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Through a glass, darkly

An analysis of the monitoring process used in Public-Private Partnerships in Abu Dhabi government schools

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the monitoring process used to evaluate Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in education in Abu Dhabi. It leads to a suggested framework services in education, and more efficient in supporting school improvement.

The thrust of the literature on PPPs is to emphasise political and economic benefits, with little focus on educational outcomes. Assumptions that the use of the private sector brings about positive change are seen in the educational (as well as other) sectors, but there appears to be little data on verifiable improvements in academic outcomes.

Documentation from and about the Abu Dhabi PPP project was analysed. This gave an insight into the aspirations of those who commissioned the project. It also uncovered discrepancies between the original plans and the implementation. The imaginative aims were blurred in the attempt to press for fast results.

Interviews were conducted with a sample of stakeholders, including principals from government schools involved in the project, and others that have been part of the large PPP project to improve educational standards in Abu Dhabi. These interviews revealed their views as to the successes and the difficulties of the PPP itself and the monitoring of it.
The analysis of the results of these two strands of investigation – documentary analysis and interviews - are drawn using a post-positivist approach, in the belief that we can know the truth, but only imperfectly.

The ethical and cultural strictures within which the research was sited, are discussed in detail as they were a key element in the design of the research. They created limitations in terms of questions that could be asked and data recording methods that could be used.
Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, I give the background to four different strands that run through the whole thesis: (1) the global search for improved education systems (2) the monitoring of successes in education reform programmes (3) the geo-political context of Abu Dhabi, capital city of the United Arab Emirates and (4) PPPs in all their different forms and contexts. I also outline my own professional background in the field of educational reform and monitoring. Finally, I outline my research objectives and give the specific research questions that arose from these.

The global search for improved education systems

Governments around the world have been working for many years to improve their national school systems. In countries as far apart as Chile, Kuwait, Thailand, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), governments have sought to improve economic outcomes through higher standards of student attainment (Bowles and Gintis, 2014; Hallinger and Moosung, 2014; Mizala and Schneider, 2014; Bates, 2013 and Kennedy, 2013). They strive to provide the “best education possible” for their children, but the definition of this may differ from country to country. For many, this has meant spending more of the gross national product on public education, in order to produce better student outcomes in terms of examination results and test scores, leading to better national economic growth, long-term (Hanushek, 2003).

However, it has become increasingly clear that more money on its own does not necessarily lead to better learning. In many instances, increased spending does not seem to have any significant effect on student achievement. For example, Burke
(2012) points out that over the past 40 years, both teaching and non-teaching positions in US public schools have increased at far greater rates than student enrolment has increased.

Developing countries also spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year on schools, educational materials and teachers, but relatively little is known about how effective this expenditure is at increasing the skills, knowledge and understanding that young people develop whilst in school. In fact, much evidence suggests it is not effective. For example, a report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Mexico (2009) demonstrates that despite increased spending over the past 20 years, education indicators there remain well below the average of the OECD and below many of its Latin American ‘emerging market’ peers. Lower secondary schools enrol only two thirds of the relevant age group and the quality of education is low, as indicated by poor scores in the Programme for International Student Assessment \(^1\) (PISA). The report suggests that this reflects inadequate teaching quality, perhaps due to poor teacher selection processes and limited school autonomy in budgeting, teaching and personnel decisions. For schools in Mexico, there is only limited accountability to parents, as there is no national exit exam after secondary education. Educational evaluation schemes here are fragmented and disjointed.

Similarly, Glewwe et al. (2011) surveyed studies published between 1990 and 2010, in the education and the economics literature, to investigate which specific school

\(^1\) The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students.
and teacher characteristics, if any, appear to have strong positive impacts on learning and time in school. Starting with over 9,000 studies, 79 were selected by the team as being of sufficient quality. Reducing them further by the veracity of their economic methods, 43 high quality studies were examined, a strong foundation for conclusions. The few variables that do have significant effects – availability of desks, teachers’ knowledge of the subjects they teach, and teacher absenteeism, for instance – are hardly surprising and thus provide little guidance for future policy makers:

“This review of existing evidence suggests little in the form of ‘best policies’ that can readily be introduced through central provision or through regulatory approaches. This realization implies that progress is likely to proceed with local experimentation built on local knowledge and capacities. Yet local experimentation is unlikely to be successful unless there is a process of evaluation that works to continue the policies and programs that rigorous evaluations demonstrate are successful and to discontinue those that such evaluations indicate are unsuccessful.”

(Glewwe 2013, p. 45).

This general pattern is repeated around the world. Moore et al. (2012) showed that although some progress is being made in areas of increased spending - for example, since 1990, the primary education net enrolment rate has increased from 81.7% to 84.6% on a global scale, and in countries with a low initial rate and targeted programmes, the increase was substantially better - the impact in terms of educational outcomes, and in particular student learning, has been less impressive. They cite a World Bank study on the impact of Bank education support programmes, which found significant weaknesses in students’ learning:
“Even those [students] receiving quality improvement support from the World Bank have yielded discouraging results. In Ghana, Niger, Peru, and Yemen, no more than 19% of sixth graders reached mastery levels in language; and no more than 11% do so in mathematics. In Ghana, where average test scores increased over 15 years, fewer than 10% of students have reached the mastery level in maths, fewer than 5% in English. In India, nearly 50% of 7-10 year olds could not read fluently in their local language at the first grade level. Mastery in French and maths among grade 6 students in 1999 in Niger was 13 and 11%, respectively; in Yemen, grade 6 students’ mastery of Arabic and maths were 19 and 9%, and in Peru they were 8% for Spanish and 7% for maths. In Vietnam, only 51% of grade 5 students were found to perform as independent readers.”

(Moore et al., 2012, p. 7)

This suggests that even when the quality improvement support is backed by good financial planning, the cost/benefit ratio can be poor. All aimed to improve student outcomes, but no particular measure was set and no percentage target agreed prior to commencement. It does seem that the changes quoted were relatively limited given the financial resources used, and this might lead one to question whether the models for change being used were the most effective ones.

Levin (2001, p. 2) also suggests that education reform is often not as focussed as it might be, despite the large amounts of money involved:

“In many respects, the discussion of education reform has generated more heat than light. There is a great deal of polemic literature, claiming that
particular policies will bring the promised land or, alternatively, will destroy everything we value. Careful empirical work looking at the nature and consequences of reforms in various settings is harder to find.”

He goes on to quote Howlett and Ramesh (1995) who wrote that the manner in which analysts explain public policy and the aspects which they chose to emphasise, are dependent on their own frames of reference, which in turn depend on their interests, ideologies and experiences.

During the recent world financial crisis, when economic growth declined from 5.2% in 2007 to about -0.6% in 2009, economic growth in developing countries fell from 8.3% to 2.5% (International Monetary Fund, 2010). In this context, Cetola et al. (2010) suggest that governments were increasingly looking to save costs and identify cost-effective interventions that improve education without using large amounts of resources. They reported on a United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded programme that identifies various ways in which schools can more efficiently use existing resources to improve student learning. Looking across five countries at issues such as schools opening late or closing early, teacher and student absenteeism, poor management of time during the school day, and time-off-task in the classroom, they suggest that poor management of schools can lead to the equivalent of more than 50% loss of the school year, in terms of time. Poor time-on-task, one of the five factors researched in the study, accounted for the largest portion of time lost - 41 days - and therefore the largest share of wasted resource (the equivalent of 23% of the budget). In Honduras and Nepal, the percentages were even higher (30% each).
Thus, of the many possible reasons that increased spending might not be effective, issues that are bound up in the institutional structures and organisation of the school systems (Wößmann, 2007) might be at the root of the problem and governments have looked for ways of reforming those institutions (Hanushek, 2002).

In most cases, one or more of three reform strategies have been tried: increasing accountability, autonomy, and/or parental choice. For example, in the USA, the 2001 ‘No Child Left Behind’ legislation required all states to establish standards for student achievement, to test students each year to see whether the standards had been met, and to impose sanctions on schools that did not meet expectations. This appeared to increase accountability, at least initially (Barton 2009; Rudalevige 2005).

Other countries expanded parental choice between schools, for example Sweden introducing free parental choice of schools and a voucher system in the 1990s, that effectively placed private schools on a financial par with public schools, with respect to state funding. England included aspects of all three strategies in its creation of an education market: publication of external examination results, delegation of control over resource allocation to school level, and increased parental choice within local authorities, along with the establishment of the principle that public funding followed the student to their chosen school (Chitty 2014; Green 2005).

Sahlberg (2011, 2010) suggests that competition between schools, combined with test-based accountability to hold schools accountable for agreed knowledge standards, have become a common strategy in educational reform efforts. He argues that the evidence that test-based accountability policies improve the quality and efficiency of public education remains controversial. He goes on to outline the view
that the current practice of determining educational performance by using standardised knowledge tests as the main means of accountability, is not actually a necessary condition for much of the educational improvement that is needed. He concludes that there is growing evidence that increased “high-stakes” testing is in fact restricting students’ ability to learn concepts, engage in creative actions and activities, and to understand innovation. Using Finland as an example (2011), he notes that since Finland emerged in 2000 as the top-scoring OECD country on the PISA tests, researchers have been trying to determine how a country with a mediocre education system in the 1980s, became the best in about 20 years. He highlights that Finland now publicly recognises the value of its teachers and overtly trusts their professional judgment. Indeed, during the main process of educational reform, teachers demanded and were given more autonomy and more responsibility for curriculum and in-school student assessment. While the National Finnish Curriculum Framework for Basic Education and similar documents for secondary education, curriculum planning was the responsibility of the school and the local municipalities. The Finnish system does not employ external standardised pupil testing to mark the performance of schools. It also does not have a rigorous inspection system of schools and teachers, depending rather on parents to alert the authorities of any concerns.

Assessment practice in Finnish schools is grounded in the national curriculum, but the system gives a high priority to personalised learning and individual creativity. The progress of each pupil is judged more against individual development and ability, rather than statistical indicators. Education authorities assert that curriculum, teaching and learning (rather than testing) drives teachers' practice. The determining of pupils' academic performance and social development are seen as a responsibility
of the school, not of external assessors. Teachers are deemed to be the best judges of how their own pupils are progressing. This suggests that educational change might more usefully drive towards increasing partnership, networking and social capital in schools and in their communities. By building trust and strengthening collective responsibilities, both within and between schools, standards appear to rise.

Sahlberg’s (2010) analysis of education policies leads him to conclude that more work should be done promoting more appropriate, “intelligent” forms of accountability to meet accountability demands, encouraging cooperation not competition among students, teachers and schools (p. 53). This might include more balance between qualitative and quantitative measures, and build on mutual accountability, professional responsibility and trust. So-called intelligent accountability is deemed to utilise a wider variety of data to express the strengths and weaknesses of particular schools in meeting goals. It combines internal accountability, consisting of school processes, self-evaluations, critical reflection and widespread school/community interaction. Levels of external accountability are built up on regular monitoring, sample-based student assessment and themed evaluations appropriate to the stage of development of each individual school.

Intelligent accountability also stresses the principle of mutual responsibility. This principle underlines the notion that accountability dynamics can and should be regarded as a two-way process. Clearly, schools should be held accountable to decision-makers and to the community for the overall outcomes of schooling. These outcomes, as defined by the school and their stakeholders, should go beyond the student-achievement results that remain the focus of external standardised tests. Expected outcomes would include non-cognitive, ‘soft’ areas, such as social skills,
spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, and aspects of personality not assessed by tests, such as resilience and responsibility. On the other hand, the government decision-makers, local authorities and school governance boards should also be held to account for providing schools and their students, teachers and head teachers with the resources, working conditions and opportunities needed to attain agreed educational goals.

Much of the focus of international research was, then and now, on the more developed education systems, but the same problems and solutions were being looked at by governments in other parts of the world. The history of education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region reflects that of other developing regions (Chapman and Miric, 2009). Following the end of the colonial period, newly independent governments introduced publicly-funded mass education systems, which helped them to build up their countries and win the support of the public.

The establishment of these new education systems was centrally-driven (Welmond, 2006) and subsequent reforms by governments have also been top-down activities. However, despite the time and money spent, three factors have combined to create a crisis in MENA education systems: an increasing educational disparity within the countries, a perceived decrease in the quality of education despite high per capita education expenditures, and a serious mismatch between labour market needs and the output of educational systems (United Nations Development Program UNDP, 2002).

Reformist governments that have increased accountability tend to combine the setting of clear standards, external monitoring of results, and rewards/sanctions based on performance indicators (Willems, 2014). The general idea is that by providing
better information on student outcomes, systems can reward students, teachers and school leaders for their efforts. But institutional reform strategies are not universally welcomed. Some contend that increased accountability (and autonomy and choice) will not automatically improve outcomes. Indeed they could have the opposite effect, if they are poorly implemented. For example, critics of increased accountability such as Aske et al. (2013), Ossege (2012) and Schwartz and Mayne (2005) suggest that such high stakes testing systems lead to narrower curricula, stifle creativity, and undermine student engagement. Furthermore, they argue that rules can become ends in themselves, that accountability stressed compliance, and that hierarchical structures hinder efficiency and performance. Thus, the critics emphasise the need to relax input controls.

**Monitoring of school improvement**

Many countries throughout the world have developed some means of monitoring the quality and standards of their education systems, but surprisingly little is known about how (even whether) school inspections drive school improvement or which types of inspection are most effective (Ehren et al., 2013). Despite this, many countries in the world (van Bruggen, 2010) have developed inspection models, although occasional countries overtly and consciously do not (Samuelsson and Lindblad, 2015).

School inspection is usually concerned with the improvement of standards and the quality of education being provided (van Bruggen, 2010). Clegg and Billington (1994), reflecting on the practice of inspection by the Office For Standards in Education (Ofsted) in the UK, suggest that a major purpose of inspection is
“to collect a range of evidence, match the evidence against a statutory set of criteria, arrive at judgments and make those judgments known to the public” (p. 2).

Similarly, the South African school inspectorate is concerned with and is divided into management functions and advisory services. It has been argued that the effectiveness of the inspectorate in terms of quality of teaching and learning is limited (Chetty et al, 1993).

I believe the central role of inspection as the dominant strategy for monitoring and improving the performance of the education system in schools cannot be overstated. The school improvement project described in this research utilised a model for monitoring closely based on that of the UK’s Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Ofsted is responsible for inspecting and regulating education and training for learners of all ages and for inspecting and regulating those services which care for children and young people in England. Inspections are carried out by one or more inspectors. Each inspection must follow a specific framework devised for that particular provider, for example the Framework for the regulation of those on the Early Years and Childcare Registers. The inspection process has been widely criticised, particularly by teachers, who have argued it causes high levels of stress among staff under pressure to ensure their schools perform well. The inspection process was streamlined in 2005, but there were still concerns among teachers that Ofsted had a "fascination with failure" (Keates, 2006). Indeed, Ofsted's expansion in 2007 attracted controversy with questions being raised about the inspectorate's ability to cope with such a broad remit, culminating in a call from the Commons Education Select Committee for Ofsted to be fundamentally reformed. The Committee said it believed a single
inspectorate was too big to function effectively and greater elements of specialism were needed to raise the quality of inspections (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011). Despite many unanswered questions about its work at this time (Gaertner and Pant, 2011), the recommendation has not been actioned. Nevertheless, it retains its image amongst many overseas education agencies as a gold standard for school inspection.

**Public-Private Partnerships**

Pressure on finances and to improve standards, have combined to encourage governments to seek different ways to solve the problems. The drive for greater efficiency at the same time as raising standards (Curristine, 2005) has led to one development in particular in the last 10-15 years. The notable increase in the number and range of Public-Private Partnerships, where the government and market sectors, including in education, seek to work together for mutual benefit, is perhaps the major effect of these two factors (OECD report, 2008). In activities as diverse as facilities management, the military, information and communication technology, water supply, health care and education, the number of projects is growing (Brighouse, Howe and Tooley, 2010; Chakrabarti and Peterson, 2009; Bult-Spiering and Dewulf, 2006).

Flinders (2005) suggests that there are many possible reasons for this growth. It may be that the combining of public and private expertise, finances and practices meets the desire on the part of politicians for greater efficiency, lower risk, better understanding of complex projects and more accountability. Even so, whether any version of the PPP model is the most appropriate or even is an improvement over traditional publicly-funded development programmes, has not been demonstrated
rigorously in any sector (Chakrabarti and Peterson, 2009; OECD, 2008; Bult-Spiering and Dewulf, 2006).

Despite the increase in the use of PPPs, little is known about how the model operates as a means to manage and execute projects, and how good the results are: this is especially so in developing countries. Although there is literature which lists best practices in broad terms (World Bank 2003; United Nations Foundation, 2003; Weigel and Waldburger, 2004; World Bank, 2006), most of the recommendations are based on descriptions of individual projects. In particular, there is a dearth of in-depth evaluation and assessment of the processes and outcomes at various stages of projects; the processes used to monitor performance also vary widely (OECD report, 2008, pp. 79-83).

There are many that favour the system, as a valid and successful means of spreading risk, and obtaining value for money (LaRocque, 2009; OECD report, 2008; Institute of Public Policy Research, 2001). Governments across the world have sought additional funding and expertise for a wide range of projects through PPPs. Organisations such as the United Nations are often positive about PPPs, especially about the potential for the developing world, for example in the development of transport infrastructure (ESCAP, 2007). In education, it appears that public funding but not public management of schools may be the answer: Wößmann (2009, p. 41) suggests that some types of PPP may lead to “the most effective school systems” of all.
The main conclusion of those researchers who have attempted to evaluate the success of PPPs (OECD report, 2008; Bult-Spiering and Dewulf, 2006; Flinders, 2005; Dewulf et al., 2004) is that at best the case is unproven; at worst, their use can

“...represent a Faustian bargain in that the form of PPPs may deliver efficiency gains and service improvements in some policy areas but these benefits may involve substantial political and democratic costs”

(Flinders, 2005, p. 216).

This notion, that an agreement based on PPP is expedient in the short-term, but carries a heavy cost in the long-term, is used in other writing, such as that of Peters and Pierre (2004). Shaw (2004, p. 73) notes that “… it makes electoral sense to stretch out the payment of the bills even if the total cost is much larger. So the government can claim (credibly) to be embarking on the largest hospital building programme in history without placing unduly burdensome claims on the public purse. The real cost will bite only later”.

**Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates**

Abu Dhabi is the largest of the seven Emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is also the capital city of the UAE. The UAE is one of the six countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
The ADEC PPP project and my professional role

As the Director of the educational PPPs’ Monitoring Agency in Abu Dhabi, I was able to see from the inside how the original plans were formulated and implemented from 2006 to 2009. The project continued until 2012 and I was consulted about matters pertaining to these expensive and complex projects throughout.

The unusual access to the projects was too good an opportunity to miss, as far as research was concerned. Although mindful of the range of pitfalls that being an insider might cause, I knew that I was uniquely placed to carry out some meaningful and useful work, aimed at helping to ensure the best value for money and maximum improvement in pupil outcomes from this kind of project. The most obvious hazards to be circumvented, were the potential for conflicts of interest issues and ethical dilemmas. These are dealt with in detail in Chapter 3.
**The four different providers and their approaches to the project**

I am fortunate in being able to spend time working in state schools, academies and private education in the UK, as well as around PPP projects in many parts of the Middle East. The PPP project that is at the core of my research was originally focussed on 30 schools, with support delivered by four external providers. These companies (here called A, B, C and D) were two British organisations, one American and one Lebanese.

The approaches adopted by the four were different, although the variations were not great, at least between three of the companies. In general terms, the British and American entities favoured continuous professional development that moved their schools’ teachers towards a holistic curriculum and used teams of highly qualified and experienced UK/US teachers and senior teachers to try to create change. All three brought in large numbers of staff and allocated them by school, with support/management teams based regionally. The three companies had wide experience of supporting and consulting in schools, but not of managing them. The US company also used a style of coaching, which meant that they allocated a specific senior education professional to work with an individual school principal.

The Lebanese company adopted a more defined, sequential curriculum, rigorously applied with frequent assessments, using staff qualified in administration but trained only in their own system, in their schools. Many of the staff who taught were not qualified in child development and had a limited range of teaching techniques. The company brought in staff from outside of the UAE, like the other three, though not
necessarily from the Lebanon. The overall strategy was to try to replicate in the Abu Dhabi schools, systems that exist in their own worldwide network of schools.
Research aim, objectives and questions

My interest was focussed on monitoring processes involved in educational PPPs.

The success of Finland’s education system, with very limited school inspection per se, seemed to suggest that there might be alternative routes to success other than that most commonly used, which was based on a rigorous school inspection system, often a quasi-Ofsted model. The monitoring and evaluation system set up to monitor the PPP project in Abu Dhabi was one such example: I hoped that by analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the model, useful improvements and suggestions might be generated relevant to similar forthcoming projects.

It was apparent that alternative styles of monitoring existed, but were not widely used in the education sector. Logic modelling is used in particular in development projects (Gage and Dunn, 2009; Frankel and Gage, 2007), but rarely so far in education. Newton et al. (2013) are one of few groups or individuals that have thus far used it and they applied it to teacher training. Teacher education programmes in the USA were increasingly under pressure to demonstrate their effectiveness by showing gains in pupils’ learning in classrooms where programme graduates were teaching. They mapped logical steps leading from what the trainee teachers learned in their programmes, to what they were doing in classrooms, focussing on what might best contribute to their pupils’ learning. They argue that the logic model approach made more explicit the links between programme processes and the intended outcomes.

The overall research aim is to evaluate the method used to measure the effectiveness of PPP projects in education in order to develop a framework for describing and
measuring both processes and outcomes of the contracted-out management services model used in some of Abu Dhabi’s state-funded schools.

My research objectives therefore were to:

a) describe and contextualise the type of PPP being used to manage the schools chosen by the government in Abu Dhabi;

b) identify the methods currently used to measure the processes and outcomes of this partnership;

c) evaluate these in terms of their effectiveness for bringing about improvements in the way the partnership operated and fulfilled their purposes;

d) explore the links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring;

e) if possible, develop a framework for more effective monitoring and evaluation of PPP projects focussed on school improvement.

My research questions therefore were:

i. what type of PPP was being used to manage and improve the target schools in Abu Dhabi?

ii. what were the methods used to measure the processes and outcomes of these partnership?

iii. how effective were these methods in bringing about improvements in the way the partnerships operated and fulfilled (or did not fulfil) their purposes?

iv. what were the links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring, in the context of the project?

v. is there an alternative framework for monitoring and evaluating PPP projects focussed on school improvement, that might be more effective?
To meet these objectives and answer my research questions, I sought the views of principals and other stakeholders, in particular government employees, as to the strengths and weaknesses of the monitoring process. My Year 1 study had focussed on surveying parents, and using the results of those surveys to create an agenda for semi-structured interviews with principals. By surveying parents in six government primary schools that had been part of a PPP project to improve educational standards in Abu Dhabi, their general views as to the success and the difficulties of the PPP was highlighted. This generated data and questions which led to detailed discussions with the principal of each of the schools. The results of the two-pronged approach helped set the scene for the larger study described here. Twenty-four interviews were planned and 20 were completed.

A range of documents (186 in all) pertaining to the project was analysed extensively. The monitoring reports focussed on the success of the PPP project and written after school visits were also considered in detail.

I began by analysing existing research literature on school improvement, education reform of national systems, accountability, governance and school improvement. The literature on general PPPs is then summarised. Finally focus is given to educational PPPs and the methods used to monitor and evaluate their success.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In surveying the literature, there were three distinct fields in which to search: education reform, PPPs in education and monitoring processes used in PPPs. These were drawn from the research questions. My approach leant heavily towards tracing references, because using bibliographies of other books and articles, I was able to follow obvious and not-so-obvious line of enquiries. As there is a limited literature on my specific field of enquiry, I wanted to be very inclusive in my reading and therefore in my thinking. When I found a good article or book, related to my topic, I always carefully read the bibliography. The references connected present findings with other findings and put pieces of knowledge into a wider context. I used databases, such as Scopus and Google Scholar, which also give information on how often a document has been cited and by whom. In general, I minimised my reading into governance and leadership styles, as I judged these to be of only limited relevance to the project.

First, my research question (i) pointed towards research on and discussion of Public-Private Partnerships as a common response to the requirements of education, again, with special reference to developing countries. This was to help me describe and contextualise the type of PPP being used to manage schools in Abu Dhabi. Secondly, a general survey of the literature on educational reform across the world, especially that on governance and accountability was undertaken. This was to help me answer my research question iv. I was particularly keen to seek out work that explored the links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring in an
international context. Finally, my questions (ii) and (iii) led me to research available into education quality monitoring and inspection processes, in an attempt to focus in particular on monitoring and evaluation of PPPs. I hoped this would help to identify the methods currently used to measure the processes and outcomes of these partnerships. It might also assist in evaluating these methods in terms of their effectiveness for bringing about improvements in the way these PPPs operate and fulfil their purpose – my research question (v).

Overall, the three parts of the available literature would lead to a stronger foundation for developing a framework for more effective monitoring and evaluation of PPP projects focussed on school improvement.

**Education reform across the world**

“There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new system. The innovator has the enmity of all who profit by the preservation of the old system and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new system.”

(Machiavelli, 1513, p. 24)

Fullan (in Whelan, 2009) covers the key dilemmas that have plagued the recent history of school reform. Building on the reform work carried out in Ontario, Canada since, 2003, he emphasised that successful systems focus on a small number of goals. These may be ambitious, but they would link capacity-building to results as
the central strategy, and pursue it through explicit partnerships between the (for Canada) three levels of school and community, districts/local authorities, and the federal government.

He suggests there were specific opposing forces (see figure 2.1) challenging reform strategy.
Figure 2.1: Opposing forces in educational reform (based on Fullan, in Whelan 2009)
These forces may well be acting, but the key is to use the description to create a strategy for improving outcomes. In 2003, Ontario used the framework to create a version of systemic change, but others had preceded it: the UK’s Education Act of 1945 and the subsequent Education Reform Act in the Eighties had attempted to grapple with these opposing forces, and in 1997, the UK government launched a different example of ‘whole system’ change, basing policies and strategies on the change knowledge of the day. Whilst the structural and organisational changes that occurred are well documented, the success criteria used by the UK and the Ontario governments were surely more political ones than educational: making improvements to pupil outcomes is a long-term process, and thus requires a more detailed and measured process of action, than Fullan suggested at that time.

