

**Detailed response from consultation at NCERT  
as an input to MHRD  
on the PPP Model document**

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A consultation held by a group comprising of educationists and civil society members on 5<sup>th</sup> November at NCERT to discuss a note from MHRD on '**Public Private Partnership in school education**'. This note provides the details of the discussions at this consultation.

## 1. Issues needing conceptual clarity

### 1 Clarifying the concept of PPP and the nature of the “private”

The document uses the term private without defining whether the term covers “for-profit” business entities or 'not for profit civil society' and uses the term to mean either in different parts of the document.

Quote from the MHRD note to support the above statement (all quotations from the MHRD PPP note are shown in *italics* in this document, preceded by a \*. **Emphasis ours**).

*\* The private partner would also maintain the infrastructure during the contract period which could be from 10 to 20 years. In lieu of that, the **private partner** would be allowed to use the school outside school hours for running skill development centres using their own **business models**.*

*\* Example: Adopt a school in Pakistan: An **NGO** in Pakistan has taken up several public schools under this scheme.*

(There is a contrast between the business entity in first quote and NGO in the second quote, both used to describe the 'partner').

Also we need to note that the term PPP has been largely used in the infrastructure sector, wherein under 'PPP' arrangements, the private sector is usually a business entity that creates an asset which earns revenue and claims rentals for such asset. **The PPP policy document prepared by the Government<sup>1</sup> clearly talks of it as an economic “for profit” model, discussing concepts of 'internal rate of return of investment', 'revenue streams' etc.**

However, for-profit entities are not allowed to run schools as per Indian education acts. Also, at a systemic level, it is not possible for school education to be a profit making activity, since the returns from education tend to be of a long term nature and also by nature more in terms of social impact than economic returns. Hence any partnership has to be on a 'not for profit' basis. However, the document ignores the civil society sector, which has had a long history and tradition in India of setting up schools and equates volunteerism with only individual effort. **The purpose of the voluntary sector (civil society) in setting up schools is similar to that of governments - public service or public welfare, while the purpose for the “for profit” sector will be to generate profits from their activities.** Hence while the complementing and supplementing efforts of different groups is very much required, **the term PPP should not be used in school education** since it has wrong connotations. Instead, a term like '**Government Civil Society Collaboration in school education**' should be used. This will clearly communicate that education is not being seen as a commercial activity and that PPP is not being used to privatize school education in the country.

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1 See “Guidelines for Formulation, Appraisal and Approval of Public Private Partnership Projects” prepared by Department of Economic Affairs for details

## 2 *Distinguishing between core pedagogical processes and other 'support services'*

The document treats pedagogical processes as an extension to other activities of the school and discusses it as a kind of 'service' which can be offered under different management models. Education requires its own expertise and capacities and is a society transformation process, not just a 'service' to be delivered. Hence it is important to separate core pedagogical processes from support activities as school building construction etc.

*\* 3.3 Infrastructure, support services and educational services: Under this model, the entire school is set up and managed by the private partner. This includes construction of school building and provision of support services and educational services.*

*\* 3.6 Professional services: Certain professional services like teachers' training, quality assessment, student evaluation and other supplementary services can be contracted out by the government to a private partner. This helps in building up core competency in specific areas in the private sector and several private players can compete with each other so as to raise the standards and to lower the costs. Also the school officials will be free to spend more time on actual running of the school than concentrating on lateral services.*

*\* An established caterer would be able to provide school meals to a school or a group of schools more efficiently and at lower cost than if the services are arranged by the school in-house. The arrangement also leaves the school staff with more time to concentrate on the core educational activities rather than getting diverted to provide for support services for which they have no core competency.*

This distinction between non-core activities of the school - construction of building and other physical infrastructure, which can be simple commercial activities that can be contracted out, and core activities of teaching-learning which also include teacher training, material creation, assessment etc is important. The document also suggests that organization should focus on its 'core' work areas. The need for PPP in case for former set of activities needs to be clearly shown and wherever possible, simple straight forward contracting arrangements (asking a private sector entity to construct a school building) can be seen while the latter is a core activity that can should not be clubbed with such outsourcing. Activities such as mid day meals should not simplistically be seen as non-pedagogical activities, since the program has been seen to have significant positive effects on bridging social barriers and there is a value in keeping it as a part of the schools processes.

## 3 *Distinguishing between financing schools and handing control over schools*

A major justification for in the document PPP is shortage of funds. However, 'financing' is a distinct process and need not be conflated with management. As the note accepts, governments can borrow at much cheaper rates than businesses, hence financing school education through borrowings (if revenues are not sufficient and cannot be increased) by the government could be cheaper than asking businesses to raise finances and then pay them annuities through these PPP routes. Secondly, the question of school management is independent of school financing and need not be mixed. The finance provider need not be asked to run schools.

