

HYBRID PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP MODELS AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN PAKISTAN: A SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become a growing feature of educational governance in Pakistan, stemming from the country's long-standing issues of restricted access, poor educational outcomes, insufficient capacity, and educational infrastructure. However, there is mixed evidence on the effectiveness of these mixed governance models, especially in terms of learning outcomes and educational equity. The study aims to explore the effectiveness of hybrid PPP models in enhancing the educational outcomes in Pakistan with the help of a qualitative research design using secondary data analysis. The study summarizes peer-reviewed literature, government reports, policy papers and publications from international organizations. The analytical framework for studying the role of collaboration, shared accountability, coordination and stakeholder engagement on PPP performance is developed in the context of Network Governance Theory. The results reveal that hybrid PPPs have helped to extend the access to education, boost enrolment, and enhance school infrastructure, although the effects are not consistent on learning achievement and equity. The study proposes that the quality of the governance, not the ownership of the organizations, is the key factor in the success of partnerships. It is concluded that strengthening institutional coordination, accountability, monitoring, leadership and stakeholder participation is crucial to achieve sustainable and equitable PPPs for educational reform and help realize SDG 4 in Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Educational governance in Pakistan has undergone a series of cycles of reforms driven by both central and decentralisation forces, donor pressure and increasing marketisation. In reality, the state has continued to be the primary funder and the primary rule maker, but has increasingly turned to non-state providers for wider access to education where public provision has been inadequate and uneven (Bukhari et al., 2025). This change is important as the school system in Pakistan is integrated with parallel public and

private systems and these structures are now driving the pursuit of access, quality, and equity across provincial boundaries (Siddiqui, 2017).

The development of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in education was no coincidence. The Punjab Education Foundation, an originally limited money lender, has become an autonomous PPP body through the 2004 Act, and the Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme, which was initiated in 2003 with significant donor assistance to enhance access, quality and governance (Saeed & Zubair, 2019).

These changes led to the development of mixed governance approaches, whereby the government finances and/or regulates education and private or non-governmental entities provide services. PPPs have best been understood as partnership arrangements, in which the responsibilities are shared on a spectrum between the complete public and the complete private sector (Ali et al., 2024). Pakistan was a major example of this transition in governance because the policymakers were looking for solutions to the weaknesses in public education that have been prevalent in the country for years. PPP was developed to increase the school enrollment of disadvantaged students and underserved communities by implementing subsidy, voucher and school-support programmes at a large scale in Punjab (Rizwan et al., 2025).

But there is more to the prime concern: increasing enrollments. While there is a long journey to take from policy intentions to classroom practice, Pakistan still faces significant problems within education, with regard to quality, equity and implementation. Regional inequality continues to be one of the most powerful indicators of governance issues. The findings of the district level evidence also show that there is a high level of variation in educational performance with northern Punjab districts consistently outperforming many districts in the province of Balochistan (Sajjad et al., 2022). Household level evidence also suggests that province of residence is the most significant factor that contributes to explaining inequalities in children's learning opportunities and educational attainment (Akram & Pervaiz, 2025).

Another aspect of the public school system that has been a recurring theme in discussions about PPPs is how it performs. Another focus of attention in the debate about PPPs is the performance of the public school system. Previous studies suggest that the fast growth of private schools was due to the quality of public-school management and provision, and that schools' benefits observed in the literature could be attributed to school-level differences in student characteristics rather than the quality of the school provision itself (Aslam & Kingdon, 2021). The

effectiveness of PPPs is uncertain and more research is needed. A recent assessment of the outcomes of PPP in Punjab showed positive learning outcomes in the case of private school subsidy programme and a mixed picture regarding the performance of schools under PPP for socio-economically disadvantaged students (Ansari, 2024).

The same scenario emerges in the case of Sindh. While autonomy, accountability, monitoring and evaluation are reported to be strengthened in EMO schools, this was not always linked to improved educational quality, equity or access (Ind et al., 2022). The same is urged by international evidence. Research from low- and middle-income countries indicates that PPPs can increase access and lower costs, but that improvements in learning quality are frequently limited, and that selection of students rather than school effectiveness itself, can influence learning outcomes through a PPP. (Baum, 2018).

