

**Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) As Inter-mediator to Support  
Public Private Partnership in Education Sector at School Level in  
Sindh**

***Abstract***

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**Introduction:** The recent initiatives in Public Private Partnership in the globe is to provide support by the government to philanthropic initiative in which they provide money to non-profits, private schools and marginalized communities in rural areas. Yet another initiative model is that of providing professional services such as teacher training, capacity building, delivery of textbooks, curriculum designs, and other supplemental services with the coordination of specific organizations. The current study the researcher diagnosed the current practices and role of SEF as mediator of public private partner.

**Methodology:** The study is qualitative in nature; semi structured interview was applied as data collection tool with thematic analysis. The Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) as a semi-autonomous organization with a mandate to support education in the province through multifarious interventions. The Foundation ensures provision of equitable quality

*education across its education related portfolio by way of extending professional development and capacity building services for the school partners and the teachers on a regular basis as a major input for enhancing the students' overall development capacities. The Foundation has institutionalized student assessment system for monitoring the student achievements other than a school monitoring system which is in the process of being modernized further.*

**Keywords:** *Sindh Education Foundation, Public Private Partnership and Education Sector at school level*

## Introduction

Private participation in education has intensified over the last twenty years around the globe, serving all types of communities from high-income to low income families (Antoni et al., 2020). Although governments play a key role in financing the education (at least of primary and secondary education), in many countries but private sector also play their participation in provision of education (Patrinos, 2009). There is intermediary organization that have joined hand with private partners and opened school at grass root level of province of Sindh. Private partners are mainly NGO's and individuals, who are interested in opening schools in various districts of Sindh, recently the organization have signed an MoU with private partners in which it is stated that in order to open/ run schools the intermediary organization will provide financial and technical support to these individuals and NGO's

.Financial support is in terms of provision of money grants every 3 months, whereas technical support includes school visits and the provision of teacher training as well as monitoring and evaluation of private partners. However, the intermediary organization faces a challenge while opening schools and to explore the factors which are supporting the model of PPP in the province of Sindh (Sindh Education Foundation, 2011). In order to provide basic access to education and bring more than 200,000 out-of- school-children (OOSC) into the school systems, the private partners who want to open schools in the rural or marginalized community are likely to join hands with intermediary organization which provides them financial and technical support, while the private partners are responsible for establishing and managing the schools.

Private partners are either individuals or educational NGOs and 'individuals' are defined as people who have the experience of running and managing schools at the grass-root level. An NGO, then is any educational non-governmental organization that can intervene and open a cluster of schools in the various districts (Sindh Education Foundation, 2015). When private partners need to open a school at

the grass-root level they face certain challenges.

These challenges include poor infra-structure of the school, low enrollment of students, weakness in the teacher's capacity to deliver and limitation in training as well as language barriers etc. In order to understand the mechanism of public private partnerships and challenges faced by the organization itself and private partners this study highlights the key challenges and to explore the factors which are supporting PPP model in Sindh using case study methods (World Bank, 2018; Ahmad, Thomas, & Hamid, 2020; Ali et al., 2020). There are many NGO's and individuals who have signed MoU with the intermediary organization. The partners that are selected for this research include: Organization A, Organization B, and Organization C as well as ten Individuals. The portfolio of organizations and interventions in districts of Sindh under public-private partnerships model are as follows: two of them are smaller scale organizations, whereas the third organization has an outreach in overall Pakistan. This study highlights the challenges of private partners and discusses the factors which are supporting the factors of PPP while opening schools at grass-root level Sindh Education Foundation, 2011)

Globally there are many challenges faced by NGO's and individuals when the public and private partners join hands together. One of the key challenges is that NGOs have difficulty in finding adequate suitable and continuous funding for their work (Bellei, 2016; Ali, Ahmad & Sewani, 2022). The second key challenge that most of the private NGO's are facing is poor governance, who system has severe governance challenges. Thirdly there is absence of strategic planning, in that case when any NGO after agreeing certain terms and conditions gets certain amount of money from donors but due to lack of strategic management and planning they will end up with poor results and project will be either downsized or end without getting any of the target given by donor. Fourthly, the ability of lack of communication or poor networking also results in duplication of efforts and conflicting of strategies at ground level (Hodge & Greve, 2007; Ali, Shah & Ahmad, 2023). It will be repetitive mistakes by the people who are involved in the project as many NGO's do implement without mapping the community need and take the consent of the community. The overall network of communication is normally very poor within the sector (Prabhakar, 2010; Dilshad, Shah, & Ahmad, 2023; Imran et al., 2023; Jabeen, Ali & Ahmad, 2023).