The issue of access to secondary education is critical and this is too large to be addressed by the private sector, government will need to setup and run schools. **The danger of not providing access to government schools is in creating a stratified system which will increase inequities. The poor and marginalized need schools that have a good level of investment and resource support and this requires public funding and management.**

Much smaller economies and poorer countries spend more as % of GDP than India does. India has never got close to the 6% of GDP that Kothari Commission sought for public funding of education. The claim that 'since the government has no funds, the support of the private sector is required' needs to be investigated. DPEP and SSA have ensured that access to elementary education is near universal in India and additional funding for access to elementary education is marginal. The education cess is also providing significant funds for elementary (and now for secondary education as well)

#### **4 Conflating elementary, secondary, higher secondary education**

The document does not clearly state whether it covers elementary or secondary or higher secondary education. In each of these, the funding contexts and requirements are quite different. The document needs to clearly state its applicability to only secondary education and keep elementary education out of its scope.

### **3. Assumptions**

The note makes a few assumptions which are not substantiated. These assumptions need to be clearly unpacked and discussed for their underlying principles and for their implications.

#### **1 Assuming public system works poorly and cannot be reformed, that private schools are inherently superior to government schools**

*\* 3.4 Management Services :Under this PPP model, the government entrusts the management of the existing government school to a private partner, which would provide management services for the staff, finance and planning. **This results in lowering bureaucratic constraints in managing the school and there is greater freedom to operate.***

*\* PPP emerges as a viable alternative to improve access to quality school education while ensuring equity and social justice. Not only can the constraints be overcome, but the **quality of education can be significantly enhanced through improvement of accountability structure. There is a perception that the accountability of teachers in private schools is much higher as compared to government schools because of the inherent structure of management.** That is why even low income families make their best effort to send children to private schools by paying a much higher fee as compared to government schools which have nominal or no fee*

*\* Thirdly, the processes for construction of school building, recruitment and deployment of teachers, filling up of vacancies, etc. take unduly long time in the government set up. Private sector will be able to enhance efficiency in these areas and can bring professionalism into the system. Fourthly, **involvement of private sector would generate healthy competition among many private parties and this would lower cost and improve standards.***

The document asserts in many places that the private sector is **inherently** superior and the government system **inherently** suffers from poor accountability, inefficiency etc. Such generalizations on a very large system need more substantiation. The Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas government are accepted as excellent and there is need to investigate why other government schools cannot become equally good, and governments need to provide the same funding support and (autonomous, well resourced) working conditions as these schools have. These schools prove that taking government failure as a axiomatic is wrong. State government schools in many places are doing very well. The document

seems to be treating the government system as being incapable of being reformed. **It is not explained why many or most of the perceived advantages of the non-governmental sector can not be done in governmental settings.** Government schools need and can have greater autonomy and resource support.

**The document quotes the example of IT services being outsourced. Research on ICT programs in schools<sup>2</sup> indicates that outsourcing core areas of curriculum and pedagogy has inherent causes for failure.** Whereas the Kerala experience of integrating ICT learning into regular teaching-learning structures/processes has been successful and has also impacted learning positively.

## **2 Experience from USA in privatized models (charter and voucher schools)**

Many of the claims made by the document were also the basis for the privatisation of school education in the USA and Chile, where charter schools and voucher systems were introduced a few decades back. The experiences of these systems indicates that privatization has overall not had positive effects and specifically negative on equity aspects.

1. In education the push for privatization of education came first by suggesting that
  1. Public schools are of low quality
  2. Common schools system denies parental choice for schooling
  3. Achievement of the not commensurate in terms of children's performance with financial inputs.
2. The private sector was supposed to provide a) higher quality of education b) improved children performance and c) reduction in state spending.
3. The two prominent methods utilized were the vouchers and charter schools (the MHRD document's suggestion for the 2500 model schools is a variation of the charter schools).
4. The economic, performance and choice arguments in favour of privatising education was also fueled by the demands of mostly white parents and religious groups to allow their children to learn in schools other than those of the common neighbourhood type - so there was also a racial and religious demand for parental choice - a backlash against desegregation and busing that allowed mixed racial classrooms.
5. Nearly twenty years after the first experiment, the Milwaukee voucher system started, expanding to Cleveland and other places, and charter schools came up in about forty states, what is the experience? To begin with they certainly did not produce the exodus from the 'low quality' public schools as may have been expected; 75% American children still study in such schools.
6. The response to the much hyped Milwaukee voucher system was underwhelming rather than overwhelming - of the 15,000 vouchers on offer out of about 104,000 children, only over 5000 were utilized by the parents. Of these about 70% were redeemed in religious schools! The response from many places was similar, vouchers being redeemed in religious schools, or white parents making subtle inquiries in order to select schools with less black children. The parental choice seemed to be for segregation on racial or religious lines - in a way undermining the 1954 racial desegregation verdict of the US Supreme Court and busing in southern US states. **The danger of similar segregation on caste, class and religious lines would be a big threat in India if similar parental choice was to be made available in India**