Based on these findings, three core questions were formulated for this study, which are presented below: How has the hybrid PPP model affected educational outcomes in Pakistan? What are the governance mechanisms for successful and unsuccessful implementation? What are the lessons that can be drawn for policy reforms for future? To answer those questions, the study will involve a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of hybrid PPP models, the governance mechanisms they use, the educational outcomes and policy recommendations. From what has been studied, successful PPPs are dependent on the institutional trust, communication, organisational ability, transparency, accountability and effective risk-sharing between the PPP partners (Xiong et al., 2018). Research on education also has clear goals, effective communication, good monitoring and collaborative engagement with stakeholders as critical factors for the effective implementation, while cautioning that good monitoring systems are necessary to strengthen accountability, but that poorly designed ones could undermine them in hybrid governance (Twinomuhwezi & Herman, 2020).

This study is important not just for assessing the effectiveness of one specific policy programme, but because it demonstrates the importance of considering the holistic impact of policy programmes. It adds to the work of educational governance by Ainsworth and Grant (2016) and the work of Stollery and Munroe (2014) which explained the working of hybrid arrangements in the context of Pakistan; it adds to the work of public administration by Ainsworth and Grant (2016) and the work of Young and McNab (2010) which focused on the concept of shared authority and accountability; it strengthens the literature of PPP by providing context-specific evidence on educational partnerships (Stafford & Stapleton, 2021). The study also provides empirical evidence to inform policy making for more equitable, accountable, and effective governance for maximizing educational outcomes in Pakistan (Hares, 2021).

To sum up Pakistan's experience, PPP governance has become a more and more attractive yet highly contested option. While PPPs have increased education access and improved some management roles, evidence on learning outcomes, equity, and sustainability is still ambiguous, necessitating further research on governance mechanisms in order to maintain the momentum of advancing education access and developing its sustainability (Muhammad, 2022).

Literature Review

In recent years, public-private partnerships (PPPs) have emerged as one of the most visible governance reforms in education, especially in developing countries, where governments are looking to increase access, quality, and efficiency in education, but have limited financial and institutional resources. PPPs are not a full privatisation of the responsibility for education, but arrangements in which both government and private or non-state actors are involved in service delivery, provided by both with government funding. The governance mechanisms on which responsibilities, accountability and decision making rests are crucial to the effectiveness of these partnerships (Ali et al., 2024).

The literature broadly considers an educational PPP to be an institutional arrangement whereby the government is ultimately responsible for the education and where private entities are involved in the management, operational services, infrastructure, or educational delivery of the school. PPPs differ from conventional privatization in that they keep the public in the loop and add a private sector element to enhance services and efficiency (Ind et al., 2022). Others scholars insist that PPPs should be seen as a continuum rather than an organizational model. At one end there is a complete public provision, and at the other end, a complete private provision. In between these extremes there are many hybrid models that vary in ownership, financing, management and accountability arrangements (Baum, 2018). Even though cooperation between governments and private entities has been around for decades, educational PPPs became popular in the age of public sector modernization, involving efficiency, decentralization and results-based management. Partnerships were seen as effective tools for governments to increase access to education and meet budget constraints and the demand for better schooling more effectively (Kumari, 2016).

Due to a search by governments for alternative ways to provide educational services, Educational PPPs have been growing rapidly in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. This expansion is part of a larger trend in government reforms that promote public-private partnerships to enhance learning outcomes and that alleviate government administration pressures (Baum, 2018). There is a wide variety of PPP models available from international experience. These are Education Management Organizations (EMOs), voucher programmes, foundation-assisted schools, charter-type schools, adopt-a-school initiatives, concession schools and a number of subsidy programmes. While there are variations in institutional arrangements across countries, all aim to leverage the public contribution of financial resources and the private contribution of managerial skills to enhance educational results (Ali et al., 2024). Even though they are becoming

increasingly popular, PPPs are still a subject of debate in educational policy. The proponents of partnerships see them as being conducive to innovation, managerial flexibility, and better service delivery, while critics consider them as raising issues of educational equity, public accountability, and the responsibilities of the state to provide quality education (Hares, 2021).