### **Problem of Study**

The public-private partnership model is considered as one of the successful models in which the target is to provide basic education in the remote and disadvantaged areas of Sindh, in order to empower the children and bring out-of-school-children in the school systems throughout the Sindh (Jabbar, 2016). In order to bring children into schools, government run public schools, allow intervention to private sectors to open schools and use the model of public-private partnerships by joining hand with private partners

in educating the masses (Malik, 2010). There is an intermediary organization in the province of Sindh that plays a role

between the government and private partners by providing financial and technical support to the individuals and organizations Jabbar (2016). i.e. (private partners-educational NGO's or school operators who are interested in opening schools at grass-root level of Sindh).

Currently, the target of the organization is to enroll students that are out-of-school throughout the province. In order to fulfill the target, this intermediary organization takes money from government and circulates it to the private partners to open the schools in the province (Malik, 2010; Ahmad et al., 2023). While fulfilling the target, the organization and private partners have to face challenges, when both have same agenda of attaining the goal of bringing more than 200,000 out of school children of marginalized community using public private partnerships model in year 2017. This is exploratory research to investigate the key challenges faced by the intermediary organization and private partners to bring out-of-school children back into the school system in Sindh (Sindh Education Sector Plan {SESP}, 2018). This study is an attempt to explore the current practices and role of SEF as organization that leads public private partnership in the province in bringing out-of-school-children back to the schools and providing quality education.

### Scope of Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the factors which are supporting Public Private Partnership (PPP) process and coordinating institutes in Sindh and to investigate the issues related to implementation of this PPP in order to mainstream out of school children in the province of Sindh. In PPP model government /semi government organization and private partners which are NGO's and individuals in some cases, have to deal with challenges while attaining the goal of bringing out of school children back to the schools; challenges faced by the private partners, however there are some supporting factors which supports and ensure the success of projects (Iossa & Martimort, 2015; Ahmad, & Hamid, 2021). Usually, when private partner's open schools in far flung areas, broadly, they have to deal with school establishment and school management challenges. On the other hand, the role of intermediary organization is also very crucial due to the involvement of government in the funding process, government and bureaucratic interventions, complex structure of organization, higher management challenges, lack of capacity and training opportunities for staff (Iossa & Martimort, 2015; Ahmad, Rashid, & Ali, 2023). Beside challenges, there are also some supporting factors due to which PPP is a successful model and this study will give balance picture of supporting factors and challenges experienced by intermediary organization as well as private partners while opening schools at grass root level (Innovative Development Strategies, 2009; Naeem, Ali, & Ahmed, 2022). The key purpose of this study is to explore and understand the mechanism of public private partnerships, and focus on the identification of supporting factors and challenges face by the intermediary organization and private

partners.

## **Literature of Study**

### **Public Private Partnership**

According to research of Tilak (2010), there are several models of Public Private Partnership or PPP in trend in different contexts. The model of PPP has similar yet different features. Government take initiatives by using different models of PPP according to need of time. In this regard government invite private sector to take initiatives and join hands with government in order to bring positive change to attain the goals of educational development through a specific project; or by taking individual effort and convince the government to accept a new method of operation in which the private sector and the government jointly deliver any service. In both cases, public and private join hands together to bring any change (World Bank, 2018; Raza & Ahmed, 2017). Generally, different models of PPP are used to have a contract between government and private sector to bring any sort of new agreement in educational development for instance to set up new institutions, and/or to run the institutions, or carry on a particular activity in education whereas state shall be responsible for financial and monitoring and evaluation of the project (Carbonara et al., 2013; Thomas, Khan, & Ahmad, 2022). A typical model of PPP implies the private sector providing infrastructure and service delivery; it may also be responsible for designing, financing, building and ‘operating’; and it recovers its investment through lump-sum/annualized payments from the governments, and through user charges (Antoni et al., 2020; Ahmad, Bibi, & Imran, 2023). Under the typical model, it shares risk with the state. The other models of PPP included in which government plays the role of investing on infrastructure or sometimes government and private sector bear the costs together and private sector operates by using per child subsidy model in which pays recurring costs to the private partner on per student basis; or sometimes private sector bear the cost of infrastructure whereas government runs the institutions (Carbonara et al., 2013). Moreover, government also use the model in which government pays annualized/lump-sum payments to the private sector for capital investment; or private actors build infrastructure and run the institution, government bear all the costs, or government pays for the government-sponsored students only and the private players recovering other costs from other students.