2 Karnataka Mahiti Sindhu program study – see [http://www.itforchange.net/media/Policy\\_Brief\\_on ICTs\\_in\\_School\\_Education\\_from\\_IT\\_for\\_Change\\_August\\_2009.pdf](http://www.itforchange.net/media/Policy_Brief_on ICTs_in_School_Education_from_IT_for_Change_August_2009.pdf)

7. As for performance, large studies by now have concluded that "**neither voucher nor public school parents appear to be receiving the promised educational benefits of competition through school choice**" (Van Dunk and Dickman, 2003; *School Choice and the Question of Accountability, The Milwaukee Experiment*; Yale University Press)
8. A study much publicized by the media was initiated by the school choice enthusiast Paul Peterson at Harvard University, in partnership with the Mathematica researcher David Meyers. It reported that vouchers substantially increased scores of black children by allowing them to attend private schools. A control group in public schools was reported to have scored 6 points lower. Princeton economist Alan Kruger re-analysed the data and found no evidence for Peterson's conclusion. Peterson remained silent but Meyers acknowledged Kruger's analysis conceding that the 'impact of a voucher offer is not statistically significant' (Winirep; *What a Voucher Study Truly Showed and Why, New York Times*, May 7, 2003).
9. US Education Department's analyses of maths and reading scores demonstrate that differences between private and public schools are not consistently significant after controlling for social and economic factors such as education and income of parents (*Braun, Jenkins and Grigg, 2006; Comparing Private Schools and Public Schools using Hierarchical Linear Modelling, US Dept. of Education; <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2006461.asp>*). In its editorial on July 19, 2006 titled Public vs Private Schools, the New York Times noted that "**these results confirm the wide variations across private, public and charter schools and challenge the 'magical thinking' that seeks improved education by granting vouchers to attend private schools, rather than by producing better-trained teachers**".
10. In 2006, the Dept of Education released a study prepared by the ETS in 2003 that showed fourth graders in traditional public schools performing significantly better in maths and reading than their counterparts in charter schools. Confronted by his own department's findings, a US Government official said - "We know charter schools are not doing harm"! This represents a major comedown from the huge positive changes they were supposed to make in terms of performance.
11. As for curtailing the state's expenditure, the promise of the US Government and a serious demand of the 'expand markets - shrink government' economists, conservatives and Republican Party members; in spite of bringing in privatisation in transportation, education and health, the government spending increased by 5% GDP as the Bush term ended, and the government workforce increased by the same rate as under the Democrats. (*Brown and Jacobs, 2008; The Private Abuse of Public Interest, University of Chicago Press*)

The The Planning Commission and MHRD are advised to seriously look for similar data before they undertake similar measures; the casual quotation in the MHRD document about some World Bank study in five developing countries is one sided.

### **3 Assuming that schooling can be a for-profit based activity at a systemic level .**

\* A system of incentives is built in so that the schools are pushed to improve their performance continuously over time. Those schools which fail to perform would not receive payment from the government.

\* The per capita fee is determined by a process of bidding among the technically competent and responsible private partners

**The repeated mention and reliance on monetary incentives and disincentives for achieving quality**

**suggests this belief and related assumptions about superiority of private sector practices – competition driven cost reduction and quality improvement, acceptance of failures as a systemic feature suggest that schooling is seen as an activity that can be for-profit on a large or systemic scale.** An activity like education is not best motivated by purely monetary incentives/disincentives and requires different set of motivators, such as a supportive/enabling environment, professional development opportunities etc. Even the business sector is now moving out of reliance on only simple monetary incentives / disincentives . Even if such reliance shows short term 'results', their long term negative repercussions hugely outweigh their short term benefits.

The document needs to explain why commercial entities will accept this invitation and invest in schools with the amounts required. Why will private entities put in the 146 lakh crore rupees? What will they seek in return. What profit margins would be acceptable and what would be social and economic costs of this funding? Given that around 93% of our people work in the unorganized sector and more than 80% live on less than Rs 20 per day, it is unrealistic to expect that for-profit models can be workable.

As the Hindu article<sup>3</sup> points out, government schools act as benchmarks for quality, where government schools quality is good, private schools are also seen to be good, while if the government schools are poor quality, private schools are worse. Also private schools are usually set up where government schools are already there, not in places which lack access. Hence there is no alternative to establishing a strong and healthy public education system.

