

**PADERBORN UNIVERSITY, GERMANY**

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**FACULTY OF CULTURAL STUDIES**

**Financing Education in Under-Resourced Contexts:**

to what Extent Can Social Entrepreneurship be more Efficient and Effective than Donor Aid in the Education Sector in Zimbabwe? - A Mixed-Methods Grounded Theory Study

**DISSERTATION**

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## Abstract

Zimbabwe is a youthful nation. Just over 60 per cent of the population is under the age of 25 (UNFPA Zimbabwe, n.d.-a). Such statistics highlight the importance of social services such as education. Despite this, the education sector in Zimbabwe is beset with funding problems. This decades long challenge initially led to an influx of donor aid in the sector which has dwindled over time. Furthermore, the impact of past and current aid is difficult to isolate. In response to under-funding, the Government has allowed schools to generate their own incomes through commercial ventures. The resultant uncertainty of this novel situation invited enquiry into to what extent social entrepreneurship can be an alternative to donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

This research was conducted using the mixed methods grounded theory methodology within the framework of a mixed methods design. Straussian grounded theory combined with Social Return on Investment analysis, as well as secondary data and literature were key features. This allowed for the generation and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. After identifying and analysing the conditions, strategies and consequences of both donor aid and social entrepreneurship, the research found that the origin and locus of an initiative determined efficiency and effectiveness of said initiative in the education sector in Zimbabwe as represented by the core category of this research. The origin and locus could be internal or external i.e. endogenous or exogenous. The Social Return on Investment analysis confirmed these findings through case-by-case micro analysis of individual initiatives and their cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Four categories helped to demonstrate how efficiency and effectiveness manifested in the study and ultimately revealed the core category. These were Managing Information, Individual Characteristics, Sustaining Initiatives and the Shifting Scope of Initiatives. As indicated above and as the rest of this thesis will show, what all four of these categories had in common is that they were all highly sensitive to the source of an initiative or its location and this was important for efficiency and effectiveness. As such the findings demonstrated that donor aid and social entrepreneurship are not as diametrically opposed as the initial research questions suggested. Thus, this theory proposes that initiatives to address education problems in Zimbabwe may benefit from thoroughly interrogating the origin or locus of said initiative and whether it fosters or hinders efficiency and effectiveness before and during implementation.

**Keywords:** Education, Social Entrepreneurship, Donor Aid, Efficiency, Effectiveness

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**Dedication**

*Cheziya changu*  
For my mother, Agnes Mutiwanyuka.

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## List of Acronyms

ABZ	Aussie Books for Zim
AECF	African Enterprise Challenge Fund
ANDE	Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs
ATI	Aid Transparency Index
AU	African Union
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Model
BID	Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo
BSPZ	Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CAQDAS	Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CCTs	Conditional Cash Transfers
CEA	Cost Effectiveness Analysis
CESA 16-25	Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025
COVID 19	Corona Virus 19
CRS	Creditor Reporting System
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DA	Donor Aid
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECG	Education Coordination Group
ECOZI	Education Coalition of Zimbabwe
ECOZI	Education Coalition of Zimbabwe
EDF	Education Development Fund
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
ERI	Early Reading Initiatives
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
ESSP	Education Sector Support Plan
ETF	Education Transition Fund
EU	European Union
FAWEZI	Forum for African Women Educationalists in Zimbabwe
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FDGs	focus group discussions
FMIS	Finance Management Information Systems
GALI	Global Accelerator Initiative
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's
GIIN	Global Impact Investing Network
GIIRS	Global Impact Investing System
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPE	Global Partnership of Education
GRA	Global and Regional Activities
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ICA	International Co-operative Alliance
ICT	Information and Communication Technology

IGATE	Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education
IGP	Income Generating Project
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRIS	Impact Reporting and Investment Standards
ISEP	INSEAD Social Entrepreneurship Programme
LAN	Local Area Network
LAYS	Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling
LEP	Look East Policy
LG	Learner Guide
LIC	Low Income Countries
LMIC	Lower Middle-Income Countries
MCDM	Multi-Criteria Decision Making
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MHTESTD	Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education Science and Technology Development
MM-GT	Mixed Methods Grounded Theory
MoFD	Ministry of Finance and Development
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
MoPSLSW	Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare
NAPH	National Association of Primary School Heads
NASH	National Association of Secondary School Heads
NDS1	National Development Strategy 1
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NER	Net Enrolment Ratios
NFE	Non-formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ONS	UK Office for National Statistics
OSISA	Open Society for Southern Africa
P4R	Programme for Results
PEIC	Primer Estudio Internacional Comparativo
PFS	pay-for-success
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLAP	Catch-up Education Performance Lag Assessment Programme
PSG	Peer Support Group
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe exchange rates
REACH	Results in Education for All Children
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
SACCOs	Savings and Credit Cooperatives
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

SEACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SIB	Social Impact Bonds
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIG	School Improvement Grant
SROI	Social Return on Investment
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
TDH	Terre des Hommes
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEA	Total Early-stage Activity
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
UCCZ	United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe
UCTs	Unconditional Cash Transfers
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USD	United States Dollars
VfM	Value for Money
VSLs	Village Savings and Loans
WASH	Water Sanitation and Health
WHO	World Health Organisation
YEP	Youth Education Pack
ZGSE	Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education
ZIMCODD	Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZINTEC	Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course
ZINWA	Zimbabwe National Water Authority



## 1 Contextualising the Study

Education remains one of the most urgent issues of the 21st Century. This focus is not novel. It would not be too far-fetched to say that all societies have always placed great importance on imparting knowledge. This is evidenced by the myriads of early schools in various cultures (van Baal, 1964; Majoni & Chinyanganya, 2014). This importance is not always necessarily reflected in the financing and management of education systems in countries such as Zimbabwe, the subject of this research. The 4th Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education, the African Union Continental Education Strategy for Education 16-25, and the Education Sector Support Plan (ESSP) 2021-2025 for Zimbabwe all note the enabling role of adequate education financing for universal education. However, the ESSP (2021) also critically notes that education in Zimbabwe will likely be under-funded for the duration of the plan both by Government and by funding partners (p.23).

### 1.1 Background

The checkered history of Zimbabwe's education system provides the backdrop for this research. By turns peppered with positive success stories and rather depressing, this history has seen Zimbabwe consistently produce one of the highest literacy rates in Africa. At the same time, other learning outcomes remain poor. Transitions from primary school to secondary, secondary to high school or post-secondary and from high school to tertiary education are characterized by bottle necks across the board. For example, 2021 primary school completion rates for boys and girls reportedly stood at 84 and 86 per cent respectively. Reported secondary completion rates on the other hand dropped to just under sixty per cent for both genders (International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa, n.d.). Enrolment rates have for the most part fared better, but the sector has experienced chronic challenges related to teacher shortages, shortages of teaching and learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, not enough schools and strained capacity within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2021b).

As of 2022, the Republic of Zimbabwe had a population of 15,178, 957 people (Zimbabwe Data Portal, 2024). The United Nations reports that 62 per cent of the population is below the age of 25 (UNFPA Zimbabwe, 2024). Despite its youthful

population, education services are limited. As far back as 2015, the country had a shortfall of 2,056 primary and secondary schools (MoPSE, 2017). This figure jumped to an estimated 2,953 in 2024 (ZIMCODD, 2024, p. 10). The national statistical agency reports that in 2017, one quarter of all 3- to 24-year-olds had left school (ZIMSTAT, 2017). Prior to independence from the Rhodesian Government in 1980, white colonial settlers enforced an unequal education system limiting black children to technical subjects such as agriculture, building and carpentry in preparation for their entry into the job market as labourers (Kanyongo, 2005). In 1980 however, the new independent Government instituted a number of educational reforms. Massive expansion in educational enrolment in the first twenty years after independence (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011) catalysed by a declaration of tuition free primary schooling was accompanied by curricula and other reforms. Gross enrolments in primary education shot up from 64 to 125 (World Bank, 2023).

The success of the primary school tuition free programme meant that Zimbabwe quickly achieved Universal Primary Education in those early years. During this period, the focus was on building more schools for new enrolments from the previously excluded black majority. In addition to government directed communal efforts, the responsible Ministry was also the recipient of donor aid for the purposes of building educational facilities from organisations such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (Colcough, 1990). Teacher training to service the growing populations of learners was also prioritized. Again, the Government received teacher training support in the form of Government-to-Government aid from partners such as Cuba (Chingombe, 2012). In 1991, after adopting a more free market and less socialist model at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (Saunders, 1996), the Government made a U-turn on tuition free primary education. This saw cuts in government expenditure on social services such as education and the introduction of fees and levies. The then Ministry of Education and Culture was unprepared for the resulting teacher shortages and funding constraints and rural children and schools were most affected (Makoni, 2000; Mlambo, 1997; Saunders, 1996).

