TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION: AN EXPLORATION OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract.   One of the most significant current discussions in the public management agenda over the last couple of decades is public-private partnerships (PPPs). Despite the positive rhetoric, huge efforts are required to reap the advantages of PPPs and overcome the many potential challenges. In meeting these challenges, it is important to understand and manage inter-organizational relationships (IORs) between the public and private sector organizations involved in a public-private partnership arrangement. However, 'limited scholarly attention has been devoted to the on-going managerial life of a PPP' (Weihe, 2010, p.510). This research paper contributes to a better understanding of the 'on-going managerial life of a PPP' by presenting an empirical study of educational PPPs in Pakistan.

Keywords: Public-private partnerships, Inter-organizational relationships, Educational PPPs, Primary education, Third sector, CARE, ITA

JEL classification:

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I. INTRODUCTION

Markets and hierarchy are often seen as distinct and opposing mechanisms for the provision of public services. However, due to increasing interdependence of various public and private sector organizations, the boundary between public and private sectors has become blurred (Pollitt, 2003). Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are situated on this boundary. PPP is a specific type of inter-organizational collaboration that is distinct in one fundamental way that it involves public-private interaction and thus 'demand[s] a specific and individual analysis' (Noble & Jones, 2006: 914). PPPs have been a hot topic of discussion during the last two decades or so (Bovaird & Tizard, 2009; Hodge, Greve, & Boardman, 2010; Osborne, 2000). There is an increasing tendency, both in the industrialized world and in developing and transitioning countries, to involve the private sector in public service delivery. Despite the positive rhetoric, huge efforts are required to reap the advantages of PPPs and overcome the many potential challenges (Huxham, 2003; Skelcher, 2005). In meeting these challenges, it is important to understand both structural and relational aspects of PPPs.

The formal and structural aspects of PPPs have been discussed in depth in the existing PPP literature. This includes discussion to explore the conceptual boundaries of PPPs (Klijn & Teisman, 2005; Klijn, 2010; Skelcher, 2005), analysis of the institutional design of partnership and modes of governance (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998; Skelcher, 2010), designing contracts and allocating responsibilities, risks and rewards (Hodge, 2004), assessing economic worth (Boardman & Vining, 2010), investigating the relationship between democratic practices (e.g. public interest issues, accountability and transparency), design of partnerships (Skelcher, Mathur, & Smith, 2005), and discussing the outcomes of PPPs (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Hodge & Greve, 2007).

It is argued by some PPP scholars that the dominance of this 'macro-level' analysis has resulted in relatively limited scholarly attention to the 'micro-level' analysis of operational and relational aspects of collaboration (Noble & Jones, 2006; Weihe, 2010). This imbalance limits our understanding of the diverse and dynamic nature of relationships within PPPs. This research paper contributes to filling this gap by presenting an empirical study of PPPs in the education sector in Pakistan.

The paper presents an analysis of two in-depth case studies where two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) entered into separate PPP arrangements with the Government of Punjab. Their involvement was part of the government's 'Adopt-a-school' programme, which aimed *'to uplift the standard of education'* in the adopted state schools. This paper presents and explores the different inter-organizational relationships (IORs) found in the two case studies. It then seeks to address the question of why these differences have emerged given that the two cases share the same policy context and, in theory, operate under the same policy model of partnership. Answering this question requires going beyond the structural aspects into the relational side and is important for better understanding of PPPs. The paper is divided into four sections. The *first* section outlines the conceptual framework used in the study, focusing on organization identity and mutuality as important dimensions for analyzing IORs. The *second* section explains the context in which PPP initiatives were introduced in the education sector of Pakistan and introduces two case studies where the state and private not-for-profit organizations have entered a PPP arrangement called 'Adopt-a-school' programme. The *third* section examines the dynamics of IORs in the 'Adopt-a-school' case studies. Style of management and leadership approach are identified as important factors influencing mutuality and the dynamics of IORs. The *final* section concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for theory and practice.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of *'inter-organizational relationships'* (IORs) is sometimes viewed as an umbrella term to represent the organizational forms or structures that diverse partnership arrangements can take (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Huxham, 2003). IORs are also viewed from a process perspective (Levine & White, 1961; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Here they are seen as 'the sequence of events and interaction among organizational parties that unfold to shape and modify an IOR over time' (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994: 91). Under the process perspective IORs are seen as the developmental process as opposed to the structural form these relationships take. This paper largely adopts a process perspective in analyzing IORs but acknowledges that it is often impossible to draw neat distinctions between structures and processes.

