

Full Length Research Paper

Evolution of public-private partnerships in Zimbabwe's state universities

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Despite persuasive heuristics and pragmatic promotion for the use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to infuse dynamism into public sector infrastructure development, little is known about their progress in Zimbabwe's state universities. This study traces the evolution and validation of PPPs as an alternative funding option for the development of educational infrastructure in Zimbabwean state universities and compares it with other traditional funding options. This descriptive qualitative research methodology, grounded in constructivist research philosophy and bolstered by a multiple case study research design collected data through in-depth key informant interviews. Nineteen key informant participants were selected through criteria and critical purposive sampling techniques, while secondary data was sourced from relevant literature. This study established that there has been a low uptake and implementation inertia of educational infrastructure PPPs in Zimbabwean state universities since their adoption and standardization in 2010. Although the concept was introduced back in 1998 and initial PPP frameworks were developed in 2004, it wasn't until 2010 that serious emphasis was placed on adopting them in Zimbabwean state universities. Various justifications were identified for the adoption of PPPs in this sector and PPPs emerged as a viable alternative to traditional funding sources such as the national budget, institutional funds and loan financing. PPPs were viewed as a sustainable approach that could help state universities bridge their infrastructure gaps. The study recommends that state universities adopt a business oriented approach and operate as social enterprises if they are to attract a significant pool of quality private investors in PPP arrangements.

Key words: Public-private partnerships, Zimbabwe, higher education

INTRODUCTION

The utilization of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) has become the most widely adopted alternative model worldwide for facilitating the provision of public infrastructure and services in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. PPPs encompass the collaboration between the public and private sectors, working together to provide services that were traditionally administered and

funded solely by the public sector. They represent a cooperative initiative between government and one or more private sector enterprises, funded and operated in conjunction (Boyer et al., 2016). PPPs were initially established in the 1990s as an innovative approach to delivering infrastructure and services across various regions of the world (Boyer et al., 2016).

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Given the constrained funding capacity for capital projects through conventional sources in the public sector, partnering with the private sector emerged as an appealing alternative for many governments. This approach aimed to augment and enhance the provisioning of infrastructure services (Quium, 2011). Presently, PPPs are increasingly regarded as a mechanism for advancing infrastructure development in an economical and sustainable manner (Zinyama and Nhema, 2015).

In the realm of educational infrastructure delivery, PPPs have demonstrated their effectiveness, particularly in countries like the United States of America, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Germany (Ingo, 2003; Newfield, 2010 as cited in Nuwagaba, 2013). Insights from international literature propose that PPPs can substantially reshape higher education by fostering increased access, competition, efficiency, and quality (Warasthe, 2017). PPPs have evolved into a valuable approach for augmenting funds available for the construction or enhancement of educational facilities, often yielding superior value for money compared to conventional public sector investments. While specific arrangements may vary, the private sector generally undertakes financing, design, construction, and operation of a public-school facility through a contract with the government, typically spanning 20 to 30 years. At the culmination of this concession period, ownership of the facility is transferred to the government.

Notwithstanding the unwavering efforts of the Government of Zimbabwe, reports from the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovations, Science, and Technology indicate that most universities have yet to adopt and implement PPPs to enhance the educational infrastructure within their respective institutions. As noted by Dube and Chigumira (2010), these institutions continue to rely on government capital funding via the Public Sector Investment Program (PSIP) for the development of campus infrastructure. Despite the compelling promotion of the use of PPPs to invigorate public sector infrastructure development, there remains limited understanding of Zimbabwe's State universities' experiences with PPPs as an alternative funding avenue to address their evident educational infrastructure gaps. Tracing the evolution of PPP usage in State universities provides insight into the advancement, nature, and pace of PPPs as a policy stance aimed at mitigating the persistent infrastructure gaps in these institutions.

Prior research on PPPs has examined their application in Zimbabwe from a broader context and across various sectors, including the feasibility of PPPs in Zimbabwe (ZNCC, 2009), the potential for PPPs to address issues in state-owned enterprises (Massimo, 2013), and the viability of utilizing PPPs for water infrastructure development (Mtandwa and Zinyama, 2015). In contrast, this study focuses its empirical evaluation specifically on the use of PPPs as an alternative funding mechanism for capital projects within Zimbabwe State universities. Its objective

is to chart the evolution of PPPs in this context, delve into the rationale driving their utilization for educational infrastructure development, and offer a comparative analysis against other conventional funding avenues. The study's outcomes will thus contribute to the cumulative comprehension of the PPP concept in Zimbabwe at large, with a specific emphasis on its implementation within Zimbabwe State universities. Furthermore, the study's findings will serve as guidance for shaping overarching PPP policies and will provide valuable insights for potential private capital investors keen on engaging in collaborative ventures with the government for the advancement of educational infrastructure development.

Research objectives

1. To trace the evolution of PPPs as an alternative funding option for the development of educational infrastructure in Zimbabwe State universities?
2. To establish the rationale for the adoption of PPPs in Zimbabwe State universities
3. To appraise how PPPs are valuable as compared other funding options that are available for educational infrastructure development in Zimbabwe State universities

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Despite its worldwide adaptation, the term Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is still not clearly defined (UNECE, 2012). There is no widely agreed single definition or model of a PPP (Bernardino, 2010; OECD, 2010; The World Bank, 2006). There is a great variety of definitions for PPP available worldwide. Some industrial practitioners and academics still regard the definitions as being very woolly. According to Paper and Gawel (2011), the term PPP describes a wide range of arrangements whereby government services are outsourced to commercial partners and risk is shared between the public and private sector to bring about desired outcomes in areas associated with public policy. Still, on outsourced services, Alinatwe and Ayesiga (2013) view PPPs as a means of public-sector procurement using the private sector's best practices for financing, design, construction operation, and maintenance of public infrastructure and facilities to meet public needs. PPP as such has been defined in different ways by researchers and practitioners with each definition varying slightly from each other.

