

# Passing the Baton: Understanding the Public Private Partnership(PPP) Model of Pre-Primary Education in Mumbai, Maharashtra<sup>1</sup>

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## A. INTRODUCTION

The advent of Public-Private Partnerships(PPPs) in the social sector, including education, can be traced back to the 1990s when international organisations and multilateral agencies became interested and invested in propagating the advantages of such partnerships (Miller-Adams 1999). PPPs in education are heralded by its proponents for their ability to indemnify not just low investment capabilities (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio and Guáqueta 2009) and administrative capacities of the State (Fabre and Straub 2021), but also to share the burden of delivering quality education, along with the State (Muralidharan and Kremer 2005). Opponents, on the other hand, are sceptical about the efficacy and promises of PPPs, especially when it tends to shift the responsibility of delivering education from the State to non-state entities, and adversely impacts equitable access to schooling through increased commercialisation and privatisation of education provisioning (Bous 2019). A state regulation is, therefore, required to not just improve the delivery of quality education but to also ensure that a child's right to education is safeguarded (Sakellarioua and Patrinos 2009) .

The term PPPs still lacks a standard definition (Tilak 2015), including a lack of legal definition in India. Centrally, the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year development plans were the first formal documents to pave the way for PPP modes of education in India,<sup>3</sup> reflective of India's economic strategies of privatization and liberalization post-1990s. Despite a stated commitment to the state's active role in such partnerships, the proposed strategies guiding PPPs in education have further reduced the role of the state to limited key areas of education financing, management, and regulation (Srivastava 2016). The plans are also unclear on identifying different accepted models of PPPs by the Indian government, and fail to distinguish between mere privatisation of education and '*genuine partnerships*', amongst different actors (Srivastava 2016), including not-for profit organisations.

### ***The Policy Discourse in PPPs in Education: Theoretical Underpinnings and the Gaps***

Socio-economic conditions, political ideology, social policy (Osborne 2007), and legislative design have an important role to play in determining the course of PPP implementation in a country. Thus, before promoting PPPs in newer geographies, especially in developing countries, careful consideration of the economic and political considerations that drive this form of provisioning of education must be undertaken (Fennel 2007). A majority of studies on PPPs in education focus on the demand side of models, relating mostly to educational processes including learning outcomes, innovations in education, parental experiences, teacher experiences, and inequalities (Verger and Moschetti 2017). There is however a gap in evidence assessing the supply side of PPPs, especially how regulatory policy may guide the design and execution of such models. Even within this, there is a dearth of research focussing on Early Childhood Education(ECE) or pre-primary education, which is distinct from any other stage of education, requiring an integrated approach between education, health, care, and nutrition for a child (Haddad 2002).

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<sup>3</sup> Planning Commission, 10th five year plan, 2002-2007, vol II - Sectoral Policies and Programmes, page 39, [https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/volume2/10th\\_vol2.pdf](https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/volume2/10th_vol2.pdf);

This paper contributes to this discourse through the study of delivery of Early Childhood Education (“ECE”) in balwadis, through a PPP model. This model is run by the Education Department of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (“MCGM<sup>4</sup>”), Maharashtra, India in partnership with multiple NGOs. . The paper investigates the ‘PPP balwadi model’ through the lens of multiple stakeholders - teachers, parents, and organisations tasked with its operation - and conducts an in-depth analysis of policies and legal contracts governing its implementation. The paper identifies gaps in legislation, policy and implementation of the model, which may consequently impact the the rights of the child to equitable and high-quality ECE under this model. The paper brings attention to the need of deploying a robust policy and legislative framework, to guide and monitor such partnerships.