The existing literature on collaboration and partnerships provides different theoretical frameworks to encapsulate the complexity inherent in the variety and contexts of these relationships. This paper draws on the framework presented by Brinkerhoff (2002) to analyze IORs within partnership arrangements. Brinkerhoff (2002) has identified two dimensions as key to understanding IORs: *organization identity* and *mutuality*.

ORGANIZATION IDENTITY

The defining characteristic of PPPs is the dual identity that partners share: their own distinct organization identity and the partnership identity (Huxham, 1996; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991). This usually leads to tension between pursuing individual organizational goals and achieving partnership goals. Thomson and Perry refer to this tension as 'the process of reconciling individual and collective interests' (2006: 26) and it is a recurring theme in the existing literature on partnerships and collaboration. Brinkerhoff (2002, 2002b) examines organization identity at two levels. First is the organization's own mission, goals and constituencies and with respect to this the 'maintenance of organization identity is the extent to which an organization remains consistent and committed to its mission, core values and constituencies (2002: 23). Secondly, organization identity refers to the comparative advantages of the sector an organization belongs to. It is generally argued in the partnership literature that in order to reap the synergistic rewards of a partnership, it is essential to maintain these comparative advantages. Organizations which get involved in PPPs arrangements need to maintain their unique identities in the context of increasing interdependencies developing over time (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). Partnerships are seen as an exchange relationship whereby each partner is chosen and assigned responsibilities according to the comparative advantage that each is presumed to contribute to the partnership. These exchange relationships are also discussed with respect to the strategic alliance literature (e.g. Levine & White, 1961; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994) and from a resource dependence perspective (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Technically if organization identity is lost, comparative advantage is lost and there would be nothing unique on the part of that partner to contribute to partnership. In such a case there is no rationale for justifying the huge efforts required for partnership working.

MUTUALITY

Mutuality refers to interdependence among partners in a partnership or similar arrangement (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Thomson & Perry, 2006). The social dilemma of individuals pursuing their *individual welfare* rather than the *joint welfare* has always been discussed as the main problem in the face of any attempts targeted at collective benefits (Olson, 1965; Ostrom, 1990). However, Ostrom (1998) has argued that it is possible to curtail the costs related to collective action by 'building conditions' that can help in dealing with difficulties of getting individuals to pursue collective interests. Mutuality acts as an incentive or motivating factor to enter into partnership arrangements and encourages partners to pursue collective goals by giving them a sense of ownership. This is usually done by providing opportunities for partner organizations to jointly determine the partnership procedures. This implies that mutuality helps to solve the collective action problem by providing partners with a mechanism to reconcile individual and collective interests (Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991). Participative decision making, shared power arrangements, reciprocal accountability, transparency, information sharing, joint determination of programme activities and mutual respect are commonly used indicators of mutuality.

METHODS

The study consists of two case studies, Co-operation for Advancement, Rehabilitation and Education (CARE) and Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aaghai (ITA), both of which are NGOs and are selected mainly due to their prominence in the field. The information and analysis presented in the paper is based on 46 in-depth interviews conducted with the officials from both NGOs as well as the government officials including head teachers, senior teachers and district education officials. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded in NVivo. Some of the key documents such as contracts, terms and conditions, minutes of meetings and field notes from process observation were also imported into NVivo for analysis. A thematic coding approach was used and this enabled both deductive and inductive analysis to be undertaken simultaneously (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The research context of this empirical study is important for at least two main reasons. First, the developing country context provides an opportunity to study PPPs outside of the developed world and to test whether the models and frameworks developed in the west make sense in this context. Second, the existing PPP literature is skewed towards studying infrastructure PPPs. In contrast, this study considers PPPs for service delivery.

EDUCATIONAL PPPS IN PAKISTAN

The issue of access to quality education in Pakistan is crucial and like many other countries the provision of education services in Pakistan has undergone many changes during the last two decades. Developing countries often face significant educational challenges around providing access to schools and delivering quality education. Many countries, including Pakistan, have looked to the private sector to help overcome these problems (LaRocque, 2008; Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, & Guaqueta, 2009). The government in Pakistan officially recognizes that the public sector on its own lacks all the necessary resources and expertise to effectively address and rectify low education indicators (Government of Pakistan, 2004). Since 2001, the government has undertaken many initiatives to mobilize all sectors of the society in the face of educational challenges. Many of these initiatives are geared towards improving service delivery in state schools through PPP agreements with the private sector (including NGOs)(GoP, 2003; Government of Pakistan, 2004). The 'Adopt-a-school' programme is one of the most prominent initiatives in which government departments form partnerships with private sector organizations and hand over the management of the state's under-performing schools to the private sector for a specified period of time under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The programme has received national recognition and is in practice in all four provinces of the Pakistan.

