



Performance of Public-Private Partnerships in delivering Education services: The Case of Universal Secondary Education Policy Implementation in Uganda

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Abstract

After implementing the Universal Primary Education policy for 10 years, Uganda initiated the Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy in 2007. The objective of the USE initiative was to equitably increase access to secondary education. The policy is implemented by public secondary schools as well as through a Public-Private Partnership (USE PPP) between the Ministry of Education and Sports and selected private secondary schools—mainly in sub counties without any public secondary schools. Within the USE PPP, the government provides a subsidy (capitation grant) to private schools to enrol UPE graduates. In this paper, we adopt the integrated framework for assessing public-private partnerships to examine the workings and performance of the USE PPP. The focus on USE PPP is due to the fact that this type of arrangement in delivering education services never existed prior to the USE policy. Based on 2013 survey findings, the USE PPP is performing moderately well in terms of good accountability, relevance, effectiveness, impact and participation. However, the USE PPP is performing poorly in terms of efficiency and sustainability. The paper has documented the major challenges faced by the USE PPP and proposed specific actions that can improve and sustain the impact of USE policy under PPP framework.

Keywords: Public-private partnership, Universal Secondary Education, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Background

Transition from primary to secondary education has remained very low in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. According to the 2010 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report, 38 percent of children who are supposed to be in lower secondary school are actually out of school. Moreover, access to secondary education is inequitable, to the detrimental of poor children.

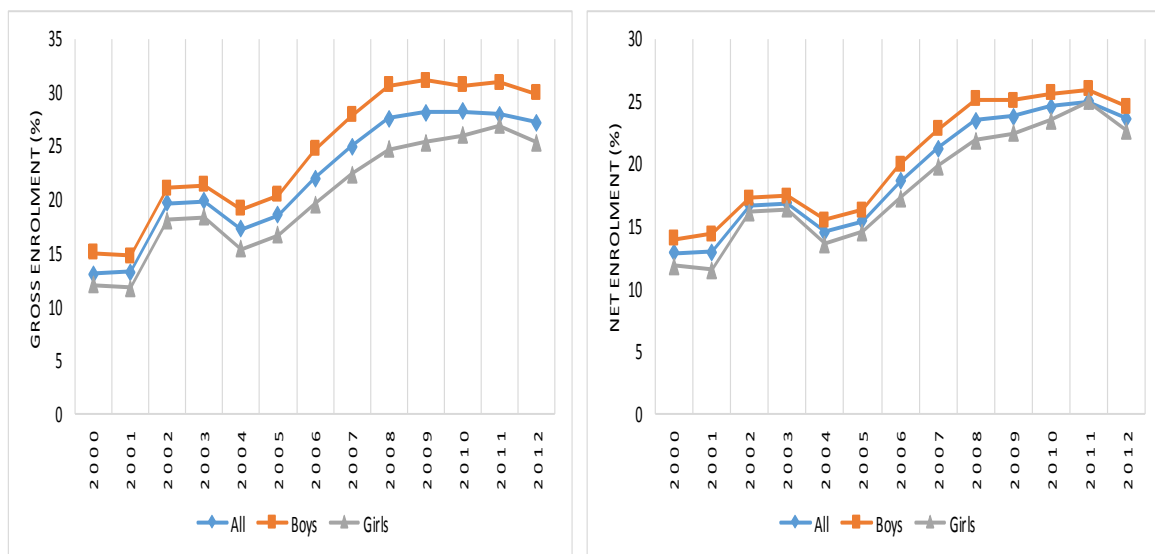
Like many other SSA countries, Uganda's secondary education sub-sector is characterized by low enrolment and high drop-out rates. In 2013, the average Gross Enrolment Rate was estimated at 27 percent (29 percent for boys and 25 percent for girls) (Ministry of Education & Sports (MoES) 2013). Analysis based on Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) of

2009/10 indicates that high cost of schooling remains a major barrier to accessing secondary education. Besides, the challenge of low secondary school enrolment, the drop-out rate is alarming, especially for the girl child. Only approximately 34 percent of girls that join secondary schools complete the ordinary secondary school level compared to about 52 percent for boys (MoES 2012).

In order to address access constraints to secondary schooling, a number of countries in SSA (for example, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) are implementing Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy. Uganda started implementing the USE policy in 2007, through a Public- Private Partnership (PPP) – owners of some private secondary schools have partnered with the MoES to enrol eligible children for the ordinary level secondary education. The USE policy aims at consolidating Universal Primary Education (UPE) gains and ensuring equitable access to secondary education by all eligible students regardless of their socio-economic background.

In Uganda, it is over six years since the USE policy was launched, yet enrolment for secondary education remains below 30 percent as illustrated in Figure 1. Both gross and net enrolment rates increased after the introduction of the USE policy, but seem to start declining after 2011. Yet, by Government introducing the USE policy and implementing it in partnership with private schools, it was hoped that many children would then gain access to relatively affordable secondary education. This raises questions on the performance of this partnership against the expected outcomes of the policy. Therefore, this study sought to provide insights into the performance of USE implementing public-private partnership.

Figure 1: Gross and net enrolment rates in secondary schools (2000 – 2012)



Source: Education Management Information System 2000 -2012

The information generated from this study can be used as evidence for possible reforms in the re-design and implementation of the USE policy. The scope of the current study is limited to the performance of the PPP but it does not focus on the learning outcomes, which thus can be an area for further research.

