

# **Public–Private Partnerships in the distance learning program during COVID-19 pandemic times in the Philippines: Identification of practices and principles**

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## **Abstract**

Several challenges fill the distance learning program in the Philippines and the Public-Private Partnerships implementation process. The educational system in the Philippines, like any other developing country, is severely affected during these pandemic times. Although the public schools already employed the programs and resource mobilization, partnership effectiveness is not yet fully determined. As such, our qualitative study applied the concept lenses of SDG#17 and SDG#4 to describe the degree of integration of practices and principles during the implementation of PPPs in the distance learning program. Semi-structured interviews and content analysis were conducted among public school principals in Mandaluyong City in NCR, Philippines. The prevailing PPP practices and principles are Upfront commitment to maintenance, and predictability and transparency of whole-of-life costs, creation of specific obligations of both parties, the establishment of educational objectives in the MOA, evaluation of the work progress & completion based on the targets, and lastly, sharing results of the outcome of these educational endeavors. The commitment of the teachers is the main enabling factor, while the poor internet connectivity and effect and restrictions brought about by the COVID19 pandemic are the hindering factors in the distance learning program. This paper can serve as a source of reference in establishing a long-term sustainable plan for implementing partnership efforts in quality education across the regions in the Philippines. We could also utilize the results of this study in the process of policy innovation to implement all the PPPs and maximize the impact elsewhere in achieving all the SDGs.

**Keywords:** distance learning program, PPP stages, public-private partnership, quality education, value drivers

## **Background of the Study**

There are evident environmental, economic, and social challenges our world faces at an unprecedented high rate in these pandemic times. The climate change and destruction of natural resources around the ecosystems on our planet are escalating issues nowadays. The presence of poor work conditions and child labor in many countries wreck human dignity and urban areas are struggling to accommodate the rapid growth of the population. This situation creates poverty and hunger issues, leading to inequality and a flange of crime rates. Another is the widespread pandemic brought about by COVID19 which has threatened human health that affected educational delivery, especially in the public sector.

To address these widespread problems the world over, the United Nations (UN) and its member countries must continuously execute the agendas and commitments in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were crafted in 2015 to primarily protect the planet, end poverty, and ensure prosperity by the year 2030. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a new universal set of goals and targets that came into effect on 1 January 2016; which aim to "end poverty in all its forms" by 2030 "and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental" (UN, 2015, p. 3).

The magnitude, advocacies, and ambitions of all SDGs show that a single organizational actor cannot confront these. But instead, they require the joint effort of several entities in society. They realize the significance of collaboration, SDG No. 17 calls for "partnership for the goals," supporting multi-stakeholder partnership in general, and promoting effective public-private partnerships (PPPs). Also, these partnership endeavors and interventions are essential in mitigating the effect of the suspension of face-to-face classes in all education sectors in the Philippines. It is noteworthy to dwell on and examine the distance learning programs in the Philippines during these COVID19 pandemic times since these endeavors address the targets and indicators of SDG No. 4, which calls for Quality Education.

### ***Evolution of Sustainable Development (SD).***

In the cognitive development process, Shi et al. (2019, p.12) combine the evolution of practice and theory and concludes that the view of SD has gone through three stages: the embryonic stage (before 1972), the molding stage (1972–1987), and the developing stage (1987–present). The SD principle has progressively evolved from the preliminary ambiguous definition to an international actional and has contained

increasing practical understanding. As part of the New Sustainable Agenda, the 17 SDGs succeeded and expanded the eight-millennium development goals (UN, 2015, p. 5) launched in 2001 and expired in 2015 with a primary focus on poverty and health only. The purpose of sustainable development has become more comprehensive and universal, changing from the single factor goals focusing on ecological sustainability to MDGs and SDGs today (Shi et al., 2019, p.12). The creation of the global SDGs means SD will further become the core concept and main principle for guiding the world's economic, environmental, social, and governance development.

While these 17 goals have been welcomed equally by the governments, firms, and academia, they represent a new opportunity to build more prosperous, greener, and more equal societies. The SDG also imposes significant challenges and tensions in attaining the outcomes that are difficult to resolve. To systematically implement and measure the output of SD, the UN initiated and formulated these SDGs through a series of global and extensive conversations from 70 countries. SDG included 11 thematic and 83 national consultations, door-to-door surveys, and an online survey where people were asked to highlight topics they would like to see approached in the goals (UN, 2015, p. 10).