## B. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### ***Description of the Model and the Policy***

In the context of this model, balwadis are pre-school grades, which are being run in the premises on the MCGM elementary schools. The Education Department of the MCGM has run the ‘PPP balwadi model’ for over 10 years, in 819 balwadis, which cater to at least 16,000 children from low-income households in Mumbai, India that the Education Department of the MCGM runs in partnership with ‘social organisations’<sup>5</sup>. Under the model, not-for-profit organisations and charities, hereafter ‘*organisations*’, are tasked with running balwadis, while the MCGM provides them with infrastructure and facilities (such as classroom spaces and facilities in existing schools) along with honorariums for staff.

Policies for governance of PPPs in education are sparsely in India, including in the case of the MCGM - through a standalone policy titled ‘*MCGM’s PPP Policy*’.<sup>6</sup> The MCGM’s PPP policy is guided by existing legislation on education – The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (‘RTE Act’), most provisions of which are only applicable to the education of children between 6-14 years of age. Therefore, there is a lack of clarity on whether or not the PPP Policy strictly applies to preschool education.

Importantly, the PPP Policy makes no mention of balwadis however does mention preschool education under “specific service partnerships”<sup>7</sup>. There is also a lack of any public information<sup>8</sup> indicating the applicability of the PPP Policy to the balwadi model. Stakeholders (including organisations and a government official) also corroborated this lack of information and clarity. This leaves to interpretation whether the MCGM’s PPP policy applies to the PPP balwadi model. On the contrary, it is instead, a *Memorandum of Understanding*<sup>9</sup> (“MoU”) that drives the on-ground implementation of the PPP balwadi model. Therefore, this paper focuses on these three key policy/legislative documents (the RTE Act, MCGM’s PPP Policy, and the MoU) for analysis, and discusses specific instances highlighting gaps in governance between the three.

### ***Methodology***

This study adopts a qualitative research approach and includes both primary and secondary research.

***Secondary research:*** Secondary research was conducted on – a) policy documents of the MCGM that might pertain to governance of the PPP balwadi model; and b) responses received from the MCGM to Right To Information applications (‘RTIs’) filed by the researcher team to fill gaps in

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<sup>4</sup> The MCGM or the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is the municipal civic body of the city of Mumbai, Maharashtra and is one of the richest municipal corporations in India.

<sup>5</sup> Term as used in the MCGM MoU to refer to organisations that run balwadis under this partnership model.

<sup>6</sup> MCGM, Education Department, [PPP Programmes Document](#).

<sup>7</sup> Section 2, 3, i, MCGM PPP Policy.

<sup>8</sup> Source: MCGM’s [website](#)

<sup>9</sup> The MoU was not available in any public domain, and was sourced internally by the research team.

publicly accessible information, or where such available information was unclear. A total of fifteen RTIs were filed between 17 March and 23 April 2021 on various questions about the departments responsible for the regulation of ECE delivery in the state, and the progress of committees tasked with regulatory functions as per the state policies. Six of the RTIs did not receive a response.

**Primary data:** Primary data was collected between June to August 2021, in the form of semi-structured, qualitative interviews with representatives from organisations running balwadis, teachers and a government official tasked with overseeing the model. A total of 15 private organisations running balwadis were interviewed. The questionnaire broadly included inputs on division of roles and responsibilities between organisations and the MCGM, measures for monitoring and accountability, measures for equitability in student enrolment, provisioning of entitlements to students and grievance redressal mechanisms, if any. The organisations that were interacted with, run between 2 to 96 balwadis each, covering 732 of the 819 balwadis currently functioning under this model. Additionally, interviews were also conducted with 43 teachers employed under the balwadi model.

The combination of policy documents and data from organisations and teachers aided triangulation of information. A key limitation of the sample is its lack of representation from balwadi helpers (employed alongside balwadi teachers) and in-depth interaction with other state officials responsible for running the balwadi model. The sample also does not cover parents and children.

