

A Theoretical Assessment of the Challenges of Public Private Partnership in Improving Infrastructure Service Delivery in Swaziland

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Abstract

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) play an important role in improving the quality of infrastructure service delivery in different countries. In the construction industry, PPPs contribute to skills transfer by the private sector to the public sector and achieving greater efficiency by reducing government bureaucracy and financial burdens. However, these partnerships have challenges that hinder the implementation and delivery of infrastructure. This research examines challenges encountered in the implementation of PPP in construction projects. The study is a literature review/ survey on the challenges faced with the implementation of public private partnership in improving infrastructure service delivery on projects. The study is conducted with reference to existing theoretical literature, published and unpublished research based on international context. However, the challenges specifically are based on literature in Swaziland to identify the challenges they face and the way forward. Other scholars' works were critically examined to determine the views on the subject. The research revealed that on the political level, there are high expectations with concerns that officials' expertise to handle PPP projects are not sufficient, Private sector stakeholders were concerned about the possible dominance of foreign companies. Moreover, labour feared negative consequences for workers, and part of financial sector did not see enough opportunities for PPP in Swaziland. Lack of common understanding and coordination, insufficient planning capacity and structuring support were amongst the challenges faced by PPP in Swaziland. The study will assist the Swaziland Construction Industry in improving their services in terms of delivering construction project timeously since particular strategies can be developed to overcome the identified challenges.

Keywords: construction projects, infrastructure, public-private partnerships, Swaziland

1. Introduction

Literature revealed that most countries are experiencing backlog in infrastructural service delivery and this has a negative impact on the economy and the residents of the country (Greve and Hodge, 2005). Most countries have been doing their best to come up with solutions to this challenge and PPPs is one of the solutions being adopted (Asmati, 2010, Babatunde and Opawole, 2012 and Greve and Hodge,

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2005). However, PPPs is not the answer to infrastructural service backlog but it can only reduce the challenge faced by our government (Asmati, 2010, Babatunde and Opawole, 2012 and Greve and Hodge, 2005). PPP's have been used in a number of countries as a means to deliver and manage public infrastructure (Asmati, 2010, Babatunde and Opawole, 2012 and Greve and Hodge, 2005).

Many countries in Africa including Swaziland depend and rely on the developments funded by the public sector (Asmati, 2010, Vilane et al, 2012 and Axis Consulting, 2013). According to Greve and Hodge (2005), PPPs are loosely defined as cooperative institutional arrangements between the public and private sectors and it has a new gained wide interest around the world. There has considerable research work conducted, both locally and internationally, on the nature and form of PPPs (Asmati, 2010). This study would focus on the challenges faced with the implementation of public private partnership in Swaziland.

1.1 Swaziland

Swaziland is very small country. It is heavily dependent on its neighbours for access to the sea, to the markets and to outside suppliers (Mashwama et al, 2016). Swaziland's population is estimated at around 1.4 million. Swaziland is Africa's last monarchy, ruled by King Mswati III, subject to constitution of 2005. The constitution involves some democratic element and protection of human right (Mashwama et al, 2016). The Kingdom is divided into four districts namely Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo and Shiselweni District. The capital city is Mbabane in the Hhohho District with a population of around 100,000 (Thwala and Mvubu, 2009).

1.2 Swaziland construction industry

The construction industry (CI) in Swaziland is a key component of economic growth. For the developing countries the construction industry plays even a greater role in development and poverty alleviation by providing access to basic services and transport facilities (Mashwama et al, 2016). The construction companies operating in Swaziland range from small local contractors to major companies with the capability to carry out highly specialised projects. The large contractors employ about 20,000 people. The range of work undertaken in the construction industry covers small buildings, multi-level projects, roads, dams and infrastructure. Therefore, the CI is a key source of work and income in the Kingdom. The overall contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the construction industry was 5.8% in 2002, but it has dropped down to 2.8% in 2013 (Swaziland Business year book 2002, Central bank of Swaziland). Government is the major client in the construction industry of Swaziland. The ministry of Public Works and Transport is the Government's implementing agency on behalf of all ministries with regard to all construction capital projects (Mashwama et al, 2016). The Swaziland Government through the ministry of Public Works and Transport also has a responsibility to educate contractors and subcontractors about government's expectations of the quality of work; the process of tendering and the information required (Thwala and Mvubu, 2009). The Government of the kingdom of Swaziland, through its 25- year National Development Strategy has identified the construction sector as a priority area to provide the impetus on improve the social and economic development of the country. However, the Agriculture industry is the one that leads by contributing more to the economy of the country.