The UN SDGs' ambition and extent of implementation require the joint effort of several societal actors instead of single entity participation. As such, the UN created SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (UN, 2015). It calls for "partnership for the goals", encouraging multi-stakeholder partnership in general and practical public-private partnerships (PPPs) to one of its targets. SDG 17 is a vision for improved and more equitable trade and coordinated investment initiatives to promote sustainable development across borders. It is about strengthening and streamlining cooperation between developed and developing nation-states, using the SDGs as a shared framework and vision for defining that collaborative way forward. It seeks to promote international trade and help developing countries increase their exports to ensure a universal rules-based and equitable trading system that is fair, open, and beneficial to all (UN, 2015).

Quality education was acknowledged as an effective tool and means to achieve SDGs. As such, the pronouncement of SDG 4 is Quality Education. The full title of SDG#4 is "Ensure inclusive and equitable

quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Guaranteeing equal opportunities and access to education in the contribution toward human capital development is one of the specific targets of SDG#4. In these pandemic times, it is a challenge to provide children and young people with quality and easily accessible education and other learning opportunities. The SDSN Australia/Pacific (2017, p. 14) states that the vital role of education in supporting and promoting the implementation of SDG is attributed to the following principle: Quality education leads to improved development outcomes for individuals, communities, and countries, meaning better access to gainful employment, better nutrition and health, reduction of gender disparities, greater resilience in disasters, more engaged citizens, and the like. This is under the SDG 4: Quality Education. Dela Serna (2015. p.6) explained that the Philippines had created policies and solutions for ESD implementation for the youth, such as the National Environmental Awareness and Education Act of 2008 National Service Training Program (NSTP), and Sangguniang Kabataan. The country's efforts still need to be further bolstered, especially in terms of curricula, transforming learning environments, and building the capacities of educators (Dela Serna, 2015. p.6). The HEI's pursuit of ESD in the country is progressing in its teaching delivery for students' benefit. Several legal bases direct the way it should be implemented in all levels of education and see to it that it should be implemented based on its purpose (Balanay & Halog, 2016, p.172).

### ***Public-Private Partnership***

Among the different types of project partnerships, the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) helps instill innovation for the public institution's benefit. PPP also provides technology, funding opportunity, and the transfer of knowledge and skills. This form of partnership is recognized as an essential vehicle for achieving sustainable development, including the goals stipulated in SDG #4 about Quality Education.

In the PPPs Reference Guide version 1.0, the World Bank (2012) defines PPPs as "a long-term contract between a private party and a government agency, for providing a public asset or service, in which the party bears significant risk and management responsibility." Moreover, PPPs are defined as "any long-term collaborative relationships between one or more private actors and public bodies that combine public sector management or oversight with a private partner's resources and competencies for a direct provision of a public good or service" (Kivleniece, I.; Quelin, B.V., 2012, p. 5).

PPPs play a strategically significant role in SDG implementations. As the instrument for economic value, PPPs are a rational vehicle to solve the large infrastructure gap through private sector involvement. The private sector is expected to take a higher willingness to take risks using their managerial skills and capabilities based on their specialization and the mastery of assuming the upfront costs. PPPs also have the potential to create social value beyond that created by the firm working alone. The public and private sectors can adopt a synergistic arrangement to fulfill the collective societal needs. Social value also pertains to increasing efficiency in essential services provision, including affordable housing, a robust healthcare system, and, interestingly, access to quality education.

Despite the potentially beneficial aspects of using PPPs for public services provisions like leveraging the efficiency of the private sector participation, access to capital for the public sector, and proper risk transfer, there are identified several disadvantages that need to be considered. The disadvantages include, among others, high capital costs, restrained innovation within the partnership, high monitoring costs, and management of challenges and problems over extended periods. The concepts of PPPs are known to solve and optimize the challenge of all SDG efforts and programs, especially the distance learning problems in public schools within economically challenged nations like the Philippines. The PPP process implementation is filled with many challenges in making it relevant to a sector, such as distance learning programs during pandemic times.

A large amount of time and resources are needed for several implementations of partnership activities such as training the people, document preparation, and collaborative meetings. Policy innovations and appropriate monitoring and management skills are needed in this partnership. The infrastructure endeavors have acknowledged several challenges associated with PPP application. However, there are limited studies dealing with PPP implementation in quality education. Given the above background on renewed calls and the need for applied PPP literature, there is an evident need for dwelling on PPP empirical studies focusing on the distance learning program in this COVID19 pandemic.

The underpinning research problem in the partnership initiatives in the distance learning programs is presented in question format: *What are the alignments in the partnership of public schools and private*

*organizations towards the targets and indicators of SDG4 and SDG17 in the distance learning program during these pandemic times.*

We formed the following objectives to address the research problem:

1. To describe the initiatives in the Public-Private Partnership of the distance learning programs based on the alignment to targets and indicators of SDG17 and SDG4 during these pandemic times in schools of Mandaluyong City, NCR Philippines. Specifically, this research aims:
  - a. To describe the basic arrangement of the public schools and private firms.
  - b. To determine principles they employed in the partnership endeavor.
  - c. To identify the practices under SDG17 and SDG4.
2. To identify the enabling and hindering factors in implementing PPP initiatives that affected the attainment of SDG 17 and SDG 4.