Despite various definitions and varying salient features of PPPs, Hardcastle et al. (2005) observe that definitions of PPPs usually share certain similarities which can be classified into the following five groups:

1. The partnership includes two or more subjects, one of which is from the public sector and the other being from the private sector. PPPs can also include a public

partnership with non-governmental organizations.

2. In PPPs all project participants have the principal position, which enables reducing the agency costs. This effectively means that all participants contract their participation for their account regarding the project and the other participants.

3. In PPPs, long-term and stable cooperation between the partners is established.

4. In the model of PPP each partner contributes to the partnership. For the partnership to succeed, each partner must contribute material or non-material resources to achieve the synergy effect.

5. The partnership includes shared responsibility for the produced outputs for the provided services. Such a relationship differs significantly from the traditional position of the public sector, in which it keeps the responsibility for public service provision and public policy implementation, based on possible advice or one-time services provided by the private sector.

van Wijk (2011) observes that PPP has alternative names in various countries such as Private Participation in Infrastructure in the United Kingdom, P3 in North America, Private Finance Project in Australia, and Private Finance Initiative in Japan. Zimbabwe has its specific definition of PPP which is context specific as captured in the PPP policy of 2013. As captured in the policy Government of Zimbabwe PPP Policy (2013), a PPP entails 'a contractual arrangement between a governmental institution and a private party whereby the private sector party provides public infrastructure and/or infrastructure-related services and where the provision of such infrastructure and/or infrastructure-related services is:

1. Based on measurable output (result) specifications;
2. Governed by a payment mechanism that provides payment only on delivery of services at required standards;
3. Accompanied by a transfer of financial and operational risks with consequential financial effects; and
4. Demonstrates Value for Money (VfM) to Government.

This Zimbabwean PPP definition captures four essential elements which are; it is silent on the length of the contractual structure, it, however, notes that the contract has to be lengthy in duration, it is silent on the bundling of processes as a requirement for qualifying as a PPP and the definition established more explanation on the need to consider 'outputs' in a PPP arrangement (Government of Zimbabwe PPP Guidelines, 2013).

Under section 143 of the Companies Act [Chapter 24:03] of Zimbabwe, a public entity is a corporate body established by or in terms of an Act of Parliament for special purposes; or any company in which the State has a substantial or controlling interest, whether by holding or controlling shares therein or of a right of appointment of members to the controlling body thereof or otherwise and

includes any company which is a subsidiary of the first aforementioned company. In this case, all State universities which are established through various Acts of parliament represent the public entity/ sector. Rather than the public sector directly procuring a capital asset like administrative offices, halls of residence for students and staff as well as teaching and learning facilities, the private sector establishes and finances a business that designs and constructs the required assets and uses them to provide services to the public sector. The private sector refers to organizations that are for-profit (Akintoye et al., 2003). Examples of the private sector include all local and international investors who are willing to partner with the government in the provision of educational infrastructure. A PPP can also be between the public sector and NGOs (van Wijk, 2011).

Scholars normally adopt a definition that closely matches their research. This research subscribed to a definition given by Akintoye et al. (2003) who define PPP as a long-term contractual arrangement between a public-sector agency and a private-sector concern whereby resources and risks are shared to develop a public facility. In this case, Zimbabwe State universities represent the public sector, and the private sector constitutes the construction companies, private capital investors, consortiums, insurance houses, and other financial markets which intend to invest in properties.

Evolution of PPPs in infrastructural development

Public-Private Partnerships are not new, and they date back thousands of years. As Jomo et al. (2016) observe concessions, the most common form of PPPs – where the private sector exclusively operates, maintains, and carries out the development of infrastructure or provides services of general economic interest – date back to the times of Roman Empire. During this time, concessions served as legal instruments for road construction, public baths, and the running of markets. Other famous examples as cited by Jomo et al. (2016) include medieval Europe, whereas early as 1438, a French nobleman named Luis de Bernam was granted a river concession to charge the fees for goods transported on the Rhine. The turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth century saw the proliferation of numerous PPPs with many infrastructure facilities (water channels, roads, railways) in Europe and later in America, China and Japan began to be privately funded under concession contracts (Jomo et al., 2016).

Even though the practice has been around for millennia, the term PPP was coined and popularized in the 1970s, when neoliberal ideas began questioning the previously dominant Keynesian paradigm and the role of the state in the context of poor economic performance (Jomo et al., 2016). During this time, new ideas, such as the New Public Management (NPM) became the new vogue to redress poor economic performance to the failures or

inadequacies of the market which was attributed to government failure or inefficiency. McQuaid and Scherrer (2010) also occur, adding that the evolution of PPPs can be traced back to the period of the 1970s when the macro-economic disturbance emerged. They further allude that the trace of PPPs is also found in the NPM body of reforms where there was stubborn recoil of government frontiers in the provision of public goods and services. PPPs in this regard was seen as the gap-filler of the recurrent government failure (van Wijk, 2011). New Public Management (NPM) theory which was propounded way back in 1968 by Waldo (1968) calls for a reduced, effective, efficient, and economic state and the involvement of the private sector in the development programs and the provision of public goods through arrangements such as PPPs. PPPs, which especially gained on their significance at the beginning of the 1990s, was viewed as the policy instrument of a new public management approach (Rakić and Rađenović, 2011). The background of PPPs as such lies intensely in the orthodoxy of NPM, which continues to have an impact on all public administration in the world (Blunden and Dando, 1995).

