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RATIONALE, FUNDING, AND GOVERNANCE MODELS OF PUBLIC
PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION: A COMPARISON OF THE UAE
AND JORDAN

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ABSTRACT

RATIONALE, FUNDING, AND GOVERNANCE MODELS OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION: A COMPARISON OF THE UAE AND JORDAN

Samar Farah

This dissertation examines how national resources influence the adoption and implementation of technology-driven public private partnerships (PPPs) in education in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It specifically investigates (1) to what extent different modalities of funding of the two countries influence the models of PPPs that emerge in education, and (2) the role of various actors, and particularly non-state actors, at the policy adoption and implementation stages of the policy process.

The study utilizes a qualitative methodology, analyzing policy documents, media, and in-depth interviews with three types of actors (government officials, non-state actors, and other external actors), to capture different perspectives surrounding the two PPPs. The study finds that the two models of PPPs in the UAE and Jordan are determined in large part by their modalities of funding, which are a reflection of the national resources of the respective countries. Despite the differing funding streams,

context and rationales for the reforms, both countries still choose to adopt similar program. While Jordan adopts an externally driven and funded reform to serve its political and economic needs, the UAE internalizes the reform, adopting it voluntarily and funding it internally in an effort to project a vision of modernity and relevance within global education policy circles. As a result, each of the cases takes on a different governance model. In Jordan, the PPP takes the form of a co-regulation model, where non-state actors play a decisive role in all aspects of the initiative. In contrast, the PPP in the UAE is characterized by a delegation model in which implementation is largely contracted out to the private sector, while decision-making is held in the hands of the government. These different regulatory frameworks ultimately have important implications for ownership, alignment, and the sustainability of each of the PPPs.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mom, whose biggest regret was not completing her higher education, yet whose curiosity, creativity, and thirst for knowledge make her one of the most educated people I know.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CA	Computer Associates
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLI	CISCO Learning Institute
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DfID	Department for International Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EDC	Education Development Center
EFA	Education For All
ERfKE	Education Reform for Knowledge Economy
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDB	German Development Bank
GEI	Global Education Initiative
HDI	Human Development Index
HP	Hewlett-Packard
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRB	International Review Board
ITG	Integrated Technology Group
JEI	Jordan Education Initiative
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KAFD	King Abdullah II Fund for Development
KHDA	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
MDGs	Millennium Development Goal
MDSO	Most Different Systems Design
MICT	Ministry of Information and Communications Technology
MOCA	Ministry of Cabinet Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
NBN	National Broadband Network
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
PiL	Partners in Learning
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PMO	Prime Minister's Office (in UAE) or Program Management Office (in Jordan)
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PPS	Probabilities Proportional to Size
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
QRF	Queen Rania Foundation
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SLP	Mohammad Bin Rashid Smart Learning Programme (or MBRSLP)
SNA	Social Network Analysis
TC	Teachers College
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

TRA	Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Market liberalization policies from the 1980s triggered a new wave of engagement of international and private organizations in determining the solutions to public sector problems. In the context of education, the growing pool of transnational actors has seen the transfer of educational reforms across the world promoting greater accountability, standardization, and evidence-based decision-making, among others (Sahlberg, 2006). These market solutions are sold as being “‘in the national interest’, central to global economic competitiveness...and the basis for building knowledge-based economies” (Robertson & Verger, 2012, p. 5; Ball, 2012).

One model of governance that has emerged out of greater private sector involvement in public education in the early 1990s has been the public private partnership (PPP) model. According to Robertson and Verger (2012),

‘Partnerships’ were a corrective to too much state (Keynesianism), on the one hand, and too little state, on the other (privatization). In acting as a bridge between each sector, partnerships were also presumed to act as a conduit enabling the values of each partner to be capitalised upon. (p. 9)

While some see it as a more innovative and sustainable solution to traditional problems such as donor dependency, lack of technical expertise within governments, large inefficient bureaucracies, and more, others argue that it comes at a cost, which is the rising influence of neoliberal ideas in public services (Robertson & Verger, 2012). Notwithstanding the different perspectives on this debate, PPPs have since taken off in education and particularly in the field of ICT, with many efforts being spearheaded by the likes of the World Economic Forum (WEF), World Bank, and the United Nations. For example, the vision of the WEF is “to improv[e] the state of the world

through public-private cooperation” (WEF, 2015). Similarly, one of the eight Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations called for “Develop[ing] a Global Partnership for Development” and one of its targets specifically recommended, “In cooperation with the private sector, [to] make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies” (UN, 2015).

