clearly stated needs of public sector through allocation of resources, rewards and risks.

The study conceived public-private partnership in educational perspective. It took cognizance of the current research in this area to identify and analyse different programmes in education across the globe. The study also noted experiences of different projects and programmes associated with the problem.

According to the Pakistan Education Action Plan 2001-2005 (2002) PPP models that gained visibility within Pakistan include 'Adopt a School programme', non-formal school programme; adult literacy initiatives, Up-Gradation of Schools through Community Participation Project, Concessions to Private Schools, Citizen Community Boards, School Management Committees, Education Voucher Scheme, Tawana Pakistan Programme, Foundation Assisted Schools, Teaching in Clusters by Subject Specialists, Continuous Professional Development Programme, Fellowship Programme, Non-formal basic schools programme, Home School Programme, Community Supported Schools Programme, and Community Based School Programme.

The analysis of the data and literature review provided a general view of the PPP in education. A number of programmes of PPP in education of both developed and developing world were thoroughly studied and analyzed. The study also explored new dimensions in PPP. It was found that there are a number of PPP

models in use in the education sector, each with variety of characteristics, unique design features and different country contexts. The several forms of PPP being implemented across the world include Under Private Finance Initiatives (UK) in which construction and renovation of educational institutions are financially supported, operated and implemented by private service providers after which the leased schools are given back to the government authority; Private Management of Public Schools managed the School Improvement Service of the local education authority in Lincolnshire (UK). It has customers around the globe including the Ministries of National Education in Brunei and Oman; Community Action Networks (UK) in collaboration with Rural Net, built the leading network of volunteer organisations in the whole country, with more than 750 membership linking the social, corporate and public sectors;

Government of Ontario in Canada chose to use the phrase “Alternative Financing and Procurement” as a form of collaboration with the private providers that defined and assigned risks, resources and rewards; The New Schools Project in the Australian state of New South Wales consisted of two key parts. First, the private providers’ financed design and constructed new public schools in the state. Second, the private sector provided cleaning, maintenance, repair, security, safety, utility and other related services for them; The Offenbach schools Public-Private Partnership project provides for the renovation, upkeep and facility management of schools within Germany.

Another unique approach to Public-Private Partnership was evident in the Republic of South Africa where their national leader Nelson Mandela by the sole power of public persuasion with moral purpose succeeded in mobilising financial support from individual philanthropists and institutions to establish many new educational institutions to serve the educational interests and needs of the poor and marginalised segments of the society. Charter schools in the US are secular government schools of option that operate without many public restrictions of the rules and regulations that apply to conventional schools under public domain, such as restrictions on geographic enrolment and teacher union contracts etc. The JF Oyster bilingual elementary school in Washington DC was built without any cost at taxpayers through a novel approach of Public-Private Partnership; the private management of government schools in the United States can adopt either of the two types. The first involved contracting directly, in which a local school board directly contracts with an Educational Management Organisations to manage and govern a government educational institution. The second involved contracting indirectly, in which Educational Management Organisations manage Charter Schools either as the controller of the school charter or under contract to the institution that controls the school charter.

The study concluded that there are a number of pre-requisites to joint collaboration and meaningful partnerships in education; they include a strong regulatory framework, flexibility in provision and good quality assurance. More advanced and sophisticated models of Public-Private Partnerships for instance educational institution infrastructure development interventions and financial support-based PPP represent a significant design and implementation challenges for public sector. They require a redefinition and reconsideration of the role of government authorities and different skills of the concerned civil servants who are responsible for the intended task.

According to the Global Monitoring Report (2009) in fact Public-Private Partnerships in education sector is not a remedy to all ills. Progress towards improving educational outcomes more generally will require much wider programmes for reforms. However, PPP, if implemented rightly, are a valuable instrument for governments to achieve the objectives of national policy with respect to education. Good policy design, careful implementation and effective management of the programmes can make them a success.

Research Questions

The following key research questions were framed for the study:

1. What is the concept and current status of Public-Private Partnership in education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing initiatives of Public-Private Partnership in the education sector of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?
3. What can be the new dimensions of PPP to be integrated in the education system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan?

Methodology

An opinionnaire was the primary source of data collection, which was personally administered to all the respondents of four categories including principals/heads secondary schools, PPCs principals/heads, PPC teachers and experts on PPP subject and also collected in person. The secondary sources of data were a study of office documents, internet sources and review of the related literature.

The current descriptive study was carried out in five districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. It conceptualized Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in global perspective and investigated Public-Private Collaboration (PPC) programme in education. The selection of PPC institutions were made from the target

population.

The population of the study consisted of 120 principals/heads government boys' secondary schools, 120 principals/heads of PPC institutions, 240 PPC teachers and 240 experts on PPP subject. Stratified sampling techniques were chosen for collection of data. The sample was divided into four groups: principals/heads government secondary schools, principals/heads PPC institutions, PPC teachers and experts on PPP subject.

Results

The results of the study were based on the analysis of data which unfolded that:

1. There is a dire need for PPP in education because participation of private sector in the provision of education brings about positive results for enhancement of educational services,
2. Among different forms of PPP in education Public-Private Collaboration (PPC) is one of the successful forms of private sector participation in education, which is a replicable and sustainable mode of PPP in Pakistan.
3. The indicators for readiness to get into PPP should include political will and support to the concept of PPC; willingness of all parties involved to promoting Public-Private Collaboration in education and regulatory measures by government for identification and addressing of PPC needs.
4. Indicators of success of PPP programmes included availability of benchmark data for setting targets and subsequent assessing the progress of PPC programme and clear terms and conditions of partnership to prevent monopoly of either partner for smooth functioning of PPC programme.
5. Generic guidelines should be developed for identification of private partner by government; including experience, competence, team capacity, and effectiveness of proposed intervention etc.
6. A clear communication strategy should be in place at all levels to prevent communication gap between the government and the private partners.
7. An in-built mechanism should be formulated for conflict resolution as flexibility in terms of partnership.
8. There is a need for commitment on the part of government in the partnership agreement to allocate adequate funds to sustain the gains made through the public-private collaboration as a sustainability or exit strategy.
9. An accountability mechanism should be formulated for all PPC partners; making it part of the agreement based on results, financial discipline; internal and external audits of the PPC programme.
10. A number of indicators should be set for ensuring transparency on the part of government and private partners in running the PPC affairs. They included notification by district government to assign some responsibilities to concerned community particularly parents regarding PPC programme; involvement of PPC institutions in dialogue at different levels to make the programme successful and making the Parent Teacher Council and PPC institution part of the consultative process at all stages of public-private partnership.
11. Different Monitoring and Evaluation tools should be developed such as involvement of community through Parent-Teacher Councils in order to monitor the internal affairs of PPC; establishment of a monitoring committee at provincial and district levels to oversee its affairs; engagement of a district based credible NGO to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation process of the programme; evaluation of partners' performance by assessing outcomes as per agreed monitoring indicators & targets and establishment of a PPC-Management Information System at provincial level to provide relevant information needed for efficient and effective management of programme.
12. Possible risks and mitigation measures should be proposed in the partnership agreement.

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