The remaining part of the paper is structured as follows: section 1.2 provides a conceptual framework for the study; section 2 presents the review of literature; section 3 describes the

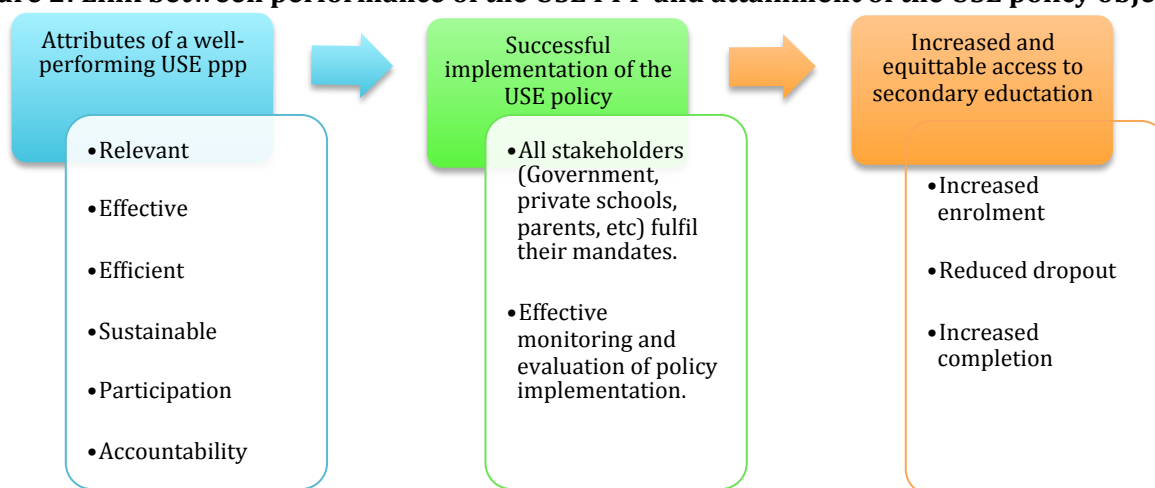
methodology used; section 4 presents the results and discussion, while section 5 provides the conclusions and emerging policy actions.

Conceptualisation and definitions

Although there are Government aided USE schools, implementation of the USE policy heavily relies on the partnership that exists between the MoES and selected privately owned secondary schools. This partnership is largely driven by limited public secondary school infrastructure, which would otherwise limit access to all qualifying children. Collaborations such as this are commonly referred to as public-private partnerships (PPPs). MoES (2010) defines a PPP as a Medium to long-term contractual arrangement between public and private sector to finance, construct/renovate, manage and/or maintain a public infrastructure, or the provision of a public service.

Thus, in the context of this study, if the contractual arrangement between MoES and private secondary schools works well as illustrated in Figure 2, access to secondary education should greatly improve. Currently, the MoES mainly uses Gross Enrolment Rate and Net Enrolment Rate to measure access to secondary education. Accordingly, if the USE PPP is indeed performing well, then access should increase, and drop-outs previously associated with high cost of schooling is deemed to reduce, hence registering higher completion rates.

Figure 2: Link between performance of the USE PPP and attainment of the USE policy objective



DATA AND METHODS

Data sources

This study used secondary data on number of USE schools and USE enrolment for the period 2007 to 2012 to gain an understanding of how the USE PPP has grown over the years. This data is collected by MoES and was sourced from the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

To be able to evaluate the performance of the USE PPP, primary data was collected in June 2013 from 61 private secondary schools that are partnering with MoES to implement the USE policy. These schools were selected from four purposively selected districts of Arua, Iganga, Kibaale and Luwero – representing the regions of northern, eastern, western and central respectively. The choice of the districts was based on the number of private USE schools in a given district – from each region a district with the highest number of private USE schools was selected so as to obtain adequate observations for analysis. The actual numbers of private USE

schools visited per district are: Luwero (23), Iganga (18), Arua (11) and Kibaale (9). The study did not collect data from public USE schools because they are not part of the USE PPP (they are entirely government aided and do not have a private sector component).

Using a semi-structured questionnaire, we conducted face-to-face interviews with the Headteachers of the selected schools. In some cases, we also interviewed bursars, Directors, Chairpersons of Boards of Governors and other school administrators. Additionally, we reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), certificates of accountabilities, head count forms and other relevant documents to be able to extract more data. To further get insights on the operations of the USE PPP especially with regard to policy implementation, support supervision, school inspection and evaluation, we interviewed the Assistant Commissioner in charge of private schools, Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), District Education Officers (DEOs) and other school inspectors.

Analytical framework

Integrated framework for assessing public-private partnerships

The analytical framework adapted for this study is a modification of the OECD's standard aid evaluation criteria, which assesses PPP performance, based on five criteria namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Lund-Thomsen (2007) while assessing the impact of PPPs in the global South, added two other criteria (participation and accountability) to OECD's standard aid evaluation criteria and came up with what he called "An integrated framework for assessing the performance of PPPs". Below is a description of the seven PPP performance assessment criteria.