*\* (i) Students in private schools outperformed students in public schools on a variety of achievements  
(ii) Unit costs of private schools were lower than those of public schools and  
(iii) Private schools had greater authority for decision making at the school level and better emphasis on enhancing student achievement.*

*\* Another reason for improvement of efficiency is the greater accountability of private staff to perform in a private set up as compared to the accountability of public sector staff because of the inherent nature of the arrangement.*

*\* (5) Reduction of costs: Because of greater efficiency and competition among private partners, the cost of operation is expected to be much lower than in government set up. This is due to the greater managerial efficiency in the private sector.*

*\* (6) Accountability for performance: In the public sector, accountability for performance in schools is diffused. Therefore, there are many instances of failed schools, particularly in urban areas. However, in case of a PPP model, failed schools would mean no payment and hence is preferable.*

#### **4 Assumption that private sector practices will help meet educational aims**

Organizations that can be influenced through monetary incentives/disincentives will seek to maximise the incentives (minimize disincentives). Given that costs are easy to compute, but the outcomes are extremely difficult (learning processes and learning outcomes are not to be conflated with performance in select subjects) and also the ability of the regulator is very weak, it is bound to create schools which can compromise on quality levels to cut costs. While these entities may still make small profits the large losses in terms of children's learning and future cannot be estimated. Under the NCLB, schools were threatened with grant cuts, if their 'learning levels' dropped below set benchmarks. In many cases, the schools just expelled 'non performing' students (invariably these students came from marginalized backgrounds) to

3 See 7. Can privatisation help? Anuradha De and Meera Samson - Hindu article enclosed

ensure they qualified for grants. Hence punitive measures will compel 'schools to succeed' by creating 'student failures' who are expelled from even possibilities for learning. Thus the biggest danger from relying on private sector is that this would take the form (in the context of poor regulatory capacities and the need to cut costs and even increase profits) of low cost schools for the poor and the marginalized, which would further inequity in the school system and in society.

The learning from PPP in ICT in school programs clearly shows that business vendors will try to compromise on quality aspects since these are very difficult to monitor, in order to cut their costs further.

*\* (8) Greater flexibility: Under PPP, there will be greater autonomy and flexibility at the school level whereas the government systems have rigidity. The private partner will have much higher autonomy in hiring teachers and organizing the school. Similarly, depending upon the need, the schools processes can be modified quickly*

*\* (2) If schools are in interior areas, these may not attract reputed private partners.*  
(equity goals not achieved)

The note assumes teaching to be a service that needs to be delivered and invites private players to provide educational services. In such a view of teaching, learning is largely skill-based and hence the focus is on testing for learning outcomes. Pedagogy thus gets limited to a 'performance pedagogy' wherein learner performance is the key indicator of teacher performance and hence accountability. These 'performance pedagogies' have the danger of instituting a pedagogic regime which offer seemingly democratic choices for parents. The US model of NCLB where 'testing' was the primary focus as would be in this case, led to much higher regulation costs, distorted pedagogical processes (teaching to test), causing qualitative decline in teacher involvement and student learning and reinforcing inequities.

Already our education system is stratified and there are several religious schools which provide ideological teaching and circumscribed pedagogy. Privatization is shown to increase the stratification, vouchers in USA were largely used to enroll in religious and given the highly feudal and stratified nature of Indian society, vouchers can be expected to promote caste and religion based schools. Similar issues are also likely in the vast number of private teacher training institutions, whose meaningful regulation is non-existent.

Teacher educator imbalances will be accentuated, the note ignores the requirements and issues of Teacher Education. Teacher incentive in private schools is largely negative, comprising of low salaries and threat of being fired. This can only de-professionalize teaching which will harm the teaching-learning processes and outcomes. The experiences of privatized TE needs to be studied to see the impact of privatization.

The advantages of the private sector are specified in three areas - provide 'quality education', cost reduction and flexibility including in teacher hiring. The stress on competition cutting down costs of schools seems to support the arguments for the low budget private schools. These schools deprive the poor and the marginalized of good education, since poor infrastructure and poorly paid and ill qualified teachers only results in poor quality of education, even in cases where there may be a high pressure drill learning practices that seem to showcase learning.