In 2008, education ministers and other senior leaders from eight political and geographical jurisdictions convened a so-called ‘International Dialogue’ to examine what had been learnt about large scale reform. Those present represented England, Hong Kong, Ontario, Singapore, Wales and three states from Australia (New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria).

At that meeting and in his work before and after, Barber (2008 and 2006) makes the case that it is now about implementing the agenda, not just talking about it. He suggests that the countries that are successful in implementing effective change are those that have a coherent, flexible set of closely aligned strategies. In particular, he argues that it is a matter of developing and combining three big components – [1] the new professionalism of the entire teaching force [2] citizenship empowerment and [3] strategic leadership at all levels of the system.
Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) review five jurisdictions where collaborative working has brought about gains in pupil achievement. Like Salhberg (2011), they cite Finland, and underline the manner in which they create the curriculum together, school by school, district by district. Singapore is often the other highest-performing country on PISA. Educators here are depicted as wanting to “give away their best ideas to other people”. It appears that this makes the educators have to keep inventing new ideas, just to stay ahead. The teachers collaborate, rather than compete. In Alberta, Canada, one of the two highest-performing provinces, the Teachers’ Association has spent half of its resources on professional development. Professional inquiry supported and encouraged by school leaders at all levels has become central to the development of the teaching profession. In Ontario, there is a clear view, suggest Hargreaves and Fullan, that when teachers look at attainment data together, they overtly describe that behind every number is a child. The transparency of the data available requires and allows teachers to take collective responsibility for all children. In California, the Teachers Association collaboratively set up the Quality Education Investment Act for many hundreds of low-performing schools in the state. It appears that with teachers as drivers of system change, achievement gains are being made, especially with Hispanic and African-American students. All five of these examples support the notion that professional capital is

“[…] about enacting more equal, higher-attaining, more healthy countries in just about every way that counts. This is why successful countries treat their teachers as nation builders, and how they come to yield high returns in prosperity, social cohesion, and social justice.”

(Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012, p. 185)
The professional capital approach recognises that teaching is difficult. For example, it is hard to be certain of the signs of Asperger’s Syndrome, and it is hard to differentiate by task and instruction, rather than by outcome (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2013).

Leana (2011) studied 130 elementary schools in New York City, measuring three things: human capital - the qualities of the individual teachers, their qualifications and competencies, social capital - to what extent did the teachers work in a trusting, collaborative way to focus on learning, for example - and an indicator of teachers’ impact, pupils’ achievement in mathematics at two points in the year. She found that schools with high social capital showed positive achievement outcomes. Unsurprisingly, schools with strong social and human capital together did even better. But of particular note, was the finding that individual teachers with low human capital who worked in a school with high social capital, got better outcomes than those working in schools with lower social capital. In short, being in a school with teachers that are working effectively, produces better performance even from a less competent teacher.

This suggests that competent teaching requires technical knowledge, high levels of education, strong practice within schools, and continuous improvement over time, undertaken collaboratively. Over time, policies and practices that emphasise professional capital, build up the expertise of teachers individually and collectively, appear to make a positive difference in the learning and achievement of all pupils.

Getting the best people to be teachers required attracting them into the profession in the first place. This would, for most, necessitate good schools for those people to
work in. But this is surely a dilemma that is still not being answered: it makes sense that the best pupil outcomes will come from good teachers who are well supported in great schools: but that does not lead to a plan other than to make schools better and get better people to become teachers – surely this is what education reform is about in the first place. So whilst these frameworks and opposing forces are interesting descriptions of the status quo, they do not suggest ready solutions. If continuous professional development of teachers pays off in places like Finland, Singapore and Ontario, the best way you can support and motivate teachers is to create conditions where they can be effective day after day, working together. This requires effective leadership (Stoll et al, 2012).

Day et al. (2016) and Sammons et al. (2011) show that there are direct links between leadership processes and schools' academic performance, to the extent that one can predict improvement in the other. Their survey of head teachers and senior staff suggests that rapidly improving schools in England show general improvement across a whole range of areas. These include teaching practice, educational climate and learning conditions, which are likely to have a mutually reinforcing impact. Thus skilful leadership can help schools to break out of a low attainment cycle. Their work illustrates the direct effects of leadership on a range of key dimensions of school and classroom processes. These lead in turn to improvements in students' academic outcomes at school level.

The importance of leadership and of the approach taken to managing people in education is well established (Orr and Orphanos, 2011; Sammons et al., 2011; Thornton, 2010; Kydd et al., 2003). ‘Without people, organisations would not
exist…’ but organisations need to be led or they - and the people within them - will not reach their full potential (Anderson, 2003, p. 11; Grace 1995).

If this is so, then it must be relevant to the questions asked in this research, because the whole focus is on how we measure school improvement, in the context of PPPs. The National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research (Harris et al., 2008) suggest that leadership is one of eight key factors in determining the success or otherwise of school reform projects: their report states that

“...school improvement strategies and initiatives require a team of high-quality instructional and organizational leaders that improve student achievement...”.

Again it appears that this is a cogent and logical statement, but it does not assist with the obvious subsequent question, which is about how we get there.

On top of that, the effects of leadership on improvements in pupils’ academic outcomes might be weaker than many would expect. School and leadership effects appear to influence changes in school academic outcomes, but via their effects on other things: on teachers, on teaching quality, on promoting a positive school ethos, and a culture that emphasises high expectations and strong academic outcomes. Although headteachers/ principals are still perceived as the main source of leadership by staff (Spillane et al., 2008; Robinson, 2007), it appears that their impact on pupil attainment is indirect: their leadership practices shape the processes and pedagogic practices that directly result in school improvement especially for schools in challenging circumstances, even having an effect on the way teachers think about
learning practices, but it is through this route only that they influence pupil outcomes.

This is important for the current research. If the quality of leadership has a secondary impact on pupil outcomes, this suggests that monitoring of education reform projects including PPPs, should focus far more on teaching than on leadership. What time and effort is given to evaluating changes in the quality of leadership, should be secondary to that given to the time devoted to evaluating the quality of teaching. If school improvement requires the re-alignment of structures, values and vision (Day et al. 2007) to impact more positively on pupil attainment, then that should be the focus of the monitoring process.

Similarly, if as the UK’s Department for Children, Families Schools report (Day et al., 2009) suggests, headteachers in effective schools are more successful in improving pupil outcomes through their values, virtues, attributes and competences – “who they are” – then it could be argued that this is where quality improvement monitoring should focus. The specific combination, implementation and management of their strategies in the unique context in which each one works, suggests that a one-size-fits-all, check list inspection is less likely to be looking at the important elements. In the full report, Day et al. (2011) suggest that

“policy makers need to understand the limitations of their role and to focus their energies increasingly on creating the conditions in which this new professionalism can thrive” (p. xix).
This seems to fit a dynamic rather than a static theory of educational effectiveness (Creemers and Kyriakides, 2012). This model attempts to link the dynamic relations between multiple factors associated with effective education. It in particular attempts to use the more “modern” goals of education such as reasoning ability, conceptual understanding, and innovativeness.

But there is some research that suggest stronger and more direct links between students' attainments and school leadership. Kythreotis et al. (2010) examined changes in 22 primary schools, associated with leadership. Their findings are based on a longitudinal study, and do provide more support for the model of direct effects of principals' leadership on student academic achievement. Gains in student achievement were found to be related to five factors at the school level, including the principals' human resource leadership style, to four dimensions of organizational culture and at the classroom level, to three dimensions of learning culture. Bolanle (2013) also found some links between leadership skills and aptitudes, and student attainment, looking at 154 principals of public secondary schools in South Western Nigeria and the relationship between these leadership skills and school effectiveness in terms of student academic achievement. Findings suggest that the principals possessed technical, interpersonal, conceptual and administrative skills that had a significant relationship to school effectiveness.

But to some extent at least, the issue is unresolved, as it is in much of the research on effective schools. Reynolds et al. (2014) surveyed research into educational effectiveness from Australia, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. Their results are perhaps odd. Whilst there are links between research into educational effectiveness, the Dutch National Inspection Framework, and evidence of government interest in Germany,
Finland, and some Latin American societies, it is only in Wales that there appears to be systematic use of educational effectiveness research findings (Reynolds, 2008). This may be due to Welsh educational outcomes falling rapidly down the PISA table.

A range of possible reasons for this lack of policy/practice linkage are suggested by Reynolds:

- the relatively high level of statistical knowledge necessary to access some of the findings;
- the amount of criticism of educational effectiveness research which has emerged, especially when politicians may tend to favour the findings that are more popular with the electorate;
- some reluctance to embrace repeated arguments for the importance of teacher effect rather than school effect;
- a similar reluctance to accept context specific policies, rather than policy-maker commitment to universal “one-size-fits-all” ones;
- the tendency for educational effectiveness research to generate findings that are “inconvenient”, for example the negative association between school development planning and improvement in student achievement over time (Gray et al., 1999) or the relatively small effects associated with factors such as governance, setting and streaming.

These ideas seem to suggest that if education research is ignored by some, the reasons are varied: one relevant one is that political imperatives may outweigh scientific findings. It will be important to bear this in mind in the research I am undertaking here. Although the Abu Dhabi government is not democratically elected as in the UK, it is nevertheless sensitive to the people’s views. This coupled with the
impatience that comes with having a significant cash reserve, may hinder the use of objective measures of success (Karl, 1997; Pinto, 1987).

Globally, there are few examples of substantial take-up of the possible insights of educational effectiveness research at practitioner level (Reynolds, 2014). This does seem odd, when educational practitioners studying educational administration, educational leadership and educational improvement would have been exposed to it. It seems that educational effectiveness research is added on to programmes, rather than being the driver of them. The work of John Hattie (2009), who adds the results of numerous large scale studies and aggregate the results, is gaining a foothold in the Middle East and elsewhere, but this is still mainly at the level of individual schools rather than Ministries.

If Ministries are in general taking little notice of research on education effectiveness, then might it be that at school level, the research messages are driving reform more obviously. The work of governors is by and large to maintain and improve standards in a school, so governance ought to be influenced by education research.

Connolly and James (2011) reviewed six articles on governance issues from a range of different countries. They surveyed more generally current literature on governance in the public sector in the UK and internationally too, but none of the six sources or those referred to in the more widespread review were at a similar stage of development to Abu Dhabi.

Whereas in England, for example, all schools that are funded by public money are required to have a governing body, that is legally responsible for the school's
conduct, this is not so in Abu Dhabi. An English school governing body must have representation from stakeholder groups such as parents of pupils and members of the school's wider community and the staff; but Abu Dhabi schools did not. The governance role in the schools involved in the current research project has been fulfilled by the civil service, specifically the Ministry of Education. There has been no school-based body in any of the schools. Using Paletta’s (2012) two key variables to identify the ‘position’ of the schools, they have had very limited autonomy, and almost no encouragement to work with other schools to improve performance (see figure 2.2).

![Diagram](image.png)

Figure 2.2: Opposing forces in educational governance (based on Paletta, 2012)

Nevertheless, amongst the nine themes Connolly and James identified, the following three are of particular note in the context of my research:

- the significance of governance in improving school performance and pupil attainment;
- the contested territory of school governance and the conflicting roles and responsibilities;
the complex and demanding capabilities required for, and participation in governing.

I will briefly describe how the themes fit into the context of this research.
The significance of governance in improving school performance and increasing pupil attainment is not well established, although from the literature and my own experience, there does seem to be linkage. Excellent schools do tend to have good (or excellent) governance (OfSTED, 2002), but the way the link works is not clear. Ranson et al. (2005) studied 80 schools in Wales, asking headteachers and Local Authority officers about the role, process and effectiveness of governance. Despite this exhaustive survey, the best phrase to describe what they found was that there was an “association” of governance with school improvement, but the causality of the correlation involved was unclear. Thus the lack of school-focussed governance in the Abu Dhabi maintained schools in this study might be argued to have limited impact in terms of school improvement. It would also mean that the monitoring and evaluation carried out by both the Private Provider and the external monitors who were reporting back to the government, would be amongst the first external view on the school’s performance since the education system was started. As James (2014) points out, there is a tension between local (governing body) control and central (Ministry) control. Even if one accepts the Chhotray and Stoker (2009, p. 3) definition:

“governance is about the rules of collective decision-making in settings where there is a plurality of actors or organisations and where no formal control system can dictate the terms of the relationship between these actors and organisations”
there is still in any country going to be an interaction between the stakeholder groups, which may include the School Governing Body, parents, regional and national government. In the context of the Abu Dhabi PPP schools, the complexity will be potentially greater, because although there is no school body, there are advisers from the Private Partner, as well as regional and federal interest.

As far as the ‘contested territory’ described, there are many different approaches being taken to school governance. Issues around improving the performance of schools, especially those catering primarily for lower socio-economic classes are common internationally, but policy responses vary. In the USA, in some schools, the City Mayor takes over and establishes authority over the school system in place of the normal practice of district governance under a school board that is independently elected. In South Africa however, elections of parents onto school governing bodies is the core of the school reform strategy. In England, the dominant strategy has been to reduce the influence of local government. Nevertheless, in both the USA and England, there has been a trend to try to engage a wider range of providers and stakeholders in governance (Armstrong et al. 2015).

One of the arguments used to explain why it seems to be a universal problem encouraging a wide enough range of stakeholders to be involved in the school governance process, is the range and complexities of skills required to do the job well (Efrat, 2014; Balarin et al., 2008). Tsotetsi et al. (2008) found that school board members in South Africa were concerned about the lack of funding for training, at the lack of training material in their own language, and about the lack of sensitivity to their needs. Given that part of the job of the Private Providers is to create and
support governing bodies (of an admittedly ill-defined nature), I believe that these concerns will be found in the context of the Abu Dhabi schools too.

Fullan’s (1999) contention that there are no shortcuts in the change process needs to be considered. The shared sense of purpose which good schools develop is surely achieved through a process of vision building which, he suggests, does not happen in a vacuum but reflects fundamental values and norms. The need to engage with local priorities and take account of cultural differences (Crossley and Holmes, 2010) and to bring together the micro and macro in a ‘two way relationship of pressure, support and negotiation’ (Fullan, 1993, p. 37) is clearly evident in countries such as Uganda. However, positive support for school improvement will only come from below if parents, teachers, community organisations and students are consulted and work together. The uniqueness of each school will determine how people within that school view what they perceive to be opportunities or threats. Higgins and Rwanyange (2005) examined a wide range of examples of partnership in Ugandan school. Although they concentrate more on the politics than quality improvements evident in schools, they suggest that working with local officials, parents, schools and communities to determine targets and priorities, in the context of their particular circumstances has the potential to create a stronger sense of ownership and to build effective partnerships and networks.

In seeking to answer my research questions it will be important to bear the three strands (from Connolly and James’ nine, see page 37) mentioned in mind, in the context of ADEC, the schools themselves and with the Private Providers.
Education reform and accountability

Bryk et al. (1998) studied school reform in Chicago and identified four main elements of the external reform of large groups of schools: (i) policies focusing on decentralisation, (ii) local capacity building, (iii) stimulation of innovation, and (iv) rigorous external accountability. Decentralisation allowed schools to start creating solutions; building local capacity required investment in policies, training, professional development and ongoing support, to develop the facility of schools and communities to operate more effectively. They found that the stimulation of innovation must be a strong feature of the infrastructure: investments made in research, development, innovative networks, for example, so that the marketplace of educational ideas is constantly being refreshed. Finally, a rigorous external accountability system was required, built into the infrastructure. Schools, they suggest, do best when they are paying attention to standards of attainment and to performance. An external accountability system must generate data and procedures that make this focus both more likely and more thorough. However, they suggest, such a system must be mainly (not exclusively) based on a philosophy of building capacity, enabling educators to become more assessment literate. They argue that no external accountability system can have impact unless it has a capacity-building ethos: but while this is the main goal, the system must also have the responsibility of intervening in failing schools. Balancing this accountability support and accountability intervention may not be easy, but it is necessary.

Balarin et al. (2008) argue that in England, the accountability pressures on schools (and therefore on head teachers and governing bodies) have accumulated over time. They suggest that the different themes of accountability in education over time, as set out by Ranson (2008) like “trusting the professionals and their expertise”: the late
1970s when market accountability was key; the early 1980s which focussed on contractual, accountability and legal regulation; the early 1990s and performance and audit-based review. Each theme has remained, and been added to the last. This may be of particular relevance to my research, given the strong accountability burdens of managing schools in a non-democratic country like the United Arab Emirates. The country has developed at an extraordinary rate (Zahlan, 2016; Davidson, 2008), but it seems possible that it will not have avoided the combined pressures mentioned in Ranson’s list. It would be hoped however, that having the historical outline available, the PPP project would avoid or at least ameliorate some of the issues.

When ‘New Labour’ was elected to power in the UK, there was more emphasis given to the principles of choice, diversity and competition. The creation of Specialist Schools, (1997, 2003), then the Academies Programme (2001, 2004) and Self Governing Trusts (2004) all reinforced the belief that strong independent institutions could and would raise standards of achievement. The Labour government strengthened the regulatory practices to support performance accountability for the education market place. There was more detailed definition, targeting and monitoring of inputs, processes and expected outputs of schooling, which again, it was thought would improve standards. A complex national system of regulations was put in place to measure and monitor a limited set of school performances and outcomes - principally, test and examination results - to constitute performance accountability for marketability (Ranson, 2008).

In the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (2004), then in the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (2005), it was suggested that providers might include ‘parents groups able to sponsor schools, enabling successful schools to
establish and manage entirely new schools and federations’. Schools were encouraged to form partnerships and federations that would work together to raise standards. The business and private sectors would extend their control and provision of state schooling, and also play a role in a new system of more local governance. Thus there was a strengthening of consumer choice, contract law, audits of performance and regulative accountability. In part, these political imperatives led to the popularisation of the PPP model. Glatter (2016) and others note that there is a move towards ‘governance by contract’. Although sometimes scathingly referred to as ‘privatisation of the education system’, the rhetoric has led directly to the current context in which my research was conducted. In particular, Selznick’s suggestion that there may be a fundamental problem with PPPs:

“The logic of contract runs up against the logic of sustained cooperation” (1996, p. 272).

There were dilemmas, though. The element of choice for parents as the consumers of the education service did not sit well with policies designed to encourage local partnerships between schools, parents and services. The regulation by the government of a national curriculum and inspection audit stood in opposition to pupil-centred learning needs, and the desire to exercise local accountability for the community.

Allen and Burgess (2010) argue that simply increasing the amount of competition between schools will not lead to an increase in quality. They suggest that the following four conditions must also be in place:
• Parents must value and be able to correctly identify educational success as a school characteristic

• Parental choice must be meaningful and capable of affecting the allocation of pupils to schools

• Schools must find it beneficial to be popular and to grow

• The best way for schools to be popular must be to raise the quality of teaching and learning, rather than engage in other activities (such as cream-skimming children that are easier to teach)

Wilson (2010) suggests that there are limits to the effectiveness of both top-down and bottom-up accountability mechanisms. The problems of measurement error and gaming undermine the effectiveness of performance indicators, however much effort has been exerted trying to be specific. She suggests that there are three factors behind the increasing reliance on the use of performance indicators in education and other sectors. First, the long term development of a performance measurement ‘movement’, which has included the worlds of consultancy, academia and government. Secondly, there seems to be an appeal to public managers of allegedly transparent processes such as ratings and rankings. Thirdly, there is appeal of seemingly ‘objective’ systems to politicians, because they appear not to rely on high degrees of trust in public service providers. It is these pressures that have led to the increasing focus on quantifying educational outcomes.

However there are problems with using metrics-based performance management in the delivery of public services to increase accountability. There is a growing body of evidence on the shortcomings of both the performance indicators themselves and the manner in which individuals and organisations respond to them (Propper and Wilson,
There is less evidence on whether or not performance indicators achieve the aim of improving the quality of public service delivery in any sector, and little discussion regarding the relative costs of achieving any such improvement.

Evidence on the impact of metrics-based accountability systems on student achievement in the US is described as ‘limited and ambiguous’ by Kane and Staiger (2002). They express caution about attributing observed gains to the specific accountability systems employed in Texas and North Carolina. Others have found differential effects: Dee and Jacob (2009) find positive effects on maths scores but no impact on reading scores. Hanushek and Raymond (2005) find a positive effect of such an accountability policy, which is only significant where sanctions are imposed for poor performance.

It can be argued that any educational performance indicator will be an imperfect measure because of the complexity of the process. This may create an inclination to focus on the parts of the process that are more measurable, to the detriment of other, less quantifiable, aspects. Thus accountability can become biased towards the things that are easier to quantify, like examination results. Similarly, performance indicators expressed as targets might be expected to create threshold effects, impacting on in-school resource distribution. Many schools have become adept enough with the data to target resources on pupils on the grade boundaries, for example, presumably to the detriment of pupils at one end or the other of the ability spectrum. Neal and Schanzenbach (2007) looked at 20,000 pupils over three years, and found highly significant gains in the middle sections of the prior achievement distribution, contrasting with more limited gains at either end. Reback (2008) combine several administrative data sources to create a very large Texas student-
level panel data set covering the 1992-93 through 1997-98 school years. He calculates the estimated probability of pupils and their classmates affecting their school’s rating based on their prior attainment, and finds that a pupil’s marginal importance to their school’s rating is associated with faster test score improvement.

Thus it is clear that despite much work on trying to increase accountability in schools and systems for the success and quality of what is provided, the complexity is so great that performance indicators and statistical measures may not be sufficiently refined tools. Although they will give some degree of evaluative accuracy, it seems that they may also distract from the whole picture, both for the observer and the school/s.

In the Abu Dhabi public schools involved in the PPP, an attempt was being made to accelerate development through the various steps of accountability described above. Put another way, what England had taken over 150 years (the original school inspectors were appointed in 1837 – Sturt, 2013) to grow, schools and private providers were being asked to bring about in just 3 years.

**PPPs in Education**

In education, there are many types of PPPs. In different ways, they seek to upgrade either one or all of the three levers described previously – accountability, resource allocation or school choice. In some, the government provides subsidies to existing private schools, or funds a number of student places (Kingdon, 2007). Other governments contract with the private sector to provide educational services, such as teacher training, management, or curriculum design (World Bank, 2006). In England
at present, there is a clear shift towards encouraging schools to form partnerships between school and other entities which focus on self-improvement (Ehren, 2016, p. 146). Yet others see governments contracting directly with private organisations to manage and operate state schools, such as in the US with charter and concession schools (Center for Education Reform, 2007); similarly, in the UK, Academy Schools were originally supposed to have matching private/public funding (National Audit Office, 2003) but now have mainly public funding, despite being predominantly privately run. Another PPP model requires private organisations to provide education for a specific group of students through a subsidy or voucher (Bettinger, 2009; World Bank, 2006).

Some argue that there is a revision happening at present that changes the public–private split, reallocating tasks, and rearticulating relationships between organisations and tasks across this divide (Jessop, 2002 and Ball 2012). The creation of executive agencies, boards, councils and trusts, the establishment of PPPs, the contracting out of state services to private providers, the use of consultants and companies for evaluation and school management are all examples of services previously undertaken by government and public sector organisations which are now being undertaken by various other agencies in various kinds of relationships among themselves and to various parts of the state (Ball, 2012). As Robertson et al (2012, p. 36) note, some see the state’s ceding of the power to make decisions about the regulatory and operational basis of the education process to the private sector represents a significant shift in authority from the public to the commercial realm, and from the national to the international.
Each of the options outlined above has the potential to improve education systems, but few programmes have been carefully evaluated. According to the World Bank, even those that have been, have not been subject to rigorous scrutiny (Patrinos et al., 2009).

The following four themes run throughout my research. First, there is an undoubted desire of governments to improve the quality of education provided, often by increasing the amount of resources allocated to the sector, and specifically, to intervention programmes. Secondly, there is seeming confusion as to whether the increased resource produces suitable - or indeed any - gains. Thirdly, there is difficulty in separating people’s political, sociological and cultural beliefs from the intervention programmes and the concomitant explanations as to successes or failures. Finally, there are few models available for the monitoring of programmes (including Public-Private Partnerships), other than those that are some version of an “Ofsted inspection”, in education, at least.

The term “Public-Private Partnership” has been in general use since the 1990s. However, there is no widely agreed definition or model of a PPP. The term covers a range of different programmes and structures wherein the private sector delivers a public project or service. In the UK, the Private-Finance Initiative (PFI) was an extension of the idea of concession-based transport and utilities projects that have existed in the European Union (EU) countries for many years. In countries like France, Italy and Spain, revenues for private companies are earned payments by citizens using toll roads, for example. The PFI expanded this to a broader range of public infrastructure; it also combined it with the introduction of services being paid for by the public sector itself, rather than the end-users.
Depending on the country and the project, the term PPP can, therefore, cover a spectrum of models. At one end, there are relatively short-term management contracts, involving limited capital expenditure by the private party; there are concession contracts, which may involve the design and construction of major capital assets, the provision of services and the financing of entire building and operation projects; and at the other end, there are joint ventures and part-privatisations involving shared ownership (PriceWaterhouseCooper, 2004).

A review of the literature reveals much discussion over the definition of a PPP, but little agreement. The closest to a formal definition (though it is not a legal one, according to PriceWaterhouseCooper, 2005), comes from the EU Commission’s 2004 Green Paper on Public-Private Partnerships. It refers to PPPs as

“forms of cooperation between the public and private sectors for the funding, construction, renovation, management or maintenance of an infrastructure or the provision of a service.”

Other definitions have been suggested:

PPPs are aimed at increasing the efficiency of infrastructure projects by means of a long-term collaboration between the public sector and private business. A holistic approach which extends over the entire lifecycle is important here.

(German PPP Task Force, Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bauen und Wohnen, 2007, p. 25)
Standard & Poor’s definition of a PPP is any medium-to-long term relationship between the public and private sectors, involving the sharing of risks and rewards of multi-sector skills, expertise and finance to deliver desired policy outcomes.

