

The risks and rewards of public-private partnerships

AN EDUCATION EXPERT DISCUSSION



THE RISKS AND REWARDS OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

On 20th April 2023, the Global Independent Schools Association (GISA) hosted a call with education experts from around the world to discuss the risks and rewards of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in education. It was the latest in a series of calls that bring together school leaders, education experts and business representatives to discuss key issues.



THE ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

HOST



Nicholas Piachaud
Advocacy Consultant
GISA

GUESTS



Claudia Costin
Founder
Center for Excellence and Innovation in
Education Policies (Brazil)



Karim Mostafa
CEO
Eduhive (Egypt)



Amit Chandra
Senior Consultant
Central Square Foundation (India)

INTRODUCTION

Education systems worldwide rely on PPPs to staff schools with teachers, build vital education infrastructure and provide schoolchildren with transportation and meals. They can also finance innovation and social impact, such as projects aimed to increase access to education for marginalised groups. Such partnerships are increasingly popular in low and middle-income countries, where the public sector often struggles to meet the demand for educational services. But they are not a panacea. When poorly conceived, such partnerships can fuel inequity across education systems and lead to social stratification and school segregation. What are the key factors that make PPPs a success? This discussion brought together different perspectives on the issue from the worlds of policymaking, business and civil society.

TOP TAKEAWAYS

1 PPPS CAN UNLOCK VITAL FUNDING

At their best, PPPs are mechanisms which can enable the public, private and philanthropic sectors to work together to improve education infrastructure and facilities. They can also fund the provision of vital services and equipment in classrooms. **Claudia Costin**, a former Secretary of Education for Rio de Janeiro, argued that while in office PPPs had helped her to address systemic teacher shortages and improve access to education across the region. Dr Costin is also a former Senior Director for Education at the World Bank Group, which has long championed PPPs in its development work.

2 PPPS CAN POOL EXPERTISE

PPPs can also harness expertise across different sectors. **Karim Mostafa**, who leads the Egyptian education management company Eduhive, described a successful partnership with the Ministry of Education to launch a new model of school which followed the international curriculum. These schools, he said, were priced below other private schools but were still well-equipped with teachers, textbooks and technology. The first school was opened in 2019, and 36 more have since followed.



3 CREATIVE APPROACHES CAN MAKE PPPs MORE EFFECTIVE

Governments around the world have partnered with the private sector in a range of different ways to address education issues. Often, such partnerships have focused on building and upgrading schools' infrastructure. But there are also other models. **Amit Chandra**, a consultant for the Central Square Foundation, one of India's largest education NGOs, listed what he considered to be the most "creative" PPPs, including India's grant-in-aid programme, Indonesia's funding of operational costs for basic education and the Philippines' teacher salary subsidy schemes. Such programmes, **Mr Chandra** argued, had helped to build the capacity of education systems and, in some cases, widened access for marginalised students.

4 PPPS CAN BRING SECTORS TOGETHER ON EDUCATION

It can be challenging to get the public and private sectors to work together effectively. **Claudia Costin** noted that policymakers often struggled to incentivise the private sector to support schools, particularly including in marginalised areas. But she also argued that the best approach was through open dialogue between the sectors: "It is not easy, and it's not about public schools being bad and private schools being good," she said. "It's about putting our strengths together."

Dr Costin also argued that such partnerships could give local communities more of a voice in education issues. She pointed to examples in Brazil of representatives of local communities joining the school boards of privately managed institutions. "When society gets involved, schools thrive – even in vulnerable environments."



5 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS: BALANCING DIFFERING ROLES

Today, public and private school systems co-exist in a number of different countries around the world. But these systems often serve different types of students. **Claudia Costin** said that policymakers' priorities should be to build sound public education systems, and that the private sector could be a vital source of innovation – a testing ground for new ideas. **Amit Chandra** argued that a key function of private schools was to expand parents' choice over where to educate their children:

“You will have to democratise the system so that more and more people can participate.”



ABOUT GISA

The Global Independent Schools Association represents, co-ordinates, and gives a voice to the global independent education sector - which educates 350 million children around the world.

We want to showcase the impact of the global independent education sector, and become a resource for the world's governments and international institutions to tap into, talk to, and, in times of crisis, lean on.

As a member of this association, you will join our network of educators, executives, public policy experts, faith leaders, philanthropists and more. You will be able to participate in GISA Advocacy Initiatives, Global Alliances, Working Groups and Events. As a leader you can help to shape our global agenda, gain access to influential decision makers and leaders, and strengthen your global and local networks.

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