The Common Service Centres (CSC) scheme of DIT to provide ICT centres across the country is a good example to study. While the stated aim of the scheme is to provide government services through these centres, the program has largely been a failure across the country. One important reason is the design of this program in which the centres are owned by franchisees operating on a commercial model. The commercial viability considerations of these owners makes any kind of social empowerment /

transformation possibilities remote. Whereas there are programs where similar centres, setup by community (not for profit) institutions have been able to fulfill the goals of social change and development. **Thus the choice of a commercial model to fulfill social change goals can result in failure and this is relevant to “for-profit” school models.**

#### 5 *Assumption that state can effectively regulate private schools (for efficiency and other advantages)*

*\* (7) Quality monitoring: In case of PPP, government will monitor the quality in the school as payment is related to quality. The private partner would have an incentive to raise the quality of education in the school to be eligible for payment.*

The State has been a poor regulator in many sectors and even in the case of unaided schools. Schools are micro institutions difficult to meaningfully regulate. The current regulatory framework is weak. A strong regulatory framework and strong regulatory capacity is a pre-requisite of expanding the non governmental sector. In its absence, the basic goals of quality and equity run the risk of being compromised

The document accepts that schools can fail as a systemic feature and that the government is still safe, since these schools will not be paid. This a very economic perspective of schools and ignores what would happen to the students in those failed schools. Accepting school failures as a systemic feature is not acceptable. If all schools need to be successful, then competition cannot be a feature of the system.

The experiences in Delhi (Social jurist) where private schools were given free land and asked to admit 25% of students from poor and marginalized backgrounds need to be considered. The private schools were able to violate the requirements for long time and even after being advised by courts to fulfill their obligations, the situation is still far from required. If this is the situation in the capital of the nation, it clearly shows that regulating micro institutions as private schools across the country, which the document takes for granted, is an impossible task.

## 4. Not aligned with existing legal-policy frameworks

### 1 *Implications from RtE*

*\* The private partner has full autonomy to recruit its staff and for determining their service conditions and also for the smooth running of the school.*

With the RTE now an act, its requirements with respect to teacher working conditions, professional development need to be considered. Teacher professional cadre in 6 years time is required to be setup as per RTE and teacher strength in each school needs to be as per norms. All this will require high investment. On the other hand, many private schools run at 'cheaper' costs by paying very poor salaries to teachers, cutting down on infrastructural and teaching support processes including teaching learning material, teacher training etc. Such schools short change the poor and cannot be given recognition as per RTE. With RTE, system cannot consist of stratified schools – hence expanding access to schools will need to be comparable quality for all. hence need to rejuvenate entire system. Other educational policy documents have also stressed on need to avoid stratified schools as is inequitable.

The PPP document looks at education as a trade rather than as a right. It will accentuate the divisions across schools and further stratify society which is against the basic spirit of the constitutional right to education.

## **2 Implications from NCF 2005**

*\* A system of incentives and disincentives is also built in to motivate the private partner to continuously improve quality. The schools follow the curriculum framework set by the Government whereas the private partner devises appropriate pedagogy and educational delivery mechanism for optimal outcome.*

*\* The performance indicators are specified to regulate payment of per child cost by the government. Since there are no management quota students, the requirement of monitoring of performance indicators will have to be more stringent.*

\* 6.5 Model schools:

*The release of the amount would be triggered through certification by an independent agency on achieving pre-determined performance standards.*

Separation between pedagogy and curriculum and reliance on external testing systems of assessment are two aspects which are not in keeping with our curricular framework (NCF 2005). School is a complex social institution and any claims of 'superiority' of models (such as the cited World Bank studies) needs to be checked over a period of time. Short term solutions can create long term problems. 'Quality' or 'performance' measured purely in terms marks in specific subjects can distort learning processes and outcomes. The NCF 2005 stresses on the holistic nature of learning, where the curriculum needs to include art, physical education as well. Focusing on few cognitive areas which is necessary for large scale external testing mechanisms would go against the letter and spirit of NCF 2005.

## **3 Implications from PRI Act**

As per the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments, education is a responsibility of locally elected governments. Greater involvement of the local governments and of communities (through community bodies and Parent Associations) is expected to play an important role in improving school education. Several studies report the positive impact of an engaged community with the school, which is also an important educational aim. The note completely bypasses this important dimension in seeing the market as the solution. Instead investing in and building closer linkages between schools and their communities in relationships of mutual support and respect are critical to building a strong school system.

Community audits have been mandated under the NREGA program and in many states, the concept of community or social audit is being extended to other programs. The role of the parents associations and community bodies in supporting the work of the school and monitoring aspects has been discussed in relevant policy documents. The participation of the community must be seen as superior and constitutional mandated over outsourcing to the business sector.

## 5. Some Alternatives proposed

### 1 *Public system reform and strengthening*

India is a young democracy. The process of maturation of public institutions is a time and effort intensive process as the experience of the developed world shows. It is only mature and strong public institutions that can protect democracy and work for the constitutional goals of equity and social justice. Yet there is a dire need to both reform and strengthen public institutions. Government bureaucracies can stifle innovation and autonomy of schools and government hierarchical functional can stifle initiative. It is important to avoid simplistic extremes of 'government schools are not functional' and 'only government should be involved in running schools'. It is also important to recognize the reducing faith in the government and in public systems. The participation of non-governmental actors is crucial in the reform of the public sector. What is critical is the nature of schooling as a publicly funded, public welfare motivated effort.