## C. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### ***Key Parameters for Assessment***

The recent interest in assessing PPPs in education has led to the introduction of multiple conceptual frameworks and methodologies guiding these assessments. There is an increasing interest in understanding the economic and political dimensions of PPPs in education, and synergies between the two (Ackerman 2004). This has led to the evolution of multi-dimensional frameworks which are more interdisciplinary in nature (Fennel 2010). Fennel's paper uses the concepts of "voice", "exit", and "loyalty", to assess how behaviour of parents and students impacts the quality of education delivered under PPP models (ibid). Other frameworks have extended analysis to include concepts of "choice", "accountability", "autonomy", and "diversity" (Aslam, Rawal and Saeed n.d.). This paper makes an important contribution in acknowledging '*enabling factors*' that complement these theoretical concepts, specifically macro-elements such as – policy and contracts guiding PPPs, overall regulatory and implementation environment of education delivery, and the nature of non-state partners (ibid). This paper adopts some of the concepts from aforementioned frameworks to assess whether the policy and implementation of the PPP balwadi model accounts for them, with a view to secure rights of the child to equitable and quality ECE.

### ***Voice and Inclusion of Diverse Stakeholders***

The concept of voice refers to influence exercised by stakeholders and the "political activity" undertaken by them, in demanding equitable and quality provisioning of education, including under the PPP model (Fennel 2007). The study assesses the policy parameters created to safeguard the rights of children, parents, and teachers -the key stakeholders and provisions created to empower them. The key indicators under voice and inclusion are: i) norms and standards of education delivery, including the status of welfare provisions such as mid-day meals, enabling greater participation in education; ii) measures for the inclusion of vulnerable categories such as children with disabilities ('CwD') and children from migrant families and iii) provision for grievance redressal mechanism for the parents and teachers.

#### ***i. Norms and Standards as minimum inputs for education***

The RTE Act provides the norms and standards as a part of its "Schedule", mandating its adherence in schools. They act as a useful parameter to assess whether the schools are providing the '*bare minimum*' to ensure conducive running of schools. Some of the important

norms and standards include the salary and qualifications of teachers, Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) (including teaching-learning equipment, library and play material, games, and sports equipment), curriculum, and classroom size.

**Policy:** The PPP Policy pegs itself to the RTE Act in reference to minimum standards for infrastructure and inputs, called '*boundary constraints*', for running its PPPs across schooling levels. Separate from the PPP Policy, the MoU addresses minimum standards and inputs on certain aspects, such as the minimum educational qualifications for teachers, classroom-student ratio, and a range of '*support services*' to be provided by the MCGM to the enrolled students, including uniforms, stationery, water bottles, tiffin boxes, umbrellas, raincoats. The MoU also states that TLMs will be provided by both the organisations and MCGM, but there is no clear demarcation on what TLMs must be provided by whom. Neither the PPP Policy nor the MoU mentions the provision of Mid-Day Meals<sup>10</sup> (MDMs).

**Practice:** The MCGM provides infrastructure and facilities in MCGM classrooms; a monthly maintenance allowance per balwadi; an honorarium for teachers and helpers; and some TLMs; however much of this was deemed insufficient by teachers and organisations interviews.

Firstly, in this model teachers are employed contractually, and provided a meagre honorarium of Rs.5000/month and not a salary. In several cases, organisations reportedly pay them over and above the honorarium to ensure their retention. Reportedly, there were also delays in the payment of honorariums by the MCGM, in clear contravention of MoU's provision for timely payments, despite an explicit demand by the teachers to enhance the honorarium.

Second is the PTR. The MoU stipulates the PTR as one classroom/teacher for every 20 students. In practice, the organisations find no difficulty in enrolling a minimum of 20 students. On the contrary, the classroom size in some cases increases to as much as 35-40 students. The organisations continue to run the classrooms without adhering to the stipulated PTR, to ensure that no student drops out of the school. In such cases, organisations reportedly demand additional classroom space, which is often not granted by the MCGM, owing to the paucity of space in the schools. Instances of school auditoriums and other spaces doubling up as balwadi classrooms have also been reported, creating a major challenge to provision of a conducive learning space for preschool education.