The concept of hybrid governance is a conceptual framework for understanding the educational PPPs. Hybrid governance is a more distributed form of governance, compared to the traditional outsourcing or privatization, which enables governments to retain strategic oversight of education systems. Decision making is not hierarchical, but collaborative, (Stafford & Stapleton, 2021). Under these schemes, the government is typically responsible for devising policy, financing, regulating and ensuring the quality of educational provision while the private sector is responsible for running the school, the daily management of its affairs, jobs and/or educational support services. This blend aims to capture the public accountability and private sector flexibility and managerial skills (Ind et al., 2022). The hybrid approach to governance, however, also adds to institutional complexity as the participating organisations have diverse governance objectives, incentives and cultures. It is therefore vital that effective coordination is in place to avoid responsibility conflicts and ensure a consistent level of education (Stafford & Stapleton, 2021).

The efficacy of PPPs is likely to be more about governance during implementation rather than contractual considerations. Institutional trust, clear decision making, communication, organizational capacity, clear responsibilities and balanced risk-sharing are the characteristics of strong partnerships (Xiong et al., 2018). In the education sector, there are also scholars that highlight the importance of having specific goals, partnership between stakeholders, regular communication and monitoring systems that facilitate long-term implementation instead of short-term contract fulfillment (Sajida & Kusumasari, 2023).

Performance contracts might help improve accountability by defining responsibilities and measurable results within the institution. However, effective monitoring is not necessarily leading to accountability because the responsibilities of stakeholders are unclear, or school-level implementers are not aware of the programme goals (Twinomuhwezi & Herman, 2020). The experience in Pakistan also shows that both the institutional learning and the adaptive implementation of the contract are as important as its design in determining the quality of governance. Continuous assessment of operational issues and the subsequent modifications to governance arrangements are more likely to keep educational improvement alive in partnerships than any contractual provisions demanded in a formal agreement (Saeed & Zubair, 2019).

One of the most debated issues in the education policy literature is the effectiveness of PPPs in improving educational outcomes. Many governments view PPPs as a means to enhance access, quality and efficiency but empirical evidence shows that their performance is quite different in different institutional and national settings. In fact, the advantages of PPPs compared to conventional public education systems (CESS) are not considered common ground (Ali et al., 2024). Based on the experience of developing countries, there is limited evidence to show that PPPs successfully achieve learning outcomes as opposed to access to schools. Subsidy schemes and partnership schools, as well as voucher schemes, have helped to drive up enrolment and to lower some financial obstacles to school, especially in underserved communities. These successes demonstrate that PPPs can play a role in expanding education participation when capacity is underdeveloped within the public sector (Hares, 2021).

Gains in student learning seem to be less continuous than gains in educational access, however. Insufficient evidence exists about the overall effectiveness of PPP schools in improving student performance, although a large quasi-experimental study in seventeen countries showed

that students enrolled in PPP schools often outperformed students in government schools, but this was due to "student selection, family background and peer composition" more than effective institutional performance. The results thus cast doubt on the existence of learning benefits from PPPs (Baum, 2018). The literature also differentiates between two different types of improvements: school management improvements and educational quality improvements. There are some studies that show that partnership schools can have more effective management, clearer goals of performance, and a more structured organizational system than traditional public schools. However, although those managerial developments do not necessarily translate into improved academic outcomes or equitable educational outcomes (Ind et al., 2022). Another major topic in the PPP literature is educational equity. While partnerships often help to increase educational opportunities, they don't always contribute to higher achievement for socio-economically disadvantaged students. Despite institutional changes, household income, geographical location, parental awareness and school access still have an impact on participation, potentially perpetuating inequalities (Ansari, 2024). Additional studies indicate that the quality of teachers is a significant factor in the success of the partnerships. However, rather than focusing on the differences between public and private teachers, recent studies suggest that continuous professional development, instructional support, effective supervision, and implementation capacity are more significant in shaping quality of education despite organizational ownership (Bukhari et al., 2025).

The implementation of educational PPP is one of the most notable cases in South Asia in Pakistan. The growth of partnerships has been spurred by the continued inadequacies of public education, the rising role of the private sector and substantial provision from international development partners. Therefore, PPPs are emerging as a significant aspect of the educational governance reforms aiming to maximize access, quality, and performance of the education system (Saeed &

Zubair, 2019). The transformation of the Punjab Education Foundation into an autonomous body to run partnership programmes with private schools, marked the first time that many of Pakistan's educational partnership programmes were introduced by Punjab. In addition, there were efforts to reform the education sector through the Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme, aimed at bolstering governance, enhance the quality of education and increase access for disadvantaged groups (Saeed & Zubair, 2019).