There is also a need to increase the transparency and accountability in the working of the public education institutions. Issues such as recruitment, transfers etc also need to be transparent and carried out under well defined rules. The extent and nature of financial and resource support and the activities supported also need to be transparent. Tour plans and diaries should be disclosed publicly. Attendance in schools (and in support institutions) could be recorded through biometric devices. Reform in government structures and processes to also provide clear rules of engagement with civil society is required, which can help incorporate innovations in curricular processes in their efforts. We also need to invest in performance assessment systems which are beyond simple monetary incentive based systems, and factor the far more complex aspects of motivation in public services. These are doable steps and there have been projects that can provide insights on this task.

Each school needs to be treated as an institution in its own right and the Head Teacher of the school needs to be given both required autonomy as well as resource support as well as capacity building to be able to provide required leadership to the school. Defined tenures and transparent transfer processes, devolution of decisions relating to finances and spending to the school and its associated community institutions is critical to help build each school.

The public system have created 'model schools' such as the Navodaya Vidyalayas, however these schools have not served the purpose of serving as a resource for surrounding schools. Instead of creating more model schools, the factors that have helped these schools – much higher investment, school and teacher autonomy, professionalization of the teacher and official cadres need to be extended to the regular schools to bring them to similar levels of autonomy and effectiveness. We need to bring back trust in the public system, that is the most important issue

### 2 *Policy on both administrative and pedagogical aspects*

The causes for parents preferring private schools to government schools needs to be studied. English medium instruction, computer literacy, appearance of disciplined environment are factors cited in some studies. The need to introduce English as a language of study is being considered by state governments. This would appear to fulfill a key demand of parents, and the associated requirements of teacher preparation, learning materials, age appropriate transaction need to be considered.

### 3 *Teacher professional development*

Teaching is being seen as a 'service' provided, which is simple enough to be readily replaced. Our schools

need to be places where students can learn how to negotiate the increasing demands and complexities of today's world, capable of much higher order skills than mere rote memorization skills. In today's complex world, students need to learn to be able to negotiate such complexities, then teaching-learning can be seen as a rich and complex process and not a simple, easily replicable process. Greater autonomy and investment in teacher development is an important component of public school system reform. The failure of the PPP models in ICT learning comes from their ignoring the teacher. The vendor directly teaches the students, bypassing the teacher (and teacher educators).

Teachers unions are an important part of civil society and their support and involvement for promoting teacher quality is important. Policy measures as the one proposed need to take into confidence the teacher community in the country.

#### 4 *Financing*

The history of universalizing education across the world clearly indicates that governmental spending led to the universalization. By 1900 universalization was nearly complete in OECD / developing countries with governmental funding support. Similarly, even developing countries such as South Korea, Malaysia who are seen as high achievers have much higher public spending on health and education which has resulted in human development comparable to the industrialized world.

At this point in time, due to the financial crisis and the slowdown in Indian economy, the revenue situation of the government is weaker. There is a view that since the largest allocations in the recent five year plan have been to education and health, cutbacks will also need to be done in these sectors. Also, in universalization of secondary education, there will be a huge initial requirement for physical infrastructure.

Yet, the documents claim that the 145,000 crores required for universal secondary education is not available in an economy of India's size needs to be questioned. The increase in Income tax exemptions (proposed Direct Taxes Code) is estimated to result in annual revenue loss to government of 55,000 crores and the purchase of Nuclear submarines a cost of around 100,000 crores and these need to be kept alongside the claim of lack of finances to support public spending on education. In any case, to tide over immediate fund shortage, options such as borrowing from bilaterals or deficit financing should be preferred to models where ownership is being transferred to private sector to fulfill a funding requirement. The 13<sup>th</sup> finance commission should allocate higher support to states where funding support is needed (per-capita expenditure is much lower). Also, PPPs can be 'rent thick' and this would add to the total costs. The entry of large corporate actors would compound the nature and extent of corrupt practices and lead to new bureaucrat-contractor nexus creation.

The investment in public education has been much lower than what government appointed Kothari Commission sought for. The shortages in these investments have a cumulative effect and with each year, the backlog of investment required increases. Much higher investments in teacher education and education administration institutions is needed. The DIET-BRC-CRC system which is expected to provide academic monitoring and support across the entire country, needs much greater investment, both in professional capacities and in autonomy and accountability mechanisms. The institutions of education administration also require much higher investment to support capacities for administration of the school system. Each school requires its libraries, laboratories, computers, telephone, television and radio sets, playgrounds apart from hygiene infrastructure such as staff rooms, drinking water, functioning toilets etc. Teacher vacancies need to be filled-up in a proactive manner through transparent recruitment processes<sup>4</sup>. Unless

4 Shortage of people is a feature throughout the system. For instance, NCTE, the apex body for Teacher Education is itself a 2-3 member bureaucrat organization, whereas it needs a strong complement of good teacher educators. DIETs across the country have vacancies rates even approaching 50 – 70% of staffing

these measures are in place, it would be unfair to judge a school as a failure.