Third, is the entitlements. It is key to note that at the level of ECE, nutrition and healthcare are also crucial components (Kaul, et al. 2017). The provisioning of entitlements such as Mid-May Meals (MDMs), and school uniforms are crucial to ensure the retention of students (NUEPA 2014). In the PPP balwadi model, the provisioning of MDMs and school uniforms is conditional on the availability of a budget with organisations. While the MoU makes no mention of providing MDMs and uniforms, in certain instances, organisations provide them by utilising their own finances, in acknowledgement of their importance for students. Teachers strongly recommended the need for the MCGM to provide such entitlements to their students. Further, the MoU makes the provision for a range of TLMs (including teaching aids, textbooks, toys, worksheets, etc.), to be jointly provided by the MCGM and organisations. In practice however, provisioning of TLMs is often delayed, resulting in parents resorting to buying TLMs on their own, increasing their out-of-pocket educational expenditures. Finally, the balwadis did not follow a standard curriculum as organisations were free to choose their own curriculum. The absence of a standardised curriculum might necessitate proper monitoring of organisations to ensure quality of ECE provided.

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<sup>10</sup> The mid-day meal programme is a national programme by the Government of India directed at addressing the issue of nutrition, food security and access to education. The scheme is the world's largest school feeding programme reaching out to about 12 crore children in over 12.65 lakh schools across the [country](#).

ii. *Incidences of Exclusion: Children with Disabilities and Children of Migrant Workers*

Some instances, in both policy and practice, point to the possible prevalence of exclusion of certain categories of students, including children with disabilities and migrant children.

**Policy:** The RTE Act extends to Children with Disabilities (CwDs), and other vulnerable groups such as migrant children, requiring that they are neither discriminated against nor denied permission to transfer to other schools<sup>11</sup>. However, neither the PPP policy nor the MoU explicitly accounts for the needs of migrant children or CwDs in preschool education.

**Practice:** The study finds that balwadi teachers, while willing and interested in helping a child with a disability, lack training to do so. balwadis are not equipped to conduct early identification of disabilities and lack accessible resources for inclusion of CwDs in education. For children of migrant workers, balwadis take cognizance of the RTE Act and integrate them into the classroom, even in the middle of the academic year, without any discrimination. Even if the students do not attend the balwadis for smaller time periods, their seats are retained. However, in cases where the child intends to enrol after a prolonged period of absence or discontinuity, balwadis lack the capacity to provide instruction and appropriate mechanisms to meaningfully re-integrate them into the classroom. In some cases, organisations said that such children are not formally enrolled, which potentially leads to inaccurate enrolment numbers and deprives these children of supporting aids and entitlements. Finally, unlike other students' performance, teachers are not held accountable for the performance of migrant children, which further dis-incentivize teachers from paying additional attention for their inclusion.

iii. *Platforms for Grievance Redressal*

Literature reveals that stakeholder spaces such as School Management Committees ('SMCs'), Parent Teachers Associations ('PTAs'), and teacher unions can be used effectively to channelise their grievances, and provide them with adequate voice in the system (Chugh 2021).

**Policy:** The PPP Policy iterates the importance of parents' and teachers' involvement in ECE, and suggests incorporating feedback from SMCs and PTAs in the performance evaluations of organisations. However, the MoU makes no mention of either SMCs or PTAs. It refers to a grievance redressal mechanism but places the responsibility of addressing such grievances on the organisations themselves, reflecting a clear conflict of interest. Further, as per the MoU, in cases of delays or non-payment of honorarium to the teachers, the MCGM can initiate penal action against the organisations.

**Practice:** The findings of the study confirm that there are no formal procedures or committees constituted or supported by the MCGM for addressing the grievances of the stakeholders. While the model overall misses a clear process or protocol to address grievances, some of the organisations have constituted such a process internally, of their own volition. In these cases, teachers are expected to raise their complaints directly to the organisations (which are forwarded to the MCGM only if they are 'grave' in nature), creating opaque measures of redressal. The absence of teacher unions (owing to the contractual nature of teacher employment) further weakens their ability to raise complaints independently. The prevalent practice in most of the cases is for the HM of the MCGM school to receive and address complaints from teachers and parents.