Relevance: This evaluation criterion tests whether clear objectives were established under the PPP and whether the PPP objectives are in line with those of the partnering institutions. This criterion also explores whether the PPP objectives meet the perceived needs of the stakeholders (in this case schools, parents and teachers); and whether the stakeholders are supportive to the realization of the PPP objectives. Thus, assessing a PPP's relevance is not only necessary in ensuring that the priorities of the PPP and the those of the intended beneficiaries are taken into consideration, but also helps to improve design of the PPP.

Effectiveness: This criterion first assesses whether the PPP has yielded the intended objectives. In context, the study attempts to establish whether the USE PPP has led to increased access to ordinary level secondary education for all categories of children (boys and girls, residents in poor and non-poor households, children living with disabilities, and those in war affected areas). Second, effectiveness criterion assesses whether the achievement of the intended objective is indeed remarkable – in this context we assess whether the USE PPP has significantly increased access to secondary education. Third, the effectiveness criterion assesses whether the PPP is being implemented as per the guidelines. Specifically, in this study we sought to find out whether USE private schools adhered to all implementation guidelines that are provided by the MoES in the "Policy and operational arrangements for implementation of Universal secondary education (USE)". And lastly, this criterion assesses whether the stakeholders are satisfied with the outputs/outcomes of the partnership.

Efficiency: This criterion assess the performance of a PPP with regard to whether; 1) the public financial contribution is adequate, 2) the private partners are using the available resources optimally, 3) the private partners have adequate resources to enable them implement the activities of the PPP, and 4) the private partners consider themselves more efficient than the public in delivering the service in question. Thus, in line with the

mentioned, we assessed whether private USE schools; receive adequate funding from Government to enable them enrol and educate students, have adequate resources (e.g. qualified teachers, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, etc.) and use the resources optimally, and are better providers of secondary education compared to public USE schools. An understanding of how the private USE schools are using the limited available resources to increase access to secondary education will guide the redesign and implementation of USE programme.

Impact: This criterion assesses whether a PPP: has been effective, has yielded un-intended consequences, has co-opted stakeholders and regulatory efforts are respected, and has in place an effective monitoring and enforcement system. Particularly, efforts were made to understand whether: apart from increasing enrolment for secondary education the USE PPP has had other positive or negative externalities; schools, parents and students are included in the operations of the PPP; regulations governing the USE PPP are observed; and private USE schools are monitored and recommendations are adopted.

Sustainability: This criterion assesses whether the PPP achievements are sustainable in the long run, whether the PPP can financially sustain itself and whether the organizational structures created through the PPP will continue to exist. The particular issues that were examined in the current study included; whether the Government and private USE schools can sustain their contributions towards USE implementation, whether the Boards of Governors created in fulfilment of the USE PPP requirement will continue to exist with or without the partnership, and whether parents and guardians will continue to fulfil their roles.

Participation: The OECD (2007) defines participation as the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services. In terms of assessing the performance of PPPs, this criterion facilitates an investigation into whether the intended beneficiaries of PPPs have had any influence on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of PPP initiatives. In the context of this study, the beneficiaries of the USE PPP are the participating schools, parents/guardians and children. Thus, we made investigations into whether private USE schools, parents/guardians, and students participated in the design and implementation of the USE PPP; and whether they (beneficiaries) have taken interest to monitor and evaluate the USE PPP undertakings.

Accountability: This criterion provides an understanding of whether there are internal checks and balances in the PPP that can be used to guide the conduct of its participants and enforce agreed-upon rules. Having had prior knowledge that the MoES produced a document on the operational arrangements for implementation of USE programme, we investigated whether private USE schools have knowledge of what the operational arrangements provide for; and whether the actions of participating schools and parents are in accordance with the set procedures and rules of conduct.

Application of the integrated framework for assessing PPPs

During data collection, for each PPP assessment criterion, the respondent was requested to explain with examples a set of questions/issues. Based on the information provided by the respondent, the research team, made an objective evaluation of each criterion and assigned numbers 1, 2 or 3; where 1 = True, 2 = True but to a less extent, and 3 = Not true. The

descriptive analysis based on the scores is what gives an indication of how the PPP is performing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Growth of the public-private partnership implementing USE policy

Table 1 (Panel A) presents a snap shot in the growth of both government and private USE schools since 2007. Broadly speaking, the number of private USE schools increased from 1,155 in 2007 to 1,919 in 2012 – translating into 66 percentage increase. While this growth is mirrored in both categories, the share of government USE schools is on a decline relative to that of the participating private schools. Put differently, the public-private partnership has continued to grow over the years – with a share of nearly 47 percent in 2012. The increase in the number of USE schools seems to have led to significant increases in the number of USE students enrolled in ordinary level secondary education by five-fold. Although, the increase seem to have been faster for girls compared to their male counterparts. It is also important to note that immediately after the implementation of the USE program in 2007, enrolment of eligible students almost doubled in 2008 – regardless of gender. All this said, the share of USE private schools in total USE enrolment seem to lag their share in the total number of USE participating schools.