Standard & Poor’s PPP Credit Survey (2005, p. 18)

‘Public-Private Partnership’ is a generic term for the relationships formed between the private sector and public bodies often with the aim of introducing private sector resources and/or expertise in order to help provide and deliver public sector assets and services.

European Investment Bank (2004, p. 2)

From these definitions, it can be seen that a PPP is an umbrella term that includes many different models in which private companies use their expertise and experience to support and improve public services, whilst, at the same time, sharing the costs and the risks. However, this is still only a partial definition. There are many types of contracts, depending on the specific services provided. These vary in their degree of complexity: in education, services provided might range from the construction, management or maintenance of infrastructure, to the provision of education services and operations, as in voucher schemes or charter schools.

Nevertheless, the different types of PPP do share common characteristics:

- A contract between the public and private sectors for the delivery of services;
• Shared risk, with risks that are allocated to the side which is best able to reduce their impact and/or absorb their effects;
• The need to utilise private sector management and experience;
• The capability to raise finance from private companies, rather than through the government, in order to pay for facilities or services for public benefit;
• Contractual payments from governments to support low or non-existent revenue on projects involving charging the user, like drivers at road tolls and passengers for their rail fares;
• The payments from government are based on the companies meeting key specified outputs, such as roads of a particular standard, or buildings built to a predetermined plan.

These features of PPPs are not contradictory. Even so, they do not define them rigorously, because they do not indicate what their specific purpose is, why they are used, and how their processes and outcomes are measured and monitored. Each of these three characteristics is discussed briefly below.

PPPs have become prevalent in many sectors, and in different countries. Facilities management (building and engineering maintenance, domestic services and utilities supplies) has become a common candidate for PPP. In the UK, the PFI though launched in 1992, was revitalised as part of a PPP in 1997 (HM Treasury, 1998). More than 700 projects had been signed for by March 2012, with a combined value of more than £28 billion. These included

• health projects;
• education projects;
• transport projects;
projects in the Treasury, Home Office and Foreign Office;

- Defence;

- 161 across the regions;

- 107 other projects in various sectors.

(HM Treasury, 2013)

Sometimes, PPPs has been used to stimulate development in markets that are not growing as the government would wish. In some aspects of the health field, for example, there has been: “...an explosive growth in the number of public-private partnerships...” (Burke and Francisco, 2005). One example is in the development associated with drugs for neglected diseases, for instance the creation in 1999 of the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV). It was established in Switzerland with initial seed finance from the Government of Switzerland, the UK Department for International Development, the Government of the Netherlands, the World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation. The possibility of profit in anti-malarial drug development was too low to attract pharmaceutical investment, so a new method of stimulating drug development had to be found.

According to Moran and Guzman (2005), this was the first PPP to focus on new drug development. It was followed by increased research and development (R&D) activity for many neglected diseases. This is clear not only from the number of new PPPs created, with a consequent increase in the number of projects being conducted, but also by the growth in individual PPP R&D expenditure since 2000. For instance in 2004, new PPPs in drug development, in a wide range of countries, had an aggregated portfolio of 41 projects compared to 33 in 2003. Furthermore, their R&D expenditure nearly doubled from US$ 23 million to US$ 44 million in the same period. Even though the increase is not across all diseases, it is nevertheless
significant. In 2004, nearly 60% of PPP projects in the preclinical stages (17 out of 29) and 82% (9 out of 11) in clinical stages were dedicated to malaria. In fact, 75% of the total budgets of PPPs were used to cover expenditure on these malaria projects in that year (Moran and Guzman, 2005).

In the UK around 2003-2004, a government decision to recreate the National Health Service (NHS) as a purchaser of health care services, rather than a direct provider of these services, resulted in a series of PPPs being set up, initially to run fast-track treatment centres. This first step has led to many others, culminating in a government white paper that suggests that hospitals need to be ‘set free’ from the NHS. Many groups have voiced their disquiet, and the increased use of the private sector has always been within the background noise of medical, political and social unease, as well as academic disquiet (for example, Pollock et al., 2002).

Lee (2010) suggests that in China, the use of PPPs has led to the transformation of urban water services since the late 1990s. The lack of funds, out-dated technologies and management skills, and under-priced tariffs charged for water supply had led to poor urban water service in much of China. By encouraging private sector participation in the sector, multinational and Chinese companies have actively participated in the new developments. Yongjian et al. (2010, p. 482) suggest the growth in the number of projects is increasing ‘at a fast pace’.

Also in China, but in the construction field, Wang et al. (2007) found that the number of PPP projects increased, despite there being problems with many of them. Indeed, they query why projects were continuing to be started, without proper analysis of the central success factors.
PPPs have been studied in depth in education (LaRocque and Patrinos, 2006; World Bank, 2006; Lockheed and van Eeghen, 1998; James, 1993; Blomqvist and Jimenez, 1989; Jallade, 1973). A large-scale conference was organised by the World Bank and Harvard University in 2005 (Chakrabarti and Peterson, 2009; Patrinos and Sosale, 2007). The World Bank held a further conference on PPPs in education in 2007. The result of these studies and meetings has been to clarify the many forms of PPPs operating within the education sector. A wide range of education contracting models exists – see Table 2.1 below, based on Patrinos et al. (2009, p. 3).

Table 2.1: The range of education contracting models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Public2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>• Private schools</td>
<td>• User pays fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Private universities</td>
<td>• Student given loan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Home schooling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Tutoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>• Vouchers</td>
<td>• Public schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Concession schools</td>
<td>• Public universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Charter schools (US)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contracted out (direct out-sourcing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• City Academies (UK)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

There are perhaps two extremes: at one end of the continuum are the governments that provide education solely through the public sector; these are not PPPs, but refer

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2 In the UK, independent fee-paying schools are termed “Public” – the term used to indicate that access to them was not restricted on the basis of religion, occupation, or home location
to the conventional funding process. At the other extreme are those in which education is largely publicly funded and privately provided. Some countries make a clear demarcation, having the public sector as “financier” and the private sector as education provider. In the Netherlands, all education is publicly financed, including private schools. The latter provides for more than 60% of all students (Patrinos et al., 2009).

In the most common type of PPP in education (World Bank 2006), the government provides subsidies to existing private schools or funds student places. But there is a range of other models. Some governments contract with the private sector to provide educational services, such as teacher training, management, or curriculum design. Others contract with private organisations to manage and operate state schools, such as in the US with charter and concession schools, and in the UK’s Academy Schools.

They include partnerships where private organizations support the education sector through philanthropic activities, in high engagement activities; there are also many in which government guides policy and provides financing, while the private provider delivers services directly to students.

**PPPs for professional services**

Contracting out of professional services such as curriculum design, teacher training and textbook production and delivery, is one of the more straightforward types of PPP in education. The services are relatively easy to specify in legal and contractual terms: the performance of contractors can be monitored against these. As the quality of service required is specified in the contract and there are penalties included in case the contractor fails to provide the expected level of quality, competitive pressure
gives providers the incentive to maximize their performance. The World Bank (2006) suggests that this type of PPP usually gives positive results, including cost savings and quality improvement, but the basis on which these claims are made are very unclear. Whilst admittedly the report was not written as an academic paper, one would have benefited much more from clear description of how the education monitoring and evaluations were carried out.

**PPPs for support services**

Activities which are not directly related to learning, such as building maintenance, transportation, and school meals provision, have been shown to cost more in public schools than in private schools (Patrinos, 2006; World Bank, 2006). Contracting out this kind of support service enables the education sector to take advantage of the expertise and the organisation of private companies with expertise in these specific fields. There can also be economies of scale that result when one contractor provides services for many schools. However, as with the NHS or schools in the UK, political and community perceptions can see this as ‘privatisation’, which provokes concern from some (Green, 2005).

**PPPs for education services**

Some governments choose to pay for students to enrol in existing private schools, for example in Denmark and the Netherlands (Himmler, 2007; Andersen, 2005). This allows governments to expand access to education without incurring expenditure on constructing and equipping new schools. Other governments, including the UK, contract out students’ education to specialised services such as schools set up to provide for children with particular learning needs. Contracting for education services makes it at least theoretically possible for a private school’s assets to be
utilised by sending publicly funded students to these schools. Thus, the publicly funded students *may* receive a higher quality education than if the cost of their education had been restricted simply to the amount of public funding spent on them. The evidence is thin however: the monitoring of actual success or failure (especially in terms of quality of provision) is at best anecdotal (for example, Davies and Hentschke, 2006).

**PPPs for facilities development**

Contracting out the provision of facilities is appealing to governments because it avoids immediate capital investments. In the education sector, as well as in healthcare, the government is often the only major purchaser of services for a new facility. For example, in the UK NHS, as of April 2009, 149 PPP projects worth £12.27 billion had been signed (Liebe and Pollock, 2009). Since 1997, of the 133 new hospitals built in the NHS England, 101 were financed under the PFI, accounting for around 90% of the capital committed. But over the course of the contracts according to Treasury data, the government will pay £70.5 billion in charges for these investments, of which approximately £41.4 billion is for the availability of the buildings (HM Treasury, 2009). No wonder perhaps, that some hospitals are having difficulty meeting government efficiency targets (Pollock et al., 2011).

Contracting the financing and the construction of such facilities to the private sector allows the government to pay over time, making payments over the term of the contract. However, the total cost for providing these facilities, because of accumulated interest or commission charges, is likely to be many times the original cost of providing the facility. The Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys mental health trust in
Northern England, for example, is believed to be the first NHS organisation in the UK to disengage itself from a PPP agreement. It is estimated that the savings for the Trust will be around £1.4 million per annum (Guardian newspaper, www.guardian.co.uk, 2011).
PPPs through management services

Individual schools (through its board of trustees or governors) may contract a private company to manage it. These ‘contract schools’ are common in the US, for example the Chicago Public Schools (the US’s third largest public school district) is using contract schools as part of its Renaissance, 2010 initiative (Chicago Public Schools website, 2010, www.cps.edu). Some federal and local governments have brought in private organizations to manage a single public school or an entire public school district (LaRocque, 2009). Within these contracts, all non-managerial personnel continue to be public sector employees. One example is the use of Charter Schools in the US, which are secular public schools, but are freed from the regulatory constraints of geographical catchment areas and teacher union contracts. Another example comes from Latin America, where Fe y Alegría a non-governmental organisation controlled by the Jesuit Order of the Catholic Church runs schools in the poorest parts of countries such as Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela. Under this version of the model, the salaries of teachers are paid by the government: Fe y Alegría is responsible for the management of the school, the training of teachers, and the development of the school in the context of the community (Fe Y Alegría website, 2011 www.feyalegria.org).

PPPs, governance, accountability and school improvement

On the face of it, outsourcing the management of schools may have many potential benefits for government-funded education. One is the opportunity to bring in a higher level of professional skills, for example those related to management, administration, facilities and resource provision, academic knowledge, and curriculum mapping. Another is the reduction of the bureaucratic and union
constraints sometimes associated with government service employment (World Bank, 2006). Within a PPP managed services project, it is also possible to see the promotion of competition among organisations bidding to win the management contracts, thus offering potential efficiency gains. These might link with the enabling of government education authorities to specify performance requirements more clearly, so that they can change contractors if performance is unsatisfactory.

The veracity of these potential benefits is not well established, however. Apart from the philosophical and political arguments against PPPs, (Roehrich et al. 2014; Althusser, 1971), it is also possible that there is an added cost, as at least some of the companies winning management contracts are for-profit, and therefore by definition, have to add a management fee and shareholder dividend to the cost of running a school. It is not yet clear (World Bank 2006) whether the reductions in cost brought about by using the private market, balance the increase that might be associated with using them. Similarly, if the contracts are to be deemed successful, the question begged is how will this judgement be made. The quality of education, as measured by internationally administered standardised tests, remains stubbornly low. The majority of students from those developing countries who participate in the international assessments, score poorly (PISA, 2009).

The question is whether PPP is a way to solve these issues, and if so how does one know that. There are over 100 projects being undertaken internationally that fall into this general area (World Bank, 2007, Patrinos et al., 2009) and there is little written about the way in which the projects are being monitored, other than commentary about little monitoring being done. Nsasiral et al. (2013) suggest “that while many governments in developing countries have already signed their first demonstration of
Public Private Partnership contracts, most have not yet designed the legal and regulatory framework for monitoring the performance of private contractors and for ensuring contractual compliance” (p. 52). Although governments remain the main providers of the funds with which education is organised and run, in some countries private agencies deliver or manage an increasing proportion under a Public-Private Partnership model: for instance, in India and South Africa, the number of children of primary school age being educated privately has increased by 100% between 1995 and 2005; in Benin, it has increased by 300% over the same period (World Bank, 2007; Kingdon, 2007).

**Issues of governance**

The three issues I have focussed on, raised by Connolly and James (2011) form an excellent summary of the state of governance in public schools in Abu Dhabi, 2005-2010. They are

- the significance of governance in improving school performance and pupil attainment;
- the contested territory of school governance and the conflicting roles and responsibilities;
- the complex and demanding capabilities required for, and participation in governing.

The Ministry of Education initially, then (in 2006) the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), assumed the full role of governance – there were no individual boards. This is of particular relevance to the PPP project, because the private providers, although they were focussed in individual schools, were also seeking to improve
leadership and governance overall. Centrally, the project although focused on improving pupil attainment, developing better leadership and more locally oriented governance was a strategy that was being encouraged in the pre-project documentation and presentations (ADEC, 2005). Practically, this needed to happen in a socio-political context of limited democratic representation: this could be argued to increase both the conflicting roles and responsibilities referred to by Connolly and James, and the complexities involved in governance.

The emphasis that society and governments give to lines of accountability for PPPs is not equal, country to country (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Much more emphasis has been placed on accountability and on value-for-money in Western countries (LaRocque and Patrinos, 2006): most money goes to those organisations that most efficiently meet the centrally defined targets (World Bank, 2006). In Abu Dhabi, there was a clear sense of seeking rapid improvement in the performance of the education system; the introduction of new less centralised system of governance was seen as an important part of this aim (ADEC, 2005). But the lines between accountability and governance were blurred, and as stated above, a clear desire to accelerate changes in the governance and accountability structures of Abu Dhabi schools, in a much shorter timeframe than other countries had taken (ADEC, 2006a).

As governance was not in the hands of the private providers, it may be expected that results will not be as strong as they might be. Ladd and Zelli (2002) show that principals frequently have very limited support for the externally generated changes, but they have to manage the change, nevertheless. Glover and Law (2003) similarly suggest that change can happen even though school leaders may actually create their own list of priorities within those proscribed by government. Despite this, Harris
(2002) suggests that this kind of top-down change can stifle creativity at a local level. In the context of the Abu Dhabi project, there is strong centralised control and very limited flexibility on terms of governance.

As Glover and Law (2003) and Ladd and Zelli (2002) suggest, externally imposed policy changes do not carry the same degree of commitment from those working in schools as initiatives which are developed within a school. Indeed, the question “...has the need for a policy change been recognised by all stakeholders?” is one of the key questions Glover and Law identify (Ladd and Zelli, 2002, p. 58). If headteachers (and other staff) are unclear about their role, it might be expected that their commitment could be lower than if they are fully engaged. Where strong accountability systems are built into the change process, the effects are documented as being potentially great (Ladd and Zelli, 2002), but the danger identified is that the effect can be brought about by too much focus on the goals that are easily measured (for example through standardised assessment tests), and not enough on those that are more difficult to measure such as improving links with parents (Gibbons, 1998; Milgrom and Roberts, 1992).

**Weak school management**

Poor management has been identified as an important constraint on improving government schools’ performance in many countries (Mourshed et al., 2010). A wide ranging study of under-performing schools in the Netherlands (Reynolds, 1995) suggests the main weaknesses of such schools include:

- Learning material offered at school is insufficient to achieve core targets;
• Insufficient time devoted to achieving the minimum objectives of the curriculum;
• Poor instructional quality;
• Insufficient insight into students’ performance levels (no use of nationally standardised tests, for example);
• Insufficient or inappropriate special measures for struggling learners;
• Prolonged dysfunctional organisation of the school (lack of leadership, lack of cooperation amongst teachers, staff discord, conflict within or between school managers and governors).

Because the last aspect seems to include the other five, it has often become the main focus (Matthews and Sammons, 2004). To improve matters, many governments have brought in private organisations to manage one or more schools, on behalf of the state.

The responsibilities that the outside contractors are given in these contracts often include up to four categories (Patrinos et al., 2009):

i. financial management
ii. staff management
iii. long-term planning
iv. leadership

However, the processes involved in contracting out educational management services are inherently more difficult than for other services (Patrinos et al., 2009). Specifying and monitoring the performance of managers, as distinct from the
organisation overall, is much more complex. Many factors contribute to a school’s performance, in addition to the quality of the management. It therefore seems inappropriate to attribute improvements in overall school performance simply to the impact of the management contract. Even so, as in any sector, if PPPs in education is to be presented as having had positive effects, the claim of success must be based in secure credible evidence.

**How PPP processes and outcomes are monitored**

Hodgson et al. (2007) reviewed the evidence on improvement in public services, looking at over 50 studies. They highlight seven improvement triggers which have been used successfully:

i. competition;

ii. leadership/management;

iii. operational change;

iv. participation;

v. quality management techniques;

vi. resources;

vii. organisational size.

Hodgson and colleagues’ paper reviews the evidence from the studies, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used. Their findings suggest that, in spite of political drive to improve public services, there is still insufficient evidence available on what works, in bringing about improvement. They conclude that there is a need for “sustained research in this area”.

PPPs are often set up in situations where there are complex problems to solve (Davies and Hentschke, 2006). There are therefore, many factors involved and success or failure may not be obvious, or easy to apportion (OECD, 2008; World Bank, 2006). Perhaps because of these complexities, the literature on monitoring of PPP outcomes is thin, so I also looked at the research on school inspection and monitoring of failing schools.

Ofsted, as would be expected, suggest that school inspection leads to school improvement – this was embedded for many years in their strapline. The successive annual reports highlight areas where improvements have been seen over previous years, for example:

“Two years ago, our inspectors found that leadership and management in primary schools was, on average, not as good as that in secondary schools. Today, the reverse is true: 84% of leadership and management in primary schools is now good or outstanding compared with 77% in secondary schools. On the whole, primary school leaders have responded well when their schools have been judged to require improvement. More than two thirds of primary schools that were previously judged to require improvement had improved to good or outstanding at the time of their next inspection.”

(Ofsted, 2013)

The second sentence in the above quotation clearly suggests there is a link between reports from two years ago and now; no such causal effect is established, however.
Others have tried to authenticate these links. Rutherford (2012) provided a large-scale analysis of the effect of monitoring on performance in under-performing schools, including more areas than Ofsted inspect. She suggests that monitoring is

“...similar to inspections and audits, is used by a superior organization to regulate smaller entities” (p. 443)

and that

“it includes site visits and face-to-face meetings that are used to complement other sources of performance reporting” (p. 443).

She includes in her definition of the monitoring process audits of financial health, a review of the competence of personnel, compliance with externally set standards, and success in meeting outcome goals. Her results, based on a long-term study over 17 years, suggest that the results of monitoring are complex. Using monitoring interventions in underperforming school districts, she found only short-term performance improvements in pupil attainment. It appears that monitoring may be a quick fix rather than a long-term solution. Her findings also suggest that the quality of the school leaders, supporting the argument that both internal and external mechanisms must be considered when attempting to find solutions for failing organisations. Even the individual monitors’ characteristics were salient, so that women and former superintendents increased college readiness rates, but only professional education consultants were able to increase Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) pass rates. If these relationships are important, a
logical conclusion is that the monitors used should be chosen with the success criteria of the intervention in mind.

Although Rutherford’s definition of monitoring functions for her study, it is too limited and inexact a definition for the purposes of my research. It fails to specify what is being examined and how: there are many different ways to observe the quality of teaching for example, and not all lead to the same summative evaluation. Put at its most cynical:

“Why should a school conduct carefully planned and exhaustive processes around monitoring and assessing its own staff’s performance, if Ofsted can make a judgement that trumps with a series of 20 minute drop ins?”


It seems to suggest that school inspection and monitoring that is based on that model, may be an inexact science, at best. Mistry and Sood (2012) looked at the internal monitoring processes in 15 schools that provide education for pupils who speak English as an additional language. They interviewed 30 people and concluded that although senior leaders were clear about the importance of monitoring pupils’ progress, staff generally were not clear about how to do it. There appeared to be confusion amongst staff on how to collect evidence systematically and how to analyse it for further planning and support.

In the US, Herman et al. (2013) focussed on the implementation of school improvement grants for poor schools by examining three interrelated aspects: school operational authority, state/district support for turnaround, and state monitoring of
turnaround efforts. The latter is obviously of particularly interest in the context of my study. Their findings were based on survey responses from 450 school administrators and interviews with administrators in 60 districts and 21 of the 22 states where the schools are located. In the area of monitoring, they found all 21 of the states interviewed, reported being responsible for monitoring of low-performing schools. Just 13 of them reported that districts were also responsible, which suggests that use of local monitoring expertise is generally limited. State monitoring almost always took the form of analysing pupil data (21 states) and conducting school visits (20 states). To a lesser extent, there were also discussions with parents/community (16 states) and surveying of school staff (12 states).

Most states also reported that monitoring not only served accountability purposes but was also used for formative purposes, however the study does not make clear how this operates; the blurred lines possible when evaluating both summatively and formatively seem obvious, but Herman et al. did not ask any detailed questions in their survey about the school visits or how the data were cross-referenced again attainment outcomes, for example.

So it seems that inspection and monitoring are widely held to have positive impacts on school performance, but the measures used to reach this conclusion are varied and do not establish a good link between cause and effect. Success criteria are often unclear, and no examples of failure to improve schools were found in the literature. If this is ‘publication bias’, where studies with more positive and statistically significant results are more likely to be written up and published (Hopewell et al., 2009), then generally weak links found between inspection/monitoring and school
improvement may actually be more positive than they would be if all the evidence were available (Torgerson, 2003).

In the specific context of educational PPPs, research is rare. uddin and Tahir (2014) examined the monitoring function of primary education delivery in Public-Private Partnership in Anjuman-e-Khadim-e-Rasoolullah (AKRA) in Punjab. In this area, a village committee is formed for monitoring. The committee has three members and a volunteer visits a school every month and visits parents who wish to “lodge complaint against AKRA or a public school” (p. 273). They report that 38% of parents were aware of the existence of the village committee, its functions, and whom to approach if they had a complaint: but the specificity of the statistical results is not matched by sound analysis. To report that the monitoring function could be improved by involving more stakeholders, but not suggesting which groups, is not useful. To suggest that the Village Committees should be made more effective without stating how is similarly not beneficial. Finally to state that government education officers “should take more responsibility and ensure proper visits to schools in order to ensure proper monitoring in delivery of effective education system” is optimistic but impractical without concrete suggestions as to how. The study is unusual and strongly focussed on the region surveyed, but flawed because it does not lead to practical implications, either for Punjab or elsewhere.

As Coe (2009) suggests, many school improvement programmes have been claimed as being successful, but evaluations, where they exist, are generally of poor quality. They are most likely to be based on the perceptions of participants. Accounts of improvement in individual schools are frequent, but are inevitably selective. As he concludes
“School effectiveness research... has yet to identify specific strategies with clear causal effects” (p. 363).

However, for the purposes of my research, Rutherford’s (2012) and Herman et al.’s (2013) studies suggest that looking at educational quality only, may be too narrow a focus. For PPP projects, it can be argued for example, that there should be a parallel focus on fulfilment of contractual terms, which is not necessary in the inspection of English government schools because much of the compliance work is carried out by other bodies like the Local Authority finance department, Fire Service and Health and Safety authorities.

The PPP set up in Abu Dhabi is a form of contracted-out model (see Table 2.1 above), focussed on supporting the management of government schools. PPPs in management services of schools have proven effective in some cases (Patrinos et al., 2009). The responsibilities of the private partner include staff management, long-term planning and leadership support. All educational and support personnel within the school continue to be public sector employees, paid by the government. In most countries, the gains from contracting out such services have built up over time, as the governments gradually become better at creating these kinds of contracts (Mourshed et al., 2010).

However, these services are inherently more difficult to contract out than other services (like transport or catering), because of the complexities around specifying (and therefore monitoring) the performance of the private partner/s, compared to the performance of the organisation overall. Many factors contribute to a school’s performance in addition to the quality of the partner’s management.
Cross cultural differences in management

A further complication in Abu Dhabi is that, with all the literature available on how to be a good manager and a leader in schools (for example, Chapman et al., 2010; Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Beattie, 2002), there is little direct research on the role that cross cultural differences may play when using expertise from a different country (Pettigrew et al., 2001). A review of the literature produced no discussion of the role of managers and leaders of educational PPPs, nor of the issues around bringing in experts from overseas, to work with well-established government schools.

The literature on cross cultural differences, especially in the area of management has some relevance here (for example, Minkov and Hofstede, 2011; Thomas and Inkson, 2004). Researchers such as Evans (2006) have looked at the difficulties faced when setting up Franco-British teams of Human Resources managers and training officers working in industry. He found that experience of different education systems, training conditions and employment norms all created barriers to working. Nicholson and Stepina (1995) looked at differences in work beliefs and ethics, and found strong support for the proposition that work belief systems vary across cultures. Al Adaileh and Al Atawi (2011) investigated the impact of organisational culture attributes such as openness to change, innovation, trust, teamwork and morale on the knowledge exchange process within the context of a Saudi Arabian telecommunication company.
But no studies were identified that look directly at school improvement projects managed by cross cultural teams. A search of the international journal “Cross Cultural Management” using relevant key words\(^3\) did not lead to any articles.

During the implementation of PPPs in Abu Dhabi schools in 2006, there were many hurdles to be jumped. The target was for schools to reach international standards within three years. However, the notion of ‘international standards’ though accepted by many, is vague. As part of this process, the UAE took part in the PISA tests for the first time in 2010, so no comparative data were available at the time of the research. One possible comparison of educational standards in Abu Dhabi, is with Qatar (another of the GCC states) which was placed 54\(^{th}\) out of 55 countries in science proficiency levels, ahead only of Kyrgyzstan (PISA, 2006).