DYNAMICS OF IORs

The two cases, though share several similarities such as both are not-for-profit NGOs operating in the context of the same country apparently under the same model of partnership, illustrate diversity in terms of IORs. In this section the identified dimensions that are recurrent in both partnership and collaboration literatures are operationalized using

empirical data which offers an insight into the dynamics of IORs in practice. For this purpose, the cross-case analysis of both NGOs is undertaken to identify the reasons for diverse IORs in case of both NGOs.

OPERATIONALIZING PARTNERSHIP DIMENSIONS: *ORGANIZATION IDENTITY AND MUTUALITY*

The IORs between state and NGOs in 'Adopt-a-school' programme are quite formal and based on the MoU. The fact that there is no standard MoU developed by the state education department for the said programme provides a greater space to the private sector partners to envision the goals of partnership as well as the roles and responsibilities they wish to pursue to achieve these goals. It becomes evident by analyzing the two case studies presented in the paper that both NGOs have managed to preserve their respective organization identities by taking lead in developing the MoU which is carefully crafted to maintain and protect their individual distinct organization identities.

Nevertheless, public sector ensures the maintenance of its organization identity by making it necessary for private sector partners to ensure consultation with the government officials at several points and keeping them informed about the state of adopted schools. This ensures maintaining the respective unique identities of both public and private sector partners in a PPP arrangement 'in the face of growing web of interdependencies that emerge with time' (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994: 108).

The fact that partners share a dual identity — their individual distinct organization identity and collective identity within the partnership—leads to tension between both identities (Huxham, 1996; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991). The goals of partnership under 'Adopt-a-school' programme are very broad making it difficult to define them precisely. The goal of partnership is *'to uplift the standard of education'* and seems that any private sector partner could contribute anything towards improving the standard of education in the adopted schools. The lack of precise clarity in the goals of partnership coupled with no formal training or even guidelines by the government education department to those adopting state schools results in different subjective perceptions about achieving the goals of the partnership guided by their individual

organization identities. Hence, partnership management and implementation is generally dependent on the *organization identity* of the private sector partner working in state schools and varies to great extent from one partner organization to another.

In order to illustrate tension in the perceived goals of partnership the paper draws an analogy to categorize inputs for the delivery of education. Two terms have been adopted from computer system for this purpose; *hardware* and *software* inputs. Hardware in computer language refers to 'the collection of physical elements that comprise a computer system' and software means 'a collection of computer programs and related data that provides the instructions for telling a computer what to do and how to do it'(Microsoft, 2013).

For the purpose of this paper these terms are used in education system are quite analogous to the computer system[1]. The term *hardware* (very much parallel to its use in the computer system) refers to the collection of physical elements that comprise an education system and would include infrastructural facilities such as building, class rooms, library, labs, provision of missing facilities such as drinking water, toilets, fans, furniture, technical facilities such as computers, overhead projectors, multimedia etc., support facilities such as textbooks, stationery, uniforms etc. and also comprise provision of teachers[2]. *Software* in this context refers to the services in relation to delivery of education itself and would comprise of designing and providing curriculum or any other learning material for teaching, training of

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[1] This division between *hardware* and *software* inputs, however, is not intended to argue the non-relevance of *hardware* facilities or undermine their contribution for education service delivery. In fact, the provision of *hardware* inputs are the prerequisites for the effectiveness of software inputs. Even in the computer language no software can be installed unless and until it is supported by the required hardware.

[2] Provision of teachers though appears to be *software* input could be argued as *hardware* input as teacher refers to the physical element that comprises an education system. Therefore, under this analogy provision of teachers would be considered as *hardware* input while activities aimed at the improvement of quality of teaching (such as training of teachers, monitoring teachers in class rooms, evaluating teachers' lesson planning and copy checking) would be referred to as *software* inputs.

teachers and staff, monitoring teachers in class rooms, examining the notebook checking done by teachers, introducing mechanisms for quality improvement such as lesson planning, monthly exams to asses children learning, keeping a track record of child learning outcomes, implementing stated rules and regulations etc.