In more recent times, Zimbabwe has been the recipient of pooled education funds from various donors including donor countries, Multi-Lateral Organisations and Regional Economic Communities. As recently as 2024, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Zimbabwe was in receipt of USD 8,660,000 from the Global Partnership of

Education (GPE). This is one of 11 grants that the Zimbabwean Government has received from the GPE since 2013 (GPE, n.d.). Other large donor funds include the 2009 Education Transition Fund (ETF) and its successor the 2011 Education Development Fund (EDF). Together, the funds are estimated by some accounts to have reached USD 80 million and by other accounts even more (Zimbabwe Reads, n.d.). In between, the sector has witnessed donors come and go and come and stay, working in girls' education, funding bursary schemes, building laboratories, training technical staff and much more. This again is a typical feature of the donor landscape in Zimbabwe. The tendency to start and stop programmes has led to sustainability challenges. Often, even when donor aid funded programmes do not cease entirely, they tend to experience cutbacks, affecting their reach and presumably affecting their quality. That said, although final figures have not been easy to obtain, it is clear that Zimbabwe has benefited from substantial amounts of donor aid for education.

## **1.2 Significance of the Research Study**

In a bid to address these education challenges, the Government of Zimbabwe has historically been courted by and likewise courted the assistance of donors and their aid. Even though many donors have shunned Zimbabwe since the year 2000 (Sithole et al., 2014, p. 32), Zimbabwe has received considerable amounts of donor aid. Education donor aid has been used *inter alia* to support teacher training, build schools, provide teaching and learning materials, pay school fees and to give technical support to Ministries of Education. Exactly how much has been provided in donor aid since independence in 1980 is difficult to say. Publicly accessible records are difficult to find. Furthermore, while tracking impact in the form of outputs such as schools etc. might be achievable, there are many sources of donor aid that fly "under the radar" so to speak. The history of the Zimbabwean donor landscape is characterized by big country and multi-lateral donors such as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the World Bank respectively but also smaller donor organisations, typically referred to as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). Anecdotal evidence suggests that such entities can and sometimes source donor funds from private individuals and corporations and tracing such funds is challenging. This situation has led to a significant degree of complexity and fragmentation. It is hard to say:

- how much in donor aid is channeled towards education in Zimbabwe
- how much of this goes directly to beneficiaries
- how and where these funds are spent and
- what the impacts of these funds are.

Ultimately, it is not easy to determine the efficiency of donor aid as well as its effectiveness in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Isolating efficiency and effectiveness is made doubly difficult because even as donors finance education in Zimbabwe, the Government of Zimbabwe, private households, businesses and religious institutions are doing the same (Mthunzi, 2008; UNICEF, 2022). Drawing a line between which funds have led to which outcomes is complicated. Furthermore, and as the study of behavioral economics would suggest, it does not always follow that money creates a simple cause and effect relationship between beneficiaries of aid and their outcomes (Thaler, 1999). This line of thinking finds credence in this study given that despite the millions of dollars in donor aid that have been poured into the Zimbabwean education system to date, many of its challenges remain.

Nascent discussions on social entrepreneurship in development as a means of sustainable financing and in education particularly have begun to find their way into Government, Corporate and Donor conversations. An article in a 2018 edition of the Harvard Business Review candidly indicates the growing expectations of business and its relationship to development (Kaplan et al., 2018) while the Zimbabwe ESSP 2021-2025 itself suggests that there is scope for schools to generate their own incomes. This mirrors a 2021 Government of Zimbabwe pronouncement encouraging commercial ventures in schools to support the implementation of a Competence Based Curriculum and to improve their financial position. Such commercial ventures are also expected to add value in other ways such as providing practical learning opportunities. Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education 2021 data indicated that 2,289 out of the country's approximately 10,147 schools reported generating an income from these ventures. Going by 31 December 2021 Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe exchange rates (RBZ, 2021), these schools generated an estimated USD 8,930,701. This represented a significant financial contribution to the education sector and suggested the potential for overall growth in revenues in the future. At the same time, it raised questions of sustainability, management and the nature of academic benefits to learners and concerns about how these monies

were being generated and spent and thus presented a new frontier for broad-based research.