PPPs gained popularity in developed countries as it was also used in social sectors. After the United States of America, Verger (2016) observes that the United Kingdom then became the most enthusiastic adopter of PPPs, implementing partnerships framework in various range of service sectors including the education sector. Public Finance Initiatives (PFIs) was the first model of PPPs to be adopted in the UK. The model involved a private company designing, building, operating, and also financing equipment for prisons, hospitals, and schools before their conversion to public ownership (Verger, 2016). In this regard, PPPs received support from political actors who perceived them as an opportunity to counter-balance market forces brought about by absolute privatization, and PPPs as such gained momentum as a more cooperation-oriented policy framework (Verger, 2016). In this sense, PPPs became a term with multiple meanings, and many actors across the political spectrum felt comfortable with it (Verger and Moschetti, 2017).

Still, in the nineties, international organizations and aid agencies such as the OECD, the World Bank, regional development bank, USAID, and DFID also became greatly interested in the PPP scheme and as such, they adopted it as a key strategy for enhancing "good governance" in service delivery (Verger, 2016). Again these financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF have also used PPPs as a loan condition while EU, USAID, and DFID employ it as a condition for aid (Otairu et al., 2014). Under the leadership of the World Bank, these various organizations adopted the PPP framework with the notion of instilling public sector reform as well as implementing infrastructure projects particularly in developing countries (Verger and Moschetti, 2016). The PPP scheme fits well in the World Bank's long history of fostering the private sector

participation in service provision and particularly in the Private Sector Development Strategy which was inaugurated in the nineties (ibid). PPPs idea at this juncture became a cross-cutting policy tool and the Bank created a World Bank Group's Global Expert Team on PPPs, a Global PPP Network which is an online platform for practitioners, policymakers, and development experts to discuss and connect around global best practices on PPPs in a range of sectors (Verger, 2016).

In Zimbabwe, the idea of PPPs was mooted in 1998 and a significant attempt to craft a PPP framework was done in 2004 (Dube and Chigumira, 2010). Some PPPs projects have been implemented in the country, namely the Beitbridge-Bulawayo Railway (BBR), the New Limpopo Bridge (NLB), and the Newlands Bypass (Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce, 2009). Recent years have seen a marked increase in cooperation between the public and the private sectors for the development and operation of infrastructure in a wide range of economic activities. The evolution and the rationale for PPPs in educational infrastructure development in Zimbabwe however were not well known and this research added epistemological values in this way.

Motivations and interests of PPPs in the education sector

PPPs have become a 'silver bullet' which various governments across the globe have embraced in trying to solve their infrastructure challenges. Various scholarships have presented varied justifications and validations for the adoption of PPPs as a policy instrument. Among the identified motivations for PPPs include great asset utilization, innovation, value-for-money, provision of sector-wide cooperation, financing from the private sector, creation of synergy and capacity building, increase the value of a business, better risk allocation, attainment of high efficiency and quality, and promotion of competitiveness and fair competition (Liu et al., 2014; Onyemaechi, 2015).

PPPs have been an essential element of the public administration reform agenda since the early 1990s and have been introduced mainly in areas where full privatization seemed unfeasible (Zinyama and Nhema, 2015). In comparison to others like energy, water supply, and transportation, the education sector has been a fairly late adopter even though it was an increasingly important one. As Alert (2009) observes, the adoption of PPP structures within the educational sector has in recent years gathered momentum with successful examples of such projects recorded in Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates. Financial closes to implement PPPs in the education sector were successfully realized around the country with particular cases in universities such as the UAE University and Paris Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi PPP projects (Alert,

2009). PPPs are unlikely to fully replace traditional financing and development of infrastructure, but they offer several benefits to governments trying to address infrastructure shortages or improve the efficiency of their organizations (Egger, 2006).

The main rationale for the choice of PPP structure in the education projects has been the recognition that the education providers should remain focused on its core objectives of provision of educational service as well as the raising the standards of education rather than the construction and maintenance of buildings (Alert, 2009). The use of educational PPPs structure thus involves the private sector working in the construction and maintenance of educational facilities and not assigning the private sector the role of providing educational services. It is also argued that passing the responsibility for construction as well as the day-to-day maintenance of the educational facilities to the private sector would enable the public sector or the educational partner to concentrate more effectively on education (Alert, 2009).

The use of PPP arrangements in the education sector worldwide has also been backed by several socio-economic and political drivers. Firstly, investment in the education sector has always been regarded as a crucial one by most governments around the world. Providing children and young adults with increased access to educational resources of a higher standard has also been regarded as a noble way to foster a more mobile and more skilled workforce in the future (Alert, 2009). This higher educational attainment of such people usually brings several benefits which however vary from country to country.

Arguments in the international literature suggest that PPPs can positively transform tertiary education as it leads to increased access, competition, efficiency, and quality (Oketch, 2009; Ismail and Harris, 2014). Their study of PPP in Lagos, Nigeria, Taya and Dada (2012) reveal that the sectors that ranked highest (first, second and third respectively) with private sector participation through PPP in the delivery of public infrastructure are education, transportation, and tourism. The education sector was most favored because of the adequate ways that it employs in generating income while another sector was left unattended to as a result of little or no establishment of ways required to yield income. This study developed thus unravels the progression and validations of PPPs as an alternative way of funding capital projects in Zimbabwe State universities.