This research paper has significant implications for public school teachers and administrators, including government policymakers. Identifying the PPP practices and principles and enabling factors would help maximize the outcome of the distance learning program and successfully support the future implementation of PPPs in quality education endeavors. Also, this research can provide the opportunity to start PPP, establishing measures and similar projects for the less fortunate institutions. Lastly, identifying the hindering factors or local challenges encountered by these PPPs would help us formulate innovative policies that will address and anticipate solutions to these problems and appropriately help attain SDGs#17 and SDG#4.

### **Conceptual Model and Operational Framework**

We anchored this study primarily on the SDG Targets and Indicators. The PPP Value Drivers and Life Cycles and Theory of Collaborative Advantage were utilized in this research study's operational framework and methodology.

#### ***SDG Targets and Indicators.***

Targets in the SDGs are baseline manifestations that set up a clear course of action on what must be achieved. Reaching these SDG targets is part of the global effort that can move the goals to forward action. At the international, country, and local levels of SDG implementation, these SDG

indicators serve as quantitative and qualitative translations of monitoring progress towards the goals. A sound indicator framework will turn the SDGs and their targets into a management tool to help countries and the global community develop implementation strategies and allocate resources accordingly (SDSN, 2015, p. 7). The indicators serve as a measurement of the progress towards sustainable development. It also helps ensure the accountability of all stakeholders for achieving the SDGs. Thus, for this study, the relevant targets and indicators of SDG#17 and SDG#4 were analyzed..

### ***PPP Value Drivers and Life Cycles.***

Fundamental for economic growth, creating employment opportunities, reducing poverty and inequality, and attaining all SDGs need infrastructure investment in different forms. Also, infrastructure generates high social returns for enhancing welfare to the beneficiaries. However, the inadequacy of infrastructure impacts the quality of life, such as public education projects classified as social and government infrastructure. PPPs can help overcome the challenges of enhancing project selection, attracting private finances, aligning stakeholders' interests, and fostering efficiency gains. The mechanisms by which PPPs can improve infrastructure delivery are often called value drivers— instruments to maximize value for money (World Bank, 2017, p. 16). These should be integrated into PPP policies. According to World Bank (2017, p. 16), the eight value drivers are the following: 1. Whole-of-life costing, 2. Risk transfer, 3. Upfront commitment to maintenance and predictability and transparency of whole-of-life costs, 4. Focus on service delivery, 5. Innovation, 6. Asset utilization, 7. Mobilization of additional funding, 8. Accountability.

The rationale for examining these value drivers in the distance learning program is to map them to the appropriate phasing in the stages of PPPs. Accordingly, World Bank (2017, p. 70) explains that the PPP process is broken down into several stages, in which the PPP is iteratively developed and appraised. The stages are 1. Structuring and appraising the PPP, 2. Designing the PPP contract, 3. Implement the PPP transaction, 4. Manage the PPP contract.

### ***Theory of Collaborative Advantage***

The collaboration principle can be explained through the context of organizational goals involved in joint engagement across organizations. Dealing with goals as a system means viewing the goals as a linked and

hierarchically organized network of shared and not-shared goals within and across organizations. The collaborative advantage principle here captures the synergy argument: to gain absolute advantage from collaboration, something must be achieved that could not have been achieved by any of the organizations acting alone (Vangen and Huxham, 2005). The challenge is that organizations engaging in collaborations may need help identifying shared goals that positively affect these organizations' ability to deliver on core organizational goals. This concept provides a proper 'guiding light' to identify the enabling factor in the PPP.

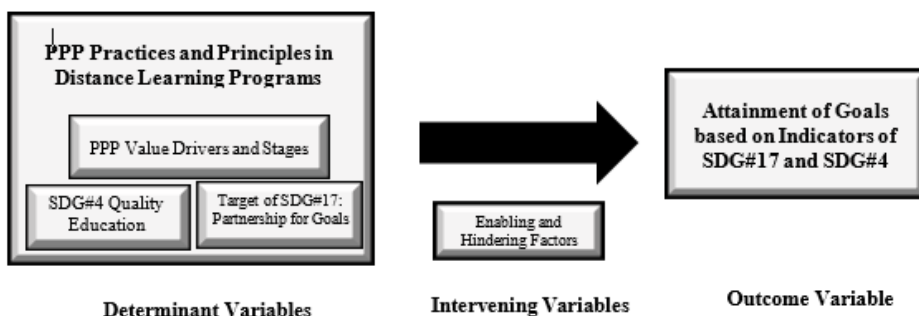
### Operational Framework.