***Choice and Diversity of School Provisions***

Choice, in this case, primarily relates to provisions in the policy and legislation that guide enrolment and admission of children in balwadis, by also ensuring freedom of options to the stakeholder. It also includes an assessment of other socio-cultural factors that guide the choice of parents to opt for a balwadi over other alternative providers of ECE.

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<sup>11</sup> Sections 5 and 9, RTE Act

**Policy:** The RTE Act enables the choice and provision of pre-schooling through Section 12(1) which directs that children must be admitted into preschools located within State schools “free of cost” and without any discrimination. This is, however, a general provision for admission in state-run preschools and, respective authorities such as the MCGM are responsible for ensuring such practice. While the MCGM PPP Policy requires organisations to follow the RTE Act, it does not explicitly address any discrimination in admissions. The MoU provides criteria for school enrolment stating that balwadis must be free, that students must be in the age range of 3-6 years, and that organisations cannot discriminate on the basis of caste, creed, color, religion, and sex.

**Practice:** Organisations concurred with the policy in that no fees are charged for admission to balwadis. Other aspects guiding enrolment trends and practices in balwadis are – i) no cap on class size; ii) children being enrolled throughout the year; iii) no criteria for selection of parents iv) targeting students living within the ‘catchment area’ of MCGM schools, v) medium of instruction as per the location of balwadi and vi) practices to disseminate information about enrolments in balwadis. Out of this, the last three provisions emerged as key catalysts influencing parental choice toward balwadis:

- i. **Neighbouring area and enrolment:** This refers to the practice of enrolling only neighbouring students in a given balwadi. To ensure this, every organisation running balwadis targets households within the ‘catchment area’ through “needs assessment surveys”. Through the survey, organisations are required to identify demand for balwadis and ensure enrolment of at least 20 students in the area. The MCGM allows balwadis to operate only if it has enrolled 20 students or more.
- ii. **Medium of instruction** Based on an organisation’s ability to secure enrolments and as per the background of households in its ‘catchment area’, balwadis are assigned a medium of instruction – often the dominant language spoken in such an area. To elucidate, in the sample, a Telugu-medium balwadi operated in a locality housing migrant households from Andhra Pradesh<sup>12</sup>. To understand distribution of balwadis by the medium of instruction, an RTI was filed with the MCGM, as per which the medium of instruction is Marathi in 34% of balwadis, Urdu in 21.6%, Hindi in 20.9%, and English or semi-English in 19.5%. The remaining 3.9% included Gujarati, Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu medium balwadis. This reflects a multi-lingual variation and distribution of balwadis across the city of Mumbai, thereby exhibiting the influence and choice of parents to opt for a balwadi on the basis of their preferred language of instruction. The study also finds instances of parents exercising choice in between balwadis offering different mediums of instruction, rather than enrolling in the neighbouring balwadi. More preference was given to English, Hindi, and Marathi medium<sup>13</sup> balwadis according to organisations.
- iii. **Information dissemination and enrolments:** A final determinant of choice is access to information about balwadis. The study finds the use of the ‘pamphlet method’, wherein teachers were actively distributing MCGM-prepared admission pamphlets on balwadis during the needs-assessment surveys. Interestingly, a majority of teachers working in a particular balwadi, often resided in the same ‘catchment area’, which enabled better communication with parents, and translated into an increase in the enrolment numbers.

Organisations and teachers also reported that households often prioritised the medium of instruction and proximity of balwadis to their residence over the quality of education delivered in the balwadi.