The government is often the major or only purchaser of services for the new facility in the education and health sector, which puts an important burden on the public purse all at once. As such contracting out the financing and construction of facilities to the private sector allows the government to pay for these capital investments over time by making periodic payments over the term of the contract (Patrinos and Barrera-osorio, 2009). PPPs allow the costs of the investment to be spread over the lifetime of the asset

and thus can allow infrastructure projects to be brought forward by years compared with the pay-as-go financing typical of many infrastructure projects. Such arrangement is mainly suitable for many institutions of higher learning in developing countries like Zimbabwe with visible educational infrastructure gaps.

PPPs also raise private funding and in the process can assist to circumvent budgetary constraints (Tamayo et al., 2014). The private sector plays an important role in the financing and provision of services that were traditionally the domain of the public sector. In the process, they produce a win-win situation for both the private sector and government as both parties stand to benefit (Dude and Chigumira, 2014). Contracting the private sector institution to finance and build learning institutions however is considered to be much more challenging than other types of contracting (World Bank, 2006).

PPPs can lower the cost of infrastructure by reducing both construction costs and overall lifecycle costs (Egger, 2006). As Rakić and Rađenović (2011) concur, public procurement through PPPs reduces project implementation costs and time, because the application of the integrated approach reduces the time necessary for planning and designing. Alternatively, it enables the realization of higher quality for the same price. As Alinaitwe and Ayesiga (2013) proffer, PPPs address the common faults that are related to public-sector procurement, such as high construction costs, construction overruns, operational inefficiencies, poor design, and community dissatisfaction. PPPs are being established as cost-effective methods of overcoming the costs related to the provision and maintenance of infrastructure. Construction of educational infrastructure like student halls of residence requires huge capital to commerce and a long time to complete and in this way the PPP is seen as a viable option that can reduce both the implementation costs and time.

As a result of PPPs, the public sector may gain new skills, technology, experience, and knowledge from the private sector. Rakić and Rađenović (2011) highlight that the provision of public services, through PPPs opens the possibility of focusing on the development and implementation of integrated innovative solutions. PPPs focus on the results, rather than on the means of achieving those results and as such allow developing unique and creative approaches for the provision of the desired projects (Rakić and Rađenović, 2011). PPPs thus contribute to the achievement of numerous benefits for both the public and the private sector. PPPs in such cases also bring innovations and modernization of educational infrastructure in the case of Zimbabwe state universities for example. State universities will need such modernization which is in line with regional and global trends.

It is however argued that the rosy picture on PPP that is portrayed by research studies and the literature often relates to countries with relatively strong public and private

sector institutions, a sound economic resource-base, an appropriate and enforceable regulatory framework, excluding the realities in developing countries (Ndandiko, 2006). Most governments in developing countries are now forced to opt for the PPP model because of their limited resources and the certain conditions imposed by International Financial Lenders (IFLs) on public budgets. Again, the participation of the private sector has been promoted as a condition set out in certain donor's funds. The Senegal case is one typical example in which the use of the private sector was indicated as the strategy preferred by the donor in promoting the implementation of literacy programs. In such a case, Dethier and Moore (2012) observes that there was then string pressure to introduce the PPP approach simply because they had become pervasive among donor agencies and World Bank.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This study subscribed to a descriptive qualitative research methodology, underpinned by constructivism research philosophy and augmented by a multiple case study research design. A descriptive multi-case study research design was used to examine four State universities in Zimbabwe in their natural setting. 19 key research participants were selected through purposive sampling techniques which entails deliberate selection of participants for their ability to provide rich information (Graziano and Raulin, 2010). Critical case purposive sampling technique was used to select key participants from State universities, Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovations, Science and Technology (MHTEIST), Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MFED), Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe (IDBZ), participants from the academic field, research institutions and PPP experts. Private construction companies that are partnering with the government in educational infrastructure PPPs were selected through criterion purposive sampling. In this regard, the research targeted four private capital investors who have once partnered with the government in the educational infrastructure development and have been in existence for a minimum of 10 years. Data was collected through in-depth key informant interviews from the relevant public and private stakeholders involved in educational infrastructure development in Zimbabwe's State universities. Construct validity and expert validity were used to support the validity of both the research instruments and the findings of the study. To ensure reliability, the interview guides were pretested to other purposively selected participants through a pilot study. Secondary data was also extracted through documentary analysis of the existing relevant literature such as conference papers, government publications, newspapers, academic books and journals, statistical bulletin magazines, internet websites, PPP guidelines and frameworks, and relevant Acts of Parliament for the Universities, Ministries, and ZIMCHE. Qualitative content and thematic analysis approaches were used for data analysis and presentation in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evolution of PPP in Zimbabwe

Documentary analysis revealed that PPPs were mooted way back in 1998 by the Zimbabwean government as a

viable tool for unlocking private sector support in funding maintenance and development of critical public infrastructure. In 2004 the government recognized the critical role of the private sector in the provision of the country's public infrastructure. The 2004 Zimbabwe national budget captured that:

The government as the traditional financier and provider of infrastructure services is facing severe financial constraints. Therefore, the Government will involve the private sector through concessions and Build Operate Transfer (BOT) schemes to meet the gap.

In response to the realization of the critical role of the private sector, the Government developed the framework underpinning PPP investment in the country (ZNCC, 2009). The framework was in the form of Public-Private Partnership in Zimbabwe Policy and Guidelines of 2004, which sought to provide the parameters for the development of an appropriate legal and regulatory framework to protect the investors and consumers (ZNCC, 2009). These Guidelines however never really took off in a significant fashion even though there are PPP projects that recorded success in Zimbabwe. Some of these projects include Beitbridge Bulawayo Railway (BBR), the New Limpopo Bridge (NLB), and the Newlands By-Pass (NBP) (Dube and Chigumira 2010). Despite these cited successful cases in Zimbabwe, the uptake of PPPs as an alternative funding option has been depressingly low.