The analysis of this research primarily utilized the concepts of PPP, its value drivers, and stages and selected targets of SDG#17 and SDG#4 as determinant variables. The outcome variable pertains to the goal attainment of the distance learning programs of public schools based on related indicators of SDG#17 and SDG#4.

We analyzed the determinant variables, outcome variables, and their relationship, including the enabling and hindering factors. These serve as a guide in determining and describing the practices and principles in the distance learning programs of the public schools in Mandaluyong City.

**Figure 1.**

#### *Operational Framework*



In addition, the enabling and hindering factors were identified, which led to the attainment of goals based on indicators of the SDG concerned. The targets and indicators of SDG#4 and SDG#17 served as a reference standard in describing the practices and principles.



World Bank (2017, p. 18) thoroughly explains the eight value drivers, which can be used to improve value for money in infrastructure provision. The descriptions of value drivers are as follows:

1. Whole-of-life costing: Full integration of the responsibility of one single party.
2. Risk transfer: Allocating some of the risks to a private party for better management of the challenges.
3. Upfront commitment to maintenance and predictability and transparency of whole-of-life costs: PPP requires an upfront commitment by the private operator to the whole-of-life cost.
4. Focus on service delivery: Contracting agency to enter a long-term contract for services to be delivered.
5. Innovation: Specifying outputs in a contract in the competitive procurement.
6. Asset utilization: Optimizing the utilization of assets for delivery of additional services.
7. Mobilization of additional funding: Charging users for services can bring in more funding and can sometimes be done better or more efficiently by private operators than in the public sector.
8. Accountability: Government payments are conditional on the private party providing the specified outputs at the agreed quality, quantity, and timeframe.

### ***Proposition***

This research is set to determine if the project partners in the distance learning program of public schools and private firms have contributed to achieving the targets and show the manifestation of the indicators of SDG#17 and SDG#4.

### **Methodology**

We employed a qualitative approach of research design that comprises semi-structured interviews. This research approach allows the respondent to change the course of the conversation and bring up new issues that the researcher had not preconceived (Axin and Pearce, 2006, p. 27). This methodology addresses our primary aim of investigating and assessing the preparedness of DepEd practitioners for PPPs adoption, and secondly, identifying the extent of integration of PPP practices and principles during the implementation process of upgrading the education schemes delivery, training of school teachers in Mandaluyong City. We intensively reviewed the goal, targets, indicators, and mapping procedures concerning SDGs.

We chose the purposive sampling technique for primary data gathering in the public elementary and high schools in Mandaluyong City. More importantly, the school must have engaged in partnerships with a private entity in the preparation and implementation of distance learning programs.

Burmeister and Aitken (2012, p.272) have pointed out the importance of the depth of the data in qualitative research over the size of the sample (i.e., the number of interviewees). As such, five (5) principals from different schools were selected and intensively interviewed. For the accuracy of the research findings, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria in selecting participants were followed. Therefore, this study supports the sample size of interviewees as being adequate for the data saturation model (Burmeister and Aitken, 2012, p.272).

The research is qualitative and focuses on describing the practices and principles of the PPP. Hence, no statistical treatment and measurement were employed in this research. The derivation of interview questions from value drivers and PPP stages allowed the presentation as the unit of analysis in the study. We formulated the questions to determine the issues and explain the contextual aspects such as the sustainable management aspects (i.e., practices, principles, enabling factors, hindering factors) for the PPPs implementation. The key emphasis was on understanding issues concerning interviewees' experiences and opinions on the research objectives. Table 1 summarizes the answers to questions under value drivers. In achieving one of the study objectives, namely, to identify the extent of integration of PPP practices and principles during the distance learning program, the interview participants were asked about several PPP practices and principles integration based on the information indicated in Tables 1 and 2.

## **Results and Discussion**

The study employed content analysis with the arrangement of the results and discussion based on the value drivers and the stages of PPP. As explained by Almarri and Abuhijleh (2017, p. 173), qualitative content analysis is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. In the data analysis in this research, the findings are analyzed based on established codes and themes on SDG#17 and SDG#4. Discussions to address the first objective in describing the initiatives in the PPP in the distance learning programs are presented based on the alignment to the targets and indicators of SDG#17 and SDG#4 that are organized accordingly per the PPP stage.

The discussions addressing the second objective of identifying the enabling and hindering factors in the implementation of PPP initiatives that affected the attainment of SDG#17 and SDG#4 are all summarized after the last stage of the PPP stages.