As part of this global transformation, private, non-government, and other non-state actors are playing a more prominent role not only in the management, regulation, and evaluation of education, but also in the policy process itself (Bhanji, 2012a; Robertson & Verger, 2012). This shift has seen the involvement of external “expertise [move] beyond the traditional task of informing policy, and [become] policy forming in a more complex form of governing” (Ferwick, Mangez, & Ozga, 2014, p. 6). In light of this context, questions abound about what these changes in governance mean for local education policymaking. What are the different forms of PPPs in education? And what role do non-state actors have in decision-making?

In addition to exploring these broad questions, this dissertation investigates the importance of national resources in influencing the models of partnership that emerge in education. For example, although PPPs can be seen as a financially attractive model for governments in developing countries, where resources are limited, other countries such as the oil-rich Gulf states in the Middle East have the flexibility to determine their educational investments without external involvement, yet they also seek the technical expertise of the private sector. These contrasting national contexts and modalities of funding may influence the types of partnerships that emerge.

According to the policy borrowing and lending literature, aid-dependent countries are considered tied to their donors through programmatic conditionalities (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010), however in resource rich countries like the UAE, where

education reforms are largely sponsored by the government, they are believed to take on a voluntary process of developing, importing, and implementing education policies. The independence in the source of funding would arguably promote greater ownership in the reform process as compared to Jordan. However, studies have recently indicated the high dependence of the UAE government on external advisors and private educational organizations in consulting on the import of global education reforms and guiding policymaking (Bahgat, 1999; Jones, 2013). These theories and propositions pose a number of questions: in what ways do partnerships sponsored by governments as compared to those funded by external actors differ? How do the roles of various non-state actors involved in each of these partnerships vary across both contexts? Finally, what are the consequences of each of these models on ownership and alignment with respect to the educational reforms?

Research Questions

This study specifically investigates how national resources influence the adoption and implementation of public private partnerships (PPPs) in education using the UAE and Jordan, respectively, as case studies.

The two sub-questions that will guide this study are:

1. To what extent do the different modalities of funding of the UAE and Jordanian governments influence the models of partnerships that emerge in education?
2. What actors are involved at the two stages of the policy process?

For the purpose of this dissertation, national resources are defined as all the natural and non-natural resources of a country including, but not restricted to, human, socio-economic, and political resources. In other words, they reflect the history,

geography, political system, socio-cultural, and economic contexts in a country. Modalities of funding refer to the “means or specifications used to operationalise/implement” a policy reform (Jacob, n.d., p. 9). Modalities of funding typically reflect the mode of regulation, or governance model, in place. For example, it differentiates between funding received directly through government, donors, private actors, or a combination of any of them. While other modalities exist, they are not relevant to the topic addressed in this research.

The other terms used in this research, ownership and alignment, are defined based on the terminology from the OECD’s Paris Declaration (2008a). Ownership reflects the extent to which countries take the lead in developing their policies, strategies, and in coordinating their development efforts, while alignment is defined as the ability of donors to link all their efforts to the national policy and strategy documents, processes, and activities put forth by the partner countries.

Background

This section provides an overview of the national contexts of the UAE and Jordan, describing the choice of the cases and the specific aspects that will be explored in this study. Next it presents the study’s research approach and a summary of how the dissertation is organized.

Why the UAE and Jordan?

Jordan is an upper middle income country in the Middle East that has been relying on foreign assistance in the form of grants and soft loans since the mid 1970s, which have been financing the country’s development projects, beginning with infrastructure and economic development (Abugattas-Majluf, 2012; MOPIC, 2014).

Investment in education reforms and programs has since followed and has boasted the involvement of USAID, European Union (EU), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), World Bank (WB), and the German Development Bank (KfW), among many others (MOE, 2012).

Within the donor community, Jordan is deemed to be a model reformer among the middle income countries. Abugattas-Majluf (2012) argues that the country's achievement of its development targets has masked the lack of structural changes in the governance systems that are needed to ensure the development of its institutional capacity and long-term sustainable growth of its critical sectors. In the education sector, while there have been indications of improvement such as rising literacy, enrollment, and attainment rates, the quality of schooling has seen small positive changes, as measured by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results which have fallen in the most recent assessments (Mullis et. al, 2011; OECD, 2013). This is coupled with the continuous dependence on foreign assistance, which according to studies on aid effectiveness is consistently associated with a state of “planned dependence [that] precludes national ownership and local control” (Samoff, 2007, p. 503).