Table 1: USE schools and enrolments; 2007- 2012

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<i>Panel A. Number of Schools</i>						
Total	1,155	1,231	1,348	1,490	1,647	1,919
a) Government USE schools	791	803	802	841	904	1,024
b) Private USE schools	364	428	546	649	743	895
Percent private USE schools in total	31.5	34.8	40.5	43.6	45.1	46.6
<i>Panel B. Enrolment</i>						
Total	161,396	316,652	451,187	600,328	689,541	751,867
a) Males	92,388	180,086	254,289	334,639	377,293	408,441
b) Females	69,008	136,566	196,898	265,689	312,248	343,426
Percent females	43	43	44	44	45	46
Percent USE students in private schools	25	27	30	32	35	39

Source: Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2007 – 2012

While there is a noticeable increase in enrolment, the gender gap remains almost unchanged. Notably, Figure 3 reveals a widening gap in 2012. In other words, the gender gap has persisted even after the introduction of USE in 2007. These trends are partly explained by the differences in primary leaving examination (PLE) pass rates for boys and girls. Compared to boys, fewer girls pass PLE, which is a prerequisite for joining secondary education. For example, in 2012, 68 percent of boys who sat PLE passed by scoring 28 aggregates versus 66 percent for girls (EMIS 2000 – 2012).

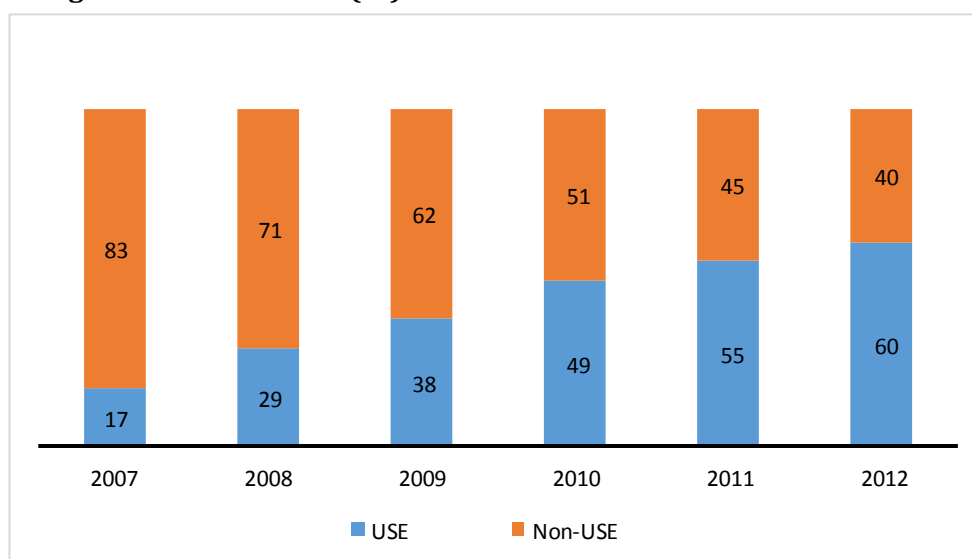
Figure 3: Trends of overall O’level enrolment for all schools; 2000 – 2012



Source: Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2000 – 2012

Figure 4 illustrates the extent to which the USE program has remained the key driver of increasing enrolment for the ordinary level secondary education in Uganda. The share of the USE program increased from 17 percent in 2007 to 60 percent in 2012. To put it differently, six in every ten students that were enrolled in O’ level secondary schools in 2012 were beneficiaries of the USE program.

Figure 4: Contribution (%) of USE to O’ level enrolment 2007 – 2012



Source: Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2000 – 2012

Performance of the partnership between MoES and private schools

This section discusses the performance of the government partnerships with private schools based on primary data collected from sampled schools. The discussion is guided by the seven criteria of the integrated framework for assessing performance of PPPs (see section 3.2.1). Each criterion is discussed separately in the subsequent sub-sections, and a synthesis of the seven assessment criteria is provided at the end.

Relevance

Nearly 77 percent of the respondents demonstrated knowledge of the USE PPP objective of increasing access to secondary education and that it does not contradict with their respective school objectives. Growing enrolment is a positive move given the profit maximising objective of most private schools.

More than half of the respondents perceived that the partnership meets the needs of the stakeholders (partnering schools and the parents). Most participating schools are satisfied with the USE support in terms of capitation grant and the teaching resources. Reporting on behalf of other parents, most Boards of Governors cited increased access to secondary education as well as growing number of adults in the communities with at least Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE). This was considered as a positive development compared to the pre-USE period.

A given partnership is said to be relevant if the stakeholders are supportive to the realization of its objectives. The field findings reveal that various stakeholders are to some extent supportive to the realization of the objective of the USE policy. For instance, parents take and register their eligible students at school, some of them contribute to their children's feeding by either paying lunch fees in cash or in kind (provide food items e.g. maize flour and beans), and others provide school uniforms and scholastic materials to their children. Additionally, in many schools, parents voluntarily contribute towards purchase of laboratory chemicals and apparatus, and construction of more school buildings when approached. It was interesting to note that also some politicians (e.g. area members of parliament) actively participate in school funding activities to support such developments.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, challenges still remain. Like with the experience with the Universal Primary Education (UPE), some parents do not provide their children with the necessary school related requirements (uniforms, books, pens and lunch among others). This has partly resulted into some students dropping out of school before completing Senior Four. There is some degree of politicisation of the USE programme. The Resident District Commissioner (RDCs) were cited to have interfered in the parents' participation in school development activities – claiming that government contribution to the participating schools covers all these expenses. Headteachers reported that there is a misconception that under the USE programme a parent has no financial obligation whatsoever. Lack of support from some stakeholders is not peculiar to Uganda but a global issue as Patrinos et al. (2009) rightly put it that managing education PPPs can sometimes be complex.