All these factors inspired this research topic and guided the adoption of social entrepreneurship as a facet against which to juxtapose donor aid. It is hoped that the findings will be used to guide interventions in education financing in Zimbabwe, future engagement in the education sector in Zimbabwe as well as catalyze more research in the area. Knowing the effectiveness of existing funding streams can help policy makers, specifically Ministries of Education and Training and other Government entities, to better finance and support education initiatives. This is a critical area as the literature on social entrepreneurship is clear on the need for further study in this relatively new field in the development sector (Gupta et al., 2020; Pascal & Pascal Sauermann, 2023) The information should also be useful to the donor community in that it can provide research backed mechanisms for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid for education. Most importantly, this research should benefit recipients of donor aid and social entrepreneurship by suggesting ways to improve the impact of both.

### 1.3 Key Concepts

The following section expands on the working definitions of key concepts guiding this research. Many of these definitions are taken out of guidelines generated by the Paris Declaration (2005). Aid is a central variable in this study and according to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) which itself quotes the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013), aid is “the international transfer of public funds in the form of loans or grants, either directly: from one government to another (bilateral aid), or indirectly: through non-governmental organisations or a multilateral agency (multilateral aid)” (IRC, 2013, slide 1).

This definition can be further split into concepts such as ‘Traditional aid’ which according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is “all humanitarian assistance that is not cash-transfer programming, whether it be provided by funding projects or distributing in-kind goods and services” (Fts.unocha.org, n.d., section. 6). A more commonly used term within the aid lexicon is the “Official Development Assistance often referred to as “ODA”.

The terms Development Aid and Official Development Assistance are synonymous and can be used in place of each other. The OECD (2019) gives a specific

definition of ODA as “government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries” (para. 1). The source of ODA, government, helps to distinguish it from Traditional Aid which does not necessarily need to come from state sources. Loans and credits for military purposes are excluded. Concrete examples of Official Development Assistance or development aid are grants, "soft" loans (where the grant element is at least 25 per cent of the total) and technical assistance. Technical cooperation can also count as a grant and approaches to ODA differ by country and mission.

There are however many more subgroups and terminologies of Aid. Table 1 gives explicit definitions of some of the many types of aid as we know them. These definitions can be expanded and sometimes conflated depending on where they are found. To illustrate, the OECD seems to make a distinction between “aid” and “assistance” even if slight, (2012, p.48) but then goes on to collapse Official Development Assistance into aid as one of its sub-groups. Similarly, Faust (2017) adopts the terms aid and development assistance interchangeably.

Table 1: Aid Nomenclature

Beyond defining aid, the development world is also concerned about how aid works and what it can do. Such concerns are often raised within the framework of the metric ‘Aid effectiveness’ which refers to the “arrangement for the planning, management and deployment of aid that is efficient, reduces transaction costs and is targeted towards development outcomes including poverty reduction” (Stern et al, 2008, p. vii). Organisations such as the IRC argue that the aid effectiveness metric measures the impact of aid on development or more specifically how well aid contributes to the achievement of ‘economic and social growth’ (Uytewaal et al., 2013, para. 2).

At the same time, and going by the IRC’s understanding of aid effectiveness, Uytewaal et al. argue that it can also be considered as an indication of the ‘quality’ of aid (2013, para. 2). This definition goes beyond what aid can do by considering the nature of aid itself and offering value judgements. It provides a springboard for discussions about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ aid. The 2005 Paris Declaration goes on to offer a five-point framework with multiple indicators guiding the definition of aid effectiveness and perhaps offering ideas about how to identify ‘quality’ aid. These five points-ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability-focus on strengthening local systems, predictability and transparency (OECD, 2005).

This study concerned itself with financing education in under-resourced conditions. As such understanding education finance as a concept helps to situate the research within the context of scarcity. In a definition proposed by Guthrie and Schuermann, Education Finance is described as “governmental and organizational processes by which revenues are generated (through taxation, tuition, fees, and philanthropy), distributed, and expended for the operational and capital support of formal schooling” (2011, n.p). They argue that education finance encompasses policy issues around ensuring equity, efficiency and freedom of choice. Education finances are typically used to fund public education where a majority of learners are expected to be serviced. It is therefore vitally important that the sources and tools for education finances are adequate and functional. However, as has already been noted, disadvantaged communities tend to have limited capacity to generate and access to such funds. Such scenarios have increased the popularity of alternatives to funding from government and organizations. One such alternative is social entrepreneurship. It is generally agreed that there is not yet one widely accepted definition of social entrepreneurship. According to Swanson & Zhang (2012, p. 171) who present their understanding of Wolk (2008), social

entrepreneurship is any sustainable venture that combines “business principles with a passion for social impact”.