### 5 *Role of civil society*

Since the government has the responsibility of ensuring universal elementary education of an equitable quality, it cannot be delegated to any non-state agency. Hence where such outsourced schools fail, the state still continues to be accountable for the failure. **This double accountability processes can be difficult to enforce and there is no 'sharing of risks; as the document mentions.** Civil society role hence should be one of supporting and complementing the state's role and not in replacing it. Any such support to the pedagogical processes in schools should be received from organizations which have worked for a defined period of time in the education system and have acquired credibility. It is important that the organization should have clearly explicit, its educational philosophies/perspectives and these need to be aligned to national educational policies.

**Karnataka has designed a 'School nurturing'<sup>5</sup> program, in which both business sector and civil society agencies are invited to support the strengthening of schools. However such 'nurturing' does not hand over control (and responsibility) for running the school to the non governmental sector.**

There are also umpteen instances where parents body/community support and involvement have strengthened schools. These kind of '**Public-Public-Partnerships**' which have a long and rich history and tradition in India and elsewhere, need to be studied and adopted on wider scale, since they strengthen the system and the achievement of its aims. Investment in community institutions and parents associations to have higher levels of engagement with schools also needs to be increased to strengthen public systems accountability.

### 6 *Role of Business sector*

The business sector has always played an important role in school education, in supplying various goods and services, including construction of school buildings, printing and supply of text books and other materials, supply of computers etc. These activities fit well into commercial contracts and are outside the core of the schools pedagogical processes which cannot be treated as commercial. The role of the business sector could be expanded in many ways:

Providing grants/endowments to schools and other institutions which can support them in many ways. Generous grants and endowments from business houses has been critical to building and supporting several institutions, including the numerous Tata Institutes across the country etc. However, these need to be in the nature of untied grants, without the quid pro quo requirements of commercial contracts.

Building capacities for creating quality teaching learning material, ranging from toys to chalks to books etc which can be sold to schools and teacher education institutions at affordable rates is an important activity.

However, the experiences of PPPs in other sectors (infrastructural) needs to be considered, there are cases of poor regulation of the private party, leading to high profit making and negative impact on consumer interests. The PPP models in the ICT programs in schools also need to be seen, in Karnataka for instance, the Mahiti Sindhu program implemented on BOOT model resulted in poor learning outcomes and did not benefit the education system at all, even though hundreds of crores of rupees were paid to the private vendors<sup>6</sup>. Hence a study on PPP experiences is required to understand the actual implementation implications.

5 <http://www.schooleducation.kar.nic.in/SchoolNurturing.htm>

6 The experiences of the BOOT Model in Karnataka is discussed in more detail in enclosed "5. PPP Models in IT programs in schools – some lessons from research"

## 6. Conclusion

The document proposes far reaching structural changes in the Indian public education system and to many PPP is being seen as a smokescreen for privatization and an abdication by state of its responsibility. Many of its assumptions need evidencing and some of the terms used need greater clarity. It requires a through examination through intensive and widespread consultations, keeping education perspectives and policies as well as the Indian education contexts and priorities as the prime consideration, to meet the goal of universal equitable quality education.

While the above paper has been recently released by MHRD, and requires wide debate, the government has already begun a program on these lines - the 6000 model school PPP. Given these serious concerns, with respect to the large scale/structural changes that the document implies, inadequate clarity on some basic concepts and terms used in the note, several assumptions made which are problematic, it is important that these concerns be addressed before the program is operationalised. **The program design for these schools needs to be in a manner that takes in support from civil society and business sectors to support and rejuvenate the public school system and not to dismantle it or further fragment it or to use public funds to support private schools.** Similarly several PPP models are already in operation in states as the document mentions and these should be put on hold till a suitable policy on participation by civil society and business sector is devised through required consultations.