It is not clear what the precise reason was for the decision to implement PPPs. In general, interventions to introduce PPPs are mainly because of a desire to save money or to reduce risk (OECD, 2008; Ball and King, 2006; Quiggin, 2005). For example, the economic argument used to justify the PFI in the UK was that efficiency savings would accrue, because of the transfer of risk to the private sector. But it has been argued that this is not a watertight argument for PPPs, as governments cannot allow essential public services to fail (Bing et al., 2005; Shaw, 2004; Bing and Akintoye, 2003; Shaoul, 2003; National Audit Office, 2001; Gaffney et al. 1999).

In Abu Dhabi, it can be postulated that finances were not the most important factor behind setting up a PPP – with the third highest per capita income in the world, and

\(^3\) Key words used: headteacher, “head teacher”, “school improvement” and “improving schools”
significant assets in oil and gas (AMEinfo, 2007) it may be thought that risk avoidance or dilution was of greater importance. Similarly, it is clear that all GCC countries lack the experience and expertise required to develop many sectors (Daryani, 2010); consequently, a PPP leverages financial resources against this need for expertise.

These questions and tensions are further complicated by the UAE’s history of poor project implementation, not just in education (Hokal and Shaw, 1999), but in other key areas such as healthcare (Bowman et al., 2008).

A review of the literature produced no discussion of the methods of monitoring used to analyse this type of educational PPP. There was however, agreement that the monitoring and evaluation processes were important (OECD, 2008; Davies and Hentschke, 2006; LaRocque and Patrinos, 2006; World Bank, 2006).

Thus examining stakeholders’ perceptions of the monitoring process used in Abu Dhabi seems a useful contribution to the debate.

**Summary**

The general survey of the literature on educational reform across the world, especially that on governance and accountability suggests that there are opposing forces in action, which are often managed for political expediency rather than research driven thought. Even where there is strong evidence and some agreement, as in the requirement for a professionalization of the whole teaching force and strategic leadership at all levels of the system, there is little consensus on how to
actually achieve these. The links between accountability, governance and school quality monitoring are similarly shrouded. Performance monitoring and evaluation may become biased towards those aspects of school life that are easier to measure, because politicians and their servants require fast and eye-catching answers. Whilst it may be that rigorous external accountability is a lever for positive change, it appears that it may not operate if instituted on its own: other aspects must be altered as well, such as parental choice: even though the government system must remain in control. Balancing this accountability support and the intervention appears to be necessary.

PPPs have become common in many sectors, and in different countries. There are projects running in building and engineering maintenance, domestic services, utilities supply, health, transport, and defence, as well as education, in well over 100 countries. The reasons for using the PPP model are rather vague. Widespread reporting of problems with many projects has not deterred governments from using the framework, perhaps because there are political gains which are above and beyond the defined success criteria. There is little literature about the ‘how’s and ‘what’s of school evaluation, inspection and monitoring. There is even less on these processes specifically in the PPP context.

As far as my research questions, the first (what type of PPP was being used to manage and improve the target schools in Abu Dhabi?) is clearly covered in the literature. It also gives some background information about the second (what were the methods used to measure the processes and outcomes of these partnership?), third (how effective were these methods in bringing about improvements in the way the partnerships operated and fulfilled [or did not fulfil] their purposes?) and fourth
(what were the links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring, in the context of the project?). The fifth question (is there an alternative framework for monitoring and evaluating PPP projects focussed on school improvement, that might be more effective?), there is some important information on logic modelling, which may be useful once the research results are analysed.

**Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework I will use has developed through the stages suggested by Burton et al (2008, p. 46). My working hypothesis is that using a conventional school quality assurance model, based on OFSTED practice, is not sufficiently sensitive to the differences in schools and providers, given the generally low standards in these government schools that I had seen in my work in Abu Dhabi, and the lack of almost any firm data on the schools. Thus I wanted to ask what the people involved in the process felt, and to check the school evaluation process used against the original project documents and the resultant reports. My initial aim was to analyse the monitoring and evaluation process used on a specific PPP, in Abu Dhabi. The original five questions have not changed significantly, but I now believe that a focus on the third and fifth questions are even more important than I had initially felt. The literature suggests that there is little known about how effective the monitoring processes of PPPs are, thus suggesting that any summative evaluations may be based on tenuous data. Thus alternative processes may be useful.

The methodology I adopt for the research is informed by the literature, both in terms of what it tells us, and where there is less information available. A consideration of
which paradigm is most likely to give clear answers to my research questions is now necessary.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

In this chapter, I review the alternative research approaches that could be adopted, demonstrate why I have chosen my methodology, outline the research design and discuss my chosen mode of data collection. I am keen to be clear about the approach and to demonstrate that I understand that being close to the research project requires a particular effort to be objective. I therefore discuss now a range of different philosophical approaches and theories, in order to better place my research. I will discuss the positivism and post-positivism (comparing phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and critical realism) approaches. I then discuss in brief alternative approaches, namely constructivism, critical theory and pragmatism. I examine the benefits of macro-theoretical and micro-theoretical foci. This allows me eventually to be clearer about the philosophical, ideological, epistemological and ontological background to my research. I also describe the ethical considerations and what I have done to ameliorate certain sensitive areas. In particular, I deal with positionality. Finally, I discuss my research sample, my means of data analysis and outline the data analysis process.

My research questions were:

i. what type of PPP was being used to manage and improve the target schools in Abu Dhabi?

ii. what were the methods used to measure the processes and outcomes of these partnership?

iii. how effective were these methods in bringing about improvements in the way the partnerships operated and fulfilled (or did not fulfil) their purposes?

iv. what were the links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring, in the context of the project?
v. is there an alternative framework for monitoring and evaluating PPP projects focussed on school improvement, that might be more effective?

This chapter seeks to demonstrate why my chosen method is likely to support clear answers to these questions.

**Research approaches**

There is no single way to achieve the objectives of a research project, in terms of the methodology chosen to carry out the research. Much will depend on the philosophy and system of beliefs which underpin different methodological approaches and the beliefs of the researcher about what knowledge in the field of study means etc. At one extreme, some researchers believe that the scientific method is the only valid means of understanding the world: at the other, other researchers believe that the social world cannot be explained without recourse to some subjectivity. This positivist/post-positivist dichotomy is one of the fundamental arguments of social science: it is discussed further here.

**Positivism**

The positivist paradigm suggests that the only truly authentic knowledge is that which can allow positive verification. In education and in psychology, it is closely linked to the behaviourist view that only data that can be received and verified according to the laws of physics, is objective. It often emphasises experimentation and seeks to minimise the number of variables involved, to highlight further the verifiability of data. Many characterise it as the “scientific method”.
It focuses on phenomena that can be understood through the use of scientific research methods i.e. on observation, experimentation and the collection of objective ‘facts’ that can (or cannot) be verified by others. There is a great emphasis on control of variables. It is based on an objective view of phenomena, which takes no account of the research context, nor of the researcher’s own attitudes and feelings. The type of reasoning used is one of deduction. It starts from the general and works towards the specific. It often involves the setting up of hypotheses that can be tested mainly by use of quantitative methods of data collection and analysis.

**Post-positivism**

Critics of positivism, as early as the poet William Blake (1820), suggest that to attempt to research without recognising overtly that life involves choice, individualism and responsibility, is to fail to represent accurately the real world. Blake criticised the Enlightenment leaders Isaac Newton, John Locke and Francis Bacon suggesting that “Art is the Tree of Life, Science the Tree of Death” (1795).

Post-positivism is less a modification of the positivist viewpoint, more a wholesale rejection of the central tenets of positivism. A post-positivist might suggest that scientific reasoning and common sense reasoning are essentially the same: there is no fundamental difference between the two, only a difference in degree.

Post-positivists agree with positivists that reality exists: but they believe that it can only be known imperfectly. Kierkegaard (1974) wrote passionately about the unlikelihood of any real objectivity: “Anyone committed to science or to rule-governed morality, is benighted, and needs to be rescued from his state of darkness”
Post-positivists believe that a reality exists, as do positivists: but they hold that it can be known only imperfectly.

Consequently, research design must seek to recognise and plan for contextual issues.

Post-positivists also believe that observations are theory-laden and that researchers are inherently biased by their cultural experiences and world view (Danermark et al., 2002).

Because perception and observation is fallible, one’s constructions must also be imperfect. So whereas positivists believe that objectivity was a characteristic that resided in the individual researcher, post-positivists reject the idea that any individual can see the world perfectly (Mertens, 2014). The only way to achieve objectivity then is to triangulate across multiple, each possibly fallible views and measures. Objectivity therefore is not the characteristic of an individual, it is a phenomenon. Objectivity cannot be attained, but it can be approached.

Post-positivists contend that multiple-constructed realities are everywhere, and that time-/context-free generalisations are not desirable nor in fact possible. They argue that research is value-bound, that it is impossible to differentiate fully causes and effects: they suggest that logic flows from the specific to general, so explanations are induced from data. They argue that researcher and research cannot be separated because the former is the only source of reality (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 2000; Guba, 1990).
My philosophical, epistemological and ontological approach

I am clear that I need to adopt a combined inductive-deductive model, when developing my methodology. This is because my research questions are of two kinds – (i) to (iv) can be addressed through a more inductive manner, but question (v) requires a deductive approach. I am by nature a post-positivist, and I would suggest that in the social sciences (in particular), reality can only be known imperfectly. I consider that individuals create their own realities, for many and varied reasons: thus the research methodology will be developed with a constructivist viewpoint in mind, also recognising the assumptions of symbolic interactionism. Whilst it would be an admirable goal to seek the truth about my questions, I suggest that all measurement is possibly fallible, and therefore multiple measures should be taken. A pragmatic approach will be taken suggesting that inferences that can be made from the data collected will lead to the best, perhaps the simplest, explanation. This will again be important for research question v, as will the combination of these ideas and theoretical approaches, to focus on all of my questions.

I consider that whilst not the only possible approach, it is the one that will be most useful, especially building towards a possible new model, as in question v.

Methodologies

In general, although not universally, research methods relate to particular research paradigms, and therefore form part of the critique of these. If research methods are the tools, techniques and processes used in a study, then the way they are utilised is the methodology. The methods might include interviews, questionnaires, observations or surveys, for example. How the methods are used is shaped by
methodology. The discussion below outlines quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods methodologies.

Quantitative research methods

Punch (1998, p. 4) defines quantitative research as “empirical research where the data is in the form of numbers”. Gay and Airasian (2000, p. 67) define it as “the collection of numerical data in order to explain predict and/or control phenomena of interest”. According to the emphasis in this type of research, what is important is the seeking out of relationships, both causal and correlational, in particular those which can be described in terms of the interplay between variables. For causal relationships, the key is that some of these cause or are influenced by others. For correlational relationships, there is an implication of a linkage, though not of a direction of causality. Through the use of research tools such as tests and questionnaires, numerical data is gleaned and analysed using statistical techniques which (it is hoped) will throw light on the precise relationships between the variables.

In the analysis of quantitative data, ‘dependent’ and ‘independent’ variables are ways of describing how different aspects of a phenomenon interact. In short, the dependent variable is that which one wishes to explain; the independent variables are those that may (or may not) be related to it or cause it. This possible co-variation is crucial, and is a key part of the positivist research paradigm referred to previously.

There are many different routes to collecting such data. Techniques such as surveys have clear advantages, in that they can generate numerical data. But quantitative
methods can be criticised. There are two main types of criticism, one concerned with validity and the other more focussed on ethical and political issues. The validity issue rests on whether the research really does what it claims to do: making data numerical may be seen as an imposition by the researcher, rather than a logical response to the research question, for example. Turning conversations into information susceptible to statistical analysis, through transcription for example, may actually rob it of its meaning (e.g. Donaldson, 1978 and Mehan, 1973).

The other main criticisms are based on the idea that it is the inequalities (in this case, in educational outcomes) that researchers should be focussing on, rather than the mere description of the status quo. Critics question the dominant views of the character and role of education in modern, predominantly Western capitalist societies. Sexism and racism are frequent foci, as illustrated by Gitlin et al. (1989). Although both qualitative and quantitative research methods can shed light on socio-economic differences, the latter is perhaps more likely to lead to a description of the status quo, without reference to possible ways to improve matters. They challenge the separation of ‘understanding’ and ‘application’ of research: their idea is that it is politically and morally unjust for a researcher to seek simply to understand events. This seems a little harsh to me, but I do think that researchers should apply their findings, to try to bring about change for the better.

Other issues may hamper the search for a clear-cut scientific answer: a survey can be impersonal, in that its wording could bias the participant’s response, or there may be a poor response rate, for example. Similarly, it may also be that this type of research
is better at testing a firm hypothesis, which might have a yes/no answer, than other methods.

**Qualitative research approaches**

There are many different types of qualitative educational research. Most include at least some of the following sets of features, adapted from Creswell (2009) and Open University (2001):

- a particular focus on the processes involved in a situation;
- use of natural settings for investigations;
- an interest in meanings, perceptions and perspectives;
- use of inductive analysis.

Qualitative researchers most commonly rely on the following means of gathering information:

- participant/non-participant observation;
- observation;
- field notes;
- reflexive journals;
- structured/semi-structure/unstructured interviews;
- analysis of documents and materials.

Qualitative techniques are used regularly in education, despite the weaknesses seen in them by some researchers. Hargreaves (1996) and Hammersley (1997) point out
that perhaps the over-riding flaw in education itself is that it does not promote a method of formulating strategy, large- and small-scale, on the basis of measurable data, gathered and validated over time, during which all possible variables have been accounted for. They argue that education research, (whether quantitative or qualitative), should be based on evidence that is rigorously sought, scientifically analysed, and built on previous research studies.

School inspection, monitoring and evaluation reports, although they contain some quantitative data, are examples of qualitative research that are as closely focussed on practical impact as they can be. In these reports, evidence is sought via agreed checklists and performance indicators, but professional judgment is almost always required in addition, for example in observing lessons or talking with children. This has led on occasion to oversimplification of data, which is fed into a qualitative analysis, leading to spuriously numerical ‘results’.

Another form of qualitative research, action research, combines ‘action’ and ‘research’, and focusses more on the practitioner analysing her/his own practice and making improvements from these observations. I really want to avoid the superficial and (to my mind) bogus nature of some types of analysis involved in school reports – for example, the averaging of lesson observation grades of small samples, to give highly authoritative looking percentages, which actually have little meaning.

**Mixed methods research approach**

Although there are obvious paradigmatic differences between qualitative and quantitative research, there are also similarities. Both quantitative and qualitative
researchers use empirical observation to attempt to answer research questions. Both methodologies “describe their data, construct explanatory arguments from their data, and speculate about why the outcomes they observed happened as they did” (Sechrest and Sidani 1995, p. 78). Both incorporate safeguards into their work to minimise bias and other sources of invalidity that can exist in every study. This seems an attractive proposition for my research, given the possibility of bias from my insider role in the programme.

Regardless of paradigmatic orientation, research in the social sciences represents an attempt to provide valid assertions about human beings and the environments in which they live (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Although certain methodologies tend to be associated with one particular research tradition, Cohen et al. (2007) contend that researchers and research methodologists need to be asking when each research approach is most helpful, and when/how they should be combined.

Creswell (2009) in his discussion on the ‘mixed method’, which seeks to combine both of the above approaches, suggests that using one after the other (sequentially) or running both at the same time (concurrently) makes best use of the strengths of each, whilst minimising the weaknesses. By definition, the mixed method is a way to collect, analyse and integrate both quantitative and qualitative data within a single piece of research. The process is based on the idea that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient alone, to capture the trends and details of many complex situations, such as the PPP in Abu Dhabi used in my research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010, 2009; Creswell, 2009).
Ivanoka et al. (2006) provide an overview of the prioritisation, implementation, and mixing in the sequential explanatory design. They also outline one approach to representing the procedures in a mixed-methods study. Figure 3.3 below illustrates this process.

![Diagram of mixed methods procedure]

Figure 3.1: Mixed methods procedure
(based on Ivanoka, et al. (2006, p.16)

Similarly, Figure 3.4 shows the suggested sequence of Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) and Broom and Willis (2007) for handling data in mixed methods research:
In summary Creswell and Garrett (2008, p. 326) outline three “stances”: those that focus on the research methods, those that see it as an approach to the whole of the research process, and a third group who feel that methods are incidental to inquiry i.e. the philosophical assumptions are the important focus. The three stances overlap with the three elements of the pragmatic approach – abduction, inter-subjectivity and transferability - identified by Morgan (2007), above. Table 3.1 below emphasises the differences:
Table 3.1: Three strands of mixed methods research

Based on Creswell and Garrett (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method focussed</th>
<th>Process focussed</th>
<th>Philosophy focussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data in a study.</td>
<td>View mixed methods as a process of research that encompasses all phases of the research process, not just the methods.</td>
<td>Stress the importance of the philosophical assumptions underpinning a piece of research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the “techniques” of research</td>
<td>Phases of research from the broad philosophical assumptions directing the inquiry to the final interpretation, analysis and report of the study.</td>
<td>See method as incidental to the enquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could be characterised as a ‘pure’ mixed methods view, encumbered by philosophy or other aspects of the research process</td>
<td>Strive to mix quantitative and qualitative research at all the stages of the research approach.</td>
<td>Recognises that all enquirers bring views about issues such as the basis for knowledge, the nature of reality, and the place of values in inquiry to their research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division between what constitutes quantitative data and qualitative data is not always clear.</td>
<td>Recognises that one cannot disentangle the methods from the research questions and the research questions from the philosophical assumptions made.</td>
<td>Raises question of what the nature of the philosophical assumptions are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allows for linking of different paradigms.</td>
<td>Some embrace <em>pragmatism</em> as the philosophical underpinning for conducting mixed methods research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chosen research approach

As with many long-running arguments in research, there is some merit on both sides. Qualitative methods may be better at seeking out and being open to ideas that were not anticipated in the original planning, but can later be addressed more directly. Being a spectator may not give the insight that being a participant gives. But having data that is eminently replicable (or not) and a numerical evidence-based approach (Hargreaves, 1996) is likely to lead to a valid set of conclusions.

As suggested in the discussions above, I am drawn towards the mixed methods approach. My overall research questions are about evaluation of the method used to measure the effectiveness of PPP projects in education, in order to develop a framework for describing and measuring both processes and outcomes of the PPP school improvement programme. There may be some quantitative data, as student attainment and achievement information. But the answers are not likely to lie in statistical facts, and there is unlikely to be one reality: rather a series of perceptions that may triangulate. Thus neither a strongly quantitative nor a wholly qualitative approach seems appropriate to answer the key question asked in this thesis. The former may preclude notable ideas and events that are not specifically planned for and being measured by the original research plan; the latter may tend to lead to findings that are not easily applied in other contexts. The important question is which methodology would give the best or most useful answer (not which is ‘right’), and which would most effectively meet the research objectives. This places the research in this thesis firmly within the mixed method camp, and specifically in the sphere of the philosophy-focussed. The key focus in this thesis is to answer the research questions: it has been argued that the pragmatism adopted by Dewey and
James, ensures that the focus of the research is on the questions, and allows that different methods can be employed to answer them.

Hartley and Chesworth (2000) for example, prioritise practical application and the seeking of appropriate answers. They evaluated whether the use of the two methodologies produced different – but complementary – information. They suggested that sequential investigations using first qualitative then quantitative - or the other way around, if that is a better fit - is not new: but “...perhaps it would be best if each method fed into the other in a sort of sequential reflective chain or spiral...” (Hartley and Chesworth, 2000, pp. 22-23).

### Research design

Yin (2009) amongst others has underlined five aspects as key in research design. First, a study’s questions; second, the proposed features of the entity or programme that are to be studied; third, the unit of analysis, being an exact definition of the programme or project being studied; fourth, the logic defining the link between the proposition and data; and finally, the criteria for interpreting the findings. To clarify these aspects in the context of this study, they are highlighted in the table below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow:
Table 3.2: The five key aspects of research design for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The questions to be asked</td>
<td>What type of PPP is being used to manage schools in Abu Dhabi, and why? What are the methods being used to measure the processes and outcomes of the partnerships? How effective are they for bringing about improvements in the way these PPPs operate and fulfil their purposes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposed features of the programme to be studied</td>
<td>Montecinos (2009) found that change in schools was most effective when all stakeholders worked together. The issues to be investigated here are school improvement, change management and organisational effectiveness, when stakeholders are not as involved as they might be. The proposition is that the greater the involvement of stakeholders in the design of the monitoring system, the greater the likelihood of successful outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The unit of analysis</td>
<td>The PPP programme consisted of many schools, many private partners and one public entity, the Education Council. The logical unit for analysis however, is the monitoring process itself: how it was received in schools and perceived by public and private partners will inform the study, and help to lead to logical conclusions that (crucially) answer the research questions. Although there is a focus on individual school/partner relationships and processes, the overall aim was to shed light on the success of the overall process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic defining the link between proposition and data</td>
<td>Of the many techniques available for analysing the data (time-series analysis, logic models, cross-case synthesis, etc.), justification must be made the logic underlying the link between what is proposed, and how it will provide appropriate data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The criteria for interpreting the findings.

The most important strategy will be to identify and address alternative explanations of any findings. For example, early involvement of stakeholders in the design of the monitoring process might be preferred because it makes the work of being monitored easier and less threatening.

For this research thesis, an iterative process was adopted, focussing on one school/partner relationship, then compared step by step to a second, third and so on. In the context of this study, the unit of analysis is broken down into 30 possible separate school/public partner relationships (as embedded units of analysis): the iterative approach is therefore possible. Background data from all 30 schools was obtained and analysed using the school reports available. The danger of drifting off into other areas as the process progressed was guarded against by (i) regular reference back to the original research questions, (ii) following a chain of evidence, (iii) triangulation of evidence from different sources and different methods of data collection, specifically the follow-up interviews and (iv) developing a database of evidence for each school/partner relationship.

**Data collection**

The table below lists the four sources from which data were collected.

Table 3.3: Data sources with comment on their validity

<p>| [1] Archival records of programme setup and development | Government records (from 2005 to 2009), previously made public, regarding the key desired outcomes of the intervention programme, emails, agendas, minutes of meetings, letters – easily available, precise and not created especially for the research. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[2] School Inspection Reports</td>
<td>30 school evaluation reports (from a possible 57) biannually for three years, from 2006 to 2009 – accessible, detailed, not created especially for the case study. [ Justification: as these reports were written as part of the PPP monitoring process, they were an ideal starting place for focusing more at school level, and understanding what worked in terms of the PPP, and the monitoring of it. ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3] Targeted semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Direct focus on study – availability of key actors from government, private partners, schools, and monitoring agency – total of 20 interviews. [ Justification: by the third year, the PPP in Abu Dhabi involved many hundreds of people. For the purpose of this study, over 30 of those most closely associated with judging the success of the project were invited to give their views: 24 agreed, but for logistical reasons, only 20 took place. ] Development of interview structure: I carried out a small-scale initial study working with 6 headteachers and 3 providers. The questions used in this thesis are based on those questions which elicited the most useful and insightful answers. Interviews were always recorded in field notes, and 8 were taped, then transcribed. Interviews took place between, 2011 and, 2012, at the person’s place of work, or at a neutral location such as a coffee shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4] Participant-observation</td>
<td>Threaded through the study – potential for bias counterbalanced by central role played</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Justification: the researcher was at the time of the project, the leader of many of the school visits and was part of the team that designed the instruments in use during those visits. Potential for bias, but counterbalanced by the three other sources of evidence, and the possibility of specific insight because of central role.

Because the evidence is from different sources, triangulation of data can realistically be expected to offer insights that any one of the sources would not. They also represent the use of multiple perspectives by which to interpret the results. It may also be said that because there are three methods of data collection and analysis in use, there is methodological triangulation (Hussein, 2015).

**Thematic analysis**

For the analysis of all the documents and the interviews, I used thematic analysis. One of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Specifically, I adopted what I consider to be the technique most likely to answer my research questions, being not tied to a particular epistemological stance. I consider thematic analysis is a tool which can be flexible and potentially provide a detailed view of the data, whilst still recognising its complexity. Mills et al. (2010) suggest that the tool is both an analytic approach and a synthesizing strategy used as part of the process of making meaning. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2008) and Boyatzis (1998) describe the main purposes of thematic analysis, they view it is a means of ‘seeing’, of finding relationships, of analysing, systematising observations, and of quantifying qualitative data. I believe it is the right tool to help me answer my research questions, as it reduces and helps to manage large amounts of data without
losing sight of the context. I hope it will allow me to focus on interpretation, which will be vital for answering especially my fifth research question, about other ways to monitor the PPP process.

**Ethics**

There are a number of ethical issues that arise from the research area and design being considered.

The six principles for research involving human participants stipulated by the Open University (2006) were used to frame the work, starting with the procedure for recruiting participants, and the gathering and management of that data. A short written protocol was drafted, and discussed with senior staff at the Abu Dhabi Education Council, and latterly with each person approached. The paper showed (a) how consent was to be gained (b) how the information was to be gathered (c) how it would be stored, once gathered (d) how a participant might withdraw at any time from the study and (d) what feedback would be given at the end of the research.

Informed consent was of particular importance, given the cultural context, as outlined previously (Hofstede, 2001). Potential participants were asked in advance and the project explained in basic terms. The key concerns of those approached were added to the explanation given to those approached later. Of most concern by far (and very evident in my year 1 work) was whether specific comments made would be reported back in an attributable manner, to their employer, the Council. As it would not be, all potential participants agreed to take part. Two individuals left the country shortly after giving consent, and were therefore replaced. Most participants
were not asked to sign any paper, as the first four people approached agreed to take part and then immediately changed their minds, when asked to sign an agreement note. This was because of their concern that in theory at least, their thoughts could be construed as critical of the Education Council, and that (they felt) might jeopardise their career. Thus consent was “opted-in”, and overwhelmingly informed by the duty of care (Petre, 2010, quoting Professor John Oates). Oral consent was obtained from every participant and a note was made describing the day and time the consent was given, and the context of the event (for example, “in the Principal’s office”). No inducement to participate was offered prior to seeking consent, either in the form of payment, information or gifts. No compensation for time contributed to the research or inconvenience was offered. Confidentiality was guaranteed, but all participants were informed that they had a right to withdraw their consent at any time, no questions asked: they were clearly informed that if they did wish to withdraw their permission, data that they had helped to generate would be destroyed.