The Schwab Foundation defines social entrepreneurship as “market-based approaches to solving social and environmental challenges...” (Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship & World Economic Forum, 2015, p. 3) Their definition argues that all social enterprises share certain characteristics. The first is innovation. The second is leveraging market forces and business practices. The third and fourth characteristics are openness to learning and being driven by values.

Similarly, Ashoka Changemakers offers several definitions for social entrepreneurs. They posit that a social entrepreneur is “an individual who conceives of, and relentlessly pursues, a new idea designed to solve societal problems on a very wide scale by changing the systems that undergird the problems.” (Ashoka, n.d., para. 1)

Alongside the interest in alternatives such as social entrepreneurship has been a relatively new corresponding interest in measuring value addition in expanded ways. This is exemplified in tools such as the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework which has been posited as a holistic Value for Money framework (Banke-Thomas et al., 2015). Banke-Thomas et al. propose a definition of SROI accredited to Nicholls et al. (2012) as “a framework for measuring and accounting for the much broader concept of value” (2015, p. 3).

It seeks to reduce inequality and improve wellbeing by incorporating social, environmental and economic costs and benefits widely referred to as the “triple bottom line” (Norman & MacDonald, 2004). This definition lends itself to application in sectors such as education where the benefits go beyond just the social.

The United Nations Development Programme uses a similar definition, noting that SROI captures the “social, health, environmental and economic costs and benefits” of an initiative (United Nations Development Programme, n.d., p.1). The use of the framework is open to private businesses, Non-Profit Organisations and social entrepreneurs as well as funders indicating a great deal of versatility.

These key concepts are not exhaustive. However, it is hoped that presenting a few of them here will prepare the reader for the sections that are to follow. They may also begin to suggest the problems that this study attempted to address.

#### 1.4 The Problem Statement

The question of why the problems in Zimbabwe's education system persist despite the various programmes (Global Partnership for Education, n.d.-a) and projects that have been implemented over the last four decades is not unique to this research. The aid effectiveness debate has been institutionalized through 'High Level Fora' in Rome in 2002, Paris in 2005, Accra in 2008 and Busan in 2011 (READ Online, n.d.).

Since then, although principles for aid effectiveness have been agreed upon, they have not necessarily been applied. In 2025, 13 years will have passed since the last High-Level Forum on aid effectiveness, suggesting that universal interest in the topic has waned. The idea that the theme has lessened in importance does not, however, mean that aid effectiveness is no longer a critical development concern. In fact, the Zimbabwean context suggests that it remains as crucial as ever. Public expenditure for education in Zimbabwe has not reached recommended levels (The Education Coalition of Zimbabwe et al., 2024, p. 7). Coupled with inflation, this continues to negatively impact the education sector.

In 2023 media reports in state newspapers indicated that the country had an estimated deficit of 2,800 schools (The Herald, 2023). More recent indications are that the deficit has increased to 2,953 schools (ZIMCODD, 2024, p. 10). There is an ever more pressing need to ensure that any additional donor funding being channeled towards education in Zimbabwe is being used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

This sentiment holds true for social entrepreneurship as well. As recently as 2021, the Government of Zimbabwe endorsed the establishment of commercial ventures in Schools with a view to helping schools generate their own finances and fill funding gaps (Muleya, 2021). Data from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe indicates that one fifth of schools reported generating approximately<sup>1</sup> USD 8,930,701 in the 2021 fiscal year (MoPSE, 2021). This step mirrors growing interest in using social entrepreneurship to address social problems. Unfortunately, there is not much information available on the subject in Zimbabwe specifically. Neither has there been sufficient evidence provided by the Government of Zimbabwe to justify adopting such a novel approach. It is also unclear how these funds are being spent. This research therefore

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<sup>1</sup> Rapidly fluctuating exchange rates in Zimbabwe over the course of 2021 mean the final amount presented here can only be an aggregate estimate based on exchange rates on 31 December 2021, [https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Exchange\\_Rates/2021/December/Rates-31-December--2021.pdf](https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Exchange_Rates/2021/December/Rates-31-December--2021.pdf).

aimed to investigate to what extent social entrepreneurship, which *prima facie* seems to have gotten off to a decent start, can serve as an alternative to donor aid in Zimbabwean education.