Five years on from 2004, the government openly admitted that PPPs programs had 'fail to take off' hence the two-day workshop held in Harare on May 9, 2009, to review the country's PPP policies and guidelines passed in 2004 and to incorporate input from other stakeholders and enhance the role of the private sector in the provision of both infrastructure and basic social services. The government considered harmonizing all PPP-related institutional, legal, and policy frameworks, to make them transparent and responsive to the needs of both investors who bear the commercial risk and consumers who should afford the services (ZNCC, 2009). The Short-Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP), an economic blueprint adopted during Zimbabwe inclusive government in 2009 then clearly adopted PPPs as a procurement method to deliver public infrastructure and services (section 434-440), and reinforced the 2004 PPP Policy (Government of Zimbabwe, PPP Policy, 2013, Foreword, p.1). PPPs in this line were provided for under the private sector invitation in such areas as air and rail services, power generation, dam construction, and national highways (Ministry of Finance 2009). They were further reconfirmed under the Three Year Macro-Economic Policy and budget Framework (STERP II) which emphasized the use of PPP for the upgrading of road capacity, new construction works, and maintenance (Zinyama and Nhema, 2015).

Furthermore, in 2010 the inclusive government through the office of the former Deputy Prime Minister (Professor

Auther Mutambara), also made some renewed efforts to revitalize PPPs following a series of workshops on PPP which were undertaken in Zimbabwe focusing on the issues to be addressed for successful PPP between 2009 and 2010. Various PPP documents were also designed and presented to anchor the future road towards PPP in Zimbabwe. These documents include the PPP policy, (2010); PPP guidelines, (2010); Legislative Review for Zimbabwe (2010); and the institutional Framework, PPP, (2010). These documents form the basis upon which PPPs would be structured (ZNCC, 2009). The legal framework guiding the PPP arrangements was enacted in 2015 in the form of a Joint Venture Act of 2015.

The government wanted to roll back the state and at the same time liberalize the market by inviting the private player in areas that used to be a preserve of the state. In this way, the government was operating in line with the provision of the New Public Management theory which acknowledges the accommodation of the private players through partnerships for the provision of public goods like educational infrastructure in State universities in this case. PPPs consist of organizations from the public as well as from the private sector working together to satisfy public needs. PPP as a new concept in New Public Management was designed to overcome inefficient allocation of resources in public bureaucracy and the production of public goods and services (Rakić and Rađenović, 2011).

The development of PPPs in Zimbabwe State universities

The government of Zimbabwe made renewed efforts to standardize and accelerate PPPs in the tertiary education sector in 2010 even though some PPP arrangements were already underway in other universities. In its efforts, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development (MHTEISTD) developed an Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Joint Venture Partnerships at State Institutions of Higher and Tertiary Education in Zimbabwe (2015). These Guidelines acknowledge that the Government cannot adequately provide public infrastructure and deliver quality services in institutions of higher and tertiary education on its own. As such Joint Venture Partnerships (JVPs) have therefore been reemphasized as the way to refurbish, rehabilitate, build and sustain infrastructural development in higher and tertiary education institutions.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development outlined in the guide therefore that PPPs or JVPs in institutions of higher and tertiary education would involve the sharing of responsibilities between the government and the private sector to finance as well as manage a package of capital investment in educational infrastructures such as accommodation and other related infrastructure in state institutions of higher learning such as universities, polytechnics, and Teachers' colleges. Such

shared responsibilities according to the operational guideline include the construction, management, refurbishment, maintenance, and replacement of public sector assets such as student and staff accommodation, and this was to be done in line with the Joint Venture Bill of 2015 which was proposed in the Parliament. It was equally recommended that a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) which is an operating company should be established as a form of JV to roll out the proposed projects.

The enunciation of JVPs was guided by the government's vision to promote public and private sector collaborations to support infrastructure development in these institutions of higher and tertiary education. In the same vein, the government then used the guideline as a Launchpad to establish a framework to harmonize JVP arrangements in the higher and tertiary education sector. The specific objective of the operational guidelines includes among others; standardize the section and contracting of partners for JVPs by institutions, creations of JVPs Committees in these institutions as well as setting out guides for the monitoring and evaluation process for JVPs projects.

Extant literature shows that PPPs can be an effective tool particularly in the delivery of educational infrastructure. PPPs have generally proven to be a valuable alternative funding option especially in countries such as the United States of America, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Germany as cited in Nuwagaba (2013). Arguments in the international literature also suggest that PPPs can positively transform higher education as it leads to increased access, competition, efficiency, and quality (Patrinós et al., 2009). PPPs have become a useful way to increase the funding available for constructing or upgrading school buildings and often yield better value for money than traditional public sector investments. In the Zimbabwe context, the study established a plethora of reasons which motivated the government to adopt PPP as an alternative funding option for capital projects in State universities and the following sections discuss these.

The rationale for the adoption of PPPs for educational infrastructure in Zimbabwe State universities

Increased infrastructure gaps in Zimbabwe State universities have been widely perceived as the main justification why the government of Zimbabwe undertook to adopt PPPs. Zimbabwe came under pressure to expand university education in 1998 and yet it had very limited resources to do so. The expansion of tertiary education in Zimbabwe, particularly State universities increased demand for requisite infrastructure facilities for teaching, learning, and accommodation. The number of State universities rose from five in 2000 to nine in 2014 and twelve by the year 2018. This increase of Zimbabwe State universities posts 2000 era however did not commensurate with the government infrastructural support which was

dwindling every year (Dude and Chigumira, 2014). As observed by Dude and Chigumira (2014), the rise of State universities without adequate infrastructural support created a huge infrastructural gap. The student population has risen from 2240 in 1980 to over 200000 students by end of 2018 and this number did not commensurate with the available educational infrastructure. According to the MHTEISTD investor handbook of 2017, only 15-20% of this current student population in State institutions of higher learning can be accommodated in a student residence. The shortage of campus accommodation as such provides ready off takers from the private sector through PPP arrangements for accommodation at tertiary institutions.

