

Public-Private Partnerships in Zimbabwe's Education Sector: Forms, roles, challenges and sustainability enhancing strategies

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Abstract

This article interrogates the forms, roles, challenges and strategies for enhancing the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Through desktop-qualitative research grounded on secondary and thematic analyses, this study revealed that, globally, the use of the PPPs in the provision of education is on the increase and they exist in the form of service contracts, lease, design build operate and transfer, management contract and concessions. In terms of roles, PPPs provide resources and technical expertise, technology in schools, renovate infrastructure and assist in increased teacher and pupil turnout. Observed challenges to the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector include embracing non-competitive bidding frameworks, lack of community engagement in PPP projects, limited financial capacity to compensate private players in the event of losses, and poor cost management. To enhance sustainability of PPPs in the education sector, the study proposed inter alia, ensuring a competitive, transparent, multi-stage process in private partner selection; stakeholder engagement in PPP projects; proper cost management throughout PPP project lifespan; and establishment of institutional and regulatory frameworks.

Key Words: Zimbabwe, Public-Private Partnerships, education sector, infrastructure, sustainability strategies.

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1.0 Introduction

In the wake of declining traditional sources of infrastructural development financing mechanisms, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are evolving as potential frameworks for financing infrastructural development world-wide. Traditional mechanisms included external support in the form of off-shore loans, Official Development Assistance (ODA) grants, and domestic financial support from local government and central government allocations (Asia Development Bank 2015). Even though there is no universal scholarly agreement on the definition of the Public-Private Partnership, Hautberge (2015) offers a useful starting point as he characterises it as a cost and risk-sharing relationship between the government and private entities, on the basis of a shared aspiration to bring about a desired policy outcome. This notion is shared by Sulser (2018), who defines PPPs as long-term agreements between a government entity and a private player, for the purpose of providing a public benefit or service. In this case, the scholar notes that the private partner bears considerable risk and management responsibility; and remuneration are related to performance. Similarly, the UNCTAD (2018) defines PPPs as a cooperative project between the private and public entities on a long-term basis (ranging from a few up to 30 or more years), for provision of a public asset and/or public services, sharing risks, responsibilities and rewards between the project partners. Equally important, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013) defines PPPs as forms of cooperation between the government, businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions as well as knowledge bodies during which they agree to work together to attain a common objective or to perform a specific task, jointly sharing the risk and responsibility as well as assuming their competencies and resources. In view of the above, Mutandwa and Zinyama (2015) noted that the cohesion in the definitional frameworks of the PPPs is that, PPPs are to a large extent argued as a gap-filler towards infrastructural development by the public sector. The argument is that the effect of the PPPs mainly hinges on the extent to which governments successfully control the private player, sufficiently providing for operational independence of private partners.

The need to interrogate the forms, roles, challenges and prospects of PPPs in the education sector is particularly critical in view of an increasing child population worldwide amid mounting pressure on the quality of education and strained public finance resources in third world countries such as Zimbabwe. According to UNESCO (2013 research cited in Aslam, Rawal and Saeed: not dated: ii), there is a crisis in learning in many schools as third world countries are failing children. Against this background, engaging non-state actors particularly private players will increase access, improve quality and ensure cost-effective education to the public (Aslam, Rawal and Saeed: not dated). As argued in this source, PPPs provide mechanisms to meet such goals as education for all and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four, that seeks to ensure access to equitable and quality education for all by providing both hard and soft education services.

For Zimbabwe, Dube and Chigumira (2010: 15) established that infrastructure in most education establishments have become dilapidated while also sanitation and water facilities are insufficient. Furthermore, the same voices pointed out that Zimbabwe's land reform programme has resulted in construction of new schools in resettlement areas whose infrastructure is in sorry state that some lessons are conducted under trees. With the government's limited financial resources, PPPs can be used as a key mechanism in the provision of adequate education infrastructure. This deficit in education infrastructure also exists at higher and tertiary education levels as Mushaniga (cited in the *University World News* article 14/04/2018) revealed that the sector had a deficit of accommodation for 139,000 students, and as such, PPPs may close the gap.