## **1.5 Aims and Objectives of this Research Study**

### **1.5.1 Aims of the Study**

The initial aim of this study was to explore if and how social entrepreneurship is a more efficient and effective financing approach than donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe. However, as the research progressed, this aim evolved into an investigation of the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship respectively. These results were then juxtaposed against each other, with a view to determining the extent to which social entrepreneurship might be more efficient and effective than donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe and therefore serve as an alternative. The consequent theoretical and practical objectives of this study are captured in the following sections.

### **1.5.2 Objectives of the Study**

The theoretical objectives of the study were as follows:

- a. To build a deeper understanding of the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe.
- b. To develop a grounded theory of the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

The practical objectives of the study were to:

- a. Compare the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid to social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe using mixed methods grounded theory.
- b. Create a foundation for further discussion on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing among education stakeholders in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

## 1.6 Research Questions

In keeping with the problem statement, aims and objectives of this study, the questions guiding this research were as follows:

- I. How efficient and effective are social entrepreneurship and donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe respectively?

This question considered the strengths and weaknesses of both donor aid and social entrepreneurship. It investigated the specific ways in which efficiency and effectiveness were observed by beneficiaries and stakeholders and reflected in secondary data.

- II. What are the Social Returns on Investment of donor aid and social entrepreneurship in the education sector in Zimbabwe respectively?

The question aimed to measure the additional social, health, environmental and economic value generated by donor aid and social entrepreneurship in relation to the costs incurred. Conducting a Social Return on Investment analysis was particularly important for understanding the distinction between the value of what was spent and the value of the impact achieved.

- III. Based on the comparison of efficiency and effectiveness (question I.) and Social Returns on Investment (question II.) to what extent can social entrepreneurship serve as an alternative to donor aid in Zimbabwe's education sector?

The goal of this last question was to integrate the results of the first two research questions. By so doing, the researcher hoped to be able to determine the extent to which social entrepreneurship can be more efficient and effective than donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe, if at all.

## 1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The subject area of this research was limited to Zimbabwe. Within Zimbabwe however, data was collected from a broad range of sites and four provinces in total. These were Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo and Manicaland. Field work was conducted in rural, urban and peri-urban sites and a mix of public, private and third sector institutions made

up the target group of this study. The educational institutions visited cover every administrative level within the Zimbabwean education sector. These are the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), provincial offices, post-secondary non-tertiary Colleges, high schools and primary schools. Field data from as far back as the 1980's right up to 2023, the last year of data collection, were included in this study. Respondents taking part in the study were beneficiaries or administrators of donor aid, beneficiaries or administrators of social entrepreneurial projects, MoPSE officials, teachers and caretakers. The data incorporated primary data from respondents, secondary data from institutions and literature from within this field.

## **1.8 Research Methodology and Data**

This study used both qualitative and quantitative data within a mixed methods grounded theory methodology which integrated a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis. The grounded theory methodology assumed primacy in this mixed methods research and was chosen as it allows for the following considerations. The background of the researcher as an Education Management professional, the novelty of social entrepreneurship in the education sector in Zimbabwe, the poor results culture of donor aid, exploration and discovery, objectivity and the inductive development of theory. The propriety of grounded theory as a method of enquiry for researchers who already have some knowledge of the topic at hand but who seek to further this knowledge is according to Abdellah (2016, p. 13) reportedly supported by authors such as Backman and Kyngas (1999). Abdella doubles down on this position arguing that grounded theory uses empirical data "that reflects the viewpoints, ideas, and perceptions, of individuals involved within the problem area" (2016, p. 13). This quality of grounded theory was of particular interest to the research given that reporting in the donor aid sector is typically dominated by the donors themselves. Furthermore, the focus of such reporting tends to be skewed towards accountability to funders (B. Anderson, 2014). The inductive nature of a grounded theory study however considers all data and varied perspectives and leads to the development of an explanatory theory about what is happening, a fitting quality, given the novelty of social entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe.

Unlike in the donor aid sector in Zimbabwe, the social entrepreneurial reporting landscape in education is still in its nascent stages. Despite initial positive pronouncements from the Government of Zimbabwe, empirical evidence is thin on the

ground. International examples indicate that social entrepreneurship comes with its fair share of challenges. Fraser et al. (2023) highlight some of the tensions that can arise in the social impact space for instance the difficulties of achieving consensus about definitions of value among stakeholders (p. 9). Grounded theory allows for the interrogation of conflicts such as these and as earlier noted, can even help to explain them.