Various other reasons were pointed out by research participants as the motivations that therefore necessitated the adoption of PPPs by the government as an alternative funding option for educational infrastructure development. The following subsections discuss these rationales:

Fiscal challenges

Fiscal challenges were also frequently cited as another major validation that necessitated the Zimbabwe government to consider PPPs to foster educational infrastructure development in Zimbabwe State universities. The government could not fund infrastructure development from the national budgets because about 80 percent of the budgetary allocation was catering for current expenditure and only 20 percent for capital expenditure. The government of Zimbabwe admitted that the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIPs) have failed the nation as evidenced by about 592 uncompleted projects across the country (in 10 provinces) and as such, they made a policy to involve the private sector to provide the facilities in areas that used to be the preserve of the government. Responses from all the State universities pointed to the same notion of lack of funding and indicated that donations and other traditional sources of monies are no longer coming in the predicted pattern. The magnitude of funding requirements for educational infrastructure development in institutions of higher learning which according to the MHTEISTD Investor handbook of 2017 stands at about USD 3.7 billion made the case for the adoption of PPP as an alternative funding option a key imperative in Zimbabwe State universities.

The need to tap efficiency

The other motivation for the espousal of PPPs was the need to tap into the efficiency which the private sector has. Submissions from MFED indicated that most projects that are implemented by the government alone were taking long and as such incurring more cost overruns and time overruns as compared to the ones implemented by the private sector which were completed within reasonable

time frames. PPP experts alluded that PPPs have been mainly opted because of their aptitude to yield efficiency gains from improved project delivery and management, as well as access to advanced technology. The private sector participants concurred with this submission highlighting that the government's search for greater efficiencies and economies in the delivery of public services in key infrastructure projects have been the motivational factor for the use of PPPs in most key sectors. Otairu et al., (2014) opine that PPPs have also been found to assist improve on the management of the twin risks of time and cost overruns better as compared to the traditional method.

Affordability and availability

Affordability has also been cited as another justification for PPPs. MFD (JV) unit alluded that if services are provided by the government, they can be affordable but not available. As such tapping, the efficiency from the private sector, therefore, means that services will be affordable and available. The desire to establish an optimum matrix that might ensure the availability of infrastructure such as accommodation at an affordable cost has thus been cited by the participants as the motivational factors for the adoption of PPPs.

Value for money

Value for money was also cited as the other validation for the adoption of PPP by the Zimbabwe government and in Zimbabwe State universities. Value for money entails that the government will get value for the money that they spend and would get services delivered in an economic, effective, and efficient way through PPP arrangements. The argument by participants was that through PPPs, services can be provided at a cheaper price and in an efficient way as compared to them been implemented by the government alone. By cheaper it entails that the government is exempted from certain responsibilities that they were supposed to finance and as such the burden is removed. Quium (2011) equally notes that various countries have resorted to value for money as the main criterion for judging the validity of a PPP option for a project.

Introduction of new technology

Research participants also indicated that PPPs arrangement enables the introduction of new technologies in educational infrastructure development. Participants from the (JV) unit of the MFED alluded that the private sector is more innovative, and they can come up with better technology as compared to the public sector especially in terms of design, construction, and maintenance of buildings. The rationale here thus was to

enhance technology transfer both to the locals and to the institution through PPP models such as (BOTs). By the time the infrastructure is transferred to the government, the private sector ought to have transferred enough technology to both the locals and the contracting authority. Literature Rakić and Rađenović (2011) also points to the notion that through PPPs, the public sector may gain new skills, technology, experience, and knowledge from the private sector.

Sharing of risks

The need to share risks was also mentioned by most public sector participants as the other rationale for the uptake of PPPs. They argued that through PPPs, certain risks are allocated to the private party like the design and financing risk. They indicated that through PPPs, risks are allocated to the party that is in a better position to manage the risk. Rakić and Rađenović (2011) concurs with the same submissions adding that PPPs enables risks to be allocated to the partner who is apt to manage them more efficiently and to face the incentive they bring. PPPs as such have become attractive to governments as an alternative off-budget mechanism for infrastructure development as they equally allow the transfer of many project risks to the private sector (Quium, 2011). The private sector in this regard was better at managing the risks of building, operating, and financing, whereas the public sector is better at dealing with political risks.

Cost overruns management

Participants from the public sector also mentioned that PPP was also considered because of their ability to foster effective cost overruns management as well as to instill time overruns efficiency. Some of the capital projects have been running for quite a time to the extent that one wonders whether these projects are still relevant. Examples of such projects include student halls of residence and some learning facilities and lecture halls in some of these State universities. Such a sluggish execution of government projects increases the costs on the government part hence PPP. Extant authorities like Egger (2006) reveal that PPPs have a track record of completing construction on time or even ahead of the planned schedule. He gave an example of Terminal 3 at the Toronto Pearson Airport which was completed 18 months ahead of schedule under a PPP contract and the assumption was that the adoption of PPP would go a long way in curbing intergenerational educational infrastructure shortages in Zimbabwe State universities.