2. Theoretical overview of Public Private Partnership (PPP)

2.1 Definition of Public Private Partnership

There is no common definition for the concept of public private partnerships, as it is usually defined in relation to the various forms it assumes (Boardman, Greve and Hodge, 2010). PPP is defined as any medium to long-term relationship between the public and private sectors, involving the sharing of risks and reward of multi-sector skills, expertise and finance to deliver desired policy outcomes (Deloitte, 2010). The World Bank (year) defines PPP by looking at various key elements such as the existence of a partnership style approach to the provision of infrastructure as opposed to an arm's-length "supplier" relationship (The World Bank, 2007). Both parties take either individual or joint responsibilities; risk sharing, reward and value for money (The World Bank, 2007). PPP is defined as a collaborative arrangement over one or more phases of the life cycle of a project between a government or its agency and one or more private sector parties. The rights and responsibilities are innovatively specified, with the elements of sharing risks and rewards in a long-term contractual relationship (Manchidi and Merrified, 2001).

2.2 Types and forms of PPPs

There is rich information coming out from literature in categorizing various forms of Public Private Partnerships (Chib et al., 2009). It has been stated earlier that lack of uniformity in the definition of the concept of PPP is as a result of the different forms of PPP models (UNESCAP, 2007). Literature reveals that various institutions and authors choose to classify different modes of PPP based on their understanding. However, the most common PPP modes found in various literatures include, amongst others, the following:

- *Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT)*. The arrangement involves the transfer of responsibility for constructing, financing and operating a single facility to a private sector partner for a fixed period of time. At the end of that period, the responsibility reverts to the public entity (Fastrich and Girmscheid, 2007; Alfen et al, 2009, Vilane et al., 2012).
- *Design-Build-Finance-Operate (DBO)*. The service provider is usually responsible for financing the project during construction. The government purchases the asset from the developer for a pre-agreed price prior to commissioning and takes all ownership risks from that time (Manchidi, et al, 2006, Vilane et al, 2012, Houghton, 2011 and Koning, 2007).
- *Build-Operate-Own (BOO)*. It involves the granting of ownership rights in perpetuity to develop, finance, design, build, own, operate and maintain an asset. The private sector own the asset outright and retains the ownership and operating revenue risk, with no transfer to the public sector (Alfen, et al, 2009 and Vilane et al, 2012).

The PPP models can therefore vary from short-term simple management contracts to long-term very complex contracts, based on ownership of the capital assets, responsibility for investment, assumption of risks, and duration of contract.

2.3 The rationale for the establishment of public private partnerships

The Government of Swaziland is currently facing challenges in infrastructure development and public service delivery. Moreover, the government has made slow progress in addressing the infrastructure

gap due to low implementation rate of capital projects, low economic growth rate and the most recent cash flow challenges faced, not only by Swaziland but by international economies as well (Axis Consulting, 2013). Inadequate infrastructure is a constraint on growth worldwide, and particularly in developing countries. Infrastructure services are often inadequate to meet demand, resulting in congestion and they are often of low quality or reliability, while many areas are simply un-served (Ntshangase, 2002; Bovis 2010). This poor infrastructure performance especially in delivering construction projects reflects universal challenges facing governments (Bovis, 2010 and Rilley and Kraft 2010). Literature reveals that poor planning and coordination, weak analysis underpinning project selection, pursuit of political gain, and corruption, means that the limited resources are often spent on the wrong construction projects (Babatunde and Opawule, 2012; Fastric and Girmsheid, 2007 and Ntshangase, 2002). Furthermore, according to Manchidi et al (2006) and Vilane et al, (2012), there are fiscal constraints, which hinder the implementation of infrastructure projects and thus a need arises to overcome these challenges. One of the ways to overcome the challenges in infrastructure delivery is through PPPs as suggested by Manchidi et al (2006) and Vilane et al. (2012), who stated that given the fiscal constraints in Swaziland, Public-Private Partnerships are discussed as an alternative method of realizing infrastructure delivery and supplementing public sector resources.