### **Models of Public Private Partnership**

There are many factors the work presented by Litham (2009) that suggests how model of ppp is considered as successful model in education. The factors includes are as follow;

Ultimately success for PPPs in education must be measured by the degree that the PPPs have improved teaching and learning, provided improved facilities and introduced improved means of management and enabled the wider community to participate in the process of education and training needs Litham (2009): It is important to figure that there is a need of need assessment and it is carried out not only for the partnership 's providers but also the partnership 's end users. In other words, it is necessary to have need assessment for any PPP within the context of the overall national education sector plans and for all the partners to be clear about the transaction costs that will be incurred in maintaining the partnership.

**Ownership** Following on from the needs, it is essential to ensure that the end users are involved in the conception, planning and implementation stages of the endeavor. In addition, there needs to be an appropriate balance that can allow for the PPP to be directly accountable for its action and for each of the partners to be able to satisfy their own constituency in its terms of accountability (Elacqua, 2012).

**Accountability:** unfortunately, regulation and accountability concerning partnerships is still sparse and weak. But this regulatory vacuum makes it even more imperative that measures are in place to ensure transparency regarding the management, financial structures, processes and results. A focus on outcomes is paramount and it is important from the outset to have and maintain an instrument that can share information and results regarding these outcomes among the stakeholders (Brans, 2013). **Impact:** Although it is difficult to ascribe effects of change in the education sector, it is important to establish impact assessments on the partnerships and, again, to use the end users in this process of gathering the requisite evidence of impact (Litham, 2009; Ahmad, Sewani & Ali, 2021). There can be various PPP modalities for infrastructure projects. The major transaction modalities are given below but a particular PPP transaction can also be a hybrid model (Elacqua, 2012).

**Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT):** It is similar to that of BOT agreement apart from the fact that private party has the ownership of infrastructure until the fixed term expires.

**Build-Transfer-and-Operate (BTO):** It is a contractual agreement that allows govt. agency to award infrastructure project to the private parties on the basis of turn-key assuming delays, cost overruns and performance risks. Private parties have right to operate the project facility to collect the revenue.

**Contract-Add-and-Operate (CAO):** In this arrangement, private parties are tasked to expand the existing facility. However, the arrangement of transfer may or may not exist. **Develop-Operate-and-Transfer**

**(DOT):** It is a contractual arrangement that allows private parties to build infrastructure and develop adjoining properties as well. It allows the private parties to earn additional benefits from higher rental or property values.

**Rehabilitate-Operate-and-Transfer (ROT):** In this arrangement, private party is given a facility to



refurbish, maintain and operate for a certain period and private party is allowed to collect revenue and recover investment through user levies.

**Rehabilitate-Own-and-Operate (ROO):** In this arrangement, private party is given a facility to refurbish, maintain and operate without any limitation of time or imposed ownership.

**Concession Agreement:** In this arrangement, govt. agency entrusts the private party for a fixed term after certain payment is provided. The govt. may collect user levies itself or the entrusted may collect it for consideration.

**Management Contract (MC):** In this arrangement, govt. agency entrusts the private party for management of infrastructure fixed term after certain payment is provided. The govt. may collect user levies itself or the entrusted may collect it for consideration.

**Service Contract (SC):** In this arrangement, private party is a service provide to the govt. agency for a fixed term in order to build/refurbish a facility. The govt. agency pays the private party for that fixed term as per agreed schedule.