To run higher education as a social enterprise

The realization that institutions of higher education can run

as a social enterprise also triggered the government to employ some business practices in these institutions through PPPs. Participants from the MHTEISTD alluded that by running as social enterprises, this practice would eventually offload some of the financial burdens from the national budget as PPPs present an alternative funding option for infrastructure development in Zimbabwe institutions of higher learning. A Director from ZIMCHE supported the rationale of adoption of PPPs as a way to run higher education as social enterprises highlighting China as an example that there are close to 3000 tertiary institutions and three-quarters of these are funded by the private sector (including offering student loans) and are confident to do that because they know that immediately after completion there is a guarantee for employment and this guarantees the return of the loan together with the interest. Most of the PPP experts submitted that PPPs were also adopted as a government's measure to avoid exposing the government of Zimbabwe to further sovereign debt/government debt. Furthermore, the adoption of PPPs is motivated by the need to circumvent growing public debts which have some inter and intra - generational effects on society.

PPPs compared to other contending funding mechanisms for educational infrastructure development

Various other traditional ways have been cited by the participants as methods that are available to fund university infrastructure development. The study thus sought to examine these contending sources / traditional ways to understand their strength and weaknesses as compared to the PPP option. These other ways include the national budget, development partners, institutional funds, debt financing/ loan finances, and private accommodation.

The national budget

Most of the participants concurred that the national budget has been the source of funding for most of the educational infrastructure in State-owned universities. Most of the student and staff accommodation, and other learning facilities like the lecture rooms, libraries, and laboratories in State universities were funded by the budget as Public Sector Investment Programs (PSIPs). Trend analysis of the Zimbabwe national budget however shows that allocations for capital projects development have been on a decline as more resources were now channeled towards current expenditure. This has posed a serious challenge to most of the state-funded capital projects, some of which have come to a halt. State universities like the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) submitted that their projects like the library and student accommodation among others have since come to a standstill because the state funding through PSIPs has

since stopped. Observations by the researcher on most of the educational infrastructure projects in State universities reflected that some of the buildings are in a state of standstill, partly completed and abandoned. Some of these buildings have even grown trees inside and the participants attributed this to a lack of funding that used to come through PSIPs which is no longer coming in the expected fashion. Some of the participants indicated that they cannot even remember when they last received money for capital projects from the Treasury as they have since been instructed to come up with other new innovative ways of funding these projects. The option of government funding through tax revenues- the budget (PSIP) has proved to be a challenge and as such there was a need to explore other funding options which include but are not limited to PPPs.

Comparing the budgets to PPPs most of the participants regarded PPPs as a better financing option for financing infrastructure development. They have argued that if you are to finance capital projects from the fiscals it normally requires huge amounts of money and in most cases poses some strains in the national purse which is already limited. This is unlike PPPs that can allow the costs of the investment to be spread over the lifetime of the asset and thus can allow infrastructure projects to be brought forward by years compared with the pay-as-go financing typical of many infrastructure projects. The creative financing approach is mainly suitable for many institutions of higher learning in developing countries like Zimbabwe with visible educational infrastructure shortages as it can facilitate the availability of such educational infrastructure facilities by many years as compared to the national budget provisions approach.

Development partners

Development partners were also frequently cited as influential in funding educational infrastructure development in State universities. Most public sector participants particularly submitted that these development partners have been assisting in the construction of lecture rooms among other educational infrastructures. Findings were that these development partners like ZIMFUND may just request to co-fund or offer a pure grant which the government might not be requested to repay or may be requested to repay a small percentage. Grants through development partners have always been welcomed as a favorable option as they sometimes would be just donations with no cost of returning in some cases. Even though the funding option accrues vast merits, participants from State universities noted that accessing these grants from these international institutions like Ford Foundations has become a challenge due to economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe. The other limitation of these grants is that they usually target the development partner's preferred area of interest which might be different from the

one with an immediate financial need and in some cases a grant is attached to a loan. Comparing this form of financing to PPPs, most participants again regarded PPPs as a better option that is business-oriented and provides a win-win reliable situation to both concerned parties.

Institutional funds

Research participants also cited institutional funds as the other traditional source of funding that can be used to build university infrastructure. Institutional funds include that fees that are paid by students and these differ with institutions, level of study, and type of program undertaken. These are also referred to as direct funds from the institution or internal funds and if well managed can also produce wonderful results in educational infrastructure development as testified by a participant from MSU who highly alluded to the massive expansion of the institution to the proper uses of institutional internal sources. Despite their contribution to infrastructure development, many participants have indicated that internal sources are not adequate due to the amounts that are paid by students, and as such PPPs become a better financing arrangement even though they are not an absolute panacea to everything.

Debt financing/ loan finances

Debt financing is also another traditional way that has been used to finance capital projects in State universities. To construct educational infrastructure, most participants concurred that State universities borrowed money from open financial markets which can either be domestic or international. Borrowing might, however, require of course the blessings of the Treasury who gives them the borrowing mandate or powers and the government may, in this case, offer a guarantee. The issue of exorbitant interest rates has been highly cited by many participants from State universities as a major limitation of this option of financing. The PPP experts and academia also indicated that some of the loans are usually offered on a short-term basis, and they cannot fund long-term infrastructure projects.