Both CARE and ITA have distinct goals that are explicit both in the MoUs and in practice as observed during the fieldwork. In case of both case studies, the NGOs did not give autonomy to public sector partners in determining the micro-level goals of partnership. There is of course, the macro-level mutually determined goal of the PPP that is *'to uplift the standard of education'* but the operationalization of this macro-level goal was left on the part of private sector partners by the state.

In case of CARE, *'to uplift the standard of education'* primarily means to improve management of the state adopted schools and improve the learning levels of children. This is the reason that CARE takes on the management responsibility of the adopted schools as mentioned in the state-CARE MoU:

> Management of the entire affairs of the above-referred schools shall exclusively vest in CARE… subject to the overall supervision and control of the "District Government" within the formalities of this agreement (State-CARE MoU).

Furthermore, CARE takes the responsibility to:

> evaluate and prepare appraisal reports for all including Government staff. Such performance & evaluation reports about the performance of Government staff would carry reasonable weight and importance both in CARE and District Government Education Department (Clause 18, State-CARE MoU).

As a result, their main emphasis is on the provision of *software* inputs such as:

- regular monitoring of schools, record keeping and data management including attendance records, movement register, teacher evaluations, minutes of meetings etc. and sharing information with relevant district officials;

- taking initiatives to improve discipline at schools such as establishment of school committees, day master/mistress duties;
- obliging government teachers to use CARE supplements which are designed to improve teaching pedagogy;
- providing CARE teachers to overcome shortage of teachers;
- capacity building by providing training opportunities to teachers and staff;
- monitoring teachers in class rooms;
- conducting centralized examination in all schools to assess learning outcomes of children;
- introducing mechanisms for improvement in learning outcomes such as lesson planning, keeping a track record of child learning outcomes;
- running summer camps to actively engage students in studies and co-curricular activities; and
- conducting English classes after school in selected adopted schools to improve spoken and written English of students.

Nevertheless, the fieldwork shows that besides a lot of *software* inputs provision, in practice CARE has refurbished and provided many missing facilities in adopted schools including construction of classrooms, libraries, science labs, furniture toilets etc. and CARE officials proudly refer to this as 'going way beyond the contract'. Due to their established rights to manage the adopted school under the MoU, the specifics of the programme are designed *a priori* by CARE in light of their mission and goals and not much mutuality is seen on the ground with respect to planning and designing these interventions. Nevertheless, there is evidence of joint decision making and joint determination of programme activities at points when these pre-determined interventions are going to be implemented in schools.

On the other hand, ITA envisions management of adopted state schools as a *joint* responsibility of the state and ITA clearly mentioned it in the state-ITA MoU:

Management of the entire affairs of the above referred (adopted) school(s) shall mutually vest in CDG and the NGO… subject to overall supervision and control of CDG (City District Government) within the formalities of the agreement (Clause 28 i, State-ITA MoU).

This is so because for ITA, *'to uplift the standard of education'* broadly refers to the provision of technical support to the adopted state schools and creating a 'safe learning environment through school rehabilitation' (ITA, 2012a).The interventions undertaken by ITA include:

- Capacity building by providing training opportunities to teachers and staff,
- community mobilization;
- provision of teachers;
- encouraging safe learning environment by providing missing facilities;
- creating awareness and sensitivity about health and hygiene, and environment issues;
- encouraging and involving children to take part in project based learning and co-curricular activities through 'summer schools';
- providing technical support on child friendly schools (CFS) and Early Childhood Education (ECE);
- designing and providing supplements to improve pedagogy;
- provision of ECE kit, health kit with first aid box, sports kits, reading kit;
- provision of uniform, school bags, books and stationery; and
- promoting literacy for mothers and siblings.

These interventions are implemented largely through 'timely resource mobilization' from diverse sources. Working with state education department increases the credibility of ITA and enables ITA to capitalize resources from multiple channels including community, corporate sector, philanthropists, expatriates and many multilateral and bilateral donor organizations. ITA has always strived towards its role in

'influencing of public policy' which is stated explicitly as a part of its mission statement. Getting into partnership relationship gives ITA the required influence to assert policy influence by gaining the knowledge about grassroots issues. Drawing on ITA's Provincial Programme Coordinator:

> See if you want to do advocacy at macro level you can't do it until you have knowledge of grassroots level and what people actually do at grassroots level…and get to know their local issues and problems… secondly if we want the government to improve quality of education in government schools then we need to show government the best practices there and suggest the government to replicate it, so that's the advocacy (ITA-Provincial Programme Coordinator).