The Government of Sindh followed a similar path with Foundation Assisted Schools and Education Management Organizations (EMOs), specifically with the rural population and children out of school. These programs were part of a wider strategy of decreasing regional disparities and educating more efficiently through partnerships with non-state education providers (Ind et al., 2022). In Pakistan, PPP schemes are currently in place in school subsidy, voucher, foundation-assisted schools, EMOs and other school-support schemes that engage private sector organizations in school management and/or improving the quality of public school provision. Together, these arrangements constitute a gradual shift in governance from traditional to hybrid governance models in education (Ali et al., 2024).

There are mixed findings about the performance of the PPPs in Punjab based on empirical evidence. The partnership programmes have helped to enhance educational opportunities and boost school participation; however, there is unevenness in the achievement of learning outcomes. A recent review, however, found that the private school subsidy programme in one specific domain (mathematics at Grade 4) offered evidence of a statistically significant improvement but that evidence for broader educational benefits was limited (Ansari, 2024). In addition, researchers have raised the possibility that the apparent success of private sector participation is due to either the actual effectiveness of the institutions or to a difference in the type of students enrolled. Partnerships can sometimes overestimate the educational gains from such

arrangements, as the schools frequently accept students from relatively privileged socio-economic backgrounds, and so comparisons to government schools may be misleading (Siddiqui, 2017).

The results of the evidence from Sindh also show that the PPPs have reinforced a number of aspects of educational governance. Educational Management Organizations have enhanced institutional autonomy, further devolved administrative decision-making processes and boosted monitoring and accountability processes in participating schools (Muhammad, 2022). While these governance enhancements have led to significant progress, the evidence does not reveal the same levels of access to education, quality of learning, or equity. Additionally, there is also worry about the sustainability of partnership arrangements once contracts come to an end, indicating that governance changes are not sufficient to ensure sustainable educational improvement (Ind et al., 2022).

It is important to understand the effectiveness of educational PPPs in the context of Pakistani educational inequalities. There are still enormous inequalities between provinces, between towns and villages, and between socio-economic groups, which hinder equality of learning outcomes in the country from governance reforms (Sajjad et al., 2022). The study at the household level also confirms that children's learning opportunities and results are still most strongly predicted by their province of residence. As of now, educational inequality remains influenced by variations in development, income, and educational opportunities across different regions, irrespective of the type of school governance (Akram & Pervaiz, 2025). The structural inequalities indicate that PPPs are unlikely to redress historical educational inequalities. Rather, partnership effectiveness relies on complementary public investments, equitable resource allocation, effective regulatory oversight, as well as governance mechanisms that are capable of meeting local education needs in the context of the national standards (Saeed & Kosar, 2025).

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of research on public-private partnerships (PPPs) in education, some key questions remain about how these partnerships work beyond their measurable outcomes have yet to be addressed. While the majority of research on the effectiveness of PPPs rely on performance metrics like enrolment, student achievement, cost-effectiveness, and school participation, fewer studies focus on the governance mechanisms that impact these outcomes (Ansari, 2024). International scholarship also emphasizes comparing PPP initiatives to traditional public schools, but not on the role of institutional structures, accountability, coordination, and collaboration in implementation or long-term results (Xiong et al., 2018). While policy reform and partnership programmes, and educational inequality in Pakistan, have been well documented, governance process has been given limited attention to suggest the reasons for difference in the performance of the partnerships across the provinces and institutions (Bukhari et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the previous research in Punjab and Sindh has focused on the outcomes of the programmes and institutional changes, with little research theoretically analyzing the governance mechanisms that affect programme implementation, accountability, sustainability and educational outcomes (Ind et al., 2022). Although organization ownership remains key for partnership success, there is growing evidence that the quality of governance – which encompasses transparency, coordination of stakeholders, communication, and accountability – is a more important factor than organizational ownership itself (Twinomuhwezi & Herman, 2020). Thus, this study seeks to fill this gap by taking a governance lens to investigate the models of hybrid governance in Pakistan's education sector and analyse the impact on educational quality, equity and sustainability as a result of institutional structures and collaborative relationships rather than just performance indicators.