### **Practices of Public Private Partnership Model in Education In India and Uganda**

In addition, case of India is one of the relevant examples of South Asia, according to the study of Luthra (2013) in India's Public Private Partnership's model, the private sector takes the responsibility of managing schools run by the government. The responsibilities that need to be fulfilled by the private partners lies into four major categories; a) financial management b) staff management c) long term planning d) leadership (Estache, & Serebrisky, 2006; Akram, Khan, & Ahmad, 2022; Younis, Naeem, & Ali, 2023). For example, a private partner in India called the Edu Company has entered into an agreement with the government of India, in the Punjab province and is operating five schools under PPP Model. The other initiative that can be seen under PPP model in India is a philanthropic initiative in which they provide money to non-profits, private schools and marginalized communities in rural areas of India (Luthra & Mahajan, 2013; Aslam, Iqbal & Ahmed, 2022). Yet another initiative model is that of providing professional services such as teacher training, capacity building, delivery of textbooks, curriculum designs, and other supplemental services (SEF, 2017). The key idea is to bring private experts where contractors have failed to provide the level of quality. Therefore, performance of contractor can also be monitored. Recently Government of Gujrat has taken the steps to improve the level of learning throughout the state by focusing on capacity building and teacher training initiatives to improve the quality of education. Moreover, support services involving infra-structure of school buildings, transportation of children, provision of meals etc. For example, in states like Tamil Nadu, Karantaka and Andhra Pardesh private partners set up the entire hardware infrastructure facilities (Singh,



2017). In some cases, educational services are provided to the children of marginalized community by paying for students to enroll them in a private sector. Lastly, Provision of infrastructure Government can contract out the financing and construction of facilities to the private sector which allows the government to pay for these capital investments over time by making periodic payments over the term of the contract (Estache & Serebrisky, 2006). The scope of the responsibilities taken on by the private sector varies by contract, and similar arrangements often have different names (Luthra, 2013).

Moreover, the study of Brans (2011) also supports the findings of current study that; In order to meet the goals of Education for All the government of Uganda has adopted the model of Public Private Partnerships. Uganda is promoting Public Private Partnerships in secondary education (Luthra, 2013). The key reasons of focusing on Public Private Partnerships arrangements in educational context are the growth of their population.

According to recent statistics Uganda is one of the few countries where dependents (young-age) are more than working individuals. Moreover, education enrollment at the secondary level is very low (Brans, 2011). According to some surveys only 25.2 percent of the population is enrolled in secondary schools. High population growth is the pressure that increases the demand for more children to have more access to education (Estache & Serebrisky, 2006). In order to meet the challenge of attaining EFA goal with the growth of population, the government of Uganda has decided to use the PPP model in secondary schools to improve efficiency, strengthen partnerships with private sector, and improve targeting of resources to schools that are in particular need of support and mobilize external resources (Brans, 2011).

### **Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Educational Development**

In order to see that how and why role of development partners is very important globally there are some of authors like Lewis (2005); Lewis & Kanji (2009) are defining its role, the development partners can now almost be seen as a kind of tabularasa a blank state onto which a range of current ideas, expectations and anxieties about development are now projected (Lewis, 2005). The nature of development sector has diversity and complexities involved. NGO's in some parts of the world are known for independence movements, whereas, somewhere struggling against rights, dictatorships, women empowerment (Hodge & Greve, 2007). The role of NGO's is defined in many ways. Three main roles that are being played by NGO's are: Implementers: The role of an NGO as an implementer is mobilization of resources to provide goods and services ii) Catalysts: The role of a NGO as a catalyst defined as a promoter or aspirant of a change iii) Partners: The role of a partner reflects the growing trend for NGOs to work with government, donors and private partners (Lewis & Kanji, 2009).