Making a comparison to PPP, most participants however said PPPs still offer better financing options than the other alternatives available in terms of financing infrastructure development. They argue that a loan is associated with some costs in terms of interests and in some cases; the government only opts for this option out of desperateness. Again, these loans are not always available in adequate amounts and favorable terms. The study established that local banks, for example, have funding but on a short-term basis and are not prepared to venture into long-term arrangements. The study also established that the pensions and insurance companies have such institutional

funds that can be invested on a long-term basis and might not be always prepared to extend a loan because of the economic dynamics. PPPs have been considered cheaper than bank loans because they are on a long-term basis. And their interest rate over this period can be as low as 2% per annum making it that cheaper as compared to bank loans which can charge up to 12% per annum. Still, in the same vein, PPP was considered fast because the private sector players involved seek to make a profit and as such, they normally would want to operate bounded by business practices.

Private accommodation

Individual house owners offering accommodation have also been considered as an alternative option for providing educational infrastructure, such as housing for students and staff. Private accommodation was regarded by the research participants as a separate choice, where individuals find accommodation on their own terms. It was noted that no university worldwide provides accommodation for all students and staff members. However, relying solely on private accommodation is not always feasible, and in some instances, it can prove to be too expensive for most students. Additionally, even when it becomes affordable, some of these housing options might not meet the required minimum standards for students' conducive study environments. Overcrowding in some instances could pose health risks. Although private accommodation might serve as a temporary measure to assist students, it doesn't significantly contribute to the advancement of educational infrastructure development in higher learning institutions. Participants emphasized that this option cannot be equated to PPP arrangements as an alternative method for funding infrastructure development in State universities. The two options hold differing levels of impact and cannot be reasonably compared.

Conclusion

This study's scope was focused on specifically evaluating PPPs as an alternative funding avenue for capital projects within Zimbabwe State universities. Its primary aims were to track the evolutionary trajectory of PPPs in this context, probe into the rationale behind their application for educational infrastructure development, and facilitate a comparison with traditional funding alternatives. The research findings concluded that the evolution of PPPs and the justifications for their adoption within Zimbabwe State universities align well with the principles put forth by the New Public Management (NPM) theory, which was originally formulated by Dwight Waldo in 1968. This theory advocates for a lean, efficient, and cost-effective state that collaborates with the private sector for the delivery of development programs and public services, often through mechanisms such as PPPs. The theory further suggests

that such an approach is particularly beneficial for nations dealing with budget deficits and substantial national debts.

The study's findings revealed that although the Zimbabwean government acknowledged the pivotal role of the private sector in furnishing the country's public infrastructure and subsequently developed the framework for PPP investments, the government itself has yet to fully embrace a business-oriented operational approach, particularly within Zimbabwe State universities. The government continues to adhere to a service provision ethos, especially within the education sector, where education is typically regarded as a universal right. Such an approach to operations has lowered down the innovations that can be expected in these institutions of higher learning. The prescript of the NPM to public management in which PPPs is a policy instrument places emphasis on management by objectives and performance management, the use of market-type mechanism in place of centralized command and control style of regulations, choice and competition, and devolution that has a better matching of authority, responsibility as well as accountability (Katsamunskya, 2012). The government of Zimbabwe however is not yet prepared to give absolute autonomy to educations particularly to institutions of higher learning. This goes against provisions of the NPM theory which is anchored on the capitalistic or free enterprise philosophy, which supports the concept of economic growth and development where the private sector plays the greatest role Simonet (2011). This has contributed to the low uptake of PPP arrangements which normally require a business orientation approach with commitments from both the public and the private players.

The findings of this study also revealed that Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) emerged as a strong contender when compared to other traditional funding options employed for financing educational infrastructure development. These alternative sources of funding encompass the national budget, contributions from development partners, institutional funds, debt financing or loan arrangements, as well as private contributions. In comparison to these established funding sources, the research outcomes demonstrated a preference for PPPs, viewing them as a new and sustainable approach capable of addressing infrastructure gaps and discontinuing the perpetuation of educational infrastructure shortages across generations within Zimbabwe state universities. Despite the government of Zimbabwe's endorsement and facilitation of PPPs to expedite educational infrastructure development, some institutions still exhibit reluctance in embracing this novel arrangement. While PPPs were hailed for their potential benefits, the study ultimately concluded that there exists a notable lack of enthusiasm and implementation inertia regarding educational infrastructure PPPs within Zimbabwe State universities. This trend has persisted since the adoption and standardization of PPPs as an alternative funding avenue in 2010. Only a few universities have cautiously engaged

with this approach at a gradual pace, while others possess PPP plans that remain in the developmental stage. In essence, the findings of this study contribute to the broader understanding of the PPP concept in Zimbabwe, shedding specific light on its implications for Zimbabwe State universities.

Recommendations

This research strongly recommends that State universities adopt a business-oriented approach to enhance their ability to attract a substantial pool of high-quality private investors for PPP arrangements. To achieve this, universities themselves should cultivate a robust business orientation, presenting these institutions as more than just government entities but as self-sustaining business entities. Collaborative efforts from institutions like the Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe (IDBZ) are crucial in assisting State universities in crafting sound business concepts, particularly in the realm of educational infrastructure development. It's notable that several PPP plans have been abandoned due to private investors finding insufficient business viability upon their interaction with these state universities. To address this, the research proposes that IDBZ takes an active role in assisting State universities in structuring PPP projects in a manner that renders them financially viable and appealing. Acting as an intermediary between State universities and private sector investors, IDBZ could play a pivotal role in this process.

Additionally, the study underscores the importance of State universities formulating PPP projects that are both financially viable and attractive. To ensure the swift adoption and successful implementation of PPPs, it's essential for State universities to focus on creating projects that align with the requirements of private investors and to foster robust corporate governance practices. In summary, the key recommendations include State universities developing a strong business orientation to entice private investors, leveraging institutions like IDBZ for project development, and creating well-structured and appealing PPP projects while upholding good corporate governance standards to expedite the uptake and execution of PPP initiatives.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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