Many authors and institutions have spent considerable amount of time in explaining and providing motivations for the existence of PPPs in various parts of the world, including Swaziland (Akintoye et al., 2003 and Vilane et al, 2012). The most common reason provided by many authors is the reality of lack of government budget to fund public infrastructure service delivery, and as a result they seek partnerships with the business/private sector to achieve this objective (Vilane et al., 2012, Manchidi and Merrified, 2001; Deloitte, 2010; Alfen et al., 2009). With the great number of priorities competing for public funds, governments are pressed to create more avenues to fund and meet infrastructure needs (Deloitte, 2010).

One of the key political drivers behind the PPP is the desire to improve the nation's infrastructure and supporting public services without placing undue strain on scarce public funds and without having to increase taxation (Axis Consulting, 2013 and Alfen, et al, 2009). Other reasons for the adoption of PPP model by various governments include; skills transfer by the private sector to the public sector and achieving greater efficiency by limiting the usually lengthy government bureaucracy. The public sector is usually rich in human resources but lacks in expertise whereas private sector has more expertise but lacks in human resources (Asmat, 2010). The private sector can often react more quickly, as there is no bureaucratic hierarchy for decision making (Asmat, 2010). These views were expressed in an article by Matsapha (2017), in which it was remarked that Swaziland could reach first world status if only they could adopt the right approach to budgeting such as the PPP. The article further revealed that the performance of ministries tasked with disburding funds to finance public projects was poor and thus the need for PPPs is great.

PPPs can mobilize additional sources of funding and financing for infrastructure and they can help improve project selection, subjecting assumptions to the market test of attracting private finance (Rogerson, 2010, Wettenhall, 2003, Vilane et al, 2012 and Bovis, 2010). Countries with relatively long PPP histories have found that PPPs manage construction better than traditional procurement, with projects coming in on time and on budget more often (Bovis, 2010). PPPs can also help to ensure adequate maintenance and keep assets in a serviceable condition (Rogerson, 2010 and Rilley and Kraft, 2010). Delivered PPP projects are also of good quality. (Axis consulting, 2013 and Vilane et al, 2012). Some of the projects that were delivered successfully in Swaziland, include the following:

- Uniswa Housing, where Swazi MTN partnered with the University of Swaziland and took centre stage in providing finance for the designated capital projects at the school (Observer, 2013).
- Manzini shopping mall, which was provided to improve the socio-economic use of the land on which the development was undertaken and to complement other recent development within the city (Zwane, 2015). The project was developed under a PPP where the municipal council of Manzini issued public notice inviting expressions of interest and following a bidding process, the Manzini trade centre successfully entered into a PPP with the council.

However, the above projects among others, also faced some challenges including cost overruns, lack of policy direction, unstable governments, and so on. These are discussed further in the following section.

2.5 Challenges faced by PPPs in Swaziland

Every partnership of any kind comes with challenges and obstacles that might be a threat to success of the vision they have. Review literature shows that PPPs are faced with a lot of challenges when it comes to its implementation to deliver services in Swaziland (Axis consulting, 2013, Vilane et al, 2012 and Deloitte, 2010). PPP implementation in the Kingdom of Swaziland has faced various challenges such as:

2.5.1 Lack of highest level policy direction

PPPs are lacking at the highest levels of leadership at government level. The management of PPPs from government level does not provide clearer and more predictable intent on when and why to do PPPs in general, and in specific sectors (Vilane et al, 2012). According to David Wright in a proceeding held at Ezulwini Royal hotel states that the PPP projects should be those the country needs the most and should be beneficial to the community as a whole”.

2.5.2 Lack of consistent political resolve

Reviewed literature states that political leadership shows inconsistent commitment to PPPs. Commitment to PPPs suffers from the fact that policy on PPPs changes with changes in political leadership (Vilane et al, 2012).