One other aspect of the consent had to be reviewed when the research itself started. Only eight participants agreed to be tape-recorded, the others demonstrating concern. The decision was made to proceed on the basis of field notes only for the others, partly to ensure a reasonable sample size, and partly to avoid the accusation of pressure being put on people to be recorded.

With all potential participants, an open and honest account was given of the purpose and content of the research. Although the participants knew the researcher, it was in a professional context and the manner adopted at all times was compatible with this, building on a reputation for honesty and integrity that had been established during the early years of the PPP programme, before the research was considered. There
were no elements of the research design that would have been compromised by full disclosure to potential participants, so no information was withheld. There was no covert collection of data. All participants were told that they would have full access to the outcomes of the research, in the form of a short summary document, which is to be based on the abstract of the thesis. It was also pointed out that the full thesis would be available online, for those who wished to access it.

After undertaking a risk assessment, the only possible significant harm that might befall participants was that of being called to account for views that might not coincide with those of line managers, or of the government. This was completely mitigated by using coding for all participants’ names, school names and private provider company names. Although the research was conducted in the United Arab Emirates, the requirements of the UK Data Protection Act 1998 were complied with.

Participants’ identities and the data they helped to generate were kept confidential at all times. The procedures included ensuring that other visits were taking place on the same days to school principals, who were not taking part in the study, to prevent a pattern being noticed. The study does not fall within the domain or remit of any professional body with a published code of practice and ethical guidelines, so the principles adopted were those espoused by the British Education Research Association (BERA) in their 2011 handbook, and later informed by the Open University (2014).

Although my research is not participatory in its truest sense, my role before the research was. Thus, the dilemmas and caveats proposed by Bergold and Thomas (2012) may be useful to bear in mind. These include the effects of:
• raising some questions and not others;

• involving some people in the process, but not others;

• observing some phenomena, but not others.

I therefore raised the notion of detriment with potential participants that I asked about being interviewed. UAE society being a closely knit one, especially amongst the Emirati families, I made it clear that although I would not name participants, it was possible that it would become known, simply by observation of meetings and word of mouth. No-one I approached appeared concerned about this, though few were happy to have the interviews recorded: this had an impact on my ability to create transcripts rather than use field notes. As BERA (2011, p. 7) suggests, I made it clear to participants that if any unexpected detriment arose during the research, I would immediately bring it to their attention; I would also offer the person the right to immediate and unquestioned withdrawal from the research if they wanted that option.

As Floyd and Arthur suggest (2012, p. 178), the perceived need for anonymity could well stretch beyond the publication date of the thesis. They note that “…in the years following the research when personal and professional relationships will need to be sustained and when research confidentiality may inhibit a frank and open exchange with trusted colleagues”, in particular in relation to a question frequently asked of me: ‘Which provider did best?’ Thomson and Gunter’s view (2011), building on the work of Zygmunt Bauman, suggests that the identity of a researcher might change
over time, I do not think this is likely in the context of this research. The project was a strong influence on the way that those involved thought and talked, and my role as the chief monitor is likely to remain a key characteristic of people’s memory. I therefore do not plan to drop the confidentially promised at any stage, present or future. Mercer (2007) suggests that there is a neat shorthand (insider/outsider) that is actually wrong, in that the researcher’s position amongst the researched, changes. I am aware of the disadvantages of being perceived as an insider, but given the special – probably unique – access that I have to the project, I believe that the opportunities and advantages of looking deeply at the project far outweigh the difficulties.

At the end of the discussions about the research, I promised to make available the final thesis, electronically, to anyone who at that time wanted to read it.

**Research sample**

**Documents analysed**

Government documents analysed are listed in Appendix 4. They included Requests of Proposals, mission statements from the Abu Dhabi Education Council, minutes of meetings, and internal memos written during the set-up of the PPP.

The monitoring reports for 30 schools that were analysed, covered a period of three years, from 2006 to 2009. Although there were 57 schools in the programme, not all were involved from the beginning, so it was decided to concentrate on those that had three years’ worth of monitoring reports\(^4\). Each of these schools was visited twice by teams of one or two inspectors, who wrote the report against a set framework of performance indicators that had been developed in 2005/6. The schools varied in

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\(^4\) The reports are referred to by coded school name, year and a/b, signifying the first or second visit of that year.
terms of the gender of the students, the gender of the staff, the location of the schools by the three main regions of Abu Dhabi, the age range provided for, and the private partner supporting the school. For ethical reasons discussed below, for the purpose of this thesis, the schools are numbered, not named. Similarly, the regions and providers are given random letters, so that individual schools cannot be easily identified. The table in appendix 1 summarises these variations.

**People interviewed**

There were many people involved in the PPP project between, 2006 and, 2009: headteachers, teachers, parents, students, advisors, technicians, drivers, curriculum specialists, as well as the government’s civil servants. In all by 2009, I knew there were hundreds of staff spending more than half of their working week on the project. Necessarily, only a small sample could be interviewed, and the prioritisation process took into account the involvement that the person had with the monitoring process, and their availability during the 18 month period in 2011-2012, when the interviews were conducted. A range of seniority and experience was also sought, though these factors were not prioritised as much as the first two characteristics. Where a person was linked to a company, school or a region, a balance was ensured. Overall, the aim was to create a mixed and balanced sample, representing people with different jobs, from different types of school in the project, working with different providers, from different geographical regions: as Teddlie and Yu (2007) suggest, there is a compromise that must be made between meeting the standards of sampling to achieve a good representation of the different stakeholders, and the expediencies of the actual research context. I knew for example, that all four providers would want to be represented if they felt there was a competitive edge to the enquiry. I therefore
emphasised that the investigation was firmly focussed on the monitoring, not the work of different groups of schools or different providers. The interviewees are described more fully in appendix 2.

**Method of data analysis**

**Archival records**

The documents and electronic files available were reviewed in chronological order, starting with 2005 (the year before the programme started properly) until 2009. The focus of the data analysis was again the research questions: using a simple computer program (NVivo and SuperFinder XT) relevant phrases were highlighted and recorded. An example is given in Appendix 3.

**School reports**

Each of the 30 schools that are embedded units of analysis had an evaluation report written twice a year for three years. The focus of these reports was the success of school improvement, as implemented by the private partner working with the school management team. These 180 reports were examined in three ways: first, they were reviewed, with particular attention paid to the key issues identified at the end of each report. Notes were taken on each one, focussing on references made to school improvement, (success or failure) and to the monitoring process. Secondly, key words or phrases which arose from this review process relevant to the research question were noted and then searched for electronically in all reports. I followed the process advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al. (2015). A sample list of key words and phrases are given in Appendix 6. Thirdly, the numerical judgements made by inspectors as they scored the school against key aspects of the
quality of education provided (see sample report in Appendix 7), were collated into a spreadsheet, averaged and analysed, seeking patterns in the scoring that might inform the research questions.

**Interviews**

After reviewing the archival records and school report documents, interviews were planned and initiated. Although it was not possible to follow a strict order, they were planned to follow this plan:

![Diagram of interview order](image)

Figure 3.3: Order of interviews

The logic behind this route was that the original intentions were likely to be best known to the staff that initiated the programme; chronologically, the next actors to be involved were the private companies, followed by the school principals and finally the monitors themselves. A total of 20 interviews took place.

Yin (2009) outlines a structure for describing the questions to which a study may need to seek answers. He suggests the researcher take care to balance the number of non-threatening, personalised (level 1) questions, with the research-required (level 2) questions. The former are questions asked of specific interviewees, and may include aspects which are entirely specific to the school or to the person’s experience. The
latter, which are the important ones for the research, may never be asked, because the answers to Level 1 questions may include answers to the Level 2 questions.

Field notes were the prime method of recording. In 8 instances, a digital audio recording was made and the interview transcribed (see ‘Ethics’, above). Nearly all people gave such informed and insightful responses that they were clearly ‘informants’ rather than merely respondents. Although there was no attempt to follow a fully structured survey-type approach, certain key questions were asked in all interviews, making the process semi-structured: these questions are given in Appendix 8.

The questions were written to be open-ended, but to elicit responses that would certainly inform the research questions. They were also designed to be unthreatening at the start of the interview, with the more probing questions coming later, as the person being interviewed became more engaged and engrossed. Thus early questions asked for the person’s memories of the programme, and the monitoring process; later questions asked for evaluation of effectiveness, for weaknesses in the monitoring process and for aspects that could have been more successful.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face, either in the participants’ work-place, or in a neutral space, usually a coffee shop. The choice of venue was made by the participant.

The semi-structured approach was adopted to allow for open answers, but the questions used were adapted from previous evaluation work that had been done with headteachers by Abu Dhabi Education Council officials, and by Penta International
Field notes were taken in each interview, which lasted between 35 and 75 minutes, including the recorded ones.

**Data analysis process**

The particular Public-Private Partnership project that has been at the core of this research is complex. In order to recognise and thus frame these complexities, a Conditional/Consequential Matrix was developed to describe the context of the project, as used by Corbin and Strauss (2014) and Hildebrand (2007). The matrix was designed to help decision making about sampling. It also helped to structure the varied, context-driven and complex ways that the conditions of the project, the interactions required within the project, and the consequences of these interactions, would coexist and have impact overall. Finally, the matrix was an attempt to be clear about the different perspectives within the documents and of the interviewees.

![Conditional/Consequential Matrix](image)

**Figure 3.3: Conditional/Consequential Matrix (after Hildebrand, 2007)**
Following the overall strategy suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2014), the documents would be read first with a series of sensitising questions in mind. The aim was to familiarise (or reacquaint) myself with them. Questions such as “What is going on here?” and “What are the major events being referred to?” were written on a prompt which was kept in sight as the documents were read in electronic format. Aspects that were of interest were highlighted electronically, and handwritten notes made separately.

As these groups of highlighted ideas grew, and the handwritten list too, theorizing questions were added to the prompt card. These covered possible links between concepts and whether aspects seemed to change over time. The third and final level of questions arose from a combination of Corbin and Strauss’s last two types: questions of a practical nature, that suggest where analysis might focus next, and those that guide the preparation of interviews and further analysis. It was decided to combine these final types of question, because there was so much overlap in the two processes.

This three staged approach was used for both the archived government (and related) documents, and for the 180 school reports. In practice, the two sets of data were analysed in parallel, split approximately by time: about two hours spent on one set, followed by two hours on the other, and so on. The same process was also followed for the interview data, for the field notes and for the transcripts.

The archived documents and the school reports were seen as technical literature. Thus when the preliminary analysis of these papers was started, note was taken of the
Corbin and Strauss (2014) view that analysis of technical literature can add much to a piece of research. It can for example enhance sensitivity to subtle nuances contained within the data. But the caveat they give (p. 50) is important:

“researchers must be very careful to look for examples of incidences in their data and to identify the form that the concept takes in their study”.

They also suggest that analysis of technical documents can give rise to questions to be used in interviews, and to stimulate questions during analysis. It is the close scrutiny of the documents that gave rise to the initial set of questions that were used in the first interviews. After these initial interviews had taken place, the conceptual areas that they suggested, were tested against the documents.

It would be necessary to analyse data at the same time as the collection was taking place, as it was not possible for the process to follow a rigid timeline: indeed, some interviews turned out to be unplanned and took place on the spur of the moment, as an opportunity presented itself. Certainly then, the analysis would interact with the collection process. The analysis of archival records and school reports took place in parallel with the interviews. This would turn out to be useful for checking of themes and common threads, during the process. These helped sharpen the direction of the interviews making them more coherent: ‘progressive focusing’ (Open University, 2001). The interview process was also sharpened by my initial study during which 6 headteachers and 3 provider staff members were interviewed.

Because the interview process (in particular) was spread over a long period, and sometimes the data from one event could not be analysed immediately, initial notes
were re-examined at leisure, allowing for more thought; although it was sometimes a frustratingly messy process, it created time and space for more detailed thinking and repeated analysis of notes and transcripts. Thus preliminary analysis was succeeded by primary analysis: this led to category formulation and eventually to concept formation and theory generation.

An inductive approach was thus adopted, both of necessity, and because it fitted the context. In reality, as an agent in the monitoring process, theorising began at the first point of data collection, if not before. Indeed, the research questions addressed in this thesis are the result of the “escalation of insights” (Lacey, 1976) that started when the PPP project started in 2005, at which time the monitoring process started too. Sometimes the process was frustrating and painful, but as Nias (2002, p. 107) pointed out, “...the absence of monitoring is a ‘dissatisfier’, but its existence does not serve as a satisfier”. As described in the previous section, the role of thematic analysis as a tool to consider the data more effectively and efficiently, was going to be central to making sense of it all.

**Summary**

A range of research approaches were considered, including paradigms such as positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, critical theory and pragmatism. A post-positivist stance, informed by a pragmatic view, was adopted for this study. The advantages and disadvantages of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research methodologies were outlined: the latter has been used, because it most closely aligns with the research questions, which require both rigour and open-
minded consideration. The mixed methods to be used were outlined and ethical risks considered and ameliorated.

The chosen methods of data collection were defined and the characteristics to be balanced in selecting an appropriate and valid selection were discussed. The documents to be analysed, the archival records, school reports and the people to be interviewed were defined, as was the method of data analysis.

The discussion above suggests that the overall approach to analysing the documents – government, school reports and interview notes/transcripts – will be the same. Using thematic analysis as an inductive process, the data were analysed many times, on each occasion including more information. Thus while the government documents and the school monitoring visit reports were a complete set, the interviews were not concluded for a period of six months. Each sweep of the data were based on an incrementally larger set of information, as well as benefiting from the insights gained from the previous analysis. These repeated preliminary analyses were succeeded by primary analysis. Initial category formulation was assisted by the use of qualitative data analysis software (NVivo and SuperFinder XT). This eventually led, via an “escalation of insights” (Lacey, 1976) to concept formation and theory generation. These are discussed in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4: Research findings

This chapter outlines the findings of the research process undertaken as described in Chapter 3. The findings from the different types of archival document analysis are described, followed by the outcomes from the interviews. These are then combined and summarised. There are much data now available for this process (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Evidence summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Data collection strategy</th>
<th>Data analysis technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government documents</td>
<td>i. Review and take notes on comments about monitoring of PPP</td>
<td>Search for key words/phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Content analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School reports</td>
<td>i. Review and take notes</td>
<td>a) Search for key phrases recorded in notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Content analysis</td>
<td>b) Search for key phrases in reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Collate numerical judgements made by inspectors contained within reports</td>
<td>c) Statistical collation of judgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Conduct, record, transcribe</td>
<td>Search for key words/phrases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As has been stated before, my research questions are about describing and evaluating the method used to measure the effectiveness of PPP projects in education, with a view to developing, if possible, an improved framework for describing and measuring both processes and outcomes of the contracted-out management services model, as used in a group of Abu Dhabi’s state-funded schools.
The specific questions were:

i. what type of PPP was being used to manage and improve the target schools in Abu Dhabi?

ii. what were the methods used to measure the processes and outcomes of these partnerships?

iii. how effective were these methods in bringing about improvements in the way the partnerships operated and fulfilled (or did not fulfil) their purposes?

iv. what were the links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring, in the context of the project?

v. is there an alternative framework for monitoring and evaluating PPP projects focussed on school improvement, that might be more effective?

Archival document analysis

The government documents that were analysed were those used in the setting-up process of the PPP. There was much in the form of Requests for Proposals and follow-up material. Some minutes of meetings were examined, mainly from introductory meetings and initial feedback reports. A full list of the documents used is given at appendix 4, being 6 government documents and 180 school inspection reports.

As stated above, the focus of the data analysis was seeking answers to the research questions: relevant phrases were highlighted and recorded. The focus of the school inspection reports was school improvement, as implemented by the private partner working with the school management team.
The topics that emerged were clearly linked to the initial challenge of the PPP project. The government had identified a problem area, that of low attainment in the government schools, and was seeking a resolution. The main themes that arose following the data analysis process outlined above were:

1. High aspirations
2. Focus on financial accountability
3. A set of goals that included student achievement, but encompassed other areas, too
4. Competitive nature of project
5. Flexible time scale
6. A monitoring process

Theme 1 - High aspirations

The overt overall vision of the council itself was “Advancing education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to the highest international standards” (ADEC, 2006c, p. 2). Its key objective was to “develop and implement innovative educational policies, plans and programs” (ADEC, 2006c, p. 2) that would allow this aim to be met.

The high aspiration at the heart of the programme was the first and most obvious theme to emerge. All the documents that defined the PPP programme in the first instance, related the same basic idea, that the United Arab Emirates was at a crossroads, and the decisions about to be made were to lead to the country (and specifically the Emirate of Abu Dhabi) having a highly effective education system suitable for the 21st Century:
Education in the United Arab Emirates is at a moment of important change. In the country’s early years, a system of universal, free government education was developed rapidly and with considerable success. Now there is widespread agreement that it is time to change that system to one that will serve the modern needs of the country and bring the achievement level of students in line with international standards.

(ADEC, 2007, p. 3)

Without ever defining what ‘international standards’ were, the phrase appears frequently. For example, in the draft school management agreement (ADEC, 2006a, p. 39), the private operators were informed that they would be required to provide evidence that annual progress for individual students and grade cohorts over the 3 years of the agreement was being compared against international benchmarks, with an “increased rate of progress when tracked over 3 years”. There is no notion given of exactly how much progress was required or expected, nor are there any pointers given to which set of international benchmarks or standards are to be used. There is no mention for instance of PISA or TIMSS, because the United Arab Emirates was not at this time a participating country.

Theme 2 - Focus on finances and financial accountability

The initial government documents suggest a willingness to inject extra capital in support of the project, above and beyond that involved in the cost of the project itself:
All public-private partnership schools will receive significant enhanced funding to support the work of the Contractor. This funding will be managed by the Abu Dhabi Education Council...

(ADEC, 2007, p. 11)

The funding referred to was described in three sections. First, there was to be a payment to cover start-up costs, specifically those materials and equipment deemed to be needed to improve learning at the start of the project. Second, there would be payments for resources and positions needed through the life of the project, such as additional staff, new or additional instructional materials, technology and other appropriate resources, and improved organisation and planning. The document suggests that these resources to improve the quality of the school’s educational programme would be based on a needs-analysis of the school. Finally, the council would pay for capital improvements to the school infrastructure, with an expected life of five years or more.

Details of how much and how the payments would be calculated were not given, but there was clear reference to accountability, which was usually tied to the monitoring process (see below). This accountability is to the Council, and is phrased as “Specify the rights and responsibilities of each party of the contract, including the autonomies of the provider, and the provider’s accountability to the Council for meeting the goals of the Partnership.” and “adherence to the contract terms” (ADEC, 2006c, p. 7 and ADEC, 2007, p. 6).
Theme 3 - A set of goals that included student achievement, but encompassed other areas too

The goal discussed in much of the pre-amble and introductory text, is clearly that of increasing student attainment. Without there being any specific data or reference to research, the issue of students’ achievement is pre-eminent. It is to a large extent written as if there is a well-defined consensus on this issue. There is no definition of achievement given in any of the documents scrutinised, nor is there any comparison between what is wanted for students’ achievement as opposed to their level of attainment.

There are also other goals referenced, including:

- increasing parent and community involvement in public education
- strengthening the quality and quantity of Emirati nationals in teaching and administration in public education
- preserving and promoting national heritage and culture

These are described in less detail. For example on preserving and promoting national heritage and culture, one document states that each proposal to manage a cluster of PPP schools should contain a plan to maintain and increase students’ awareness of and involvement in activities of their national culture and heritage. Each Contractor will be evaluated on the success of the implementation of such plan (ADEC, 2007, p. 14).

Theme 4 - Competitive nature of project

Implicit in the documents was the concept of the project being based on the amount of progress schools made, and thus being, in effect, a competition. The documents
describe a benchmarking visit in the first year, setting the scene for the school and the monitoring agency within the context of the Partnership. It was expected to set a mark for the school, against which future progress would be monitored, as well as feeding into the overall picture for that particular provider (ADEC, 2006c).

There were strong statements about the project being only a pilot and being set to expand from 30 to 150 (almost half the government schools in Abu Dhabi), eventually. There were allusions to expansion being linked to high performance, as in

public-private partnership schools shall administer the Ministry of Education’s standardized assessment proposed for students in Grade 7 and Grade 9. The Council shall evaluate the effectiveness of each Contractor on the percentage of the PPP school’s students proficient on the assessment compared to the average of all other public schools in the same zone.

(ADEC, 2007, p. 14)

and

Decisions to renew or to not renew a Contract... will be based on an evaluation of a contractor’s historical record in meeting performance and compliance expectations. The Council retains sole discretion to renew or not renew a contract....

(ADEC, 2007, p. 15)
Theme 5 - Flexible time scale and planned expansion

Despite being set up as a 3 year project, there were statements that suggested it might extend beyond that. It was suggested that contracts might be renewed for up to a further 3 years subject to satisfactory performance (ADEC, 2007). Furthermore, the expectation was that the project would be successful: existing middle schools and high schools would be added to the programme over the next two years, to create a total of 70 schools by 2008.

In addition, the council was clear that it intended to award further contracts to providers for the establishment and operation of 15 new government schools in 2006, with the potential for additional schools over the following three years. Taken together, it was clear that 150 or more schools would be managed through the Public-Private Partnership by 2008 (ADEC, 2007).

Theme 6 - A monitoring process

Many of the documents analysed referred to monitoring. Even the earliest reference to a PPP, when the actual model was still being decided upon, made a clear statement:

Next steps: Development of RFP including guidelines, criteria, monitoring, evaluation, timeline, etc. (4-6 weeks)...

Issues for the Council:... Contract monitoring and reporting mechanism...

(ADEC 2005, p. 9)
As soon as the substantive paperwork outlining the project in more exact detail was released, the monitoring role was underlined. It was to oversee the contract performance and compliance of the PPP schools, and the council stated that it recognised that the success of the project was contingent upon understanding the value of bringing private management to the government education sector. The objective of the monitoring agency was to be straightforward: to determine whether the providers were doing what they promised to do, whether they were meeting the partnership project’s goals (ADEC, 2006c).

The monitoring agency was tasked with developing and implementing

“smart, efficient, and sound accountability systems that are least burdensome on the schools themselves and produce reliable and useful information about school performance”

(ADEC, 2006c, p. 4).

**Archival document analysis - summary**

The Council had the highest aspirations - the phrase “...to match international standards...” is found repeatedly. Because it was not clear what the best solution would be, how these standards would be reached, partnering with four (as opposed to one) external providers, all of which were experienced in school improvement, was seen to provide the possibility of an answer – or two, three or four answers. Given that there would be four different models in existence, it was logical that there would be four different financial models, too. This led to an emphasis on accountability for cost. This was complicated by the addition of other goals, in addition to the main one of raising the quality of student attainment.
Quite overtly, there was a sense of competitiveness being set up between the four private service providers. Phrases and words such as “held accountable” and “determine the effectiveness of individual contractors” were common. The slightly flexible time-scale of the project was written in to documents because of the uncertainties involved, but the analysis suggests that it was always in the control of the Council, rather than the private partners or jointly determined.

Finally, a monitoring process was a clear theme from the outset. Although evident in many different documents, there were no details as to the process, until late 2006 and early 2007, when the project was already under way. Although a formal Request for Proposals for contract monitoring was issued in January 2006, which included a clear aim for the agency: to oversee the contracts between the Council and the private education providers (ADEC, 2007), and a list of specific duties detailed, the actual process to be followed in the monitoring process was not clear.
School reports analysis

Stage 1 (preliminary reading and sensitising questions) of the school reports analysis was informed by the headings of the reports:

- Students’ achievement and learning
- Attendance and attitudes for work and study
- Quality of parental and local community involvement
- Quality of teaching
- Effectiveness of leadership and administration
- Promotion of national heritage and culture
- Initial conclusions about school performance
- Recommendations

These headings related in particular to my research questions (ii) and iii, about what methods were used to measure the processes and outcomes of the partnership, and how effective they were bringing about improvements.

The sections on students’ achievement and learning were frequently written as descriptions of what the students knew, understood or could do. For example, reports made factual statements about whether students could read or write their names, or pick out GCC countries on a map. Some noted the achievements of the more or less able groups, such as whether they could subtract numbers using decomposition.
Some reports were very specific, which gave the feeling of a detailed view of what the students could do:

“In grade 5, for example, students are confident about the meaning of words about materials and textures, such as rough, smooth, plastic, wood and steel. In grade 3, students know many different animals, such as parrot, dog, turtle and rabbit. Handwriting in English and Arabic even in grade 1 is of a good standard for some girls. In mathematics in all grades, students understand number order and some are good at mental calculation. This includes a few students in the grade 2 special needs class, who are as competent as their peers in other classes.”
Report vi, 2006a

However, there were very few references to norms or averages. It is unclear to a lay person, and to many educators, whether the above description is positive or negative. It may well be factually accurate, but without reference to expectations, it does not help to judge the work of the provider, which is what the overall aim of the monitoring process was supposed to be. Only the very last sentence in the quotation gives any insight. At least the students who might be expected to be performing at levels below their peers, where doing as well as them: either good news for the less able, or bad news for the average students, it is unclear which.

One of the research questions was to identify the methods currently used to measure the processes and outcomes of the partnerships. Interestingly, it is debateable whether the word “measure” is appropriate in the context of the reports. The reports tend to err on the side of description, rather than measurement. Certainly, one of the
other research questions was about evaluating the methods being used to monitor in terms of their effectiveness for bringing about improvements in the way these PPPs operate and fulfil their purposes: the effectiveness of the method seems to be weak, because they make limited reference if any, to norms or expectations.

Lack of reference to norms also weakens other sections of the reports. That some students greet and initiate simple conversations in the English language, or in art, enjoy drawing with coloured pencils, describes an event, but does not assist in judging the success of the PPP project.