2.0 Literature Review

This section briefly reviews relevant theories and experiences relating to PPPs in the education sector. These experiences provide lenses for developing strategic interventions aimed at enhancing the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

2.1 Theories informing discourse in PPPs

The notion of PPPs is theoretically rooted in the New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG) paradigms. In support of the above trend, Cavelty and Sute (2009 cited in Jomo, Anis, Krisnan and Daniel 2016: 2) attest that PPPs were embraced as alternatives

for bureaucratic government and inefficient SOEs, a view which promoted the wave of privatization. Thus, the new public management draws from economics using theories such as Transactional Cost as well as the principal-agency which inform discourse in PPPs in financing public service. Under the principal agency theory, population as the principal, monitors politicians and the bureau as agents to ensure they abide by the contractual agreements. To guarantee effective performance, the agents (employees, contractors or third parties) should be the best candidates selected on a competitive basis, a factor which is core to the success of PPPs (Ayee 2005). On the same note, the transaction theory emphasises the role of the state in defining the basics of contractual arrangements between the state and investors on existing technologies and natural endowments (Ayee 2005). Weimer and Vining (1993 cited in Ayee 2005) assert that transactions are vulnerable to compliance threats. Thus, investors will resist entering into contracts unless there is a credible commitment that other parties will not opportunistically exploit their vulnerability.

Furthermore, PPPs are in tandem with the NPG framework which views public service delivery as pluralist, that is, a simultaneous interplay of multi-dependent actors. In this way, public administration scholars cited that in the NPG framework, the government is no longer the predominant force shaping public policy and its implementation. In that view, the relational capital (network), trust and relational agreements serve as the main values of the PPP framework; and these values influence the sustainability of the PPP projects in their lifespan (Weber and Khadenian 2008; Osborne and Nasi 2013).

An eclectic public administration theoretical framework drawing from both the NPM and NPG paradigms shows that some issues are crucial to the success of the PPPs. The issues include contract management; effective regulation (for environment protection, quality of life and economic well-being); and economic measurements (output, efficiency and value for money). Other issues are competitive selection; government support; investment guarantees; political commitment; effective management; incentives; network and governance systems. These built-up public administration theories by and large cast light into the study as the above traits are essential for effective governance of the PPPs in Zimbabwe.

2.2 PPP country experiences in selected education sectors

2.2.1 The Liberia Education Advancement Programme (LEAP)

According to Mtsumi (2018), the main step in what was identified as the Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL), which was retitled the LEAP, involved the outsourcing of the Liberian government pre-primary and primary school services to Bridge International Academies (BIA) for a one-year pilot programme through a PPP arrangement. BIA is an American-based for-profit business offering a commercial, private-based nursery and primary school chain. It received funding from numerous major corporations, investors and development partners, including the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank, the Commonwealth Development Corporation of the United Kingdom, with funding from the Department for International Development (DFID) as well as the Private Investment Corporation of Overseas (OPIC).

This strategy sparked substantial public outcries and condemnation from some civil society groups, teachers' unions, and even the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education for violation of the legal and moral obligations of Liberia (Mtsumi 2018). The scholar further established that the government reviewed the idea following the outcries, introducing additional seven private school providers chosen through a competitive-based selection process and a decrease in the number of pilot schools. The first phase of the PSL pilot, launched in September 2016, comprised 93 schools with an estimated range of 20,000 - 40,000 learners, which were run by eight private players. The largest number of schools, that is 25, was received by BIA without a competitive selection process.

The LEAP faced five major operational challenges, including first, unnecessary costs and lack of value for money making the scheme very costly for the state to sustain. The public sector had to spend projected extra US\$20 per learner, adding to US\$600,000 per annum, because teachers in the PSL-led schools received higher than average salaries. Over its three-year lifetime, running the randomised control trial itself amounted to about US\$900,000, which does not include analysis costs (Mtsumi, 2018).

Second, due to donor fatigue, teachers' wages were delayed in BIA schools, while resources for charging the electronic devices used in those schools were not supplied. As a consequence, this was often required to be handled by school authorities and teachers. These teachers, still threatened by lack of pay, incurred some other expenses to ensure that BIA schools were open and functional (Mtsumi 2018).