Effectiveness

In theory, PPP effectiveness is measured by attainment of its intended objectives, stakeholder satisfaction with its outcome and compliance with its implementation guidelines. One clear objective of the USE PPP is to increase education access equitably – i.e. minimize disparities in education access by the different categories of student (poor and non-poor, girls and boys, and children living with disabilities). Survey findings revealed that about 92 percent of respondents were in agreement that the PPP has helped to avail learning opportunities to all qualifying children, irrespective of their socio-economic status. However, with the available information it remains difficult to establish the extent to which the program has benefited children living with disabilities. Indeed, most Headteachers reported that they lack special facilities for students with major disabilities.

On the other hand, about 74 percent of the respondents agreed that the USE PPP has yielded substantial increments in school enrolments – which corroborates with the findings based on EMIS data. The respondents observed that at inception of the USE policy, enrolments skyrocketed and over the years, the enrolment in non-USE participating private schools has steadily declined.

Next we consider adherence to PPP guidelines as another measure of effectiveness. While more than half of the respondents cited following the guidelines and procedures as stipulated in the USE implementation guidelines, the practise on ground might be different. This is demonstrated by the fact that only one school out of the sampled schools had a copy of the implementation guidelines – implying that the rest of the schools were implementing the programme haphazardly. Nonetheless, most managers of schools had knowledge of some of the guidelines and to an extent followed them. This is illustrated by the fact that all schools had certificates of accountability – implying they were properly accounting for the USE funds; some schools had class sizes not exceeding 60 students per stream, which is the recommended upper limit; all schools had set up Boards of Governors, as required in the USE implementation guidelines; and admitted only eligible students. On the other hand, some schools were found to be violating certain principles, for example, they were not displaying on their notice boards the monies received as USE capitation grant, against what is required of them.

Efficiency

One of the indicators of efficiency is adequacy of contributions of partnering institutions. Three quarters of the Headteachers or Directors interviewed cited inadequacy of the currently level of USE capitation grants relative to the various school requirements. They reported teachers' salaries as one of their biggest expenditure, partly driven by the pressing demands for better and timely pay from teachers. Resultantly, some of the schools are compelled to violate the guidelines on expending USE funds. For example, one Headteacher emphatically stated that, "We in this school spend about 80 percent of the USE money on teachers' salaries". Yet, some schools reportedly borrow money from either friends and/or banks (at high interest rate) to clear their bills as they wait for government releases that often come late.

Additionally, the field results revealed that many schools were not using the available resources optimally – in most cases there was over utilization of certain infrastructure. For instance, in heavily populated schools, the numbers of students per stream were above 60 - which is above the permissible ceiling. The Headteachers explained that they have few and sometimes small classrooms and yet they are expected to admit all qualifying students for secondary education. This presents a challenge of managing demand against limited resources. It is argued that overcrowding compromises on quality of education because a teacher may not have the capacity and time to attend to several students' learning needs, thus making schools inefficient (Wokadala 2012).

One last measure of efficiency is whether the private sector considers itself more efficient relative to the public sector in providing a given service. The field findings show that about 69 percent of the Headteachers agree to an extent that private USE schools are less efficient than those that are fully funded by government. They cited plausible explanations for this to include: (i) the quality of students admitted in senior one - private schools, especially those in rural areas, usually admit students with lower PLE grades compared to their counterparts in fully government funded schools. As such, private schools are pushed to put in more efforts to ensure that these students excel in UCE examinations; and (ii) level of funding – government

aided schools receive more funds and material support than private schools – this enables them to operate smoothly and concentrate on teaching. More important, the teachers' remuneration in government schools is in most case much better than in private school – this motivates Government teachers to remain committed to the task. Nonetheless, some respondents observed that private schools to be more effective because: decision making is easy; automatic promotions that compromise academic standards are not tolerated; and private schools generally have relatively few students, which is an advantage - students begin practical lessons right from senior one, teachers can easily manage the few students and it is relatively easy to track students' performance.

Impact

One of the focus areas for the impact criterion is an evaluation of whether the PPP has yielded un-intended consequences. The field findings reveal that 67 percent of the respondents reported that the PPP has yielded mixed unexpected consequences. Further probing revealed that some of the positive effects include: employment creation as a result of the necessity for additional teaching and non-teaching staff (but some of the employed persons, particularly teachers are not qualified); significant reduction in the cost of looking for students as well as the burden of school fees collection; increased ease of implementing schools' work plans; increased access to information; and ease in registration with the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) – this is paid for under USE set up.

On the other hand, some common negative consequences were reported and these include: (i) attainment of poor grades in UCE examinations, which is partly attributed to relaxed Senior one entry requirements and automatic promotion policy; (ii) deviant behaviour among the students - since the law abolished corporal punishment and this has further culminated into rampant absenteeism among students (especially during harvesting seasons in rural areas); and (iii) increased irresponsibility among some parents with the misconception that government USE grant caters for all school requirements. The declining academic performance reported in some private USE schools is not unique to Uganda - Verspoor (2008) found in other countries that although private schools implementing PPPs recorded significant increase in enrolment, quality and equity issues still remained unaddressed.