It would not be wrong to say that for ITA this PPP has served as a vehicle to travel the distance between service delivery at grassroots level to policy advocacy at the provincial and federal government level. Like CARE the interventions undertaken by ITA lack mutuality as they are decided *a priori* by ITA. ITA involves state officials at points where the project is already in the final form to be implemented and there is not much input from their side in project design and planning. Rather the emphasis is on getting approval to implement the projects in state schools and keeping them informed about what ITA is doing in partner school.

From the interviews conducted with the public sector officials it could be established that for them, generally speaking, the standard of education could be improved by undertaking infrastructure improvements, providing furniture, science labs and computer labs, addressing shortage of teachers and providing some training opportunities to teachers. The comment below is quite typical explaining the perceived need of the partnership especially the role of the private sector partner:

> What we need from partnership is that in order to provide quality education we get AV aids, give us multimedia, give us IT lab, give us IT teachers, give us sweepers where required, give learning based toys to children, things like that. We don't need interference, they should give us one trainer who should come after a month or 15 days and train in art and craft, activity based

learning, doing art work and how to decorate the school. That's it! this is what we want (District government official).

From the above excerpt and several other similar examples that could be quoted, it becomes clear that getting into partnership with the private sector organizations through 'Adopt-a-school' programme was perceived as an opportunity to *'to uplift the standard of education'* by addressing lack of facilities in state schools by state officials.

This is reiterated by looking at the indicators of education improvement taken into account in the annual education statistics undertaken by the Government of Pakistan (GoP, 2011). The key indicators used to measure the quality of education system in this report are number of schools, enrolment figures, number of teachers and availability of physical facilities such as availability and ownership of school buildings, condition of school buildings, level of construction work, availability of electricity, drinking water, toilets and boundary walls, and number of classrooms (GoP, 2011: v).

This indicates the importance given to the provision of hardware inputs by the government officials which shapes the dynamics of IORs in practice. The role of the adopter with respect to achieving the goals of the partnership is primarily seen as that of a resource provider and facilitator to bring improvements in the school by providing hardware inputs. While the lists of interventions mentioned above undertaken by ITA and CARE have significant overlaps, the field research shows that besides a lot of commitment and generally more emphasis on the provision of *software* inputs, ITA keeps providing *hardware* inputs more frequently and is generally appreciated for that by the government officials. The interventions undertaken by CARE which are directly aimed at improving management of the schools and enhance learning levels of children are generally seen as stepping into the government officials' territory. This clash in perceived need of partnership between CARE and government officials becomes a reason of conflict and acts as a barrier in building IORs. The following comments by one of the CARE area manager summed up the difference in the perceived goals of the partnership:

If you call a DCO (district official) and even if you call chief minister he will come and see whether cleanliness is there, are

> teachers in the classes, if yes, that's perfect for them… they are not concerned with what the child has done in the notebooks and how much he has learnt, they think if cleanliness is there in school and teacher is in the class that's all. Whereas CARE says that work starts after all this is done, like for example you should conduct their trainings that how to teach and how to move ahead.

Along with reflecting on the differences with respect to the perceived goals of partnership, this quote is an example of CARE officials commonly-held belief that it is the provision of *software* inputs that is more important and that the state monitoring system is not targeted at the right indicators.

Although CARE supports adopted schools by providing *hardware* inputs, it takes provision of software inputs more strongly on board and adopts more direct approach while providing such inputs as compared to the enabling approach undertaken by ITA. The next set of factors deals with the organizational characteristics especially *style of management and leadership approach* which takes some of these ideas further by emphasizing the impact of these factors on mutuality and hence the dynamics of IORs. These factors emerged as prominent inductive themes, though established in partnership and collaboration literatures, while analyzing the qualitative data collected for this research.

STYLE OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP APPROACH

Mutuality in case of 'Adopt-a-school' programme is strongly influenced by two types of factors: first, the organization identity of partners especially the mission and goals or 'what is it that they want to achieve', and second important set of factors influencing mutuality in 'Adopt-a-school' programme are the organizational characteristics especially *style of management and leadership approach* which were found to be very different for both NGOs explaining differences in mutuality and thereby influencing IORs. Table 1 demonstrates the comparative analysis of both NGOs across their approach towards programme management and leadership approach and provided useful framework to figure out the reasons for diverse IORs for both NGOs.