Literature Synthesis

The literature reviewed shows a general consensus that P3s are becoming a more prominent part of educational governance reforms around the world. The majority of scholars agree that PPPs have helped to create greater access to education and to innovative approaches to management that can enhance the way schools are managed and how they are operated. However, outcomes of learning, educational equity and sustainability have not been consistently found across countries and institutions. Another common theme in the literature is that the ability to secure success in a partnership is not as dependent on the presence of a PPP as it is on the quality of the governance processes in which a partnership operates. Accountability, transparency, institutional trust, stakeholder coordination, communication, monitoring and adaptive implementation are recurring themes in educational partnerships as governance mechanisms. In view of this, these governance dimensions make them the most relevant analytical lens to grasp the variance in outcomes of similar PPP models in different contexts.

In addition, the literature suggests that Pakistan is a uniquely fruitful area for the exploration of hybrid governance in education, due to the fact that it has adopted different kinds of PPP models in various provinces, and faces significant educational differences and educational governance issues. While existing research provides valuable evidence on programme performance it is limited in comparison, with respect to understanding the governance processes behind program performance. The present study builds on these observations and sets governance (not the type of partnership) as the main explanatory variable. The study is not concerned with the question of whether PPPs are better than regular public education institutions but is focused on how governance is related to effectiveness, implementation, accountability and equity in the hybrid education system in Pakistan. This view fills an important void in the current literature and has implications that extend beyond

the scope of governance of education and public administration.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research design for secondary data analysis, fully based on secondary data, to explore the effectiveness of public-private partnerships (PPP) in enhancing educational outcomes in Pakistan. A qualitative design is appropriate because the study is intended to gain insight into governance structures, institutional relationships, policy implementation and educational outcomes rather than seek statistical relationships. The study builds on a review of the literature and policy documents to gain a holistic understanding of hybrid governance models in Pakistan's education sector, rather than relying on primary data collection through surveys or interviews. The analysis is in an interpretive research approach, in which the researcher can explore the ways in which the different stakeholders, policies and institutional arrangements influence the implementation and effectiveness of educational PPPs. It is an approach that is ideal for governance research, as it is concerned with understanding meanings, interactions and institutional processes, rather than testing causal relations, within their social and policy context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Only secondary data sources gleaned from trusted national and international publications are used. These are peer-reviewed journal articles, government policy documents, provincial education sector plans, reports from the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, and the Pakistan Economic Survey (where applicable) or official publications from the Punjab Education Foundation and Sindh Education Foundation (where applicable). These sources have detailed information regarding educational reforms, institutional arrangements, policy implementation, educational outcomes, and public-private partnerships in Pakistan. Multiple data sources allow for the study to provide evidence comparisons across institutions, enhancing study credibility by data triangulation. Secondary data analysis is particularly suitable

because there is a wealth of good quality evidence available for educational PPPs that have been well documented by governments, international organisations, and academic researchers, which allows for systematic review of this evidence (Johnston, 2017).

Before the process of literature selection began, inclusion criteria were set to ensure the literature selected is of high quality and relevant. Research published in the past decade, 2015–2025, was used to ensure that the analysis reflects the latest developments in educational governance and the implementation of PPPs. Peer-reviewed journal articles, official government documents, international organization documents and policy documents directly related to educational governance, hybrid governance or public-private partnerships received priority. To be consistent in the review, only publications in English language were included. Studies were excluded if they were not of adequate methodological quality, were published more than once, were conference abstracts, opinion pieces, newspaper articles or non-academic websites. These selection criteria also help to ensure that the study is based on reliable, current, and academically sound information, and to be the least biased in the review process as possible (Snyder, 2019).