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of the USE programme are: Central Government, District Local Governments, Parents and Guardians, Foundation Bodies/Proprietors, Headteachers, and BoGs – whose roles and responsibilities are clearly documented in the USE implementation guidelines. Nearly 59 percent of the respondents felt that all key players in USE implementation had been co-opted in the PPP framework. From the field visits, we found that generally stakeholders were doing their jobs except for those parents who were not fulfilling their responsibilities (e.g. not meeting their children' health and feeding expenses).

The impact criterion further assesses whether the regulatory efforts are respected. Our findings reveal that some of the PPP regulations are not followed or respected, partly because of ignorance of the USE implementation guidelines. As mentioned earlier, only one school in the sample had a copy of the "Policy and Operational Arrangements for Implementation of USE". Disregard of implementation guidelines was especially true in the area of financial management – which states "The school USE Bank Account shall be opened and administered by the Chair person BoGs and the Headteacher". However, many Headteachers complained that the Directors/Proprietors of the schools had taken over this role and were not spending the monies as per the approved budgets.

The other aspect looked at when assessing impact is the effectiveness of the monitoring and enforcement system. First, we note that all the respondents indicated that their schools are regularly (at least twice a year) monitored by various stakeholders. Under general provisions of the USE implementation guidelines, monitoring, supervision and regular evaluation of the USE implementation programme is expected to be conducted by various stakeholders to ensure quality and success of the programme. The field study reveals that District Education Officers (DEO), Officials from the Directorate of Education Standards (DES), Gombolala Internal Security Officer (GISO) and District Internal Security Officer (DISO) are the regular monitors (Table 2). The stakeholders have a mandate of carrying out regular (at least once every term) school inspection and teacher supervision to ensure that government gets value out of the USE partnership.

Table 2: USE Programme Monitors and Frequency of Monitoring

Monitor	Frequency (percent) N = 61	Number of schools visits per year
DEOs office	56 (91.8%)	2.4
MoES officials	33 (54.1%)	2.2
Directorate of Education Standards	31 (50.8%)	2.8
GISO and DISO	11 (18.0%)	2.5
UNEB	4 (6.6%)	1.9
Others (LCs)	11 (18.0%)	2.2

Source: Authors' computations based on field data

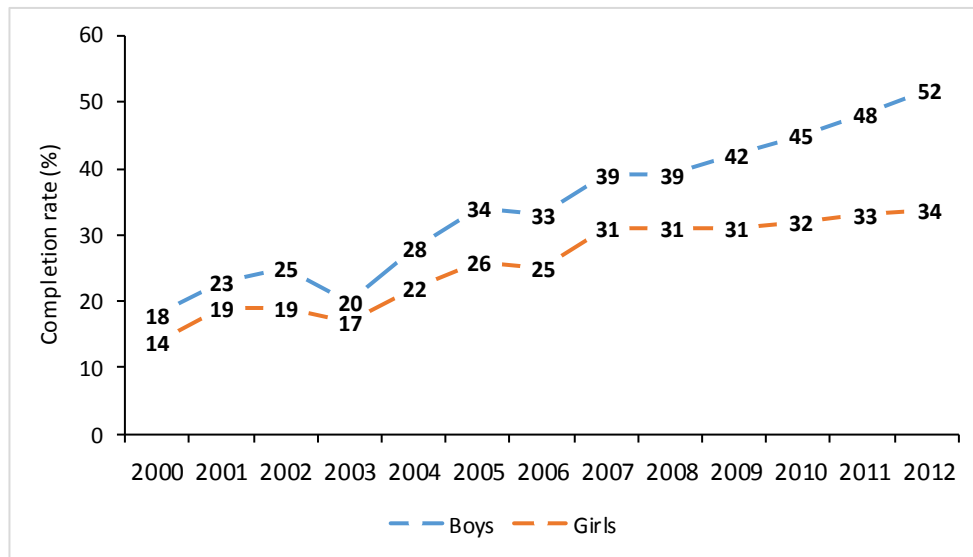
During monitoring of private USE schools, different institutions focus on different aspects. For instance, the DES evaluates the teaching curriculum, schemes of work, and lesson preparation. The officials from UNEB usually focus on centre supervision and availability of facilities like laboratories and classroom space. The MoES usually conducts general supervision and focuses on issues such as utilization of USE funds, teacher supervision, staff qualifications, student enrolment, and other pedagogical aspects. The DEO's office checks on schemes of work, lesson plans, performance appraisal, facilities for learning, hygiene of the school; adequacy of human resource, time table; and emphasizes transparency in accountability and routine census, among others. The GISO and DISO monitor schools to verify the teaching and learning; whether USE funds are released timely and in the right amount; and establish how parents/stakeholders support the USE programme.

About 78 percent of the interviewed participants in private USE schools reported that they regularly receive evaluation reports as feedback from the inspection/monitoring. However, our interaction with the Headteachers revealed that suggestions/recommendations provided by the inspectors are rarely implemented (monitoring reports are simply shelved), even in circumstances when the recommendations are relevant and achievable. Given such scenarios, it is difficult to conclude that monitoring of USE implementation is effective, especially with regard to improving teaching and learning, instructional leadership, academic achievement and overall school performance. That said, 72 percent of respondents were of the view that both the external and internal monitoring of USE implementation is quite effective.