The primary motivation for integrating a Social Return on Investment analysis within this mixed methods grounded theory study was to provide an empirical quantitative assessment of the impact of both donor aid and social entrepreneurship on education in Zimbabwe. Authors such as Angrist et al. (2020), Jerrim and De Vries (2015) and Bates et al. (2023) have highlighted how quantitative data appeals to policy makers because of its simplicity and ease of use. Financial constraints within the education sector in Zimbabwe often mean that policy makers must make difficult choices about what to fund. As such, more information about how these choices can be made in such a way as to maximise the benefits to the system is important.

Another benefit of a Social Return on Investment analysis is that it can also enhance comparability. Angrist et al. (2020, p. 2) note that education initiatives and their outcomes differ widely, making them difficult to compare and making it harder for policy makers to decide on what sort of initiatives to implement. They propose the use of “cost-effectiveness analysis and comparisons” which they argue are “a critical component to assess trade-offs of the most efficient policy and program to invest in.” (Angrist et al., 2020, p. 2). This argument can be extended to SROI methods as they provide cost-effectiveness data where they account for social, environmental and health benefits as well. This point is particularly important in a culture where reporting on donor aid and even social entrepreneurship concentrates on what was done with little regard for whether those actions were the best use of the money. Finally, SROI analyses prioritise beneficiary perspectives on impact and value.

Drawing from Levers (2013) work on emergence in grounded theory and associated frameworks, the research used a post-positivist epistemology. Early grounded theory in the tradition of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) argued that “complete objectivity is impossible” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 43). Rather, they proposed that the “values, culture, training and experience” of the researcher be recognized within research without compromising on the ultimate goal of findings that truthfully reflect the situation under study. Adopting this post-positivist stance allowed the views and experiences of

the researcher to be acknowledged in the research but at the same time interrogated against the data as it became available. Once a suitable epistemological frame for conducting the research was found, several data collection methods were selected for use. These were:

1. Face to face and WhatsApp interviews (dyadic, open-ended and semi-structured)
2. Desk Reviews
3. Surveys
4. Focus Group Discussions
5. Observation
6. Secondary data collection

This researcher conducted fieldwork in 17 locations in the country in schools and institutions. A total of 57 individual respondents took part in this part of study. In addition to visiting schools and colleges, interviews were conducted with experts working for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe, donor agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations, teachers working with students, former beneficiaries of donor aid, development organisations and innovation hubs. The majority of respondents (38) were male. This perhaps reflects the tendency to put male teachers in charge of income generating projects as well as the higher numbers of male head teachers in Zimbabwe. School level respondents worked in schools as teaching, administrative or project staff. Finding social enterprises proved difficult, hence the limited representation of such entities in this study. Two respondents worked for an Incubation hub and a Mine with a Corporate Social Responsibility component directed towards the school on its premises respectively. This collection of respondents represented knowledgeable informants from varied backgrounds with varied but relevant experience. Such respondents can mitigate against biased responses (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The research also analysed secondary data in the form of reports and spreadsheets on particular donor aid funded programmes, school and ministry records on pass rates, income generating projects and one social enterprise.

## **1.9 Structure of the Study Report**

This thesis is presented in four chapters. Each chapter builds from the preceding section and gives the reader a foundation for what is to follow. The first chapter outlines the background of the study, its motivations and what significance it has for the education

sector in Zimbabwe and beyond. This is supported by an outline of the parameters of the research, its aims and objectives, the questions guiding the research, what data sources were included as well as the methodology used.

Chapter two of this study presents the literature explored over the course of this research. It delves into the history of education in Zimbabwe, considering the structure of the country's education system and the different sources that have traditionally financed the sector. A broad overview of education financing globally and in Africa frames the study and relates this context to the context of education in Zimbabwe. The chapter goes into depth about the key terms in this study, looking at donor aid in education in general and in Zimbabwe specifically. The same level of scrutiny is applied to social entrepreneurship and the terms 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency'. The chapter ends with a summary conclusion of the picture presented by the literature.

The third chapter details the methodology guiding the research. It begins with a conceptual analysis of the ideas that the initial literature review suggests and their relevance for the choice of methods used in this study. This chapter then highlights how the research selects its choice of epistemological perspective as well as which paradigmatic assumptions it adopts and why. A thorough interrogation and explanation of the grounded theory methodology is also presented in this section explaining what it is, how it works as well as what it brings to this research. The same is done for the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework with a focus on how the SROI analysis is integrated as part of this mixed methods grounded theory study. Finally, the section describes how the research is conducted, explaining the process from instrument design through to the writing of this final report.