### Value Drivers

To examine and reveal initiatives and identify the practices and principles of the PPP in the distance learning programs of the schools, the surveying and interviewing of the participants are guided by the eight (8) Value Drivers of PPP. Table 1 summarizes the survey results based on the frequency of citations of PPP practices and principles. It is evident in the table that the generated frequencies in each value driver show an indication that the principals and the schools offer conformity to the concepts under each stage of PPP in dealing with multi-actor and stakeholder partnerships. This demonstrates attainment towards *SDG Target 17.9: Enhanced SDG capacity in developing countries*.

**Table 1.**

*No. of PPP Practices and Principles per Value Driver*

Value Drivers	Interviewee					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	
1. Whole-of-life costing	1			2	1	4
2. Risk transfer	1	1		1	1	4
3. Upfront commitment to maintenance, and predictability and transparency of whole-of-life costs	3	2		3	1	9
4. Focus on service delivery	3			2		5
5. Innovations	2	1		2		5
6. Asset utilization	1	1	1	2	1	6
7. Mobilization of additional funding	1			1		2
8. Accountability	1	1		1	1	4
	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	

The citation frequency of Table 1 reports the highest prevailing Value Driver: The *Upfront commitment to maintenance and predictability and transparency of whole-of-life costs* (n = 9) and *Asset utilization* (n = 6). Further examination of Table 1 may also suggest the limited understanding of these PPP practices and principles in other categories of value drivers amongst the interviewees, as evidenced by low citations of practices and principles such as *Mobilization of additional funding* (n = 2) that has the lowest citations. We further affirm the contention that the early stage of the starting phase of the partnership is when innovation is first exposed to the individual. However, the individual still lacks information about the innovation. These observations confirm the principals' lack of comprehensive knowledge and skills about the PPP practices and principles.

These schools need to understand, adapt and enhance the infrastructure delivery. World Bank (2015) pointed to the need to identify PPPs projects in the broader public asset management process setting as a prerequisite for success.

### ***Structuring and appraising the PPP***

Once the endeavor plan is identified and approved for development, this is followed by structuring, appraising by finalizing the terms and conditions. The proposed PPP structure and appraisal analysis are often pulled together in a business case to demonstrate why the PPP project is a good investment decision (World Bank, 2017). Before preparing and implementing the PPP transaction, authorization is usually needed at this point, per an analysis of that school case.

As stated in the objective of this research, we described the institutional aspects and arrangement of the public schools and private firms. Table 2 reveals the private partners of the selected public schools, which shows the manifestation of the creation of specific obligations in the partnership under SDG #17. Specifically, this table indicates that SDG Target 17.2: Implementation of development assistance commitments is being practiced in this distance learning program.

**Table 2.***Arrangement of the Schools with Private Partner*

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Private Entity</b>	<b>Arrangement</b>
<b>A</b>	Youth For Christ	Enhance reading and writing skills of students through Project YAKAP (Filipino) and Project MESIAH (English)
<b>B</b>	Hyper Young Institute of Technology (HYIT) and International Training Center and Hospitality Institute (ITCHI)	Computer systems services with HYIT and training on housekeeping and food & beverage with ITCHI under the Joint Delivery Voucher Program (JDVP)
<b>C</b>	Not specified	Donation of computers and other IT auxiliary parts
<b>D</b>	Rotary Club of Mandaluyong Premiere	Donation of Tech-Voc equipment such as high-end gas ranges and oven, baking supplies, and the improvement of facilities in the TLE Laboratory to provide specific conditions for Home Economics learners.
<b>E</b>	Philippine Long Distance Telecommunication (PLDT)	Grant stipulation on internet load for those students who are financially challenged

Table 2 presents the five public schools and their arrangement from a private entity. *SDG Target 17.3: Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources* since some private entity mobilized their financial resources. Moreover, Table 2 shows the recognition of the continuity of teaching skills during pandemic times. This refers to cooking, hospitality, and computer skills, which is under *SDG Target 4.4: Increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success* and reading and writing skills building under *SDG Target 4.6: Universal literacy and numeracy*.

Also, in the structuring stage of PPP in the distance learning program, a direct question was given: "What is your idea about public school private firm partnership existing in your school." Notably, Interviewees D and E explained that it is about quality education and improvement of student performance, respectively, as seen in their comments:

Interviewee D: Public school-private firm partnership providers can have many forms, and the goal often is the same – to expand the quality of education for all while reducing costs of the beneficiary school. [ . . . ]

Interviewee E: It is about collaboration that aims to address the needs of a public school geared toward the attainment or improvement of student performance.