Sustainability

First, this criterion assesses whether the achievements of the PPP are sustained over time. One major achievement that should be expected from the USE programme is an increase in the number of people who have successfully completed ordinary level secondary school cycle. Therefore, sustainability will be reflected in increasing senior four completion rates. Figure 5 depicts growing O'level completion rates for both boys and girls. Although the trends shown are for both USE and non-USE students, it is generally noted that since the inception of USE, the increasing trends have been maintained. The trends seem to suggest that the USE PPP is able to achieve and sustain high O'level completion rates in the long run. However, we should not ignore the limited growth for girls as well as a growing gender gap in completion rates. The persistent gender gap is explained by, among others, persistence of low value attached to girls' education, sexual abuse of girls, early sexual engagement and teenage pregnancy (MoES, 2013).

Figure 5: Senior four completion rates (%) for boys and girls; 2000 - 2012



Source: Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2000 - 2012

Another aspect of sustainability is whether the PPP can financially sustain itself. In this context, Government is the partner that makes the biggest financial contribution towards USE implementation. Funds are annually allocated for USE implementation by MoFPED. On the other hand, the private USE schools raise additional funds through tuition fees paid by the purely self-sponsored students and other charges (such as development fee) that are paid by both USE and non-USE students. It may be noted that in private USE schools, even the USE students pay some money in form of development and lunch fees – they are only exempted from tuition. Based on these facts, many Headteachers felt that the partnership is financially sustainable. However, sustainability should not be confused with adequacy – although the partners can sustainably contribute towards USE implementation, the contribution, especially from Government is currently inadequate. Since 2007 when the USE programme was first implemented, the capitation grant per student has remained fixed at UGX47, 000 per term. This amount is inadequate to enable the schools deliver quality education in the era of tight economic conditions.

Also, when assessing sustainability, it is important to know whether there are organizational structures specifically created to play an oversight role. Indeed, the operational arrangements for implementation of USE require that schools form Boards of Governors, who are responsible for management and administration of the USE programme within their localities. Indeed,

every USE school that we visited had this governance structure in place, that among other things, ensured expending of USE grant as per the guidelines and engaged in monitoring the implementation of USE in their areas of jurisdiction.

Participation

One of the aspects investigated while assessing participation is whether the intended beneficiaries influenced the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the PPP. It was revealed from the field that stakeholders such as school proprietors, teachers, BoGs, PTA executive had influence in the design and implementation of the PPP. In other words, they were consulted before signing the MoU with the MoES. However, in certain unfortunate scenarios, some stakeholders (especially parents and the communities) were notified after signing the MoU.

Three quarters of the respondents acknowledged having influence on USE implementation. For instance, parents, local and religious leaders, and politicians are invited to schools to make decisions regarding, for example, how much fees to charge on USE students; how to provide students with lunch (e.g. charge lunch fees or allow parents to bring food items); organizing fundraising functions for a particular cause (e.g. raise funds to construct a laboratory), and recruitment of new staff, among others. In a similar line of argument, about 66 percent of Headteachers or Directors agree that teachers and parents have taken own initiative in monitoring and evaluating the USE PPP activities.

Accountability

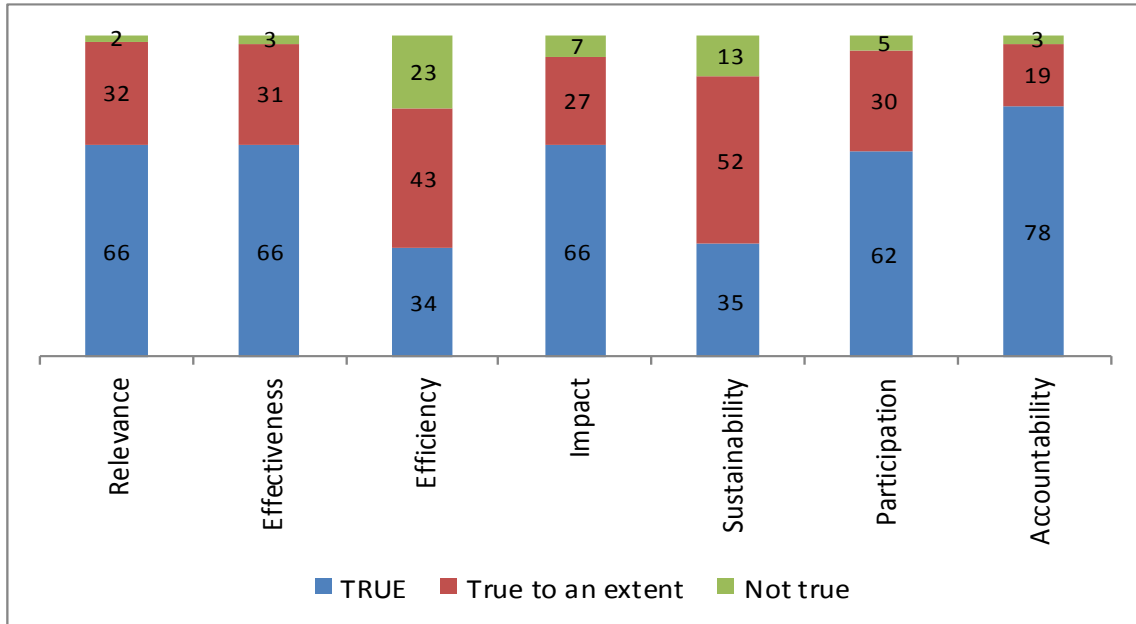
This criterion of assessing PPPs investigates whether there is a system in place to guide the conduct of people or institutions participating in the partnership. In this study, we learnt that there exists a set of operational arrangements for implementation of USE. Private schools in the USE PPP are expected to comply with the USE implementation guidelines and there are penalties for non-compliance. For example, Headteachers are expected to account regularly for all the monies received to implement USE, which is a requirement before more money can be released. The study team observed that most Headteachers or Directors had in possession certificates of accountability (issued by MoES) to certify that all monies expended to schools have been properly accounted for.