## Annexure A - List of participants at the consultation

No	Participants	Organization
1	Alison Macbeth	UNESCO, New Delhi
2	Angela Taneja	Actionaid, New Delhi
3	Anita Rampal	Delhi University
4	Ashima Aneja	Digital Empowerment Foundation, New Delhi
5	Ashok Agarwal	Lawyer, Social Jurist, New Delhi
6	Binay Pattanayak	Technical Support Group, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, New Delhi
7	Binu Sebastian	WNTA New Delhi
8	Geetha Nambissan	Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
9	Gurumurthy K	IT for Change, Bangalore
10	Harsh Gupta	Retd. Chief Secretary, Himachal Pradesh
11	K Rana	Pratichi Trust, Kolkata
12	Kaveree Bamzai	India Today, New Delhi
13	Krishna Kumar	NCERT, New Delhi
14	Malini Ghose	Nirantar Trust, New Delhi
15	Manas Chakrabarti	Independent Consultant, New Delhi
16	Mary John	CWDS, New Delhi
17	Naimur Rahman	OneWorld South Asia, New Delhi
18	Parminder Jeet Singh	IT for Change, Bangalore
19	Poonam Batra	CIE, Delhi University
20	R Govinda	NCERT, New Delhi
21	Rajen Varada	Solutions Exchange, ICTD Community, New Delhi
22	Randeep Kaur	Plan International, New Delhi
23	Richa Singh	WNTA / Centre for Democracy and Social Action, New Delhi
24	Santosh Mehrotra	Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Planning Commission, New Delhi
25	Shalini Advani	Learn Today, New Delhi
26	Siba Sankar Mohanty	WNTA, New Delhi
27	Subrata Kundu	OneWorld South Asia, New Delhi
28	Vasudha Kamat	CIET, NCERT, New Delhi
29	Vinod Raina	Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti

## Annexure B – Design of the consultation

Discussion Topic	Speakers / Discussion Anchors	Timing	Comments
Placing PPPs in perspective within the Indian education system, setting the context and raising larger issues for discussion.	Prof. Krishna Kumar	10.00 - 10.45	The larger / macro context to the MHRD document - Purpose and nature of education with respect to issues involved in privatisation - quantifiability, incentivisation etc, relationship between current educational policies, including curricular policies to the role of the 'private sector', role of PPPs
Brief overview of the MHRD document and flagging / categorizing critical issues	Prof. Anita Rampal, Mr. Gurumurthy K.	10.45 – 11:00	Defining specific areas from the MHRD document that need to be covered during the consultations. Arriving at a basic shared understanding of the document and its implications.
Nature of partnerships - partnerships with non-profit bodies and the private sector, PPP models in education - aided schools, civil society partnerships, voucher system, charter schools.	Dr. Vinod Raina	11.00- 12.00	Relationship of education systems to public sector / business sector / civil society. Implications of different kinds of collaborations, imperatives, advantages and limitations of each. Experiences and insights
PPP models/practices in other sectors, civil society partnerships	Mr. Naimur Rahman		PPPs in other sectors, practices, experiences, research
Nature of regulatory and supervisory systems	Prof. Geetha Nambissan	12.00 - 13:00	Aspects of regulating non-profit institutions (aided schools), and private sector institutions vis a vis supervising government schools– success in ensuring 'quality. Experiences from public and private schools.
Teacher professional development in the context of the PPP document	Prof. Poonam Batra		The role of the teacher and implications for teaching-learning processes
Lunch		13.00 - 14.00	
Financing of school education and the role of different actors	Dr. Santosh Mehrotra	14.00 - 15.00	The document suggests PPP as an important financial option. Nature of financing school education. The <i>financial crunch</i> argument, impact on different models of financing on educational outputs .
Operationalizing the RtE – various imperatives and situating the PPP option within these	Prof. R. Govinda	15.00 - 16.00	Implications of various requirements and conditions laid down by the RTE vis a vis PPP models, as also examining the possible alternatives

<p>Open House and Way forward</p>	<p>Prof. Krishna Kumar, Prof. Anita Rampal</p>	<p>16.00 - 17.30</p>	<p>Pulling together the issues and arguments based on the consultation to provide a response to the MHRD document</p> <p>Brief summary for a possible input note to MHRD, next steps including possible research areas and next round of consultations</p>
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Organizing group - Anita Rampal (Delhi University), Geetha Nambissan (JNU), Gurumurthy (IT for Change), Naimur Rahman (One World South Asia) and Padma Sarangapani (TISS).

## **Annexure C – List of enclosed documents**

1. 1a. Overall Feedback of MHRD PPP Note from consultation at NCERT, November 5, 2009  
1b. Detailed Feedback to MHRD on PPP in School Education note - from consultations at NCERT, Nov 5, 2009
2. Partners in Education-Krishna Kumar EPW
3. Quality feasibility and desirability of low cost private schooling - Padma Sarangapani - EPW Oct 24 2009
4. MHRD School Organization by Prof Amman Madan
5. PPP Models in IT programs in schools – some lessons from research by Gurumurthy Kasinathan
6. Market models for managing schools – IT for Change
7. Can privatisation help? Anuradha De and Meera Samson - Hindu article
8. Review of PPP in Elementary Education - A R Vasavi, NIAS
9. Lessons Of Chile's Voucher Reform Movement - By Martin Camoy