The most common and crucial challenge at the present stage is financial constraint for the NGO sector

in Pakistan. One of the key reason is negligence by government sector, lack of support by the corporate or individuals, flow of funding mechanism is also very complex, if individuals or corporate is even willing to contribute but due to inefficiency funds are not necessarily reaching to non-profit organizations (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Ali, Kolachi, & Azam, 2023). This lack of development of funding mechanism, is leading NGO's towards uncertainty, especially the smaller NGO's cannot survive for the long run. Many of the small NGO's come into existence because of lump sum funding from a particular source and die once the funding is consumed and there is no replenishment (Kazmi & Quran, 2005). The government has a tendency to prefer capital grants over recurring grants. Therefore, non-profit organizations are able to start their organization on the basis of given capital grants but when it comes to sustenance in the long run, they are unable to do so. In NGO sector another big challenge is lack of adequate human resources within the sector (Kazmi & Quran, 2005; Ali, Mankash & Ullah, 2022). Most of these organizations rely on voluntary services, although it is the strength for the organization but due to itinerant nature of the activity of most NGO's, it doesn't make employment in non-profit organization as attractive career prospects (Reeves, 2003). In addition, employment in the rural areas with NGO's working in the villages is generally not the preference for the urban middle class. In order to contribute towards capacity building and training government has taken few steps through establishment of various Rural Support programs that aimed to strengthening of capacity of community-based organizations (Bano, 2008). The higher educational system will also have to play a role in order to increase social mobilization in youth and students. However, a greater expansion of enrollment in the field of social sciences and internship of students within NGO's is needed (Kazmi, & Quran, 2005; Ali et al., 2023). As far as current and short term and specific capacity building of NGO is concerned there is a need to train the current employees in the NGO's. Providing them incentives and giving short-term courses in order to do their capacity building (Aisha & Asif, 2002; Ali et al., 2023).

### **Sindh Education Foundation an Intermediary Organization to Support School Education Sector**

Sindh Education Foundation or SEF is one organization that plays an intermediary role in Sindh between different stake-holders, included government and private partners using the model of public private partnerships (SEF, 2017; Ali et al., 2020). This organization targets the marginalized community to provide basic access of education; the core mandate of the organization is to provide basic education to the marginalized community of Sindh (Malik, 2010; Ahmad, Ali, & Sewani, 2021). The other organizations are also following the model of public-private partnerships in relatively smaller scale, for instance, AKU-IED is one of such examples that is involved in provision of training to public sector education personnel (World Bank, 2018; Ali et al., 2023). In order to intensify the performance of the

education sector in Sindh, there is a need of expanding the scope of public-private partnerships by establishing IT services throughout the province, training sessions and capacity building of educational managers, teachers, stake-holders, school operators. Moreover, for strengthening the model of PPP the partnerships should be initiated with defined policies and rules of engagements and processes (SESP, 2018).

### **Method**

This study is qualitative in nature and phenomenology approach was applied as data analysis. The population of the study is public private partnership department of government of Sindh equal, all international and national development organizations. Purposive sampling techniques was applied because to contact with to collect data from persons of administration. Semi structured interview was developed to collect data as technique, interview as tool.

Themes were developed in data analysis process.

### **Findings**

#### **Supporting Factors to SEF**

The one of the key supporting factor using by the intermediary organization is their communication and advocacy with community as well as with stakeholders throughout Sindh. The document explained key objectives of organizational communication

- a) Organize advocacy events to promote philosophy behind its interventions and activities
- b) Garner acknowledgment and recognition and seek suggestions for improvement of public private partnership schemes through debates, dialogues and consultation sessions.
- c) create national and international linkages between intermediary organization and other organizations to enhance advocacy initiatives.
- d) provide essential information relating to education to help persuade policy and decision makers in Sindh.
- e) Produce material that helps enhance the knowledgebase on matters related to education and development besides promoting intermediary organization's achievements.
- f) Tailor communication efforts with local sensibility and wisdom for maximum effectiveness at grassroots level. The strategic elements of communication used by the organization included:

The intermediary organization use the strategies like events, seminars and workshops to increase awareness on education through road shows, mobile library and street plays and celebration of international day. Furthermore, intermediary organization also uses media engagement i.e. print and electronic media about new development through press releases and other forms of articles and also

advocacy via TV and Radio programs. Moreover, Policy Papers and Publications: Engage in extensive research and produce actionable policy papers on educational issues. In addition to that organizational communication department also use website and run social media pages in order to get connected with all stakeholders