The above comments by Interviewees D and E provide further evidence that the school principals have implemented SDG#17 to continue to execute the core mandate of these schools about SDG#4: Quality Education during this COVID19 pandemic times. All these interviews show strong evidence that in the first stage of PPP, *the commitment of the teachers* has a significant role in the distance learning program.

### ***Designing the PPP Contract***

As a second PPP stage, this involves translating the commercial and operational principles into contractual terms and putting out the provisions for allowable changes and guidelines on managing the contract, such as dispute resolution mechanisms. The design of the draft contract is often completed in the early stages of the procurement process to allow for a consultative meeting with potential vendors. The World Bank (2017) explains that designing PPP contracts presents specific guidance on designing the PPP contract.

To ascertain the design and start of PPPs projects, this question was given: "How did the partnership start? What are the expectations of the partnering institutions?" Examination of the answers reveals that the PPPs projects are about providing learning opportunities. The answer to these questions supports the SDG Target 4.1: Free Primary and Secondary Education and SDG Indicator 4.1.1. The proportion of children and young people is the foundation of the distance learning program for achieving the proficiency level of the beneficiaries.

Most Interviewees expressed their answers as learning and training objectives as the main expectations in partnership endeavors. Interviewees A and E mentioned the exact expectation in the partnerships and stated as:

Interviewee A: [ . . . ] Expects that slow readers will learn to read and write text with ease

Interviewee E: [ . . . ] Stipulations include spending the grant on internet load for those students who are financially challenged or whose parents were hugely affected by the pandemic.

Moreover, as an essential practice in the PPP designing stage, the theme Memorandum of Agreement has a high citation (n=4) in the Value Drivers assessment. The above findings reveal the variety of partnerships, which means they are already practicing the basic PPP. Interviewee E's response aligns with *SDG Target 4. b: Expand higher education scholarship for developing countries* and *SDG Indicator 4.b.1 Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study*.

### ***Implementing the PPP Transaction***

During the transaction stage, monitoring and evaluation are needed in the partnership with the private party that will engage in the PPP.

The transaction stage begins when the project has established the budgetary aspect of the PPP, i.e. when the financing and duties and responsibility contracts have been signed so that PPP implementation begins. This action usually involves preparing for and conducting a competitive procurement process. Bidders submit information detailing their qualifications and detailed technical and financial proposals, which are evaluated according to defined criteria—often in a multi-stage process—to select a preferred bidder (World Bank, 2017). This has relevance to the preparation of the school and a private entity for *SDG Target 4. A: Build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools* and *SDG Indicator 4.A.1 Proportion of schools with access to (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes*. As such, we asked, "Do the students use internet connectivity in accomplishing their modules?" All interviewees expressed their concerns about the challenges of limited internet connectivity. The solution was also provided as stated in the comprehensive response of Interviewee D.

Interviewee D: The donation of Ten (10) pcs smart pocket wifi's and Five (5) Globe Wifi Modem, which are all prepaid kits, was also a great help to chosen learners to continue their Online Distance Learning. [. . .] The students used internet connectivity to accomplish their digitized modules; however, about 20% of the more than 3,300 learners opted to use the Printed copies of modules. [. . .] About 80% of the school population use internet connectivity using several platforms such as Messenger, Google Meet, MS Teams, and Discord App [. . .]

In the project implementation stage of the PPP, there will be the formulation of the specification of the output that will be characterized. The main reason for this formulation is to enable the evaluation of

performance, as well as monitoring and enforcement (Hueskes, M., Verhoest, K., and Block, T., 2017). All the principals answered that 'Internet connectivity is one of the challenges that hinder their online class.' At the same time, those donations of IT gadgets solve the problem. Despite the presence of these schools in NCR, the students in their residential places still experience slow and limited internet connection.

To assess the SDG attainment, *SDG Target 17.19: Further, develop measurements of progress* was used as a guide. This also draws upon the approach of Trangkanont, S., and Charoenngam, C. (2014) that the performance management and associated success criteria are grounded on mutual developmental objectives, which include achieving contract schedule (time), budget (cost), specifications (quality). There is a need for further exploration of further information about the PPP that takes place. Therefore, to ascertain the performance management of PPPs online distance learning projects, the following question was asked: "How is the monitoring conducted?" a probe question of "How followed this did you measure the performance and report it to private firms?" The survey showed that five performance measurements emerged as PPP practices and principles.