TABLE 1

Comparative Analysis of Programme Management and Leadership Approach

	CARE	**ITA**
Day-to-day programme management	A full time Internal Coordinator (IC) appointed for each school	An Education Promoter (EP) required to visit each school almost once a week
Selected mechanism to fulfil government reporting requirements	Quite direct: regular monitoring of schools, record keeping and data management including attendance records, movement register, teacher evaluation etc. and sharing information with relevant district officials	Mainly indirect: The EP collects data including attendance records, enrolment and quality of teaching in the form of staff statement from the head teachers of the adopted schools which is then shared with the district officials
Responsibility for school management	Strongly taking management responsibilities under the MoU as well as in practice.	School management, though mentioned as *joint* responsibility of district officials and ITA under the MoU, usually considered as government responsibility in practice.
Involvement of government officials in planning and designing the interventions	Very limited, interventions usually designed *a priori.*	Very limited, interventions usually designed *a priori.*
Involvement of government officials while implementing interventions	Strong evidence of joint decision making and joint determination of programme activities in the implementation phase	Seeking approval from government officials (including head teachers) before implementing in schools
Conflict resolution	Opts to solve problems by taking discussion route but staying firm on their own standpoint. Matter taken to the higher levels of government if not resolved with discussion at school	Opts to resolve conflicts by taking discussion route with open mind rather than making it a dispute and taking it to higher levels of government
Leadership approach	Mainly direct (*towards collaborative thuggery*)	Mainly facilitative (*from the spirit of collaboration*)

It is clear from the table above that CARE while taking on the responsibility of the management of the adopted schools and undertaking performance evaluations of all including government staff, takes a more direct and authoritative approach in programme management. CARE takes pride in the work it has undertaken in the adopted schools and considers it as their main strength to improve management of the schools for which it heavily relies on monitoring (such as direct observation of teachers in classrooms, record keeping and data management etc.). An Internal Coordinator (IC) is appointed by CARE in each adopted school who is CARE employee and is given both teaching and management responsibilities at the school level. Although the IC is required to work under the supervision and in collaboration with the school head teacher, (s)he is often seen as interference by the district officials especially the head teachers of the adopted schools. This is due to the job description of the ICs especially their responsibility to evaluate and prepare appraisal reports for the government staff, which requires them to observe both CARE and government staff closely while they are at work.

In case of ITA, on the other hand, although considered joint in the MoU, most of the management responsibilities reside at the discretion of the government head teachers in practice and the ITA staff is only to solve any problems that could not be handled by the head teachers. As the Provincial Programme Coordinator of ITA commented:

> The coordinators visit a school on weekly or monthly basically, the purpose is not that they go and sit there to see each and everything. Our coordinators' purpose to visit school is to see the follow up of the major issues of the school that were observed in their last visit… and (to see) the current problems of the schools. Basically we say that it is the government's responsibility to run the school and we target those areas (of work) where there is no expertise of government (staff) and give support in those (ITA-Provincial Programme Coordinator).

As clear from the above excerpt that the Provincial Programme Coordinator was convinced that it is state's responsibility to manage the schools and ITA supports in matters where they are unable to handle themselves. He gave an example:

> If there is some problem with the funds of school council that funds are not being transferred in the bank account then our representative is there to provide support and all other issues of this type where government people feel helpless, we are there to provide support (ITA-Provincial Programme Coordinator).

The enabling and facilitative approach is quite visible in the programme management and implementation by ITA whereby an Education Promoter is appointed by ITA who is responsible for 6-20 schools and is required to facilitate the head teachers and other staff of the school and is required to visit quite occasionally (usually once a week as seen in the fieldwork). As mentioned earlier that it is clear from the analysis of the state officials' interviews that the NGO's main responsibility is perceived to pump in hardware inputs and not to intervene much in their domain. That is why the direct role of the IC, in case of CARE, is often considered as stepping into the territories of the head teachers and acts as a barrier in building IORs.

Most of the head teachers in ITA partner schools appreciated that ITA doesn't interfere much while provide resources for the improvement of the school. While comparing CARE and ITA, one of the head teachers expressed her opinion as:

> I know CARE has adopted many government schools but comparatively ITA is far better than CARE, as whenever we heads meet with each other and have discussion, we get to know that ITA is far better than CARE.

In her opinion, in CARE adopted schools 'IC sticks to the school and they observe teachers while they are taking classes which is distracting for teachers' whereas ITA's Education Promoter comes once a week and seeks her permission to visit classes. Such type of comments is quite typical and reflect that ITA was quite successful in building IORs by adopting more of an enabling and participative approach rather than an authoritative and direct approach taken in the case of CARE.