2.5.3 Lack of Resources dedicated to fostering public private partnerships

The resources to do all that is needed to be done to foster successful PPPs are lacking in Swaziland. Less resources are devoted to promoting PPPs and building capacity within line departments or ministries and municipalities to implement PPPs (Axis Consulting, 2013).

2.5.4 Policy bias toward traditional public procurement

Literature revealed that traditional public procurement of infrastructure services is the default choice in most countries in the world (Vilane et al, 2012). Ministries must therefore, decide first if they want to consider a PPP for a given project and then prove that a PPP would provide more value-for-money than traditional government procurement (Axis Consulting, 2013).

2.5.5 Conflicting interests of parties

According to the United Nations HABITAT (2011), PPP arrangements are challenged with drastically different interests as a result of parties from different backgrounds, along with differing strategic and operational realities. As a result, relationships need to be built, otherwise projects might fail. The failure of many alliances can be traced to the partner selection and planning stages (UN-HABITAT, 2011).

Other challenges encountered in successful realisation of a PPP configuration in Swaziland include:

- Swaziland has not adopted a specific PPP legislation and these seems to be a general lack of understanding of the term PPP;
- Lack of experience- when executing complex projects from the government sector;
- Poor tender process from the government sector;
- Insufficient planning capacity as well as structuring support from the government sector;
- Lack of capital and business training for outsourced employees remain a bottleneck;
- Limited possibilities for local participation;
- Lack of competition (Natural monopoly) and political commitment to set cost recovery tariffs
- Lack of funding due to government being bad payer, for example E2,8BN was owed to a private sector after a partnership with the government, hence the private sector they discouraged to do the partnership because it could lead to collapsing of the financial system, risking depositors funds in the process (The times of Swaziland, 2012).
- the long-term planning horizon;
- the complexity of various projects;
- the institutionalized competition rules for public projects;
- the hold-up problem caused by a change in the position of partners;
- a technocratic implementation;
- Lack of information:
- reductionist measures instilling competitive norms instead of cooperative ones; and
- Cultural differences between private and public partners (Axis Consulting, 2013).
- Project development: The project development activities such as, detailed feasibility study, land acquisition, environmental clearances etc., are not given adequate importance by the concessioning authorities (Grimsey and Lewis, 2004).
- Lack of institutional capacity: The limited institutional capacity to undertake large and complex projects at various central ministries and especially at state and local bodies' level hinder the translation of targets into projects (The times of Swaziland, 2014).
- Financing availability: The private sector is dependent upon commercial banks to raise debt for the PPP projects. With commercial banks reaching the sectoral exposure limits, funding the PPP projects is getting difficult (Vilane, et al, 2012).

Literature revealed that regulatory environment must be in place in order to attract more domestic and international private funding of infrastructure, a more robust regulatory environment, hence an independent regulator, is essential (The Times of Swaziland, 2012 and Grimsey and Lewis, 2004).

3. Research Methodology

The research was conducted with reference to existing theoretical literature, published and unpublished literatures from online journals, magazines, Times of Swaziland, Conferences, Proceedings dissertations. Articles from google scholar, ASCE library, Emerald were used. A total of 41 articles

were reviewed/ used and they were all relevant to the subject matter PPP. The study is mainly a literature survey/review and looks at the literatures relating to public private partnership in the construction industry. This is because, the challenge inherent in PPP arrangements also arises from the notion of building new relationships between actors that have drastically different interests and are from different backgrounds, along with divergent strategic and operational realities. The current methodology falls within the qualitative research methodology (Neuman, 2000 and Leedy, 1989).

4. Lessons Learnt

Literature revealed that Swaziland, depend and rely on the developments funded by the public sector thus bringing financial constrain to the economy (Greve and Hodge, 2005 and Axis Consulting, 2013)). Inadequate infrastructure is a constraint on growth worldwide, and particularly in developing countries. Infrastructure services are often inadequate to meet demand, resulting in congestion and they are often of low quality or reliability, while many areas are simply un-served (Axis Consulting, 2013, Bovis 2010 and Ntshangase, 2002). This poor infrastructure performance reflects pervasive challenges facing governments of Swaziland (Manuel, 2007, Vilane et al., 2012; Bovis, 2010;). Reviewed literature reveals that Swaziland has not adopted a specific PPP legislation and there seems to be a general lack of understanding of the term PPP; Lack of experience- when executing complex projects from the government sector; Poor tender process from the government sector; Insufficient planning capacity as well as structuring support from the government sector.