### **Measures for Performance and Accountability**

Holding all partners in the delivery of education accountable is crucial to the success of any PPP Model. The primary stakeholders – households and students – must be able to hold the State accountable for the delivery of equitable and quality education. Further, teachers must be able to

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<sup>12</sup> Telugu is the dominant speaking language in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh

<sup>13</sup> Hindi is the dominant speaking language in India. Similarly, Marathi is the dominant speaking language in the India state of Maharashtra

hold the State and organisations accountable to enable them to perform their role. Finally, both partners in the delivery of education must be able to hold each other accountable for meeting their respective obligations.

**Policy:** The PPP Policy defines a range of measures to assess private players' 'performance', including a regular third-party assessment of student learning and teacher performance, spot-inspections, and provisions for school disclosures. It also provides a clear procedure for conducting third-party assessments, including active involvement and feedback from SMCs and PTAs, which further enhance the participatory role of parents and students. The Policy conditions renewals and extensions of PPP contracts on the basis of performance of organisations as per third-party assessments. However, the MoU does not specify any mechanisms for assessments, either by the MCGM or by a third-party agency. Any monitoring functions are only limited to the submission of '*effective monthly reports*' by organisations to the MCGM, which determine the disbursement of funds. The MoU does not define the content of such monthly report<sup>14</sup>. The MoU also expects organisations to submit a '*security deposit*', which is collected at the inception of the partnership and acts as financial security in case of breach of the MoU. Lastly, the MoU is required to be renewed annually, but renewal can be interpreted as being at the discretion of the MCGM, in the absence of any clear criteria for assessment of their performance.

**Practice:** The study finds that the MCGM monitors balwadis, primarily through three methods. The first is spot-checks or inspections of balwadis, conducted either by both the Head Master (HM) of the MCGM school or the MCGM ward administrative officers. The rationale of these checks is to ensure compliance with the MoU as well as to ensure regular and effective classroom teaching in the balwadis. However, these spot checks are mostly 'administrative' in nature with little attention to the actual teaching and learning processes. A further triangulation of information with teachers reveals mixed results with some teachers reporting that no such checks have been conducted in balwadis. The frequency and regularity of such visits and checks were also reported to be varying.

The second method for monitoring is the '*monthly report*'. The findings reveal that these reports only track the attendance of teachers and students and are certified by the administrative officers before being submitted to the MCGM. The last method is in-built in the annual renewal of the MoU, which is generally related to the regular and timely submission of the monthly reports and is an easy administrative process. There were reported ambiguities and a lack of accountability and transparency in this renewal process. For instance, in some of the cases, there were delays from the MCGM's end in extending the MoU. The organisations, however, continued to run the balwadis despite not receiving the renewed MoU. Finally, unlike what the PPP Policy states, there are no assessments of learning outcomes of students or of teaching practices. Some organisations continue to implement their own monitoring and evaluation practices to check on quality and effectiveness of education delivery in their balwadis but this lacks standardisation.

### **Entry and Exit**

The presence of clear entry and exit criteria for all stakeholders reflects the adoption of competitive and transparent processes in a PPP. However, the ultimate right to suspend or stop the PPP contracts, on the basis of poor performance, non-compliance, and non-equitable practices, must be reserved with the State.

**Policy:** The PPP Policy provides clear criteria for entry and exit of organisations and states that only '*high-quality agencies*' will be engaged in partnerships with the MCGM. The policy describes a selection process, to be conducted by a '*Selection Committee*', in which organisations are

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<sup>14</sup> Effective monthly reports were found to mostly include information on the attendance of teachers and students, as per the organisations.

scored on a list of criteria<sup>15</sup> which also has a bearing on the number of balwadis allocated to an organisation. Once selected, scores obtained by every organisation and the list of selected organisations are to be displayed on the MCGM website. The PPP Policy also provides for a review process for low-performing organisations, and for terminating contracts if their performance does not improve post review, and over three consecutive years. Findings from the previous section reveal that no such evaluation takes place in the case of this model. The MoU, further, provides no clear entry or eligibility criteria for organisations. It only states that organisations will be required to submit an application in response to the tender released by the MCGM. It does however describe some incidents of non-compliance that could result in termination of the contract, including delays in or non-payment of balwadi staff, breach of MoU by the organisation and failing to remedy the same within 30 days of being given notice. The annual MoU renewal process provides a built-in mechanism for easy exit of partners under the model where performance is less than satisfactory.