### **SEF Schools Network in Province**

Since its establishment in 1992, the Foundation has made serious efforts to increase access to quality education for the students across Sindh especially those in the remote and under developed regions of the province. Initially, SEF's modus operandi focused on providing grants and loans to educational institutes and organizations. Today, the Foundation provides the communities with access to quality education in partnership with individuals and/or organizations. The Foundation ensures provision of equitable quality education across its education related portfolio by way of extending professional development and capacity building services for the school partners and the teachers on a regular basis as a major input for enhancing the students' overall development capacities. The Foundation has institutionalized student assessment system for monitoring the student achievements other than a school monitoring system which is in the process of being modernized further. The foundation supports 2640 schools across the province with 841000 Net enrolment of the students.

### **SEF School Inspections and Assessment**

Assessment and that of high quality is imperative for the success of the goals set by the Government of Pakistan for Educational Reforms. Keeping this view in mind of having good quality assessment, the Sindh Education Foundation, Govt. of Sindh has setup its very own Assessment Unit to assess the students' learning outcomes of its partner schools.

The major role of the Assessment Unit of SEF is to assess the students of all the schools working under its supervision and guidance. The Assessment Unit works dynamically from designing to the execution and conducts quality examinations both in English and Sindhi based on the National Curriculum given by the Ministry of Education (M&E). In the result of assessment practices, the result of the assessment highlights the areas of improvement for the programs like teacher training, learning environment with specific teacher training modules are designed for the effective learning and assessments are also indicators of performance of teachers

### **SEF Training and Assessment of Teacher's**

It was analysis that assessment and training of students and teachers has been provided by intermediary body and it supports the usage of PPP model. High quality assessment is imperative for the success and attainment of goals set by the govt. for educational reforms. Hence, the intermediary body has set up its own assessment unit and major role is to evaluate the students of all partner schools. The assessment

unit performs on both English and Sindhi curriculum provided by Ministry of Education.

The tools and strategies applied by the assessment dept. include the following:

- It has a team of subject experts that help in provoking active learning. Paper designing is especially focused to attain the programmatic objectives.
- High quality examination system is developed using modern tools of assessment that focus on learning rather than memorizing.

The examination measurable is intended to experiment the set skills and capabilities of numerous age groups and grades through balanced structure of Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs) and short response questions.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

During interview process, with intermediary organization as well as NGO and individuals, it was told by representative of Monitoring and evaluation that the role of M&E considered to be very supportive in terms of field visit of every school and observe the performance that whether schools are running properly or not. He explained the process of monitoring and evaluation that how base line surveys and annual monitoring take place. Due to monitoring and evaluation, it minimizes the chances of fake enrolment and ghost schools and teachers. Monitoring and Evaluation is quite instrumental in attaining planned goals and effects of the interventions of intermediary organization. Both of the processes track accountability, progress, efficacy and effectiveness. M&E is like a skeleton the system which serves as an unbiased service to assure that the execution is well aligned with the planned outcomes. The unit has served the role of verification of collected data sets and baseline surveys. It has also contributed in achieving minimal fake enrolment and it has also scrutinized, verified and validated the given information. Above all, the unit gives information whether the objectives have been timely achieved or not. Monitoring and evaluation is third important supporting factor by intermediary organization that helps in the mission of mainstreaming out of school children back to school systems.

### **Conclusion**

Generally, different models of PPP are used to have a contract between government and private sector to bring any sort of new agreement in educational development for instance to set up new institutions, and/or to run the institutions, or carry on a particular activity in education whereas state shall be responsible for financial and monitoring and evaluation of the project. A typical model of PPP implies the private sector providing infrastructure and service delivery; it may also be responsible for designing, financing, building and 'operating'; and it recovers its investment through annualized payments from the governments, and through user charges. SEF is a great partner of Sindh government in education sector

invests in different programs to improve school performances that pointed to the need for streamlining management, quality, and enrolment. More than this, time to time programmatic restructuring, SEF is aimed to improving governance, assuring standardization and enhancing quality by improving school environment, academic capacity building and modernization of knowledge delivery.

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