As for students’ attendance and attitudes for work and study, the main sub-themes divide into two aspects. Observation of students’ attitudes to work and study were straightforward, but analysis of attendance data were problematical. Again there was little reference made to norms or benchmarks, whether school, national or international. Thus

“Behaviour is good. On the odd occasion when students did misbehave, for example running along the upstairs corridor and hanging over the parapet at break time, a member of staff quickly stopped them and sent them back downstairs. In lessons, students are beginning to understand that they will not be asked the answer if shouting out, only if they put their hand up. When motivated and interested, the students work well as a group and are supportive of each other. In a grade 3 class for example, when some students were finishing multiplication sums off the board quickly, students helped one another.”

Report xxiv, 2007b
As with the academic attainment sections, the inspection reports were good at describing the current or recent state of the characteristic, but made statements that it very difficult to know whether the behaviour and attitudes being reported were good, bad or indifferent.

Evidence from the reports on the attendance of students was usually expressed in numerical terms, but again there was no reference to norms or averages.

“Attendance is sound, though not as good as the original figures from the school suggest. Attendance reported in the School Profile – 99%; seen during visit – about 85%.”
(Report xxiv, 2006b)

The school reports have generally less detail about the quality of parental and local community involvement. Many comments made were relating to what other stakeholders had reported, suggesting little if any involvement of parents and local community figures in evaluating this aspect of the programme. Stating “the Principal reported that nearly all parents are satisfied with the education that has been provided for their children” (Report xxix, 2006a) is weak, because it is effectively hearsay and certainly in some of the reports seemingly uncorroborated. Statements such as

“There have not been any formal meetings held with parents this semester so far...”
(Report xxix, 2006b)
are factual and suggest poor performance by school and provider. However, the statement is followed by

“...but this is an issue being discussed within the school...”

weakens it again, because of the implication that this is in some way being dealt with. That

“...the Provider staff are keen to engage with parents in many ways, including encouraging them to attend meetings and sessions specifically about the work that their children have done...”

(Report xxx, 2008a)

may well be factually accurate, but does not help suggest that the reporting is effective in terms of monitoring the PPP project itself, and the performance of the school and the provider.

The school reports were much more obviously observation-driven when it came to the quality of teaching. Whether the teaching was good or not, the comments usually covered what was going well and what was not going well, and also about the general quality of joint planning and partnership between the teaching staff and the provider team. Although not universally accepted, criteria against which teaching can be judged (Ofsted, 2007) were in use which helped create a better benchmark for noting progress than either of the previous school report sections. In trying to evaluate these in terms of their effectiveness for bringing about improvements in the
way these PPPs operate and fulfil their purposes, this is more promising, but still there seems to be a surfeit of description, even when a grading is given\textsuperscript{5}.

“Where teaching is good, students are keen to participate. For example in a sports lesson, even though the teacher had 2 classes together, the students were well behaved and followed her directions and instructions carefully. Teachers further encourage the students by ensuring they have time to finish their activity, and also let them pin their completed work to a pin board.

Where teaching is less effective, there is little focus and neither students nor teacher seem very clear about the purpose of the session. Students either wander around the room with little direction, or sit very passively at their table and wait. In some classes, students were given little, if any direction: the teachers were focused on other things, for example the computer, or talking with colleagues at the classroom door. In a number of classes, some students were asleep.”

Report iii, 2006a

Similarly, the reporting frequently did not give help in terms of the context of the school and the progress it was making, as supported by the private provider. For example, although the writing often described good and less good teaching, it rarely gave any indication as to the proportion of each, or stated whether the teaching and learning was improving, and if so, why. So in terms of those particular research questions (number (ii) and (iii)), the teaching segments of the reports were not

\textsuperscript{5} OFSTED grading uses a four point scale, ‘excellent’, ‘good’, ‘satisfactory’ and ‘unsatisfactory’
effective. In particular for research question iii, which is about how effective the methods were in bringing about improvements in the way the partnerships operated and fulfilled their purposes, this lack of detail was obviously unhelpful.

The section on the effectiveness of leadership and administration was the one with most potential for sensitivities, especially given the cross-cultural nature of the project. The analysis of school reports showed up three main aspects: the quality of partnership between school and provider, the systems that were being improved through new policies and procedures, and often a general comment about progress being made (although the latter is also covered in its own section):

“...it is clear that the partnership between the school administration and the senior provider staff is a good and effective one. Despite some initial concerns and anxieties, there is a sense that both parties are now working for the benefit of the boys of .... Increased flexibility on the part of the provider has been rewarded with an evident openness and welcome for the new systems that are being brought into the school, and that will remain when the project is completed. Significant progress has been made in managing the behaviour of the boys.”

Report iv, 2007a

The reports gave credence to the importance of relationships, especially between the principal and the provider. But again measures of actual progress were poorly described or defined, and thus in terms of the research question about effectiveness, it is difficult to argue that the process was being successful.
One of the seemingly additional goals, but in practice a very important one, the promotion of national heritage and culture, was clearly likely to cause difficulty for at least 3 of the providers (two UK and one USA), but also it transpired for the one Arabic company (because of a much more liberal attitude, it being based in the Lebanon, which is an Arabic country but with a rich ethnic and cultural diversity). Overwhelmingly, the reports suggest little if any progress, although often by not saying very much at all about the input from the provider, suggesting it was minimal.

The reported initial conclusions about school performance and the subsequent recommendations showed two characteristics: almost all started with an overall summary statement, based on the Ofsted scale, followed by illustrative comments about the best and the worst going on in the school. The recommendations were linked to the latter. For example:

“The school has made a sound start to the PPP project. The principal and provider are understandably and correctly focussing on the issues around moving to the new site. There is good behaviour in nearly all classes (even when the lesson is not inspiring), and in the main, at break time, too. The boys demonstrate a real love of learning and an enthusiasm for lessons that is noticeable. Many of the teachers have good strategies for managing the boys’ behaviour. The training given by the provider, and the observations that teachers have done in one another’s classrooms, have already had positive impact on some staff. Nevertheless, there is still little differentiation of task, and there is some inappropriately rough handling of the students. There are concerns about the additional resources made available through the provider,
or the lack of them. In mathematics, in reading and so on, it is difficult to see where the resources are being used.”

Report v, 2006b

The recommendations for that school, based on a visit by two inspectors focussed on appropriate issues, like conducting a health and safety audit, addressing the rough handling of the students and continuing training aimed at increasing the amount of differentiation in planning of lessons. In terms of answering the research questions, especially number (iii) about the effectiveness, the recommendations were relevant and supportive of school improvement, if followed through by the school.

Some groups of comments made in the reports did not match the main headings. There were 6 major categories in the comments recorded, that cut across the headings. These were comments made about:

i. Facilities, resources and infrastructure, e.g.

“The extra resources suggested by the provider have been slow to arrive at the school…”

Report ii, 2006b

and

“There is a range of facilities which the boys are unfortunately not able to access because of resourcing or maintenance issues…”

Report iv, 2007a
ii. Good intentions, e.g.

“The providers’ staff are doing a determined job trying to support teachers and offering them the benefit of their experience and expertise, but without joint planning and an agreement between both parties, the future is not positive…”

Report xvii, 2007a

and

“An additional planned intention of this programme is to model good practices to extend the repertoire of skills of two identified teachers to enable them to lead the changes. The provider is aiming that this concentrated support will improve the sustainability of the project with these colleagues: it is hoped they will be leading professional development to cascade, disseminate and provide continual on-going support for the teachers and students across the school.”

Report xxii, 2008a

iii. Lack of readiness of teaching staff, e.g.:

“The principal remains unconvinced that the science resources are appropriate to the needs of the students. In addition, she considers that the teachers are not yet ready to use it (sic) effectively in their science teaching…”

Report xxii, 2007b

And
“IT rooms are not ready for use and many resources remain in storage.”

Report xxiii, 2006b

iv. Understanding of new curriculum that had been introduced, e.g.

“...they are keen to understand the new curriculum and the new methods.”

Report vi, 2006a

And

“...they would like a meeting with the provider so that the new curriculum can be explained as a whole, rather than bit by bit.”

Report xix, 2006b

v. Impact of provider within the school e.g.

“This is made more difficult by the continued lack of full-time on-site leadership of the provider’s team: this dilutes the impact of the provider’s staff, and makes cohesive action more difficult...”

Report xx, 2007a

And

“The impact of the provider on the education of the students is reflected in the teachers developing use of English and the more confident delivery of the ADEC curriculum.”

Report ii, 2007b
vi. Relationships between school and provider e.g.

“The new SMA (School Management Adviser) has begun to build positive relationships with the teachers…”

Report xxx, 2006b

and

“The provider staff have good relationships with the teachers…”

Report xxv, 2007a

Intriguingly, Stage 2 (searching for key words and phrases, with theorising questions) showed that some aspects which had been anticipated to be a key part of the reports were not found. Words and phrases such as “school improvement” and “students’ progress” were not found as often as “teaching quality” and “resources”.
Table 4.2: Sample of search words/phrases, showing high and low frequency occurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search word/phrase</th>
<th>Alternate/s used</th>
<th>Files in which found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘School improvement’</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Students’ progress’</td>
<td>‘Student progress’</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Teaching quality’</td>
<td>‘quality of teaching’</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘resources’</td>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘accommodation’</td>
<td>‘facilities’</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage 3 questions about practicalities, and ideas that would form an agenda for the interviews with stakeholders, grew naturally out of the discrepancies between what had been expected, and what was apparent from analysing the reports. For example, where the phrase “school improvement” had seemed such as obvious one to expect, but was not found frequently, a question or topic for discussion linked to this, was noted.

Because the school reports contain scored judgments, an extra stage was possible. This stage 4 statistical analysis of scores, whilst generating a large amount of numerical data, did not provide insight into the reasons why some schools and providers were being successful and others were not (see sample at appendix 5). It was possible to rank the schools in terms of their scores, and to compare provider to provider, but the comparisons were not helpful, because each of the four providers actually had different models operating in their schools. They argued that this was because of the different starting points and personalities involved, but the outcome for my research was that school/school and provider/provider offered little in the
search for answers to my research questions. I mention more on this, in terms of alternative ways I could have approached the research in my final chapter.

It was clear which schools had scored the highest overall, but this did not take into account that some schools had more advanced teaching strategy and practice, better resources, facilities and better trained senior staff than others. Analysing the scores for progress made was a similarly disappointing process. Although it was possible to see which school had made the biggest “jump” in terms of scoring by the monitors, it was not clear why they had been able to do so.

**School report analysis - summary**

The school report analysis was fruitful, if sometimes surprising. Analysing some 180 reports, with the expectation that some aspects of the PPP would feature heavily, only to see that they did not, was a key finding. The apparent discrepancy between the aims of the PPP project, as defined in the government documents, and the way in which school visits were reported, suggested that the interviews would usefully focus on this, at least in part.

The first stage analysis was guided by the headings of the reports. Stage 2, the seeking and coding of key words and phrases showed up an array of weaknesses, in terms of reporting efficacy, which is strong evidence for the third research question, about effectiveness of the monitoring system. School report sections on students’ achievement and learning were frequently written as descriptions of what the students knew, understood or could do, with very few references to norms or averages. The reports erred on the side of description, rather than measurement of
academic standards and attainment. Lack of reference to norms also weakens other sections of the reports. Even on attendance data, for which there was at least some numerical data, there was still little reference made to benchmark figures or targets, whether school, national or international.

As with the academic attainment sections, the inspection reports were good at describing the current or recent state of the students’ behaviour and attitudes to school, but made in such a way as to make it very difficult to know whether the behaviour and attitudes being reported were good, bad or indifferent.

The school reports had even less detail about the quality of parental and local community involvement, and much that was reported was hearsay. They were more obviously observation-driven when it came to the quality of teaching. But again, whether the teaching was good or not, there still was a lot of description, even when clear grades were given.

The reports also did not give help in terms of the context of the school and the progress it was making, as supported by the private provider. For example, although they often described the best and worst of the lessons seen, they rarely gave any indication as to the proportion of each. Nor did they state whether the teaching and learning was improving, and if so, why.

Analysis of the leadership sections of the school reports showed up three main aspects: the quality of partnership between school and provider, the systems that were being improved through new policies and procedures, and the overall progress
being made. The reports gave some insight into the importance of relationships, but again measures of actual progress were poorly described or defined.

The promotion of national heritage and culture was causing difficulty for all the providers. The reports suggest little if any progress was being made, but from the point of view of this research, the reports were descriptive and vague.

The reported initial conclusions about school performance, provider input and the subsequent recommendations showed logic in terms of being obviously related to each other. There were also clusters of comments made in the reports on

- facilities, resources and infrastructure
- good intentions
- lack of readiness of teaching staff
- understanding of new curriculum that had been introduced
- impact of provider within the school
- relationships between school and provider

These clusters may point to ways of improving the framework for monitoring (research question (v)).

Stage 3 questions about practicalities and ideas that would form an agenda for the interviews with stakeholders, grew quite easily from the weaknesses in the school reports. The discrepancies between what had been expected, and what was seen in the analysis of the reports, was used to frame questions, thus allowing for good triangulation.
The extra stage, statistical analysis of the scores in the school reports, did not provide insight into the reasons why some schools and providers were being successful and others were not. It did generate a large table of numerical scores, making it clear which schools had scored the highest overall, and which provider scored the highest overall (see appendix 5). This really had the potential to distract though, because it did not take into account that some schools had more advanced teaching strategy and practice, better resources, facilities and better trained senior staff than others. As there was no baseline assessment of the quality of education being provided at the school before the providers started their work, it was impossible to see how ‘value added’ could be applied. Thus analysing the scores for progress was a disappointing process. Whilst one could see which school and which provider had made the biggest numerical step forwards in terms of scoring by the inspectors, it was not clear why they had been able to do so, or what had been effective: thus evidence for both research questions (iii) and v.

Overall, the process of analysing 180 school reports provided excellent (if negative) evidence for two of the research questions, and for the interview process to follow.

The analysis suggested strongly that this particular method was not as effective as it should have been in bringing about improvements (my third research question). Furthermore, because each school and provider was operating in a different way, comments would be likely only to be at all valid in the context of that part of the overall partnership. The links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring (my fourth question) were similarly difficult to glean from the reports. These were (understandably) driven by the headings of the reports, not by the larger questions about the success of the project: this led to the data being school-specific,
and difficult to draw together into overall strategic imperatives for the PPP as a whole.

As both of the research questions were being answered negatively, the pursuit of a possible alternative framework for monitoring and evaluating PPP projects focussed on school improvement (my fifth research question), was clearly becoming even more important.

**Interviews**

The interviews were all conducted in a positive and open manner, despite the concerns some participants expressed about attributability of comments made.

Use of SuperFinderXT and NVivo meant that the data collected in a similar manner, but recorded differently, could still be interrogated. Although the relatively small number of interviews taking place meant that statistical analysis would be invalid, the same coding system used in the school reports (based on Ofsted criteria) was adopted:

**Table 4.3: Simple coding system for describing nodes and ideas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost all</th>
<th>90%+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>75%+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>50%+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>&gt;10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were 5 main themes that arose from the interviews:

1. Almost all the participants stated in some way that the monitoring process was not looking at the right things: there were widely differing views as to how this could have been improved, and much depended on the interviewee’s role – headteachers wanted much more focus on the provider team, for example.

   “It is clear, in my opinion, that the operators are not all the same quality. My friend is Principal at ...school, with a different operating company, and she has been given excellent support. She will go to ... in the summer and the operator will pay for all... The monitors did not look at these things.”

   Principal 2, field note

   “Why did the monitors not look at the resumes of the operators? We should not have been told there would be highest quality staff, when that wasn’t true...”

   Principal 5, field note

   “No-one came to see the school before the operator team came here. It makes nonsense. How could ADEC know? The school just became worse after PPP...”

   Principal 6, transcript
2. Many participants also suggested that the monitoring process started too early e.g. “We weren’t ready” was a phrase used by most.

“When the first [monitoring] visit came, we were still planning and getting things ready. None of the resources we were promised had been delivered.”
Principal 4, field note

“It was crazy - ridiculous when I think about it - to think that because of the difficulties getting things going, because of ADEC and some of the Principals, that an inspection so early was going to be fair. It made some of my team feel very hard done by…”
Private provider adviser 1, transcript

3. At the same time, and in seeming contradiction, many suggested that the process had started too late – meaning that there should have been school visits before the PPP project started. “How could they know how much progress we had made, they weren’t here when we started?” was one statement made by an adviser from one provider (see quote above).

4. Many expressed irritation that the process of scoring was fragile – “the grades were too prone to inspector variability” and “some inspectors were not logical”. Even some of the monitors suggested that the system had fundamental flaws.
“Some of the team leaders thought there was much too much subjectivity. They compared notes about the inspectors and their attitudes. There was way too much variety. We knew who the softer ones were...”

Private provider adviser 2, field note

“Some of judgments we made were not logical, because the framework wasn’t right. I know it was drawn up at high speed and all, but there should have been a way to amend the ones like [...] that were very obviously wrong, almost from the moment we started using it. I know ADEC wanted to carry on using the same framework, but it meant we kept have to fudge things – not many, but enough for it to be tricky...”

Monitor 1, field note

5. All five of the private provider advisers suggested that there was too much diffidence in monitoring reports. This was especially true on the area of the quality of leadership in the schools. Although it did apply in all leadership posts in a school, there was a general feeling expressed that the monitoring process was stacked against those who worked for the provider.

“It was very clear that ADEC wanted to find fault in the providers, not the schools...”

Private provider adviser 2, field note
“Looking back, it’s funny really – it didn’t feel like a partnership at all, between ADEC and [...] I was being nagged by [...] my boss, and then the ADEC monitors came in and did exactly the same. I felt like I was being pulled lots of different directions, blamed for things that were not my control [sic] and wasn’t on the same side as anyone else...”

Private provider adviser 3, field note

In addition to these, it was perhaps to be expected, that some minor themes also arose, apparent only in a sub-set of the interviews:

- Many of the school staff expressed concerns that the monitoring teams were not well briefed about the schools and the communities they exist in. One deputy head said “Some of them really were learning from us, not the other way around...”

- Many of the school staff and all the civil servants suggested that there was too little focus on the impact that the provider was having. The key point was that the school-focussed reports looked at the school-based team – but that there was not enough focus on the private provider team. Some civil servants and the monitors noted that some of the provider teams had large ‘senior management’ attachments who were not really being held to account, especially not directly. One of the latter said that a particular company had set up an “Abu Dhabi Local Education Authority” for just a handful of schools, and that like the local education authorities in England, because their impact was arm’s length, it was impossible to see which companies were
really adding value and which were not. The comment was made that “it ultimately seemed to depend on which companies recruited the best staff, and we could have done that ourselves…”

- This group also expressed a perception that the reports became the driving factor for the private providers and (at least in some) schools – rather than school improvement, *per se.* It was obvious from a number of comments and also the allusions made, that for some, the report became the be all and end all. Provider staff in particular felt that not only were the monitoring teams judging them, but that this became a shorthand and easy way for their own line managers to hold them to account, even when the issues around the framework and the variety of starting points for different schools were allowed for.

- All the civil servants and a few of the school staff were concerned that there was not enough focus on the financial details and accountability. Statements were made like “of course it was about school improvement, but it was also about the amount of money being spent”, and “...I would have spent much more time looking at whether what they said they were spending, was really being spent…”

- One of the provider staff suggested that there was an inherent problem with the process being set up as a competition: “It was supposed to be a partnership project – but it didn’t feel like that, we were always being reminded [by ADEC] that we had to do better than the other providers...”. Similarly, one of the monitors suggested that the competition was counter-
productive: “It all became too much about which company was doing the best or worst, would anyone lose their contract, which company would get extra schools” and commented that this became a distraction to the process of school improvement.

- Both monitors interviewed suggested that the job was too big. One said “...in a single day, we were supposed to judge the quality of education, the impact the provider was having, whether ADEC’s funds were being used efficiently, what everyone should be doing better – and then the next day we were in a different school, with a different provider... Sometimes I visited 5 schools in a week...”

**Interviews – summary**

With hindsight, it was predictable that the interviewees would have some views in common, and many that differed. There were three key themes that came from most or nearly all, including those that statistically were ‘minority reports’.

First, it is evident that there were widely differing ideas as to what the monitoring process was supposed to achieve. Some talked about school improvement, some about financial accountability and others about contractual adherence. In terms of my third research question about the effectiveness of the monitoring process for bringing about improvements in the way this PPP operated and fulfilled its purpose, this was a clear, negative answer. Similarly, the lack of clarity as to the links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring (research question iv), was also evident.
Second, the timing was an issue. A number of people bemoaned the fact that the process started too early and others that it had started too late. Again, in terms of effectiveness of the process, and accountability, the answers were clear. The accountabilities laid out in the documentation that underpinned the project of course, is that of the provider to the Abu Dhabi Education Council, and not to the school. I will look at this in the next chapter.

Third, there was a view that the focus of the whole PPP project became the reports. This seemed coupled to a feeling from some that inspectors’ grades were not really secure, because they had not been at the school at the beginning of the process, or because they did not have sufficient background information. This again answered negatively my third research question about effectiveness.

In terms of developing a framework for more effective monitoring and evaluation of PPP projects focussed on school improvement, the analysis of the interview data were very powerful.
Overall research findings - summary

Table given at 4.4 attempts to draw together the themes from these three different sets of data analysis.

Table 4.4: Summary of main themes from three data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government documents</th>
<th>High aspiration for student outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other goals added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on financial accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitive nature of project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of clarity as to what the monitoring process would entail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School reports</td>
<td>Insufficient focus on school improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on teaching quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Lack of clarity as to focus of monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leading to too much focus on school reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timing – when?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of these themes were couched as questions by the interviewees. This seemed an interesting way to address the efficacy of the monitoring process. The main questions are repeated and recast below, including those questions which arose out of the documents, both technical and school focussed:

- What was it for?
• When should it start?
• What data should be collected and analysed?
• Should the PPP be 'competitive'?

My overall research aim (and specifically my third research question) was to evaluate the method used to measure the effectiveness of the PPP project in the first group of Abu Dhabi’s state-funded schools. I wanted to do this to develop a better framework for describing and measuring both processes and outcomes of the contracted-out management services model used.

The data generated from the three sources – government documents, school inspection reports and semi-structured interviews – has provided strong basis for meeting this aim.

Thus the answers to the research questions are:

i. The type of PPP being used to manage and improve target schools in Abu Dhabi was thought to be a contracted-out management services model (see chapter 1), but because the responsibilities and accountabilities were not clearly set out, it also drifted in some schools into education services, professional services and even in some schools, to facilities development.

ii. The methods used to measure the processes and outcomes of these partnership are clearly based on the Ofsted practices in England, with limited contextual differences allowed for, in terms of geographical, political or
professional quality of the school, or of the provider.

iii. The effectiveness of the monitoring method in bringing about improvements in the way the partnerships operated and fulfilled was limited, for two reasons. First the success criteria of the PPP were unclear and secondly, because the means of collecting evidence not entirely fit-for-purpose, in that the quality of the schools was being measured, rather than the effectiveness of the PPP.

iv. The links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring, were not clear from the start of the project. This lead to confusion (and worse) amongst the schools and the providers.

v. There must be an alternative, more effective framework for monitoring and evaluating PPP projects which focusses more rigorously on school improvement, which I will explore in chapter 5.
Chapter 5: Analysis and discussion

In response to Yin’s (2009) exhortation for high-quality data analysis, the following have been regularly considered:

- Consider **all** the evidence
- All major **rival** interpretations
- Focus on most important/**significant**
- Use of prior, ‘**expert**’ knowledge

The data collected and analysed has been substantial (Table 4.1). Different interpretations have been offered and considered, in particular during the interviews. Both documentary analyses were aided by computer software and (more fallible, but more creative) human consideration have both been used.

Using Blomberg and Volpe’s (2016, p. 127) notion of turning data into information, and then further into knowledge, there are three themes which emerge from the three sets of data:

a. lack of clarity over the overriding goals of the project;

b. lack of involvement of the staff and other stakeholders in the schools in setting up and timing of the monitoring process;
c. a general view that although the monitoring process used gave some information, it was not as clear and useful as it could have been.

As suggested by Davies and Hentschke (2006, p. 217), to be successful, a PPP project must have some minimal level of monitoring in place before it starts: otherwise how is success or failure to be measured and recognised. It seems possible that one reason for the lack of perception on the part of the interviewees as to the purpose of monitoring (for the Council, but also for parents), might be that there was no monitoring carried out before. The main focus of the monitoring process was perceived as being about the performance of the school, rather than the performance of the partnership. This was also attributed to parents, who were reported as not really being interested in the monitoring process per se, but in how the school itself was perceived.

It may be that perception of blurred goals for the PPP and the lack of clarity as to the monitoring process and its purpose are not uncommon. Hodge and Greve (2010, 2007) suggest that partnership goals are typically vague; they further suggest that there are three potential sources of evidence about whether a PPP is working well or not: policy rhetoric, the legal contract, and the experience of historical outcomes. In the context of the PPPs in Abu Dhabi, the first source is not one to look at, as it would not be likely to assist in answering the research questions. Government rhetoric is rarely openly questioned in undemocratic countries, and although elected bodies exist now in the UAE, at the time of the research, they did not. Focussing therefore further on the other two areas, is a way to consider with ‘expert’ (Yin, 2009) eyes, what the data suggests.
The key question seems to be to what extent should monitoring be about the legal contract underpinning the PPP, and how much is it about the outcomes driving the project. The two may be related, but they also may be contradictory, in the sense that there might be a realisation that what was thought to be a good solution at the start of the project, turns out to be questionable, even though enshrined in contract.

The long and painstaking process of data collection and analysis, led to a series of obvious data-driven themes, summarised in Table 4.4 above. But it also led to a number of questions.

First, in considering the government documents, one of the clearest of the themes that appeared was that of high aspiration. But it became apparent as the research developed, that the starting point from which progress towards this lofty goal was to be measured, was unclear. In no document examined was there any statement made as to basis of the government’s aim. Indeed, the literature could be used to argue that the educational outcomes of the UAE were better than many other countries in the region. Khondker (2011, p. 305) writes:

Consider some of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) such as the United Arab Emirates with its adult literacy (90%) comparable to that of Asian tigers⁶, life expectancy (77.7) following closely in the heels of that of the United States (79.6) or Britain (79.8) where many more women than men complete university education...