Thematic analysis, content analysis, and comparative policy analysis were used to analyse the collected documents. The documents were read repeatedly at first to determine the concepts that were recurring with respect to governance, accountability, collaboration, educational quality, access, and policy implementation. The ideas were then clustered into themes to help to see the patterns and relationships between the studies. Policy documents were analysed to gain insights into the government's goals, implementation mechanisms and institutional roles while comparative synthesis of experiences was employed to reveal similarities and differences between international experiences and the educational PPP models in Pakistan. The researcher was able to gain a holistic understanding of the impact of governance mechanisms on the effectiveness of hybrid

education partnerships by using these analytical techniques in combination. Thematic analysis is a qualitative technique that is widely accepted due to its ability to provide researchers with a structure for organizing a large volume of textual data into coherent patterns and being flexible in interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This study is conducted using only secondary data which is publicly available, thus there are no human participants involved in this study, so there are no ethical risks involved. This meant that neither formal ethical approval or informed consent was required, nor participant confidentiality procedures were followed. However, the study abides by the principles of research integrity by accurately representing previous findings, avoiding plagiarism, acknowledging all previous authors and being transparent in the research process. All sources used in the analysis are used correctly in the referencing style required; interpretations of the evidence are presented in an objective way without changing or misrepresenting the original evidence. These practices foster academic integrity, credibility, and transparency and help to build confidence in the study's findings (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The research is based on Network Governance Theory that is suitable for understanding the operation of public-private partnerships in the field of education. The theory claims that the solution of the problems, which are complex in nature, is not possible through the efforts of governments alone. Rather, governance is increasingly being driven by a network of public agencies, private organization, civil society institutions and local communities working together to deliver joint issues. Network governance de-emphasizes a hierarchical governance structure and focuses on cooperation, interdependence, joint decision-making and ongoing interaction between multiple actors. The perspective of Network Governance Theory is suitable for analysing how these relationships affect educational outcomes because it focuses on

government departments, education foundations, private school operators, donors and community stakeholders that make up educational PPPs. This theory has been elaborated by others, including Rhodes (1997) and Provan and Kenis (2008), who believe that effective governance requires coordination, trust, sharing of resources, and collective responsibility, not as much as central government control.

By using the concept of Network Governance Theory, this study can explore the contribution of cooperation between the government, private education sector, education foundations, community, schools and students in the delivery of educational services in Pakistan's PPPs. In this context, the government's role is policy making, regulation, financing, and quality assurance, and the role of the private sector is managerial expertise, innovation, and operational capacity. Education foundations like Punjab Education Foundation and Sindh Education Foundation act as intermediary organizations and they facilitate the relationship between public authorities and private schools. Good governance thus requires the kind of collaboration and accountability that involves everyone, the transparency of decision-making, effective use of resources, monitoring of performance, and the generation of public good for students and society. These dimensions are used as an analytical framework for the effectiveness of hybrid governance models in this study. The emphasis of the theory is on governance processes, and not just on the difference between public and private schools, which will help understand why some educational partnerships are successful while others face difficulties in implementation and give a conceptual framework to analyse educational PPPs in Pakistan.

Discussion

The literature reviewed revealed that the primary benefits of hybrid public-private partnership (PPP) models are greater access to education, school participation, and the physical aspects of education infrastructure, while they have been less effective in maximizing learning outcomes. These

partnerships have been established to leverage public money and private sector management to improve the availability of education resources, boost enrolment and extend education access, especially in low- and middle-income countries (Ali et al., 2024).

In Pakistan, PPPs are becoming an important solution to many longstanding issues, including limited access to quality education, teacher shortage, region-based inequities, and inadequate infrastructure in public schools. Recent research indicates that in some provinces, the formation of partnerships between the public and private sectors has led to increased enrolment, improved classroom conditions and improved school management (Rizwan et al., 2025). The same improvement has been noted on school infrastructure, with PPP-supported schools noting an improvement in classroom, sanitation, laboratory, and learning environments in general, which has created more conducive conditions for learning and teaching (Dimaculangan & Lunar, 2026).

Notwithstanding these successes, there is mixed evidence with respect to educational quality. Punjab has the most robust evidence, with only the private school subsidy programme having a statistically significant impact on Grade 4 mathematics achievement, and no similar story emerged for other PPP initiatives (Ansari, 2024). Similarly, the research study on the Sindh Education Management Organization (EMO) programme reported that there were improvements in school governance and attendance; however, there was limited evidence of improvement in learning outcomes or greater educational equity (Ind et al., 2022).