**Table 3.**

*Performance Measurements adopted through the executing the PPP distance learning program*

Performance Measurement	Interviewee					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
<b>1. Gauging the performance of the students</b>	✓	✓	✓			3
<b>2. Evaluating the work progress &amp; completion based on the targets</b>	✓	✓		✓	✓	4
<b>3. Communicating with private party</b>	✓	✓				2
<b>4. Daily inspection of work</b>				✓		1
<b>5. Close participation of heads</b>		✓				1
<b>Total</b>	3	4	1	2	1	

Table 3 shows that during the implementation of PPP projects, the performance measurement is mainly in *Evaluating the work progress and completion based on the targets* (n = 4). In connection with this, many



Interviewees expressed their sentiments that the IATF protocols and symptomatic condition of the COVID patients affect heavily affected the work progress and completion of the distance learning program. Also, the remarks by Interviewees A, B, D, and E provide further evidence of their PPP practitioners acknowledging some of the usefulness of the innovation in the form of the performance management approaches. Response of Interviewee B shows the highest number of practice performance measurements as evidenced by the explanation:

Interviewee B: The division JDVP Focal Person, the school principal as well as very own immersion teacher monitors the conduct of the program by joining the class from time to time. Also, the program partner and the school provided a group chat via messenger for the beneficiaries, so everything are discussed in the GC.

The above statements by Interviewee B provide further evidence that the school principals are knowledgeable and have gained skills in the PPP. During the interview, Interviewee B mentioned that everything was new during the first month of The above statements by Interviewee B provide further evidence that the school principals are knowledgeable and have gained skills in the PPP. During the interview, Interviewee B mentioned that everything was new during the first month of the pandemic in 2020. Including measurement or performance indicators is also consistent with earlier PPP-associated studies. For example, in the context of developing economies, in the survey, Kowfie et al. (2015) used metrics such as satisfied parties, affordable housing, delivery on time and budget, and quality outcomes as performance measures. Therefore, the underlying motivation for this question was to ascertain the extent that the interviewees had in integrating the performance management innovative aspects. In this stage, 'the individual is first subjected to the partnership field work but lacks information about the PPP.' During this stage, the individual can be considered as not yet stimulated to discover more data about the procedures in the PPP process. At the same time, there might be no evidence of whether Interviewee B had not yet sought the necessary full knowledge to enhance his skills in PPP. Also, Interviewee B lacked the essential information to improve their online distance learning partnership skills and management. Interview C mentioned that they have no formal private partners. However, he and the other teachers are willing to learn PPP. However, the above observations by Interviewee C further highlight the need for knowledge sharing between the private and public sectors

Some aspects of the performance measurement of site inspections, whether official or unofficial, were practiced by most of Interviewee's A, B, C, and E. Several interviewees went furthermore by documenting this evidence as described by Interviewee A:

Interviewee A: [ . . . ] The school head and department heads to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the projects. The teachers gauge the students' performance on each learning activity, which results of which are reported to YFC. [ . . . ].

This observation reveals a limited understanding of the more particular mechanisms for PPP assessment among the schoolteachers and principals. This is attributed to the limited or no training on the details or specific procedures for monitoring and evaluating PPP projects. These findings are coherent with the literature as the importance of management and monitoring of PPP projects has also been acknowledged in previous PPP-related studies. Evidence of the significance of PPP monitoring was equally acknowledged by Interviewee D as follows: "By assessing a work progress by both partners, this also involves experts to inspect the work on every stage with the involvement of the teachers". All throughout the statement of the interviewee, the role of teachers is seen to be an enabling factor in the distance learning program, especially here in the implementation stage of PPP.

### **Manage the PPP Contract**

The government party must manage the contract and assess the attainment of the project objective once the PPP has reached its endpoint. In this distance learning program, this phase involves monitoring, evaluating, and enforcing the PPP contract requirements and managing the partnership between the public school and their private firm in the post-implementation and after the completion part of the PPP. The need for post-contract management, such as capturing lessons learned and evaluating performance, is also acknowledged in literature (Obwegeser, N., & Muller, S. D. 2018). Shokri-Ghasabeh, M. & Chileshe, N. (2014) highlighted the effectiveness of this closing phase as being influenced by the conceptualization and planning stages of the PPP life cycle. These principles could be implemented accordingly in PPP by an effective knowledge management system stated in *SDG Target 17.6. Knowledge sharing and cooperation for access to science, technology, and innovation* and *SDG Target 17.17. Encourage effective partnerships*.

Moreover, the same study emphasized the need to establish measures for reporting the progress and accomplishment of the project. As stated in the framework of this research, we rely on these measures and

accomplishments on the baseline of *SDG Target 4.1 Free Primary and Secondary Education*.

The operational positions and post-implementation could be associated with the future growth and success of public and private sector organizations, resulting in the successful development of projects in this PPP. The question on Managing the PPP contract on the last stage of PPP in the distance learning program was posed: “After the project, how did you assess the outcome?”