Third, with regard to the critical feeding programme for the school, the meals given for extended learning hours proposed by BIA under the feeding programme were inconsistent. For example, some schools only fed learners twice weekly, and this had a negative effect on learner retention (Mtsumi 2018). Fourth, there was a gap in transparency and accountability as there were no records of any competitive and open process carried out by the Liberian Ministry of Education (MoE) in the hiring of BIA and those running the pilot project in the Liberian Public Procurement and Concession Portion. There was also very limited involvement by the community in the PPP projects, and access to programme information. Fifth, many residents, and even some local MoE officials, were not informed about the pilot programme in the majority of the counties involved; and were unable to clearly express what they wanted to accomplish (Mtsumi 2018).

Despite some criticism to the LEAP over lack of transparency and accountability, excessive costs and poor value for money - the *LGT Magazine* (2021) indicated that, "LEAP has witnessed substantial growth over the past four years. Today, there are 323 LEAP schools in Liberia, compared with 93 at the start of the programme. Some 65,713 pupils were enrolled in LEAP schools during the 2019-2020 school year, which is a material increase from the 27,000 in 2016". The *LGT Magazine* (2021) further stressed that LEAP brought such advantages as innovative systems of doing things – through renovating infrastructure; increased teacher and pupil turnout; regularly administered standard checks to optimise learning outcomes; and the Teach-By-Radio distance learning program during the Covid-19 pandemic. In its appraisal of the LEAP programme, *Heritage* (2022) highlighted that Bridge Liberia, a private participant in the LEAP, was focused to help the Liberian government achieve SDG4, the United Nations goal of quality

education by supporting 350 public primary schools across Liberia, accounting for 64% of the overall programme.

Drawing experiences from the Liberian PPP Education system, the Zimbabwean education sector may need to ensure an open and competitive bidding in the selection of private players. Costs should also be cut throughout the span of PPP projects to ensure their sustainability.

2.2.2 The PPPs for the New Schools in Egypt

The Egyptian Government implemented one of the largest PPPs in the education sector in 2009. Under the programme, the government avails land, while the private partners are involved in the designing, constructing, financing and furnishing public schools and providing non-educational services under long-term agreements. The programme began in the late 2006, and involved 300 schools in the 23 Egyptian governorates. The private players' positive reaction to the programme led to its expansion in 2007 as it covered 2,210 primary and secondary schools, valued at some LE11 Billion in 2009. The first tranche of 345 schools in the 18 governorates was tendered in 2009 (LaRocque 2008: 29 -30). In the case of Egypt, the public sector provided land while the private players provided the requisite finance, construction and other services. Zimbabwe may replicate the same best practices.

2.2.3 Educational Infrastructure-based PPPs in Nova Scotia (Canada)

The province of Nova Scotia in Canada used a PPP framework to construct some 39 schools in the late 1990s. The government used the PPP model because its financial position was such that it could not afford to construct the large number of schools required, especially given its desire to outfit them with the state-of-the-art technology. In that regard, the first lease contract between the government and private partners was signed in 1998 (LaRocque 2008).

Under the PPP arrangement, schools were designed, constructed, financed and maintained by the private player. Contracts were allocated on a competitive bidding basis. The PPP schools were then leased by the government for a period covering 20 years. Most of these contracts expired between 2017 and 2020. Incentives were built into the contracts with a view to ensuring quality

construction and maintenance. Approximately 14 percent of the square footage in the province schools is found in the PPP schools (LaRocque, 2008: 30).

The government had planned to build 55 schools, but the number was reduced when the project was disturbed by a variety of political and other problems, including cost overruns driven by project ‘gold plating’, that is, increasing the school standards, expensive site selection and a weak bureaucratic management (Meek, Jim 2001 in LaRocque 2008: 30). To ensure the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector, like in the case of Nova Scotia, Zimbabwe should embrace competitive bidding, build incentives around contractual agreements, ensure that costs are cut along the project cost outlay and ensure sound project selection, identification and management.

3.0 Methodology

This is a review article on public-private partnerships in the education sector. The article utilised secondary data as it reviewed existing data collected previously to come up with forms, roles and challenges of PPPs. The article also proposes some measures and best practices to enhance the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Through desktop approach, the author used the internet, and reviewed journals, institutional policy papers for government and non-governmental agencies, magazines and newspapers on education PPP policy initiatives. The study used a qualitative approach to explore ideas, thoughts and analysis of PPPs in the education sector, and employed a detailed comparative case by case analysis of the PPPs. The data derived from a comparative secondary analysis was further analysed thematically.

