Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

1. PPPs violate the principle of education as a human right

Education is a fundamental human right recognised in several international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Right of the Child, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, etc. All these treaties identify the state as being primarily responsible for the provision of public education. Basic education must be universal and free. Allowing private sector operators to offer it for a fee is a violation of human rights as that would exclude the vast majority of poor people and widen inequalities in society.

2. PPPs contravene the ethos of education

Education plays a key role in creating and promoting critical thinking as well as transforming societies. The Convention on the Rights of the child captures the spirit of education as geared towards the ‘development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,’ and generally serves as the basis for citizenship in a democracy. The philosophy behind most PPP’s sees education neither as a right nor a public good necessary for the society but as a product or merchandise. The school just focuses on the accumulation of high grades and teaching some children to pass exams as a passport to good jobs.

3. PPPs downgrade the work and status of teachers

The primary focus of teachers remains the full development of each child or young person. Teachers at all levels of education must be appropriately trained, qualified, paid and supported. The Jomtien World Summit on EFA, 1990 noted that: “quality is a prerequisite for achieving the fundamental goal of equity and expanding access alone would be insufficient for education to contribute fully
to the development of the individual and society. The importance of quality teaching for quality education cannot be underestimated. Yet evidence from PPP's points to an "increase in part time hiring, the proliferation of contractual employment, a rise in the number of non-regular instructors and staff and general deterioration of conditions in terms of health, safety, job security and training". Cost saving in PPP’s is often achieved by lowering the working conditions of teachers and the alienation of teacher unions.

4. **PPPs facilitate the privatization of education**

PPPs clearly lead to commercialisation and privatization of public education and cannot be accepted. Privatisation makes education a commodity and students customers/clients so that the highest bidder gains access while the vast majority of poor people are condemned to deprivation. It is borne out of the neo-liberal policy of "small state-free market" to public service delivery championed by the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation. ‘Public Private Partnerships’ are used as a camouflage as they avoid the inflammatory effect of ‘privatisation’ on those ideologically opposed.

5. **Multi-stakeholder Partnerships in Education (MSPE’s) are a viable alternative to PPP’s**

Multi-stakeholder Partnerships in Education (MSPEs) involving civil society organisations, UN agencies and multinational corporations in public education under arrangements that are non-contractual and non-commercial, but based rather on the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) area viable alternative worth participating in. Such participation will be based on the condition that the MSPE does not initiate or legitimize privatization or commercialization of education, or erode public responsibility for governance and for curriculum development. Also in situations where a state has collapsed the MSPE’s may be the only option.