**Practice:** The MCGM invites applications for PPP balwadis through the release of a tender, wherein the key selection criteria include the financial and administrative capacity of the organisations as well as their general credibility. There is no clear indication of the tender adhering to the provisions of PPP Policy to select organisations. Information on ‘Selection Committees’ and on scores received by the organisations is also not available in the public domain. The running of balwadis has been allocated to many organisations, which is in consonance with PPP Policy’s provision to diversify the private providers running balwadis. For exit, the MoU mentions no clear criteria. However, organisations’ inability to enrol at least 20 students can lead to the non-renewal of MoUs. Therefore, the findings make it clear that the compliance of the processes related to entry and exit are ad-hoc in nature, with very limited administrative measures (such as monthly reports and inspections) to keep a close check on delivery of education.

#### D. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is evident through the policy and implementation that the balwadi model is catering to households from low-income strata. The PPP policy and the MoU commit to providing ‘*high-quality education*’ to children belonging to ‘*economically underprivileged communities*’. This commitment to serving the under-served communities is also reflective in deploying not-for-profit or charity-oriented organisations as partners. The rationale for running balwadis is also attributed to a lack of administrative, financial and academic capacity of State functionaries in delivering ECE. In such a case, a clear assessment of the rationale of such PPPs and their impact on marginalised households becomes paramount.

On one hand, the organisations, owing to their orientation, may adopt an *altruistic* approach to education, rather than a rights-based approach. Secondly, partnership-led provisioning, as opposed to State-led delivery of education, makes it difficult to hold a single party accountable in cases of violation of the right to education. The impacts of such gaps are more severe for children belonging to marginalised households. To elucidate, the non-provisioning of entitlements, such as MDMs or TLMs, while not enforceable on either MCGM or the organisations, has direct impacts on the inclusion of children from marginalised backgrounds, as it has a clear impact on out-of-pocket expenditures, resulting in households deprioritizing education, especially for younger children. Similarly, an absence of PTAs or SMCs, further weakens the collective voice of parents and teachers, to hold the PPP partners and the State accountable. Furthermore, PPPs in education have witnessed an increasing role for not-for-profit entities, with a promise for increased innovation and operating towards “*social justice*” and “*inclusion*”-driven

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<sup>15</sup> Including experience in education and measuring learning outcomes; proposed approach including pedagogy, TLMs, teacher training, etc.; strength of the team to manage schools; ability to cover additional expenses.



goals (Fennel 2010). This has further legitimised the adoption of PPP models of education (Kumar 2008). With a growing interest in NGO-based PPPs, there is a need to clearly delineate these partners and their approaches to delivering education, with a closer analysis of their economic motivations and modes of functioning (Fennel 2007).

Finally, the findings reveal clear inconsistencies and a lack of information between the two key policies guiding the implementation of PPP models for MCGM, i.e. the PPP Policy and the MoUs. While the former adopts a more comprehensive and robust approach to guide PPP models, the latter mostly focuses on basic day-to-day administrative processes, making the processes for monitoring, accountability, and equity weak. Suggestively, the PPP Policy can be applied to the balwadi model, thereby eliminating the need for an MoU or ensuring the MoU is made consistent to the policy. The study clearly points out the need for PPP models in education, especially at the level of ECE, to be based on norms and standards set through a legislative/policy framework, instead of ad hoc MoUs to ensure - a) Universal access to education and ancillary entitlements, b) Standardised curricula and teaching methods, and monitoring mechanisms, c) Systemic support to teachers in carrying out their role d) Grievance redressal mechanisms for all stakeholders - parents, teachers and students, partner organisations, and the State.

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