Through holistically synthesising the existing researches on PPPs in the education sector, the review study provided thematic summary of the forms and roles of PPPs in the education sector. The thematic approach further discussed the challenges affecting the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector. Moreover, drawing from global experiences, the authors suggest strategies to enhance the sustainability of PPPs.

This paper seeks to answer a number of relevant research questions pertaining particularly to the forms of PPPs that exist in the education sector in Zimbabwe; the roles of PPPs in Zimbabwe's education sector; the challenges affecting the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector in Zimbabwe; and the measures to be adopted in the Zimbabwean education sector to enhance the sustainability of PPPs based on global experience.

Unlike previous works on PPPs in the education sector in Zimbabwe, this review study goes a few strides forward by analysing global PPP experiences in the education sector. In this regard, the article identified and discussed empirical findings on PPP experiences in African countries notably Egypt and Liberia; and other international success stories from Nova Scotia in Canada, India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands.

Through a systematic and rigorous comparison of country experiences as well as tracking global developments on PPPs in the education sector, the researchers were confident to unearth areas that were otherwise overlooked or rather considered less important but may yet be critical to enhance the sustainability of PPPs as platforms of financing infrastructural development. The study assumes that only after such gaps have been unearthed can specific strategies be implemented to enhance the sustainability of PPPs as models of financing infrastructural development in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

4.0 Results

PPPs in Zimbabwe's Education Sector

In his empirical analysis on the role of PPPs in the education sector, using data drawn from some 37 higher and tertiary learning institutions as well as some 50 private companies, Chanakira (2013) noted that in Zimbabwe, five PPP models are popular in institutions of higher learning. These models include: service contracts (18 institutions), lease (9 institutions), Design-Build Operate-Transfer (DBOT) (6 institutions), management contract (6 institutions) as well as concessions (5 institutions). Table 1 shows the PPP model in Zimbabwe and the number of higher and tertiary institutions using the model.

Table 1: PPP Models in Zimbabwe and Institutions Using the Models

PPP Model in Use	Institutions Using the Model
Service Contracts	18
Lease	9
Design, Build, Operate and Transfer (DBOT)	6
Management Contract	6
Concessions	5

Source: Adopted from Chanakira (2013: 10)

Chanakira (2013) further argues that the frequencies of the PPPs are not necessarily because they are more popular but because these are the models that the private sector organisations are currently able to afford given the harsh economic conditions that have been existing in Zimbabwe for the past two decades. Rusare (2013) cited the former Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Mr. Lazarus Dokora, who noted that PPs are the way to go to ensure that schools are built and equipped in a way that would improve the quality of education from the Early Childhood Development to Vocational and Tertiary levels. The initiative also ensures availability of classroom blocks, computer and science laboratories, workrooms for technical subjects, and fully equipped libraries.

In a similar view, the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2021: 2) established that the age population for schools in Zimbabwe is estimated to increase by 50%, from 5.34 million in 2019 to around 7.98 million by 2030; with the biggest jump of 82% anticipated for secondary schools from 1.6 million to around 3 million over the same period. In that view, the UNICEF (2021) further warned that with the expected jump in age for the secondary school population, the government should consider scaling up investments in the construction of secondary schools without which learner to classroom ratio is set to increase, hot sitting arrangements become widespread while the unregistered and satellite schools would continue to increase. Citing the establishment of the National Manpower Advisory Council

(NAMACO) by the government of Zimbabwe, Rusare (2013) admits that Zimbabwe has previously benefited and would continue to benefit from PPPs in the development of infrastructure. The author noted that the role of the NAMACO is to explore opportunities for the PPPs in the higher and tertiary education sector that already has other corporate players such as the Mimosa Mining Holdings, the Econet Private Limited, the British American Tobacco (BAT) through its scholarship programmes, the Unilever and Metallion Gold flagship programmes.