Furthermore, Lack of capital and business training for outsourced employees remain a bottleneck; Limited possibilities for local participation; Lack of competition (Natural monopoly) and political commitment to set cost recovery tariffs were also the major challenges faced by the implementation of PPP in Swaziland. Moreover, Lack of funding due to government being bad payer, for example E2,8BN was owed to a private sector after a partnership with the government, hence the private sector they are discouraged to do the partnership because it could lead to collapsing of the financial system, risking depositors funds in the process (Axis Consulting, 2013 and Vilane et al, 2012); The long-term planning horizon; The complexity of various projects; The institutionalized competition rules for public projects; The hold-up problem caused by a change in the position of partners; A technocratic implementation; Lack of information: reductionist measures instilling competitive norms instead of cooperative ones; and Cultural differences between private and public partners (Axis Consulting, 2013).

In addition, project development activities including detailed feasibility study, land acquisition, environmental clearances etc., are not given adequate importance by the concessioning authorities (Grimsey and Lewis, 2004). Lack of institutional capacity: The limited institutional capacity to undertake large and complex projects at various central ministries and especially at state and local bodies' level hinder the translation of targets into projects (Axis Consulting, 2013) were amongst the challenges in Swaziland. Financing availability: The private sector is dependent upon commercial banks to raise debt for the PPP projects. With commercial banks reaching the sectoral exposure limits, funding the PPP projects is getting difficult (Vilane, et al, 2012). poor planning and coordination, weak analysis underpinning project selection, pursuit of political gain, and corruption, means that the limited resources are often spent on the wrong projects (Axis Consulting, 2013 and Vilane et al, 2012) were key contributors to hindrance of ppp implementation. One of the key political drivers behind the PPP is the desire to improve the nation's infrastructure and supporting public services without placing undue strain on scarce public funds and without having to increase taxation (Axis consulting, 2013 and Alfen, et al, 2009). Other reasons for the adoption of PPP model by various governments include amongst others;

skills transfer by the private sector to the public sector and achieving greater efficiency by limiting the usually lengthy government bureaucracy. Public sector is usually rich in human resources but lacks in expertise whereas private sector has more expertise but lacks in human resources (Asmat, 2010). The private sector can often react more quickly, as there is no bureaucratic hierarchy for decision making (Vilane et al, 2012 and Asmat, 2010).

5. Conclusion

This article has examined literature relating to the challenges faced with the implementation of Public Private Partnership in construction projects. Through PPP, Both the private and public sector stand to benefit and public sector is able to leverage private sector resources for infrastructure development, improvement and maintenance. The public sector is able to tap into private sector efficiencies and also benefit from the skills transfer from the private sector. Moreover, the Private sector gets an opportunity to influence and introduce changes and innovations to traditional Government methods both for infrastructure development and service delivery because PPP's are based on output on the output and the process is left to the private sector. From the above challenges revealed by the literature Swaziland must have a strong political commitment to policy implementation, Adopt a legal framework; Ensuring that private sector participants are able and willing to participate in the processed sponsored by government and they must provide necessary services and capital for the Government. Transparency and accountability is encouraged.

6. Recommendations for Further Studies

The concept of PPP is relatively new in the functioning of the Swaziland economy, and therefore, it will require further research which will seek to closely examine on how the PPP initiatives can be entrenched as a reliable mode of delivering effective service delivery. Further research should also be conducted in assessing the approach and attitude of government institutions towards the PPPs, and thereby measuring the involvement of PPPs in the broader government infrastructure development projects. If indeed PPPs are perceived as an effective and efficient means of delivery infrastructure, it will be interesting to see as to what extent PPPs are involved in the overall government infrastructure development programme.

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