On the contrary, the UAE is seen as the star of the Middle East due to its stable political situation and rapidly growing economy over the past 20 years, which has placed it within the top 20 most competitive economies in the world (Schwab et. al, 2013). These developments have been driven by its natural resource wealth in the form of large reserves of oil and gas, located mainly in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the country (Dobbs et. al, 2013). Despite its economic success, the country has overall seen less improvement in its social sectors – education and health – where significant

investments have been made to import leading global reforms aimed at developing a thriving knowledge economy (Burden-Leahy, 2009).

However, as in the case of Jordan, these investments have so far not yielded the anticipated improvements in the public education system. Instead, an increasing number of the Emirati population is choosing to enroll their children in private schooling due to its relatively better quality (KHDA, 2012). Although students in the UAE, and to some extent Jordan, are currently the best performers across the region in international assessments, their test scores remain significantly below the international averages in both TIMSS and PISA and they have seen little change in recent years with students in public schools falling behind their peers in private schools (Mullis et. al, 2011; OECD, 2013; KHDA, 2012)

In spite of these similar trends in education, the UAE and Jordan differ on a range of other indicators, as illustrated in table 1.1 below. Both countries are characterized by autocratic political systems, whereby Jordan is a constitutional monarchy and has faced serious internal instability within the parliament in recent years, while the UAE is represented by an absolute monarchy led by the tribal leaders of its seven Emirates. Demographically, while the UAE and Jordan have relatively similar population sizes, approximately 9.1 and 6.6 million respectively (World Bank, 2014), Jordan has a largely homogenous population consisting primarily of Jordanian and Palestinians,¹ while the UAE is a cosmopolitan country with Emiratis making up only approximately 15 percent of the population (ICEF, 2013).

¹ In recent years, Jordan has seen a large influx of refugees from bordering countries, including Iraq and most recently Syria, which has severely impeded the government's capacity to engage in its regular political, economic, and social development activities. At present, there are an estimated 633,700 Syrian refugees living across Jordan (UNHCR, 2015).

Table 1.1
Selected Indicators for the UAE and Jordan

Features	Jordan	UAE
Population	6.6 million	9.1 million
Governance system	Constitutional Monarchy	Absolute Monarchy
GDP/capita	\$5,423	\$44,204
Public spending on education (% of GDP)*	1.29 billion	3.72 billion
Total expenditure on education (as % of total government expenditure, 2010)	14.6	23.4
2012 PISA results (OECD average = 494)	386	434
% of population (aged 25 and above) with some secondary education	78.5 (males) 69.5 (females)	61.3 (males) 73.1 (females)

Source: World Bank (2014)

The economic systems of the two countries are also starkly different, with Jordan experiencing a fall in economic growth in recent years resulting in high budget deficits and loans as well as a strong reliance on foreign assistance (USAID, 2011). On the other hand, the UAE has a booming economy and boasts a GDP per capita approximately 10 times higher than that of Jordan, at \$44,204 per person (World Bank, 2013). Finally, data of both public and government expenditure on education unsurprisingly shows that the UAE is spending significantly more on education, although this has so far not materialized in terms of student outcomes.

Despite these vast differences in national resources, both countries are engaged in reforms that emphasize the development of productive citizens who will advance the national economic interests of establishing knowledge economies. These reforms are driven by the belief in the growing mismatch between the labor market needs and the outcomes of the education system (Hanouz & Dusek, 2013). In Jordan,

a multi-donor reform entitled *Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy* (ERfKE) was established in the early 2000s, supported primarily by USAID and the World Bank, to offer a “quality education focused on developing the abilities, skills, attitudes and values associated with a knowledge-based economy” (MOE, 2012, p.2).

A similar discourse surrounds the latest education reform in the UAE, introduced as part of the country’s strategy, *Vision 2021*, which calls for a collective effort to build a knowledge economy by promoting well-rounded citizens and “develop[ing] a first rate education system” (MOCA, 2011, p.13, 15). Both of these reforms feed into the global discourse regarding the importance of developing knowledge economy skills and competitiveness among the next generation (MOE, 2012; MOCA, 2011). In addition, both countries have served as leaders in education technology reforms, based on PPP models.