Rusare (2013) further notes that in Zimbabwe, with regard to the education sector, the role of the PPPs has been confined to the involvement of some churches such as the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church, the Salvation Army and the Roman Catholic Church that have either seen the establishment and management of schools or provision of resources and technical expertise.

Rusare (2013) argues that despite their important role in providing infrastructure, PPPs in developing countries are difficult to maintain in the short term as the government has to pay the private sector players to allow recovery of costs. For instance, in Egypt, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands, governments have to pay the private sector players some funds to allow recovery of the incurred costs. Rusare (2013) further maintains that this arrangement is not applicable in the context of Zimbabwe as the capacity is not available.

In view of the above gaps, Chief Economist Tilda Sibanda (cited in the Patriot 05/12/2013 by Rusare) argues that the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) is the best framework to use for financing the development of Zimbabwe's education sector. In the same vein, Sibanda defines the BOOT as a form of project financing, in which a private player obtains concession from the private players to finance, design, construct, and operate a facility stated in the concession agreement. Sibanda emphasized that during the concession period, the private player owns and operates the facility with the main goal to recover the costs related to investment and maintenance while trying to achieve higher profits on the project. This is done through charging some fees and levies that are essential with a view to recovering costs and obtaining a return on investment during the project period. However, Chief Economist Sibanda noted that the fee structures should be agreed to before the implementation of the project so that the public sector is

given an opportunity to put some safeguard measures against the exploitation of the learners and the parents through an exorbitant fee structure.

Consistent with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013), which views the PPPs as a network of the government and NGOs to bring development in society, the *Bulawayo24* (10/12/2018) noted that the government targeted to fully digitalise an estimated 3,500 schools nationwide within a five-year period in an effort to enhancing e-learning and quality education. In this respect, the *Bulawayo24* (10/12/2018) noted that the Profuture of Spain working with the World Vision Spain in partnership with the Zimbabwean government has provided close to US\$150,000-00 for the programme. The programme provided at least 48 laptops and tablets as well as some audio-visual equipment and projector to each school. In this partnership programme, the World Vision has been rolling out workshops to build the capacity of teachers (under the trainer of trainers programme) so that they impart technical knowledge to pupils and students. In this vein, the Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association (BPRA) in a Kubatana.net article 25/01/2012 emphasized that the PPP best practices from India and Pakistan show a PPP framework that witnessed the ICT corporates partnering with the public education institutions with the end results being improved access to cutting–edge technologies in the education sector. In the same vein, the article indicated that the international technology giant, Intel has been bearing the responsibility of introducing computing science in schools while also being involved in the training of computer tutors. Zimbabwe can also embrace these PPP best practices through engaging companies in metal work education, clothing companies as well as food and nutrition in line with the Second Republic’s industrialisation agenda.

Maher (2018) notes that the World Vision Zimbabwe is the implementing partner in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe and the SNV, a Dutch non-profit focused organization is the financing partner since 2013. This policy initiative aimed at Improving Girls’ Access Through Transforming Education (IGATE) to minimize obstacles that limit and hinder girls’ access to education. The IGATE initiative is currently implemented in the 10 districts of Zimbabwe and to date about 70, 000 people have benefited from the scheme. Thus, Maher (2018) notes that in the

future, the IGATE programme in Zimbabwe will target an estimated 50,000 school girls in the 450 schools across the three provinces and eight districts.

Having assessed the state of the PPP affairs in the education sector in Zimbabwe as highlighted above, it is critically important to note that a good design alone cannot guarantee the success of the PPPs in the education sector; it must also be implemented efficiently and effectively. In this respect, literature warns that to enhance their sustainability, first, governments should choose their private partners by means of a competitive, transparent, and multi-stage selection process (World Bank 2009, Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio and Guaqueta 2009). Second, there is need to assign the roles of the provider and purchaser of education services to different units within the education administrative agencies (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio and Guaqueta 2009). Third, there is need to ensure that the private player in question has enough capacity for the task at hand. The need to embed the PPPs in the curriculum especially in tertiary institutions should be seriously considered. Related to this, public-owned education institutions must develop their own capacity, create quality assurance mechanisms, develop some appropriate performance measures for the contractors, and create incentives to achieve the set performance targets as well as sanctions for non-performance (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio and Guaqueta 2009; Chanakira 2013; Makanjera 2017). In addition, Makanjera (2017) emphasized the need to have in place institutional and legal frameworks, and strengthening a PPPs unit for successful coordination of implementation of partnership projects across the infrastructural spectrum.