The outcomes are also inconsistent among PPP models when it comes to teachers. While some programmes have implemented better teaching practices, incentive structures and increased engagement with stakeholders, professional development and regular teacher support remains widely different between partnership models (Siyab et al., 2024). Overall, the evidence suggests that the objective of hybrid PPPs in improving the achievement of learning outcomes and equity in

education is not as effective as the one of expanding educational opportunities and enhancing school management.

The results suggest that the effectiveness of hybrid PPP arrangements is more related to the quality of governance than to the nature of the PPP arrangements. Key elements for successful partnerships involve having clear institutional roles and responsibilities, transparent decision making, effective communication, and robust accountability systems to coordinate various partners (Zhang & Muhammad, 2025). There is evidence from Sindh indicating that increased institutional autonomy and decentralised management led to better administration, monitoring and accountability in schools, suggesting that governance can have an impact on programme implementation (Ind et al., 2022). Likewise, the governance literature on PPPs emphasises the importance of trust, collaboration and capacity building of partners for sustaining partnerships and effective service delivery (Casady et al., 2020).

However, while these are strengths, there are a number of governance weaknesses that constrain PPP performance, especially in developing countries. Partnership programmes are less sustainable due to policy instability, low institutional capacity, financial reliance and weak regulation (Rizwan et al., 2025). Another key problem is performance monitoring, as meaningful improvements require institutions to have adequate capacities, both in terms of administration and evaluation, as a condition of funding (Yan et al., 2025). Suboptimal monitoring can lead teachers to engage in compliance-seeking actions instead of improvements to teaching and learning, and suboptimal monitoring can increase opacity and lack of accountability (Matveeva, 2025). Additionally, imbalanced power dynamics between governments, private providers, donors and communities can lead to disjointed decision-making and a reduction in collaborative governance, if responsibilities are not clearly agreed upon (Tao, 2022).

The conclusions suggest a strong support for Network Governance Theory which proposes that

complex public services can be best provided by a set of multiple interdependent actors instead of the traditional government action (Kapucu & Hu, 2020). The governance of education in Pakistan is shared between governments, education foundations, private school operators, communities and development partners, all of whom drive policy implementation and impact educational outcomes. Partnerships seem to be more effective when these actors are responsible for one another, exchange resources, and have good coordination and trust (Caves & Oswald-Egg, 2021). On the other hand, existing weak collaboration, institutional capacity and fragmented accountability limit the potential of hybrid PPP to deliver equitable, sustainable and quality education outcomes, confirming that good governance is the key to partnership success.

Policy Implications

The results indicate that there is a need for further reform of PPPs in Pakistan which should focus on strengthening the governance rather than the number of PPP programmes. In order to enhance implementation and long-term sustainability, governments should take steps to define institutional roles more clearly, to develop transparent contractual arrangements, to set up risk sharing mechanisms, and provide better coordination between public and private actors (Liu et al., 2022). In addition, monitoring and independent evaluation should be instituted regularly, to improve accountability and to assess programme performance, thereby limiting opportunities for poor compliance or ineffective programme management (Matveeva, 2025).

Capacity building investment in institutions and humans should be a key element in the education PPP policy. Increased leadership and management capabilities and teacher professional development can help to improve service quality and increase effectiveness of collaborative governance. Meanwhile, more active participation of local communities, school management committees and other stakeholders can enhance public trust and transparency and make PPP programmes more responsive to local educational needs (Zhang

& Muhammad, 2025). The reforms are especially significant for the need to close the long-standing regional gaps in access and learning outcomes in Pakistan.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted that the hybrid PPP models have been effective in expanding access to education, enhancing educational infrastructure and supporting the institutional management, in general. There is less evidence, however, of the sustained improvements in learning achievement and educational equity. This evidence suggests that the ability of partnerships to be successful is more dependent on how well they are governed to coordinate their work rather than on the type of provider – whether public or private – delivering the education. The study, which is based on the concept of Network Governance Theory, finds that good institutional coordination, shared accountability, effective monitoring, the participation of stakeholders and building capacities on an ongoing basis are indispensable to the enhancement of the performance and sustainability of educational PPPs. Improving these governance aspects will help Pakistan establish more equitable, accountable and sustainable partnership mechanisms to help meet SDG 4 (SDG 4) and enhance the quality of education in general.

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