**Table 4.**

*Assessing the Outcome*

Interviewee	Assessing the Outcome
A	Result of performance data on initial assessment on reading and final assessment are compared, analyzed, and evaluated.
B	In the Distance Learning, we rely only on the students’ learnings were mainly assessed by the output they [partner institution] have provided and they were able to finish excellently. We are further assessing our response during pandemic as we are all affected by COVID19.
C	(Response is not relevant to Assessing the Outcome)
D	assess what went well, find out what went wrong and identify what are the things that need to be done to improve future activities involving private partner and maximize usage of facilities
E	This assignment is an important part of the program to further help the learners improve themselves, teachers and the public school to create similar activities [ . . . ]

Table 4 shows evidence of the manifestation of the *SDG Indicator 4.1.1. The proportion of children and young people* indicates proof of continuity of student learning in these pandemic times. Almost all response, except that of Interviewee C, shows direct alignment in attaining these *SDG Indicator 4.1.1*, showing student centricity in the assessment.

Interviewers A, D, and E expressed the *sharing results of the outcome of these educational endeavors* that are aligned to *SDG Target 17.6* and *SDG Target 17.17*. Other assessment includes evaluation of future teaching skills needed and national education policies as part of *SDG 4.7: Education for sustainable development and global citizenship*

and SDG Indicator 4.7.1 Extent to which (ii) education for sustainable development, [. . .], are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment.

Lastly, after analyzing all the stages of PPP in the distance learning program, we collectively addressed the second research objective of this study. The *commitment of the teachers* is the main enabling factor in the implementation of the distance learning program. This is revealed in the structuring and appraising stage and the implantation stage of PPP. As a personal reflection of this study, we witnessed the sacrifice of the teachers in preparing and delivery of modules to students. On the other hand, the *poor internet connectivity* and the *effect and restrictions brought about by the COVID19 pandemic* are the hindering factors in the distance learning program, as reported by most interviewees.

### **Proposition**

As expected, the identified PPP practices and principles employed by selected public schools in Mandaluyong City in the distance learning program contribute to attaining targets and indicators SDG#4. This research has shown evidence that despite the pandemic period, the public schools and the government, and private firms are inevitably working closely to achieve SDG#17.

### **Conclusion**

This SDG research has investigated the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives in the distance learning programs of schools in Mandaluyong City in the Philippines. The findings revealed the essential PPP practices and principles associated with the targets and indicators of SDG#17. The students of public schools affected by the pandemic have benefited from the partnership with the private firm, which is a manifestation of targets and indicators of SDG#4. Several PPP practices and principles were identified, mainly under *Value Driver: Upfront commitment to maintenance, predictability, and transparency of whole-of-life costs*. Under the 4 PPP stages, it was also identified that more prevailing practices and principles initiatives, namely: *the creation of specific obligations of both parties, the establishment of educational objectives in the Memorandum of Agreement, evaluation of the work progress & completion based on the targets* and lastly, *sharing results of the outcome of these educational endeavors*.

This research further determined that the *commitment of the teachers* is the main enabling factor in the implementation of a distance learning program. At the same time, the *poor internet connectivity* and

the *effect and restrictions brought about by the COVID19 pandemic* are the hindering factors.

The PPP practices and principles, including those enabling and hindering factors that were identified in this research, can be adopted and benchmarked by other public schools in quality education endeavors. These practices in PPP can be appropriately applied in designing a program and opportunity to participate in similar projects for the less fortunate educational institutions, including Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines in any SDG. The principles can also be used to set measures for the successful implementation of PPP.

### **Recommendations**

Drawing upon the findings of this study, PPP research, and document, further study of the public schools and their PPP engagement is recommended. Also, to study their joint ventures collaboration with international private firms to improve PPP deliveries in the distance learning program and other quality education endeavors as part of SDG#4. This attempt would also provide research opportunities for determining the knowledge and skills gap issues of the school personnel in PPP.

Also, future studies could employ quantitative statistical, and correlation analysis approaches in the survey questionnaire. This process would include an analysis of the in-depth perception of the principal and teachers regarding their endeavors in PPP. Moreover, this type of research could form the basis for systematically mapping the identified principles and practices in each stage in the PPP if these studies are done quantitatively. Such an approach would lead to identifying their prevalence and incidence across the other locations of PPP. This procedure would enable the schools to assess the needed training where these practices might be lacking in their partnerships.

Also, we recommend extending the PPP research study to SDGs like *SDG#3: Health & Well-Being* and *SDG16: Peace, Justice, & Strong Institutions*. The methodology in analyzing performance management should be broadened enough to integrate sustainability performance indicators in other areas, as demonstrated in our current study on SDG#17 and SDG#4.

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