5.0 Discussion

It has been presented that PPPs are a long-term arrangement between the public and private sectors with a view to sharing costs and risks to improve service delivery. PPPs fall within the rubric of both the New Public Management and the New Public Governance frameworks which advocate for ingraining market-based principles, networks, trust and relational capital as core to improving efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery.

5.1 Forms of PPPs in the education sector

Through desktop review of policy papers, journals, books and newspapers, the study revealed that PPPs in the education sector exist in six forms. The forms include private operations of government schools; outsourcing of education services from a private-owned contractor; and outsourcing some non-education support services in which the government does not have necessary skills. Such services include canteen facilities, transport services, health care, and cleaning services, among others. Other forms of PPPs include the government providing the voucher system allowing students to go to private schools; private sector charity initiatives where the NGOs provide grants to government education sector; and the Private-led Finance Initiative where the private players finance infrastructure under the BOT and BOOT arrangements and receive a fee under a 20 to 30- year concession to recoup their return on investment.

In Zimbabwe, five PPP models are popular in institutions of higher learning, which include: service contracts (18 institutions), lease (9 institutions), Design-Build-Operate-Transfer (DBOT) (6 institutions), management contract (6 institutions), and concessions (5 institutions). Another model involves private sector charity initiatives whereby NGOs provide grants to the government education sector. Given Zimbabwe's overstretched financial resources, Chief Economist Tilda Sibanda (cited in the Patriot 05/12/2013 by Rusare) argues that BOOT is the best framework for developing the Zimbabwe's education sector.

5.2 Roles of PPPs in Zimbabwe's education sector

PPPs play a pivotal role since they help countries to achieve SDG 4, the United Nations goal of achieving quality education. First, PPPs assist in the establishment and management of schools as well as provision of resources and technical expertise. In the Zimbabwean context, PPP arrangements involved the Lutheran, Salvation Army, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

Second, through charity initiatives, PPP arrangements that have been facilitated by the Zimbabwe based NAMCO have witnessed scholarship programmes given by companies such as Mimosa Mining Holding, Econet Private Limited, British American Tobacco, Unilever and Metalon Gold to impart knowledge and skills in students at tertiary levels.

Third, given the overstretched financial resources facing governments world-wide, PPPs assist in the provision of the state-of-the-art technology in schools that is brought about by private partners. Using the case of Nova Scotia in Canada, LaRocque (2008) stressed that the government used the PPP arrangement because it had no financial capacity to construct large state of the art schools with technology. On the same note, the BPRC cited in a Kubatana.net article 25/01/2012 emphasized that the PPP best practices from India and Pakistan show a PPP framework that witnessed ICT corporates partnering with the public education institutions thereby improving access to cutting-edge technologies in the education sector. In the same vein, Rusare (2013) highlighted that PPPs are crucial as they assist in improving the quality of education from Early Childhood stage to Vocational and Tertiary levels as they provide computer and science laboratories as well as classroom blocks.

Fourth, in the case of Liberia and Zimbabwe, PPPs played a critical role in increasing pupil enrollment in both primary and secondary schools. In Liberia, for example, PPPs increased pupil enrollment from 27,000 in 2016 to 65,713 in 2020 while in Zimbabwe, the World Vision has increased pupil enrollment to 50,000 through its signature IGATE programme being implemented in Zimbabwe. The LGT Magazine (2021) emphasised that PPPs are critical as they bring innovative ways of doing things through renovating infrastructure, increased teacher and pupil turnout and the introduction of regularly administered standard checks to improve learning outcomes.

5.3 Challenges affecting the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector

Global experiences show that, as in the case of Liberia and Canada, PPPs in the education sector are constrained by excessive costs and poor value for money. Although PPP projects were implemented on a competitive basis, Nova Scotia faced costs overrun which constrained the sustainability of the projects. However, Canada offers enviable examples in embracing competitive bidding in selecting private partners in the education sector, and the constructed schools were leased to the government over a period of 20 years. Other challenges include lack of transparency and accountability as the Liberian government failed to embrace competitive bidding in selecting private partners. The NPM stresses that to enhance the performance of

partnership projects, there is a need to infuse competition in the selection of private candidates. Because PPP projects were not implemented on a competitive bidding basis, the projects created cost overruns as they did not respect the value for money.