Leadership approach is also found to be an important factor that strongly shapes the IORs in 'Adopt-a-school' programme. Murray (1998) while taking about organizational factors affecting collaborative efforts have argued that the 'attitude of leaders' towards collaborative arrangements is key and influences the 'readiness of the rest of the

organization'(1998: 1194). The leadership at ITA has firm belief in the policy of no confrontation which is integral to ITA's working. ITA job descriptions explicitly mention under personal traits that to be eligible to work for ITA a person should be humble, hardworking and committed and 'able to develop cordial working relationships' with relevant government officials (ITA, 2012b, 2012c). It would not be wrong to say that this is the most significant factor in building IORS in case of ITA. All the head teachers interviewed during this research generally reflected positively about ITA's way of conduct. Collectively, statements such as:

> 'ITA deals with us in a very good way … I think when people join ITA, the first policy they have is good behaviour'

> 'they do it in a very good and friendly way and give a lot of respect…

> 'whenever I discuss something with the EP or the district manager, they are so polite that I don't like to create any conflict with them and they deal in such a nice way and talk in a very good way'

> 'if we don't like something we tell them and they listen to us and agree with us and also drop it'

would suggest that ITA mainly enacts leadership *from the spirit of collaboration* (Huxham, 2003; Vangen & Huxham, 2003) by the means of its policy of no confrontation, engaging and embracing the head teachers and other staff of the school with respect and solving minor problems through discussion with open mind helps. Such approach is a factor to explain building IORs at the grassroots level.

Mutual respect was quite prominent in case of ITA whereby ITA officials while discussing their interventions with government officials were found to be quite flexible to change or even drop their interventions in case of critical incidents when there is no agreement on it from the school side. In case of any conflict at school level, ITA opts to solve problems by taking discussion route rather than making it a dispute and taking it to higher levels (evidence of acting *from spirit of collaboration* perspective).

The CARE case study provides many examples in which both *spirit of collaboration* (facilitative) and *collaborative thuggery* (directive) roles

are seen in practice. The leadership at CARE, like ITA, seem to adopt the policy of no confrontation and no criticism. The leader of CARE, for instance, deemed that:

> 'we have always tried to make everyone a team… and also we made a policy right from the start… we made it no confrontation and no criticism'

Nevertheless, she emphasized that:

> 'but I told them we need to stand in here; we are here to serve our children'

which elaborates that besides such policy of no confrontation the CARE officials stick to their point of view and keep on pursuing their mission. This implies that CARE officials Therefore, they keep convincing the government officials including head teachers by getting into frequent discussions as CARE Head of Management added in her interview:

> The problems and hindrances keep on appearing but we overcome them with communication. It is not like there are no problems, there are many but we don't take them as problems and stick to our aim and then they don't remain a problem for us.

Moreover, CARE ICs are frequently seen maneuvering the head teachers to get them to the course of action they want them to pursue. As observed in the fieldwork the CARE ICs made things happen through *manipulating the agenda* and *playing the politics* (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). For example, in a case narrated by a CARE IC the government teachers and head were reluctant to take 'zero period' which was introduced by CARE to give extra time to students before the starting time of school. It was especially aimed at children who were about to appear in the board exams. She explained:

> We handle them in their own ways and tell them see if we don't take zero periods children are so weak they will fail and your result will be bad and it will affect your ACR. She also tries to listen but the thing is that we also prefer ma'am (the head teacher) in every matter, we do ask her and discuss everything with her.

The above comment is an example where CARE IC managed a complex situation by carefully *playing the politics* (preferring the head

teacher as she is the one who has power and is worth to bother) and hence *manipulating the agenda* (imposing her understanding of the issue and deciding on her behalf about how to improve the exam results), what is referred to as *towards collaborative thuggery* by Vangen and Huxham (2003). In case of CARE, the fieldwork supports frequent discussion with the government officials at both school and higher levels. However, most often CARE officials stick to their own point of view and keep on convincing the head teachers by getting into discussions. There are cases when such conflicts turn into major disputes. In such situations CARE officials take matters to the higher levels of government to get them resolved (evidence of being adept *towards collaborative thuggery* perspective).

This leadership approach taken by CARE officials (guided by the organization identity especially mission and goals) is deemed differently by different head teachers. At one extreme it is considered total interference on part of CARE while on the other extreme there are cases where head teachers acknowledge CARE's contribution in uplifting the standard of school. However, the IORs tend to be similar across different head teachers in case of ITA due to its programme management and leadership approach undertaken by ITA.

III. CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

This paper has examined IORs within selected PPP arrangement, 'Adopt-a-school' programme, along the dimensions of *organization identity* and *mutuality* which are often discussed as key dimensions that signify partnership activity. It has been found that these two dimensions are interdependent and that one dimension is influenced by changes in the other dimension. While it is important to reach the higher levels on both these dimensions to reap the synergistic rewards of a PPP as suggested by the partnership scholars (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Thomson & Perry, 2006), the case studies illustrated the practical challenges associated with this phenomenon. The analysis presented in this paper identifies the dilemmas and tension that confront partners with respect to maintaining their individual organization identities whilst simultaneously establishing mutuality. In order to preserve their respective comparative advantages and thereby maintaining their organization identities, the programme management and type of interventions in case of both NGOs reflected

their own distinct organizational mission and goals. This somehow affected the degree of mutuality in the partnership as much of the specifics related to manage the partnership working in practice were found to be determined a priori without much participation of the government officials.

Given the lack of clarity in the goals of partnership in 'Adopt-a-school' programme, the mission and goals of the partnership (collective identity) as perceived by the partners is strongly influenced by the mission and goals of the individual organizations (individual identity) of the partners. This illustrates the 'the process of reconciling individual and collective interests' (2006: 26) which is a recurring theme in the existing literature on partnerships and collaboration. Ostrom's collective action perspective could be used as a useful framework to seek a balance among the dimensions of organization identity and mutuality, as the actors in PPP arrangement constantly face challenges to solve the collective action problem of 'how to change a situation from one in which appropriators act independently to one in which they adopt coordinated strategies to obtain higher joint benefits or reduce their joint harm'(Ostrom, 1990: 39).

Both NGOs sought some degree of mutuality by involving government officials in discussions while implementing the interventions which were designed *a priori* by them. Both NGOs strived to build IORs by adopting the policy of no confrontation with the government officials. While practicing such policy ITA operated mainly *from the spirit of collaboration* while CARE officials were found to practice policy of no confrontation contingently *from the spirit of collaboration* whilst drawing on *collaborative thuggery* at the same time (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). This fundamental difference in the leadership approaches adopted by the NGOs influenced the choice of mutuality indicators. The analysis of the empirical case studies established that amongst various indicators of mutuality discussed in the existing literature, different organizations pick and choose the ones that suit their goals and style of management. This implies that not all of the indicators are sought in a given PPP arrangement. Some of the indicators are ignored while others become prominent in order to pursue mutuality in partnerships.

It is clear from the analysis that IORs in 'Adopt-a-school' programme is influenced by the organization identity and mutuality within partnerships and these dimensions are interrelated and keep on influencing each other in an iterative manner. The individual organization identity of partners has an impact on the way in which partners pursue the collective organization identity of the partnership. The organization identity – both individual and collective – then determine the degree of mutuality in partnerships as 'embedded in mutuality is a strong mutual commitment to partnership goals and objective' (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002: 22). Mutuality enables to maintain, and indeed to promote, the organization identity by providing a mechanism to reconcile divergent goals and objectives of the partners (Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2009; Wood & Gray, 1991). The analysis also highlights that mutuality is strongly influenced by the style of management and leadership approach taken by the actors within this PPP arrangement. Hence, the analysis supports that both organization identity and mutuality (influenced by the style of management and leadership approach) are key dimensions shaping IORs in PPP arrangements in practice.

This paper was an attempt to analyze the dynamics of IORs within the selected PPP arrangement. Identifying the factors that explain the difference in IORs is the first step towards understanding the dynamics of IORs. The paper generally seeks to answer the research question by adopting a comparative approach. Such comparative analysis is helpful to answer the overarching research question for this paper as to why initiatives which are in the context of the same country and apparently under the same model of partnership are still quite diverse in terms of the IORs. As already established in the existing literature that IORs are dynamic in nature and these cannot be designed and determined *a priori* to develop and behave in specified ways (Thomson & Perry, 2006; Weihe, 2010; Wood & Gray, 1991). Rather they are 'socially contrived mechanisms' that are continuously 'shaped and restructured' by the actors involved (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994: 96). Having said this, however, a note of caution should be mentioned to this analysis. It is yet to be explored in the context of this research that how these IORs vary over time under different situations. Underlying these heuristics is a more complex set of formal and informal processes (Ring & Van de Ven,

1994) that go on and explain how, why and what types of IORs emerge through various interactions among the actors involved in partnership arrangements.

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