In 2003, the World Economic Forum (WEF) in partnership with CISCO and the Jordanian government (Ministries of ICT and Education), among others, announced the establishment of *Jordan Education Initiative* (JEI), a technology-driven reform based on a PPP model worth \$22 million. The objectives of JEI were to promote social and economic development in the country through a “win-win for the private sector, government, local industry, and most importantly, Jordanian teachers and students” (JEI, 2004, p. 5). The program was piloted in 100 schools in Amman, after which the goal was to roll it out nationally across all public schools. However, in 2007 the partnership model ended, private actors moved on, and JEI has since evolved into a locally owned NGO that still works within ICT in education based on partnerships with private actors, but with a more limited scope and implementation.

In early 2012, almost ten years later, the UAE launched the *Mohammed bin Rashid Smart Learning Programme* (SLP) with a similar, albeit more ambitious,

vision. SLP's goal was to provide public school students with tablets, teachers with laptops, equip classrooms with interactive smart boards in order to enhance their skills and competencies and as a result improve student learning (Pennington, 2014b). The program, worth approximately \$272,000, is a joint venture between the Ministry of Education, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) (a federal authority for Information and Communications Technology), and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in partnership with leading technology companies, educational organizations, educational and strategic consultants, and more (ICT Fund, 2013).

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate the above two PPPs in education as case studies across the UAE and Jordan to explore the extent to which different sources of funding influence the models of partnerships that emerge in education. Given the dissimilar contexts within which the two programs are introduced, the study uses Landman's (2008) 'most different systems design' (MDSD) for a few cases, which "seeks to identify those features that are the same among different countries in an effort to account for a particular outcome" (p. 70). In this case, the countries are controlled for the difference in their level of economic resources and they share a similar outcome - the implementation of a technology-based educational reform based on a PPP model. What will be explored, however, is everything that takes place in between, i.e. the process of education policymaking and the actors involved in each of the cases. Finally, the study develops a theory about the role that financial modalities play in the type of partnerships developed and the extent of the involvement of non-state actors in the policy process.

The methods used in the study include document analysis, media analysis, and face-to-face interviews. The use of these different methods will capture the complexity of relationships and processes between and across both cases, providing depth and credibility through triangulation.

The study draws on four bodies of literature, which were used to develop its conceptual framework. These include: (1) globalization and education to observe the changing topography of education which includes non-state actor involvement in education and the rise of PPPs as a model of governance, (2) policy studies, to understand the policy process and the ways in which policies are developed and transferred, and the intersection of (3) rentier state theory and (4) aid effectiveness to compare and contrast resource rich and resource poor countries. First, the dissertation moves away from linear conceptions of the policy process, exploring the ways in which it works in the context of autocratic governments in the Middle East, where there are different interests at stake and systems in place that are likely to impact the flow of the processes throughout the adoption and implementation of a policy.

Second, it intends to study this policy process within the unique political and economic context in each of the countries whereby Jordan's education system is dependent on an influx of funding from abroad, typically aid, while the UAE's natural wealth has allowed it to lead an active role in borrowing global education reform packages with the help of private and international organizations. In both cases, there is a strong involvement of local and international non-state actors in the policy process.²

² In this study, I define non-state actors as private, non-governmental organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, charities, and all other organizations that are seen as independent to the government of any country.

Organization of Dissertation

The dissertation consists of six chapters that are organized as follows:

The second chapter presents an overview of four bodies of literature that form the basis for this dissertation: globalization and education, policy studies, rentier state theory, and aid effectiveness, all of which establish the theoretical foundation for the conceptual framework presented at the end of the chapter. The third chapter describes the research methodology and design used to conduct the study, discussing the case selection, research design, sampling, instruments, data collection and analysis, and limitations of the research. Next, the fourth chapter follows the first case of JEI, describing its evolution over the past 12 years from an externally driven and funded PPP that had characteristics of a genuine partnership, but shifted to a locally owned donor-sponsored initiative with a more limited scope after the exit of the key global non-state actors. The fifth chapter delves into the second case of SLP in the UAE, describing how the country's vast resources were pumped into a nationally driven reform, inspired by similar models abroad and that attracted the largest global technology companies to form a different model of partnership rooted in competition and accountability across the partners. The sixth chapter brings together the findings from both case studies, offering a cross-case comparison across five key themes: the purpose of the partnerships, the type of the PPP model, the role of non-state actors in decision-making, ownership and alignment, and finally policy borrowing as it relates to each of the reform programs. The seventh and final chapter concludes the study by presenting a summary of the main findings, discussing the contribution of the study to the literature, and offering insights on areas that deserve further exploration.