Furthermore, community members were not involved in formulating PPP programmes, which resulted in resistance to the programmes. The NPG framework emphasizes the need to engage stakeholders to build trust and accountability. Due to limited community engagement, PPPs in the education sector faced resistance from civil society organisations, teachers' unions, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. Similarly, in Canada, PPPs faced criticism from the opposition political parties due to expensive site selection and weak bureaucratic management. In the case of Egypt, the government provided land while private players provided finance for construction of schools and other services. Based on the findings, Zimbabwe may replicate the same best practices.

The other challenge constraining the sustainability of PPPs is that PPPs are difficult to maintain in the short term as the government has to pay private players to allow recovery of the incurred costs. In Egypt, UK, Canada, Australia and Netherlands, governments have to pay the private sector some funds to allow recovery of costs. However, scholars such as Rusare (2013) argue that in Zimbabwe, the financial capacity to compensate private players is not available given the obtaining limited fiscal space. Furthermore, Chief Economist Tilda Sibanda (cited in the Patriot 05/12/2013 by Rusare) contends that the BOOT is the best framework for financing the Zimbabwe education sector. Chief Economist Sibanda further stresses that to enhance the sustainability of BOOT, the government should be given room to put some safeguard measures against exploitation of learners and parents through exorbitant fee structures.

Given that Zimbabwe, like many countries world-wide, is facing deficit of educational infrastructure, lessons from Liberia, Egypt, and Canada have shown that through transparency, accountability, competitive bidding and respecting value for money, PPPs can be utilized to bring about efficient and effective service delivery. More importantly, Zimbabwe should showcase the infrastructure gaps in the education sector with a view to attracting private

investors into the sector. Further to that, while Zimbabwe has embraced PPPs through partnering NGOs and private players at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, the sustainability of PPP projects continue to be plagued by unstable economic environment, gaps in institutional and regulatory frameworks, and control of fees by the government, among other challenges.

6.0 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The concept of public-private partnerships is gaining traction across the globe especially in economic and social sectors such as education. Admittedly, PPPs are crucial as cooperation between private and public actors is pivotal since they provide finance, innovation, efficiency as well as development in the education sector. In that view, the government should showcase the investment opportunities in the sector in various investment forums.

To ensure the sustainability of PPPs, the Government of Zimbabwe should consider the following critical-success factors:

The New Public Governance Framework emphasizes the criticality of competition, hence the need for a transparent and competitive framework in awarding contracts in the sense of using a competitive, transparent, and multi-stage process for selection of private partners in the PPPs.

In line with the NPG, which emphasizes trust and network, there is a need for the government to engage community stakeholders to build trust, transparency and accountability, attributes which enhance the sustainability of PPPs in the education sector. Engagement also covers developing an effective communication strategy to inform parents about school characteristics; and members of the public about the associated objectives and benefits of the PPPs.

There is a need to build enough safeguards through containing costs across the project stream from project inception up to completion. Costs should be cut throughout the project lifetime. Costs should be contained by the government providing cheap land and sound project selection, identification and management. BOOT is important in countries such as Zimbabwe which are facing overstretched financial resources.

Other strategies for enhancing the sustainability of PPPs may include separating the purchaser and provider of educational services in the administrative agency in line with best procurement practices, and effective contract monitoring mechanisms such as incentives and disincentives as way to meet performance targets. The government should also develop appropriate performance measures and include performance incentives and sanctions for inadequate performance in the PPP agreements. It is equally important to ensure that both the government and the contracting authority develop their own capacities. Furthermore, Zimbabwe should establish sound institutional and legal frameworks.

7.0 Ethical Conduct

This desk-based study was conducted in line with ethical requirements; authors have acknowledged all the cited sources, and plagiarism test was found to be 13%.

8.0 Data Availability Statement

Authors confirm that data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the research as it is entirely based on theoretical research.

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