⁶ A term usually referring to Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan.
Although there is data now that the Abu Dhabi government was right to seek to upgrade the education system in international terms, it was only in 2011 that the Emirate took part in any of the major international comparative competitions. Taking part in TIMMS as a benchmarking process, it scored 417, well ahead of Yemen (248) and ahead of all but one of the GCC countries. The score was behind that of Dubai (468) however, and well behind top-scorer Singapore (606).

Secondly, the focus on financial accountability, stated many times in different ways in the government documents, was not matched by specified activities suggested. Although civil service officials expressed concern in interviews that the providers were making too much profit/surplus, it was difficult at the time, to quantify. It turned out they were right: in their publicly available accounts, it is clear that at least one of the providers (supposedly a not-for-profit company) made a surplus of over £2,000,000 in a single year, according to its own accounts for that year.

These two factors alone sufficiently muddied the waters, leading to the concerns and queries expressed by interviewees. Add to this, the extra goals which were added to the PPP - increasing parent and community involvement, strengthen the quality and quantity of Emirati teachers and headteachers, and promoting national heritage and culture (see footnote 3) – and the water becomes even murkier. Add finally, a layer of competitiveness between the private partners and an unclear monitoring process, and the project becomes set not in a spirit of partnership but more one of siege mentality, where assumptions were made by providers and then stuck to, even when the assumptions were subsequently challenged by ADEC.
It is my contention that the original documentation describing the PPP project was insufficiently clear in two ways. It failed to identify desired outcomes in any manner which was measurable. It also failed to specify that there needed to be a well-defined starting point: without this, how would it be possible to note progress being made. One of the clear messages that came from the interviews, too, was that the timing of monitoring visits was an issue. A number of people bemoaned the fact that the process started too early and others that it had started too late. My interpretation of this is that both viewpoints might well have been right: as there were no well-defined initial measures of the those characteristics that the Council wanted to be improved, it is perfectly possible for one school and its provider team to want a very early monitoring visit, to demonstrate later how far they had come together, whilst another would have wanted a later visit, because they were still working out how to work together. As Levin (2013) suggests, there is a dearth of careful empirical work: this was certainly true of this PPP project.

Similarly, in terms of effectiveness of the process, and accountability, the documents and therefore the individual stakeholders’ understandings were unclear. The accountabilities laid out in the documentation that underpinned the project of course, were that of the provider to the Abu Dhabi Education Council. They did not clarify if there were any to the school, although those interviewed felt great allegiance to the schools in which they worked, and not to the Council. Indeed, many of the provider staff felt they were only given a very superficial overview of the project, and therefore fell back on their own (often substantial) experience of school improvement. It can be argued that this was valuable, but it was not necessarily aligned with the purposes of the project, which were systemic as well individual. As mentioned in chapter 2, Howlett and Ramesh (1995) suggested that the manner in
which analysts explain public policy and the aspects which they chose to emphasise, are dependent on their own frames of reference. This seems absolutely reflected in the views of those provider staff interviewed.

Even more apparent, was the theme from the school staff, who suggested that the monitoring process was not looking at the right things: surely this would not have been a common view, if there had been clear guidance on what the project was meant to achieve.

In terms of accountabilities, there were widely differing views as to how this could have been improved. Headteachers for example wanted much more focus on the provider team; providers often stated that the monitoring was too vague about weak leadership in schools.

Many interviewees made unsupported assertions, or attributed factual status to comments made by friends or colleagues. I recall myself during the project having to spend significant periods of time scotching rumours, usually about money, that circulated from time to time.

Fullan (2009) describes the reform work carried out in Ontario, and emphasises the small number of goals that led to its success. Perhaps the political imperatives of wanting to be seen to be working on all aspects of the school system in Abu Dhabi, led to too many goals being set, and all too vaguely. Barber (2009) suggests that the countries that are the most successful in implementing change effectively are those setting closely aligned strategies that are coherent and flexible.
Research questions and answers

My first research question was about what type of PPP was being used to manage and improve the target schools in Abu Dhabi. I now know it was a contracted-out management services model: this became clear during the literature review and later during the analysis of government documents related to the project. What I find astonishing is that I may still be the only person who realised this: I could find no documentary evidence that this was understood at any level, nor did any person mention it (or anything close to it) during my interviews.

My second question was about what the methods used to measure the processes and outcomes of the partnership. The answer is that a traditional, outsider monitoring process was adopted by the Council, based on the school inspection system of the UK. The answer immediately leads to the third research question, about how effective this method was in bringing about improvements in the way the partnerships operated and fulfilled (or did not fulfil) their purposes. The view becomes, in my view, ever more opaque. Because the project was not set up with clear measurable outcomes, it is arguable whether any monitoring system would have been effective in bringing about systemic improvements. My experience, supported by at least some of the interviewees, was that even using a flawed model of monitoring, the monitors themselves tried hard to reflect the progress they could see and to support further improvement. But the focus was on the school, not the project itself. Although the World Bank (2006) reported that contracted-out management type of PPPs usually gave positive results, including cost savings and
quality improvement amongst others, the basis on which these claims are made are very unclear. As an evaluation of how the World Bank spends its money supporting PPPs around the globe, this is very unsatisfactory.

Furthermore, trying to answer my fourth question, which was about the links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring in the context of the project, also highlighted the same weaknesses: lack of baseline measures, lack of clarity of desired outcomes, poor involvement of the key project stakeholders at the planning stage and an opaque vision of what governance of Abu Dhabi state schools should look like. It is clear that the main accountability of the provider was to the Council, but the strings of that were, according to the documents and the interviewees, far more focussed on finances than on school improvement.

At this stage of the research, I even started to question the concept of school improvement. Gorard (2010 pp. 745–6) makes the point as follows:

“There are also, of course, a number of differing ways of judging school performance. Schools could be evaluated in terms of financial efficiency, student attendance, student enjoyment of education, future student participation in education, student aspiration, preparation for citizenship and so on. Another perfectly proper indicator of school success can be based on student scores in assessments intended to discover how much or how well students have learnt what is taught in the school.”
The problem, highlighted by my research, is that there was no firm or shared understanding of what the measures we were all working on were.

My final research question about an alternative framework for monitoring and evaluating PPP projects focused on school improvement, that might be more effective. The interview evidence points strongly towards the models used in development planning. As Newton et al. (2013) pointed out after they mapped the logical steps leading from what the trainee teachers learned in their programmes, to what they were doing in classrooms, was that the logic model approach made more explicit the links between programme processes and the intended outcomes.

If schools are, as I believe:

“complex, contradictory, sometimes incoherent organisations... assembled over time to form a bricolage of memories, commitments, routines, bright ideas and policy effects”

(Ball 1996)

then the onus on the planners, implementers and agents of school improvement projects to be as clear as possible, is surely even greater. In the context of my research, the outsider visit is so fraught with cultural and operational risks, as well as difficulties in terms of the framework against which to make judgements, that it is at very best, a blunt instrument. Far more likely to support and reinvigorate improvement projects if an insider-monitor model is adopted.
A final thought based on the above analysis: the intentions of those working at all levels of the project cannot be faulted. But as Reynolds et al. (2016) suggest, more efforts are need on the part of researchers to engage with policymakers.
Chapter 6: Conclusion & recommendations

As suggested in chapter 2, Hodgson et al. (2007) reviewed the evidence on improvement in public services. They suggest that there is still insufficient evidence available on what works, in bringing about improvement. They conclude that there is a need for “sustained research in this area”. The data from my research suggests that there are two even more fundamental questions that have to be asked, before looking at what may or may not work, for improving educational services.

First, before any PPP project aimed at improving educational services (or perhaps any other type of project even) can be started with any reasonable chance of success, a clear indication of the starting point must be made. In the same way that Hattie (2009) reminds us that children learn most of the time anyway, and it is the school’s job to maximise that learning, it is conceivable that schools will improve if given more resources or professional expertise: but improve by how much, and with what value added by the private provider, is a question that can only be answered by knowing how good the school was in the first place.

In Abu Dhabi in 2005, there was very limited access to student assessment data, and the little that was available, was not externally validated. Thus reporting on improvements in students’ attainment, would have more correctly started with a proper measurement of their starting point.

The second question is very closely linked to the first. The style of monitoring process, for all its lack of clarity, is recognisably based on the Ofsted regime in the UK. It required trained inspectors to visit schools with a set of standards against
which to measure the quality of the educational processes, creating a formal summative report. It is arguable whether this ‘outsider’ visit process was the most likely to lead to successful outcomes for the project. Certainly most of those interviewed were at best uncertain about this. Given the complexity of the Abu Dhabi schools at the time of the project commencement, the key question is, was this particular monitoring process the right one? The complexities were manifold. For example, there was strong reliance on Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian teachers and headteachers who (as non-locals) expressed anxiety about any judgments that might offend or appear negative, thus jeopardising their jobs. There was limited accurate data of any sort - even the exact location of some of the schools was not held by the Council. The accuracy of many sets of attendance figures was highly suspect. Corporal punishment was rife. School doors were regularly locked to prevent students from leaving the building. There were significant numbers of teachers who taught less than 18 periods out of 36, whilst still drawing full time salaries. There were very few Emirati teachers, and virtually none in the boys’ schools. Compare this scenario with the conditions suggested by, for effective outsider monitoring:

Figure 6.1: conditions for conventional “outsider” monitoring (after Weir, 1995)

Perhaps the greatest potential barrier to success of the PPP was that neither parents nor headteachers were consulted over the proposed changes, even though the latter
are the ones most in touch with the parents, and therefore in a pivotal position to promote the success (or otherwise) of the initiative. As Sammons suggested (2007, p. 60), it is important to give emphasis to the positive, collegiate approach to school empowerment, creating “a positive culture for learning with high expectations” and to “match accountability pressure by support for schools (professional, and in curriculum, financial and material resources)”.

Most Abu Dhabi state school principals (as opposed to teachers) are Emirati: they have strongly held views - even passions - about their country, its values and its culture (Khalaf, 2000; Hareb 1996; Davis 1991). They are balancing conflicting imperatives of the policy shift and the conservative views of many parents (Davidson, 2009), but were not asked about how the changes could be made, or monitored.

It could be suggested that too little time and effort was spent preparing for the monitoring of the PPP project in Abu Dhabi. The people who were and are the real experts on the education system of Abu Dhabi (for example the teachers, principals, supervisors) were not consulted about how the performance of the PPP could and should have been monitored: this weakened the model (Penta International, 2009, 2008, 2007, 2006). My own experience suggests that principals of the schools were more than happy to talk about their schools and the way they responded to external policies.

An alternative style of monitoring exists, as mentioned in chapter 2. Logic modelling is used in particular in development projects (Gage and Dunn, 2009; Frankel and Gage, 2007), but rarely so far in education. The approach Gage and
others term ‘programme-level logic modelling’ analyses data by matching empirically observed events to theoretically predicted ones, and building explanations. Wholey (1979) first proposed the notion of programme logic models, to trace events when a public programme intervention was intended to produce a certain outcome or set of outcomes. He suggested that any intervention would produce activities with initial, intermediate and ultimate outcomes – the latter in theory would (or should) match with the programme’s key success criteria.

Figure 6.2: logic modelling for PPP – ‘participatory’ monitoring

The approach has been defined thus:

“A program logic model is a picture of how your program works – the theory and assumptions underlying the program. This model provides a road map of your program, highlighting how it is expected to work, what
activities need to come before others, and how desired outcomes are achieved.”


The potential advantages of this approach may be seen by matching characteristics against questions raised in this thesis by the technical government documents and the school reports, and the concerns expressed by interviewees.

The first major finding from the government documentation was about the lack of clarity over the overriding goals of the project. The use of the framework supplied by logic modelling would have been of assistance in the setting of goals, because it requires three levels to be set. I believe it is a fair assumption to make that any discussions over initial, intermediate and ultimate aims would have been more likely to uncover the necessity of having firm measures of student outcome and educational quality. In this particular project, further discussion of the additional goals regarding parental involvement, teaching quality and national heritage would have either set a long list of specific targets, or suggested a return to a more straightforward set of objectives.

The second major issue, identified mainly from the interviewees, was about the lack (or perceived lack) of involvement of school staff and other stakeholders in the schools in setting up and timing of the monitoring process. Adopting the programme logic modelling approach, would require a more detailed analysis of the steps needed to reach the final goals: my expectation is that this would require much more school input than was needed in the projects under consideration. Indeed, it might well have needed each of the 30 schools to assist in writing the steps, because the different
schools (understandably) had different starting points, different students, different communities, different strengths, different weaknesses, and different workforces in place. It is conceivable that using a logic modelling approach would have led to 30 different sets of steps, all leading to the ultimate goal/s. It may be argued that this is a far better approach given the competitive nature of the project, and the different educational philosophies espoused by the private providers.

The third major issue was that although the monitoring process used gave some useful information, it was not as clear and effective as it could have been. It seems evident, given the data presented in this research, that a stepped monitoring approach, in line with the series of intermittent steps set, would have allowed a much more intelligent approach. It would, counter-intuitively perhaps from an external Ofsted-style background, have allowed for schools and providers to suggest themselves when they were ready to be ‘measured’ against progress made, as Ofsted now do (Ofsted, 2015).

In the context of its possible use in the monitoring of PPP projects in education, I will describe this approach as “participatory” monitoring. It is an approach which recognises and accepts that the context of many improvement projects is ‘messy’ (Ackoff, 1979, 1974). If the agency organising the project is able to embrace this messiness, an ‘insider-monitor’ approach becomes a more logical solution to the problem of how to attain the overall aim, whilst also maintaining a sensible ceiling on costs and profits/surpluses. The most common users of this style of monitoring are non-governmental organisations that have been running development projects, such as those run by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (2007).
Participatory monitoring is defined by the Red Cross (2007) as “a process through which stakeholders at various levels engage in monitoring or evaluating a particular project, programme or policy, share control over the content, the process and the results of the monitoring and evaluation activity and engage in taking or identifying corrective actions” (accessed at http://www.sswm.info/print/2392?tid= ).
Table 6.1: The key differences between traditional and participatory monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Traditional Evaluation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Participatory Evaluation</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHY: Accountability – summary judgements about the project/programme to determine if funding continues</td>
<td>WHY: To empower local people to initiate, control and take corrective action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO: External experts</td>
<td>WHO: Community members, project/programme staff, facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT: Predetermined indicators of success, principally cost and production output; assesses project/programme impact</td>
<td>WHAT: People define their own indicators of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW: Focus on scientific objectivity; distancing of evaluators from other participants; uniform complex procedures; delayed &amp; limited access to results</td>
<td>HOW: Self-evaluation; simple methods adapted to local context; open immediate sharing of results through local involvement in evaluation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHEN: Midterm and completion; sometimes ex-post (long after the project/programme)</td>
<td>WHEN: Frequent small evaluations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from IFRCRCS, 2007, p. 8)

Chapman and Miric (2009) suggest that the main challenge facing the whole of the Middle East and North Africa region is how to raise the quality of school instruction and, by extension, the quality of student learning. Intuitively, it seems unlikely that
the same approach will be effective in all, most, or even many countries. They themselves propose a four-pronged approach developing teacher preparation programmes that can introduce new teaching methods, better utilising the existing teaching workforces, creating strategies that motivate teachers more effectively, and engaging parents and communities in ways that broaden educational quality. There is some overlap with the goals of the Abu Dhabi PPP project, but on the basis of the research in this thesis, it is not the goal/s but the logical steps towards them, that are crucial.

As an example, figure 6.3 below posits some possible steps towards the main goal of raising student achievement. It is hypothetic, and is given here as an illustration of how complex the logic modelling process can be, but how much more coherent it appears, at least *prima facie*. 
Support for a participatory monitoring process from other aspects of education

The experiences and perceptions of school leaders in countries that do not have a long history of Western style education are beginning to be researched and therefore better understood. The studies there are now suggesting that there is often a perceived disconnection between accountability and responsibility, at many levels. Gumus and Akcaoglu (2013) found that primary school teachers did not believe that principals supported the process of teaching and learning well, although teachers were accountable to the principals for the results of the lessons. Razzaq and Forde (2013) suggest that for school leaders in Pakistan, one of the main themes upon which they agreed, was the need for change, but tempered with concerns about the
way it was being planned and implemented. In particular, there were questions about
the limited nature of engagement of the leaders in the process, the rapid pace of
change, the poor coordination of the implementation, and the instability of policy.
Overall, the Pakistani school leaders advocated a model of change that is consistent
with the monitoring process suggested in this thesis. Being an adaptive model, rather
than an adoptive one (Hopkins et al., 1994), it implies that it is more responsive to
culture, context and environment, and might help limiting the lack of ownership
reported by many teachers in development programmes (Higgins and Rwanyange,
2005).

The participatory monitoring process requires that not only are small steps identified,
but that they are also open to stakeholders’ views and thoughts, from a very early
stage. Whilst it is not feasible to dilute or alter top-level strategy, the stages and
phases required to get there are and (according to the data suggested in this thesis)
should be more responsive to local circumstances and more customised to meet local
needs. Thus monitoring informs school/provider operation, and the other way
around.

Fullan (2009) proposes a framework for systemic educational reforms and suggests
the latest leadership paradigm encompasses having a broad directional vision, but
also (amongst other characteristics) involves:

- listening to others including those with whom one disagrees;
- respecting and reconciling differences;
- unifying opposition;
- identifying win–win scenarios;
• being hopeful and humbly confident, no matter what.

Fullan is looking at large-scale reform, meaning deliberate policy and strategy attempts to change the system as a whole. He defines a system as including a government and all its schools, and calls this tri-level reform: schools and their communities, districts or region, and state. I suggest that the Abu Dhabi PPP programme, whilst not at the beginning a ‘large-scale reform’, it was a miniature version of one, (not, I think, a ‘small-scale reform’, which implies less lofty goals).

All of the features mentioned by Fullan in his framework fit with the PPP programme, and the disquiet about the monitoring of it, suggested by the interviewees taking part in this research.

It is unclear what the baseline for the PPP project was, and thus measuring progress was always going to be difficult. There was little if any shared understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the principals and vice principals, for example, even though they were clearly going to be key players in the programme. Ng (2013) shows that aspiring school leaders in Hong Kong are more comfortable about their understanding of teachers’ professional growth and development needs, than about the links between accountability and quality assurance, and similarly between learning, teaching and the curriculum. There is no such analysis available for the 30 original principals involved in the PPP programme.
Principals are increasingly recognised as needing to play a central role in school reform (OECD, 2010). This is especially important if as Cranston (2013) suggests, the concept of accountability has undermined the idea that the teachers and principals should be driving school improvement, rather than implementing ideas from outside the profession. The possible move away from focussing on accountability to instead highlighting and supporting professional responsibility, also fits with the model of monitoring suggested in this thesis. One difference between responsibility and accountability is that responsibility can be shared, while accountability cannot. Being accountable might mean being responsible for school improvement, but it is something you hold a person to only after a task is done (or not done). Being responsible starts before and during the task at hand.

There is also the question of how ownership and responsibility for school improvement might positively affect the rate and the quality of the process. Getting the balance right between challenge and realism when setting the specific goals of a school improvement project must be a key element, both for the process itself and therefore for the effective monitoring of it. Flow theory was first cited by Csikszentmihalyi (1991), identifying the importance of achievable relationship between skill level and challenge. He first postulated the concept of ‘flow’ being a completely focused motivation or unwavering immersion in a task or event. With others, he suggested that ‘flow’ has many dimensions:

i. Challenge-skills balance;
ii. Action-awareness merging;
iii. Clear goals;
iv. Unambiguous feedback;
v. Concentration on the task in hand;
vi. Sense of control;
vii. Loss of self-consciousness;
viii. Transformation of time;
ix. Autotelic (self-motivating) experience.

(Csikszentmihalyi 1991, p. 24)

The dimensions have been well established in many fields, including sports, surgery, as well as in education. There is considerable overlap between these ideas of flow, and the findings suggested in this thesis. The balance between challenge and skill is critical to the success of PPP projects, and thus to the monitoring of that success. If there is too great an imbalance, the project is unlikely to succeed, and the monitoring process will become a litany of faults and flaws. Action-awareness may be interpreted in the school improvement context as the sensation of perfect coordination: many interviewees reported a lack of this sense, which for some at least, added to the imbalance of challenge and skill. The need and desire for clear goals was mentioned by almost all, and also could be drawn from the government documents. Unambiguous feedback seemed to be lacking, and again this is predictable in a situation that does not have clear goals. Most of those interviewed suggested that the lack of clarity led to too much concentration on one thing – the school’s report. Whilst this might have been appropriate if the goals were clearly outlined and judged in the reports, that they were not (nor could they be), meant that many people’s focus shifted away from the school improvement process. Both the lack of control and high levels of self-consciousness about the project and especially (for the principals and vice principals) being put into a position of being expected to support and defend a project they did not clearly understand or (for many) agree with, added to the lack of Flow. Time was also an issue: one principal stated very
clearly the expectation that the project would not last long: “I’ll still be here, but you’ll be gone”. The idea that working on the PPP project was in any way a self-rewarding or autotelic experience was clearly not the case. The monitoring process provoked misunderstanding and nervousness, and thus was de-motivating for some. The over-riding aim of this thesis is to help avoid this barrier or brake in future projects of a similar ilk.

The participatory monitoring framework as outlined above is a method which has stakeholders at various levels engage in monitoring the project, sharing control of content, the process and the results of the monitoring and also engaging in identifying corrective actions. It seems likely to might go some way to stimulating greater flow, as shown in table 6.2:

Table 6.2: Impact of participatory monitoring on flow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flow dimension</th>
<th>Participatory monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenge-skills balance</td>
<td>Improved balance, because of better and more inclusive goal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action-awareness merging</td>
<td>Greater possibility, due to better balance of challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear goals</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unambiguous feedback</td>
<td>The small logical steps agreed between monitoring agent and provider would provide much clearer criticism and advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration on the task in hand</td>
<td>Less likelihood of focussing on tangential issues and events, if the process is clearer and detailed more logically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of control</td>
<td>More of a sense of control, because there really would be a greater participation and input from those involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Loss of self-consciousness

Process much less likely to provoke anxiety and self-consciousness, if it is better understood and has been created more collaboratively.

Transformation of time

Much less likely to be of concern, because as each logical step is monitored at an appropriate period, the concentrated-ness of time that can appear to slow it down or speed it up, is much less likely to happen.

Autotelic experience

As above, much more likely, as the participants have been more involved, had more control and are much more aware of the logic of the process.

It seems to me that answers to the research questions posed at the start of this thesis are beginning to become clearer. Indeed, they might contribute to solving the key issues surrounding educational system reform at national level in Abu Dhabi, and even in other countries.

Describing and contextualising the type of PPP being used to manage schools in Abu Dhabi (my research question i) has been answered with reference to a wide-ranging investigation of the types, and intentions of PPP projects in education and other sectors.

Identification of the methods used to measure the processes and outcomes of these partnerships (my research question ii) was more challenging, simply because of the limited range of techniques in use, predominantly focussed on financial considerations, rather than quality.
Evaluation of these methods (especially those used for the focus group of Abu Dhabi schools) in terms of their effectiveness for bringing about improvements in the way PPPs operate and fulfil their purposes (my research question iii), was considered. I adopted a mixed method approach using three sources of evidence (government documents, school inspection reports and semi-structure interviews) and found that there were many fundamental criticisms and therefore many ways in which improvements could be suggested.

The links between accountability, governance and quality monitoring (my question iv) were explored at all phases of the research, including the literature review and the evidence gathering. Weaknesses in these links also offered ideas for a more effective monitoring system.

The development of a more effective framework for monitoring and evaluation of PPP projects, more sharply focussed on school improvement (my question v) was informed by all aspects of this thesis.

The stated overall research aim was to evaluate the method used to measure the effectiveness of PPP projects in education in order to develop a framework for describing and measuring both processes and outcomes of the contracted-out management services model used in a group of Abu Dhabi’s government schools. I believe that this has been achieved and offers to the sector new ideas and understanding within a revised framework for PPP school improvement projects.
Chapter 7: Personal reflections

My original contribution to knowledge is the creation of a different way to analyse the successes of a Public-Private Partnership in education. I have enjoyed pulling the different strands of literature, research and thought together, and adding data from my own research.

I have also had much time to contemplate the joys and challenges of this kind of research. The tips and pitfalls of writing a doctoral thesis are well covered in the literature: for example, the importance of establishing a firm structure (Joyner et al. 2012), deciding whether the thesis stems from the desire to know more about something (Burgess et al 2006) or from a wish to apply the findings to a situation (Graustein, 2014), and the importance of being organised (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016). All of these and other general issues applied to my own experience, of course. I have been aware of five other issues too, which may not apply to the majority of other researchers and are thus worthy of note.

First, the political context in which my work has taken place has been (and correctly so), at the front of my consciousness over the whole research period. The excitement of the Arab Spring had little direct impact on the United Arab Emirates. Indirectly however, it has affected the whole region, if only to make even the most stable and relaxed of regimes very aware of the fragility of some of the current systems.

Secondly, the cultural differences dealt with during the research are great and very varied. Even amongst the sample of those interviewed, there were people from all over the world, including Australia, Egypt, Jordan, the UK, the United Arab
Emirates, and USA. Each has their own educational and cultural experiences, and thus different interpretation of the programme, the monitoring process and of the questions asked in this research.

Thirdly, I have pondered hard on the pitfalls of doing research in less than ideal circumstances. The circumstances under which this research was undertaken had characteristics that did much to deter the idea of research: not only the inherent difficulties of the political and cultural circumstances referred to above, but the situation of my having been involved in the programme that was being studied. Although there were clear advantages to being an insider, as in knowing already much of the cultural context, having links to people who would be important to the research and an unparalleled level of insight into the monitoring process, each of these also presented disadvantages. For example, having some understanding of a foreign culture, can lead one (erroneously) to thinking that one knows more than one does; and insight into the process could have caused lack of objectivity.

Linking these three features together, were the ethical considerations. The research involved people making statements and judgements that might be considered unwise, if repeated and attributed. In a country where the rulers are widely adored and revered, but also run it with a firm hand, it is hard for some to think about aspects of life that can be improved: even couched in this way - “what can we make even better” – some citizens would be nervous of misinterpretation and misrepresentation.