Still looking at financial accountability, we noted mixed perceptions with regard to management powers. For instance, in some schools the powers of Headteachers were restricted to general administration and instructional leadership, and were less involved in making decisions regarding financial matters. It was common that some Headteachers have less knowledge of USE funds because they are not signatories to the school accounts. Yet, the USE guidelines empower the Headteacher to be signatory to the USE fund account. In such schools, the proprietors/Directors hijack the powers of the Headteachers as far as finances are concerned. Even though the grant guidelines spell out that it is the Headteacher who is accountable for the safe keeping and proper expenditure of all USE money. Thus, despite the existence of systems for accountability, to an extent power is abused by the school proprietors.

Finally, we consider the overall performance of the USE PPP by bringing together all the seven criteria discussed above. The results are presented in Figure 6. It is evident that the USE PPP was performing moderately well in some aspects and poorly in others. Majority (78 percent) of the respondents agreed that there is good accountability in the partnership. Many (66 percent) stated unreservedly that the USE PPP was relevant, effective, and of great impact. Also, without

reservation, 62 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that the USE PPP allows stakeholders to participate in decision making. On the weak side, few respondents were of the view that the USE PPP is efficient (34 percent) and sustainable (35 percent). Thus, overall the performance of the USE PPP is quite mixed. Improvements are needed especially in the areas of increasing resources and using them optimally, and ensuring financial sustainability and sustainable impact.

Figure 6: Summary on the integrated framework for USE PPP assessment (% reporting)



Source: Authors' computations based on field survey data

CONCLUSIONS AND EMERGING POLICY ACTIONS

Conclusions

Drawing from the EMIS data of 2000 – 2012, we note that the USE PPP has been growing both in terms of number of participating private schools and the number of USE students enrolled in private schools. Precisely, the percentage of private USE schools to total USE schools has increased to nearly 47 percent in 2012 from about 32 percent in 2007. Similarly, the percentage of USE students enrolled in private schools to total number of USE students has increased to 39 percent in 2012 from 25 percent in 2007. The positive trends in the overall enrolment in O'level seem to suggest that indeed USE has led to expanded access to secondary schooling. For example, the population of O'level students has grown by 53 percent considering 2006 as the base year (i.e. the last year prior to the rolling out of the USE programme).

Based on the guided scoring of the seven criteria in the integrated framework for assessing PPPs, we found that the USE PPP was performing moderately well in terms of good accountability, relevance, effectiveness, impact and participation. On the other hand, the USE PPP is performing poorly in terms of efficiency and sustainability. This performance is partly explained by the many challenges faced by private USE schools. The most frequently mentioned challenges are long delays in disbursing USE money to the school, mismatch between grant allocations and actual expenditure items of the schools, low and fixed capitation grant per student, and failure to put teachers in private USE schools on Government payroll.

Emerging policy actions

There are certain aspects about the USE programme and its implementation modalities that need to change or improve for better outcomes as listed below:

- a) Automation of data collection of enrolment of qualifying USE students: Government should set up a web based system where once the schools have compiled the numbers of eligible USE students, they upload them onto the system and then government accesses this information from the web and uses it to compute the respective capitation grants. Timely submission of headcount forms to the MoES by the schools would probably eliminate the delays in funds disbursement;
- b) Introduce a small tax and earmark a portion of Government tax revenue for USE implementation with intent to gradually increase the capitation grant per USE student in tandem with changes in the cost of education inputs. By increasing the USE capitation grant, schools will be able to improve the quality of services through recruitment of qualified teachers, conducting experiments more frequently and expanding infrastructure to avoid overcrowding;
- c) Provide school infrastructure e.g. laboratories and libraries: Besides, providing instructional materials (e.g. textbooks and science kits), government should provide infrastructure support as promised in the USE operational guidelines. Facilities such as libraries and laboratories can offer space for textbooks and promote science subject teaching;
- d) Place selected teachers in private use schools on the Government payroll: Government should consider putting on its payroll some teachers (especially those who teach mandatory subjects at Ordinary level) in private USE schools. The huge relief from payment of teachers' salaries would increase the capacity of schools to invest more in infrastructure development;
- e) Introduce consequences to disregarding the recommendations from the school monitoring/inspection report: For example, a Headteacher should face disciplinary action for not acting on specific important recommendations which are within reach; and
- f) Create awareness and sensitize stakeholders about their roles and responsibilities: This will increase compliance and support towards the realization of the intended objectives of USE programme. It was evident from the survey findings that some stakeholders (especially parents/guardians) were ignorant of their duties and responsibilities, and this negatively impacts on the performance of the PPP.

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