This led to the fifth and last issue: with all political, cultural and social tightropes to be walked, all the compromises that had to be made with the way the interviews were recorded (or not recorded), with all the difficulties of persuading people to talk
openly and honestly, was it going to be worth it, for the people involved, as well as for me. Vitally, was the research really going to make an original contribution to knowledge?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, I believe the answer to the questions contained in issue 5 is ‘yes’. Over the years that this study has been developing, I have completely changed the way I look at research. My supervisors will agree that I started with a strong desire to undertake a quantitative, statistically founded, number-rich investigation that would to some degree at least, end up with ‘an answer’. In the early years, it became increasingly obvious that although this ideal fitted with my own scientific and mathematical background, it was not appropriate for these research questions. Years of study with the Open University have developed a strong belief that one of the characteristics that has held back the development of the teaching profession is avoidance of evidence-driven learning. Hargreaves (1996) and Hammersley (1997) point out that this is perhaps the over-riding flaw within education itself: not promoting a method of formulating strategy, large- and small-scale, on the basis of measurable data, gathered and validated over time, during which all possible variables have been accounted for. Somehow, this need for measurable data, was equated with statistics and numbers. It gradually became clear that there was not sufficient knowledge available as yet on which to base this particular set of research questions. It would therefore have been premature to attempt to look at a narrower set of research questions, and seek numerical data. Rather, the data collected needed to be reflected upon and then fed back onto the data collection process itself. Hartley and Chesworth’s work (2000) was critical in this change for me. They suggested that investigations using different methods of data collection fed into one another in a sequential
reflective chain: that is a good description of the process underlying this thesis. Another way of looking at the research process undertaken here, is that just because it was ‘messy’ does not mean it was not valuable or important: what I had to do was to try to make some order out of the chaos.

Had the (perhaps) more rationale view prevailed, I would have refocused my questions around a much smaller theme. But I believe this would have been inappropriate at this time: there is still little research being carried out in the Middle East, compared to other parts of the world; there are similarly few studies of the impact of PPP in education. The contribution which seemed most proper to seek to make, was to try to paint a broad sketch of the issues, the perceptions of the participants and the techniques being used to look at the success of this kind of project. Thanks to the analysis of the documents available, and the perceptions of the stakeholders interviewed, it has been possible not only to describe the process, but to offer a more advanced one.

Mencken (1949) suggested that there is always an easy solution to every human problem: “neat, plausible, and wrong”. Ackoff (1979, 1974) wrote about complex problems as being ‘messes’. He suggested that every problem that interacts with other problems, and is thus part of a system of problem, is difficult to distil down to a manageable question. Horn and Weber (2007, pp. 7-8) define messy problems as having the following characteristics:

1. No unique “correct” view of the problem;
2. Different views of the problem and contradictory solutions;
3. Most problems are connected to other problems;
4. Data are often uncertain or missing;
5. Multiple value conflicts;
6. Ideological and cultural constraints;
7. Political constraints;
8. Economic constraints;
9. Often a-logical or illogical or multi-valued thinking;
10. Numerous possible intervention points;
11. Consequences difficult to imagine;
12. Considerable uncertainty, ambiguity;
13. Great resistance to change;
14. Problem solver/s out of contact with the problems and potential solutions.

These propositions have not dissuaded researchers from trying to tackle the messy problems. All apply to the monitoring of the PPP programme that has been the main focus of this thesis. There are many views as to how the monitoring was carried out, and how it could have been improved. Sometimes these views have been contradictory. Most of the problems are connected to other problems, whether of politics, governance, infrastructure or history. Data have been uncertain, and not always as clear as one would have wanted. As Sammons (1999, pp. 2-3) suggests, learning is not observable, it can only be judged indirectly by measuring the outcomes of student learning: “Measurement issues (questions of reliability and of validity outcomes) thus remain of fundamental concern to school effectiveness researchers. We need to examine both what is measured, the choices of student outcomes used to gauge progress and thus help define effectiveness, and the way such outcomes relate to the aims, goals and curriculum of schools, and how it is measured”.
There have been multiple value conflicts, again politically and socially: many of these conflicts have been caused by ideological, economic and cultural constraints. It may be said that some of the difficulties in the programme arose because of a-logical, illogical, multi-valued or over optimistic thinking. This led to numerous possible intervention points, and consequences that were hard to predict. There was uncertainty and ambiguity, in a context of significant resistance to change, from some stakeholders. Despite the very best efforts of many people, those trying to solve the educational problems, could not be in close touch with the schools, and thus outsourced this role.

My research questions were about evaluating the methods used to measure the effectiveness of PPP projects in education, in order to develop a framework for describing and measuring both processes and outcomes of the contracted-out management services model. Focussing on a selection of Abu Dhabi schools, the beginnings of a possible new framework for the monitoring and evaluation of PPP projects focussed on school improvement (and possibly other sectors too) has been described.

As a next step, it would be useful to try to categorise the types of support being provided in each school by each provider, and analyse the outcomes against these. This thesis has, I believe, added to our understanding of the sector, but there is still much to do. It is also the case that some of the ethical and cultural issues that arose could be circumvented by the researcher if that is not me: in additional to my positionality, there is the strong gender issue (for some female school staff, at least) that means that interviews had to be conducted between a man and a fully veiled woman.
As far as whole system improvement is concerned, I believe there is much to learn, too. Abu Dhabi is economically rich, and therefore in many ways looks and acts as if it is a first world country. But its education system, especially the low quality of the government schools is much more suggestive of a third world country. The OFSTED model of school inspection is predicated and generally focusses on a much higher standard of education, and is backed by years of very strong quantitative data. The model suggested by my research is based on project monitoring in poor countries, and is a more supportive model, which is likely to lead to multiple pathways to success, rather than a single model that can be replicated. Even certain senior staff at ADEC made it clear that they were looking for a single solution that could be applied to all its schools. Indeed, the single solution (were it to be found or suggested) was also to be used, in their minds, in the Emirate’s private schools, which are very heavily regulated.

The other factor in this specific context, although no doubt it will apply in others too, is that because the federal government of the United Arab Emirates has been cheated by private contractors and companies, there is an (understandable) emphasis from the finance department of ADEC on making sure it is not going to happen on this project. Sadly, they were right to be concerned: one provider was found to be bussing a single set of library resources from school to school, as notification of an inspection visit came to the head office.

But this led to a dilemma – which was more important, the aims of the project or the line-by-line costs that had been applied for and sanctioned. Again, Selznick’s “The logic of contract runs up against the logic of sustained cooperation” (1996, p. 272).
I will be offering copies of this research to all participants, but also to the Abu Dhabi Education Council, the four provider companies and to the World Bank, who fund many related projects, but the first two paragraphs on page 183 will be redacted from those copies.
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Appendices

Appendix 1  The PPP schools used in this research
Appendix 2  The people interviewed in this research
Appendix 3  Sample of text analysis from SuperFinderXT
Appendix 4  List of government documents used
Appendix 5  Sample of statistical analysis
Appendix 6  Key words and phrases used in documentary searches
Appendix 7  Sample monitoring report
Appendix 8  Questions used in interviews
Appendix 9  Glossary
### Appendix 1  Schools/reports used in this research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School #</th>
<th>Location (district A, B or C)</th>
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<th>Age of students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>6-12 years</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>girls</td>
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</tr>
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<td>mixed</td>
<td>4-6 years</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6-12 years</td>
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## Appendix 4  List of government documents used

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#### Sample of statistical analysis

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<td>PPP7</td>
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**Legend:**
- **PPP1:** Primary Preparatory Program 1
- **PPP2:** Primary Preparatory Program 2
- **PPP3:** Primary Preparatory Program 3
- **PPP4:** Primary Preparatory Program 4
- **PPP5:** Primary Preparatory Program 5
- **PPP6:** Primary Preparatory Program 6
- **PPP7:** Primary Preparatory Program 7
- **PPP8:** Primary Preparatory Program 8
- **PPP9:** Primary Preparatory Program 9

**Notes:**
- Students are being supported by the school to achieve the progress towards the curriculum standards.
- The school has evidence of student progress in various subjects.
- The school acknowledges the students' abilities to think critically in the subjects provided.
- Students' development is supported by effective teaching practices.
### Appendix 6  Sample key words/phrases used

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<th>“professional development”</th>
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<td>“head teacher”</td>
<td>strength</td>
<td>CDP</td>
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<td>“school improvement”</td>
<td>community</td>
<td>optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“improving school”</td>
<td>improved</td>
<td>benefit</td>
</tr>
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<td>development</td>
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<td>value</td>
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<td>benefitting</td>
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Appendix 7   Sample monitoring report

Second semester
Monitoring Agency visit to
XYZ School

Date: XXX 2008
Monitoring Report

Contents

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<tr>
<td>Introduction and information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students’ achievement and learning</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students’ attendance, attitude and behaviour</td>
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<td>The quality of and provision for involvement of parents and the community</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Quality of teaching</td>
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<td>Effectiveness of leadership and administration</td>
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<td>Promotion of national heritage and culture</td>
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<td>Conclusions about school performance</td>
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1 INFORMATION

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Ratio of teachers to students</td>
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<td>Average % attendance during the last semester</td>
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| Number of provider staff FT in school | 7       |
| Number of provider staff PT in school  | 4       |
2 STUDENTS’ ACHIEVEMENTS AND LEARNING

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<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>Nearly all</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Many</th>
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<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
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<td>[a] Students are being supported by the school to achieve steady rates of progress towards the curriculum standards</td>
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<td>[b] The school has a clear view that is based on evidence, on the rate of progress of students towards the standards</td>
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<td>[c] The school actively encourages students to be more able to think critically and creatively in the subjects provided</td>
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<td>[d] Students’ ability to articulate, listen effectively, and read and write fluently in other areas of the curriculum is supported by classroom practice</td>
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<td>[e] Students’ ability to apply mathematical concepts to other areas of the curriculum is supported by classroom practice</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[g] School staff sustain students’ commitment to their studies, both individually and in co-operation with their peers</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

|     |            |      |      |      |     |
| [h] Students successfully achieve the ADEC curriculum standards | ✔     |      |      |      |     |
| [i] Students are achieving and learning effectively through the medium of English | ✔     |      |      |      |     |
| [j] Students are making good progress in all subjects | ✔     |      |      |      |     |

Commentary

The students at XYZ are being supported by the school, to achieve steady progress towards the curriculum standards. In particular, the emphasis within some lessons on group work and other active learning, has increased the students ability to think critically and creatively. For example, in grade 4 and 5 mathematics lessons, students were keen to show off their problem-solving skills on mini-whiteboards. In English, in grade 5, students learn new vocabulary quickly: ‘sing’, ‘king’, ‘ring’ and ‘swing’ in a phonics lesson, for example. Similarly in science, the students competed to recall words and phrases such as ‘greenhouse gases’, ‘atmosphere’ and ‘global warming’.

Correct articulation, good listening, reading and writing are all supported by work in other areas of the curriculum. All relevant lessons were taught in English for most of the time: this means that the girls are having ‘extra’ English lessons throughout the day, and they are benefiting from this. As yet, opportunities to write freely (rather than from the whiteboard or textbook) are less well established in English and in Arabic.

There is some cross-over of learning between mathematics and science; but little in other subjects. Students’ ability to use information and communication technology across the curriculum is supported by classroom practice.

School staff do much to sustain students’ commitment to their studies, both when the girls work
individually, and when working in co-operation with their peers.

The school’s view of the rate of progress of students towards the standards is developing, but has yet to be co-ordinated into a single easy-to-follow summary of attainment and progress, by individual, group and/or grade.

| Nearly all (90%+); Most (75%+); Many (50%+); Some (25%+); Few (less than 25%) |
3 STUDENTS’ ATTENDANCE, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>Nearly all</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Many</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a] Students and parents are supported by the school to achieve good attendance</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b] There is a clear school policy on how students should behave, and how teachers should support them in this</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[c] Students’ ability to study both alone and in groups is supported by classroom practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d] Students’ ability to settle and apply themselves to their work quickly, and persevere in and enjoy their learning is supported by classroom practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e] Students attend well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f] Students behave well in the classroom and around the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary

Student attendance on the day of the monitoring visit was good, with only 6 students absent out of 278. This was an attendance rate of 98%. This compares well with last semester’s average attendance of 88.6%. The attendance and absence registers are sent around the classes in the morning when the absent students are noted. This information is then sent back to the office. Two class lists were not returned to the social worker at the appropriate time.

On the day of the monitoring visit, a fire drill was performed, and the attendance registers were immediately handed out to teachers who could see straight away the names of the students who were absent and those who were present.

Students who leave early, or arrive late are marked in an absence book kept by the vice principal. Unfortunately, she was absent on the day of the visit and this task had not been passed on to other staff. The attendance of staff however had been, and the school knew early in the day that just the vice principle was absent. Staff attendance and late arrival has been monitored, and the results are displayed in the corridor of the school.

The school has had several meetings with the staff to write a behaviour policy that they would be happy to implement. There is one last meeting to discuss rewards and sanctions. When this has been finalised, a copy will be sent to the girls’ parents. Next academic year, the school is hoping to arrange a parents’ committee, when the policy will be discussed again.

Students were seen studying well, both in groups and alone. For example, in a grade 2 English lesson students were copying English words for a party invitation straight from the board, and then designing the invitation front cover themselves. They worked well, getting on with their work quietly, and when they had finished, they showed the English teacher before choosing an English reading book to study. In a music lesson, students sang an English nursery rhyme together, while a group of them played instruments.
Behaviour across the school was good, and in some cases, very good. The fire drill was executed quickly and efficiently. Students’ behaviour at break time in the canteen was supervised well by the large number of staff on duty on the day, and students were quick to stand in lines waiting their turn. The canteen was left with little rubbish to be cleared away, and students were quick to entertain themselves outside.

Although there is little to do in the playground, the games marked on the playground floor are popular. Student behaviour was less good when the lesson started late, and the teacher seemed unsure as to what she was teaching. In one lesson, students started chatting, eating and drawing pictures. In another class, the enthusiasm of the teacher meant the lesson became rather uncontrolled; as the teacher’s voice got louder, so the students got noisier. This resulted in quieter individual just sitting and watching, while others shouted out in an attempt to get the answer the teacher wanted, rather than having a meaningful discussion.

Nearly all (90%+); Most (75%+); Many (50%+); Some (25%+); Few (less than 25%)
# THE QUALITY OF AND PROVISION FOR INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>Nearly all</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Many</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a] The school has an open and positive manner when dealing with parents</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b] The school has a clear view on how to engage parents in the life of the school and the education of their children</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[c] The school has an appropriate plan for engaging with the community in the enhancement of education of students</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d] Staff are well briefed and confident in dealing with parents and the community</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e] Teachers ensure that parents are involved in what and how their children are learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f] School staff encourage and sustain the engagement of parents and the local community in the life of the school</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[g] Parents are satisfied with the education and support provided by the school for their children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h] Any concerns that parents have, are handled appropriately</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i] Parents are satisfied with the quality of reports regarding their children’s work and progress</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commentary</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school continues to encourage parents in the life of the school. When students start at the school, they are given a general information sheet, and other information is sent to parents as and when necessary.

If students are absent from school, they are expected to bring a note from home the next day. If a student is absent from school for a second day the social worker phones the parents.

Parents have the mobile phone numbers of most of the teachers so they can phone them directly with any concerns. They can also contact the social worker, who then liaises with the teacher on their behalf.

Student misbehaviour is usually dealt with directly within the school, with the promise of a certificate and gift, if the behaviour improves: if it deteriorates again, it is suggested that they may not be able to go on a class trip.

Most trips took place last semester, but this semester [Information deleted]

Nearly all (90%+); Most (75%+); Many (50%+); Some (25%+); Few (less than 25%)

School XYZ
Parents were asked the following questions by circulating a questionnaire to them. Their answers were scored as 1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = disagree 4 = strongly disagree.

An overall average between 1 and 2 is positive, between 2 and 3 is more neutral, and between 3 and 4 is negative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of questionnaires returned: 214 (compared to only 77 last year)</th>
<th>Average response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The school has been open and positive when dealing with us</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. We are engaged in the life of the school and in the education of our child</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The school engages with the community to support the students’ learning</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Staff are well briefed and confident when dealing with us and the community</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers ensure that we are involved in what and how our child is learning</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. School staff encourage us to be involved in the life of the school</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. We are satisfied with the education and support provided by the school for our child</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Concerns that we have, are handled appropriately</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. We are satisfied with the reports regarding our child’s work and progress</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Our child is happy at school</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The involvement of the Private Providers has been a benefit to the school</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The PPP project has helped our child</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The behaviour of the students is good</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The teaching is good</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The school is well led and managed</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The school is helping our child become mature and responsible</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some parents also wrote comments, many of which were positive, such as:

- "The school has an excellent administration and staff...";
- "Thank you for the Abu Dhabi Educational Council...";
- "We are very pleased with the school level";
- "The partnership project is good...";
- "I like the school very much";

When there were concerns expressed, they were about ...
- Lack of homework
- Lack of healthy food in the canteen
- The provider ‘interfering’ with the choice of school uniform
- The end of year test not being related to the class books
- Concern over how difficult mathematics and science lessons have become

Other parents expressed individual concerns, such as the rise in prices of food sold in school.

School XYZ
## 5 QUALITY OF TEACHING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>Nearly all</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Many</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a] Contribute to linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development, and to acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b] Foster in students the application of intellectual, physical or creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[c] Promote the quality of relationships between staff and students, and between students and their peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d] Teachers meet students’ individual academic and social needs through appropriate planning and the use of effective teaching methods, including suitable activities and the effective management of time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e] Relevant teachers demonstrate an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught through high quality spoken English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f] They include a regular and thorough assessment of students’ work, including self-assessment opportunities so that their progress can be evaluated to meet the agreed standards.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[g] Teachers enable students to learn successfully and meet the ADEC curriculum standards.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h] They enable students to learn through the medium of English, as appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i] They ensure that students learn with enthusiasm, enjoyment and the ability to think and learn for themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commentary**

Most teachers were observed teaching; there are some talented teachers at XYZ. These are the staff that regularly use a range of techniques to engage with the students and to enthuse them. They work the girls hard, but they enjoy the work they do, because activities change frequently. These teachers make a significant contribution to developing the girls’ linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, physical, and creative development. That most speak in English for most of the lesson, also aids the students in their acquisition of the skills of speaking and listening.

There is greater use of display to show off students’ work. In many classrooms, there is a board devoted to this. Classrooms mainly are bright attractive learning environments: the learning resource centre is an example of good display that helps the girls learn.

The quality of the relationships between the teaching staff and the students, and between students and their peers, is very good. The staff really look as if they want to be teaching: they are rewarded with girls who want to learn. They do much to ensure that students learn with enthusiasm and enjoyment. The staff who are on duty at break time, talk to the girls, and relationships flourish.

School XYZ
All teachers have improved their standard of spoken English; nearly all are confident using their skills in the classroom, with the result that the girls are benefiting. Teachers encourage students to use English during appropriate lessons, and at break time/home time.

The school and the provider have carried out many types of assessments of students' work: observations, tests, and listening to reading, for example. Self-assessment opportunities for girls are more limited. The use of the assessment data is less coherent: tracking individual students towards the agreed standards is at an early stage of development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nearly all (90%)</th>
<th>Most (75%)</th>
<th>Many (50%)</th>
<th>Some (25%)</th>
<th>Few (less than 25%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

School XYZ
6 EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>Nearly all</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Many</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a] To what extent is there clear educational direction and leadership provided by those with management responsibilities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b] How effective are those with management responsibilities in analysing the school’s needs and setting priorities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[c] How effective is management of all levels in drawing up appropriate procedures and policies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d] How well are financial resources managed, in support of meeting the needs of the school’s students?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e] How effective is management in reviewing the implementation of procedures and policies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f] How well is the curriculum implemented?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[g] How efficient is the administration of the school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h] To what extent do teachers and other staff understand the direction and development of the school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i] How well are procedures and policies followed, especially those that involve the students’ health and safety?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commentary**

The strong relationship between school and provider continues; this relationship is crucial to the ongoing success of the project at XYZ. The jointly written school development plan covers the areas that both the principal and the senior provider team member identify as key areas for development. There is continued progress; a good example is the outdoor area which has been a focus for attention since the beginning of the project, and each semester, looks a little better, and is a little closer to being usable as a cultural area. Provider staff are appropriately timetabled to spend much of their day in classrooms, but the plan suggests that much of this time is spent planning, observing or working with individual children: this is likely to be less efficient use of their time than team teaching with MoE staff.

The unusual timetable that the school operates – 5 hour-long periods, instead of the more common 7:45 minutes works well here. The students benefit both in lessons, and from not losing time between lessons.

The school looks good. There is much use of music during the day. An important strength of the school, and of the principal in particular, is the role played by ongoing checks on procedures. The principal attends labour, frequently walks around the learning areas, sees the students onto the buses, and so on: this informal monitoring is very important indeed in the success of the school. There are now a series of appropriate procedures and policies, developed and written by the school, each of which adds to the security of the education being provided.

For example, there has been good attention paid to the health and safety of the girls. The food sold at break time is very healthy. The procedures for getting the girls off and on the buses are secure. Most girls wear appropriate clothing for their physical education lessons. The fire drill which took place...
during the monitoring visit was very successful, and clearly the result of careful rehearsal in the recent past.

Resources are displayed and stored well. The learning resources centre and the interactive whiteboard room are useful additions to the learning environment. In a few classrooms, there seems to be a shortage of tables/chairs, however.

On the day of the monitoring visit, the school bell did not ring at the correct time, being frequently 10 minutes early.

There are a few girls who are placed out of their year/grade; some of these have special needs which are being supported sensitively with additional staffing. It is unclear whether more age-appropriate placement would better meet the girls’ overall needs.

| Nearly all (90%+); Most (75%+); Many (50%+); Some (25%+); Few (less than 25%) |

School XYZ
7 PROMOTION OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>Nearly all</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Many</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a] To what extent is there a clear plan for helping students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own culture?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b] How effective are those with management responsibilities in analysing the students' needs in this aspect?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[c] How effective is management in reviewing the implementation of relevant procedures and policies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d] How well is the curriculum planning implemented for this aspect?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e] How well do students understand their own heritage?</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f] How well do students learn the Arabic language?</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary

The outside heritage area is still under construction. There have been efforts to move this along, with the planting of grass and corn.

Students continue to have Arabic and Islamic Studies lessons: grades 1 and 2 have eight lessons a week along with one social studies lesson, while students in grades 3, 4 and 5 have six Arabic lessons, one Islamic Studies lesson and a social studies lesson. In a grade 2 class, students listened to the teacher speak in Arabic, while they wrote what she said in their copy books. There was no visual prompt for them, just her pronunciation of the words. Many had neat well-formed letters, and the quiet buzz in the class showed that they enjoyed this sort of activity.

The school has an established heritage area in the playground, decorated with cushions and artefacts, along with pictures of the sheikhs, local cultural sights, and the new Dubai. The area is open for the students to use at break time, but it is also used by the Islamic Studies and Arabic teachers, sometimes.

No specific cultural trips or activities have been planned as yet this semester.

Nearly all (90%-); Most (75%-); Many (50%-); Some (25%-); Few (less than 25%)
8 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

8.1 Progress since last visit

At the end of the last monitoring visit, the following recommendations were made:

The provider must:

1. continue to develop the skills of the teachers with particular reference to
   - their English skills and the precision with which English is used
     when spoken or written
   - the moderation of their voices in lessons
   - the range of learning activities, including using ICT, and the balance
     of time spent on different parts of the lesson.

2. improve displays across the school so that in each classroom there is a range
   of displays that:
   - encourage reading and increase awareness and use of vocabulary
   - stimulate and reinforce learning across the curriculum
   - are informative
   - celebrate students' achievements.

The school has improved in the key aspects of both recommendations, even though there is
more work to be done on each, too. The English skills of the teachers continue to improve.
There were only a few examples of teachers shouting at unnecessary volumes. The range of
learning activities used has broadened. Displays are much more likely to include examples of
the girls' work, at least in some parts of the classroom. They are generally stimulating and
interesting to look at. There are more examples of dual language labelling.

8.2 Overall Conclusions

XYZ School is a good school: it continues to improve further. The principal, her senior staff,
and the team of provider staff, provide strong leadership and clear direction. The girls’
behaviour is very good: they are kept safe and are well cared for. Teachers are working hard
and making progress in their use of the English language, and in their use of a broader range
of teaching strategies.
8.3 Recommendations

The school must:
[1] ensure that the work displayed to celebrate the achievements of the girls includes examples from all subjects;

[2] make all efforts to stop parents sending in junk food for the girls’ snacks;

[3] stop girls who are not wearing suitable clothing, including footwear, from taking part in PE lessons;

The provider must:
[4] ensure that there are many opportunities for team teaching, with provider and MoE staff working together;

[5] expand the opportunities for free writing, especially in English, but also in Arabic;

The school and provider must:
[6] carry out an analysis of the number of tables/chairs required in each classroom;

[7] use MoE teachers to support the professional development sessions of all staff, to help spread good practice;

[8] seek out more ways for the students to entertain themselves at break time.
Appendix 8    Starter questions used in interviews

1. What do you remember most about the PPP project?

2. What about the monitoring visits?

3. What did you think the monitoring process would be like?

4. What questions do you think the monitoring was trying to answer?

5. If you were going to organise the monitoring, how would you do it differently?

6. What do you think the monitors were looking for, when they came to your school?

7. Where are they looking at the right things?

8. What would you want them to look at now, if they were to visit?

9. Was there anything you thought was really good about the monitoring process?

10. What about anything that you thought was wrong about the process?
## Appendix 9  Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADEC</td>
<td>Abu Dhabi Education Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emirati</td>
<td>A citizen of the United Arab Emirates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Summative judgements made about a school’s quality and progress made</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public-private partnership</td>
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<td>Provider</td>
<td>A company or person involved in a PPP from the private side</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>Process of evidence collection to inform evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OFSTED</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFE</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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