The final chapter, chapter four, focuses on presenting what data was collected. This is done with a view to helping the reader to understand the context within which the study findings obtain. The data presentation section then flows into an exploration of the Social Return on Investment section and its findings before moving to the findings of the coding and data analysis of the study. The section triangulates all the findings from the different data collection and analysis methods used and together with additional literature, presents a comprehensive assessment of the situation obtaining.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review aims to contextualise some of the long-standing challenges relating to education financing in Zimbabwe against the backdrop of international education. The write up will consider education in Africa and briefly look at some of the different ways in which the provision of education is financed globally and their related concerns. The discussion will proceed to describe education in Zimbabwe historically and at present, the Zimbabwean Education system and financing education in Zimbabwe with a view to understanding the application of the various ways in which education is financed in Zimbabwe. It is important to note that the research will primarily consider publicly sourced education financing in Zimbabwe e.g. the fiscus and focus on non-government spending. Examples of where public and private monies might be used to catalyse alternative financing will be discussed.

In 1957, Ghana became the first African country to gain independence (Akyeampong & de-Graft Aikins, 2008). Sixty-seven years later in 2024, all 55 states in Africa are members of the African Union (African Union, n.d.-b). These 55 states, represent a population of approximately 1.5 billion people as of 2024 (African Union, n.d.; Sinha & Getachew, 2024). Since 1957, the continent has achieved several significant milestones. These include the formation of the Organisation for African Unity, now the African Union, in 1963, the adoption of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Youth Charter in 1990 and 2006 respectively (AU, 2019). The region has also achieved developmental successes. The 2015 ‘Assessing Progress in Africa Toward the Millennium Development Goals’ report notes that by the 2012, Africa had put in place policies on education and managed to improve economic growth to 5 per cent per annum (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa et al., 2014). Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) saw a significant reduction in HIV incidence between 2000 and 2015 (Jahagirdar et al., 2021). With regards to education, Sub-Saharan Africa again recorded significant gains in Primary Net Enrolment Ratios (NER). By 2015, NER had reached 80 per cent, up from 52 per cent in 1990 (United Nations, n.d., para. 6).

Despite these achievements, Africa still lags behind the rest of the World on many universal developmental goals with specific focus on education, the subject of this research. While Sub-Saharan Africa achieved a Primary NER of 80 per cent in 2015, the average in the rest of the developing world was 91 per cent, a difference of 11 percentage

points (UNICEF, n.d.). Even as the global number of Out of School children dropped from 100 million in 2000 to 57 million in 2015, 58 per cent of these 57 million children came from SSA (United Nations, n.d., para. 8). While the United Nations note that progress has been made with regards to getting more children in school, such children have had to learn under less-than-ideal conditions where teacher and textbook shortages in subjects like Mathematics and Reading were pervasive (The Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2014). Within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal Four on Quality Education, between 2015 and 2021, the number of out-of-school children in SSA increased by another 12 million (UNESCO, 2023, slide. 2). Gender parity in education has also not been attained (UNESCO, 2023).

Such slow progress begs the question of why despite the crafting of national, regional and international education frameworks, the hundreds of millions of dollars in development aid which have been poured into African education, the existence of hundreds of development partners, projects and programmes, the continent has not produced better results. In an evaluation of education targets from as far back as 1990 (Education for All), development practitioners attributed the failure to reach education targets to factors such as:

- “The stresses between different multilateral organisations (Jones, 2007; Unterhalter, 2007; Mundy et al, 2011 in Unterhalter, 2013, p. 11),
- Tensions within organisations between a social democratic orientation and an accommodation with ‘small state’ globalization” (Lee and Friedrich, 2011 in (Unterhalter, 2013, p. 11),
- General imprecision about the programme envisaged (Buchert, 1995 in Unterhalter, 2013, p. 11),
- A lack of opportunities to engage regional thinking, particularly in Africa (Samoff, 2009 in Unterhalter, 2013, p. 11) and
- Failures to realise that expansion of provision of basic education could not be achieved at the expense of growing participation in secondary and tertiary education” (Henynemann, 2009; Lewin, 2008 in Unterhalter, 2013, p. 11).

In the post 2015 era, the World is looking to Africa as the youngest continent on the planet to achieve better results than were witnessed under the Plan of Action for the

Second Decade of Education in Africa and the Millennium Development Goals. The yard sticks this time around come in the form of the Global Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals), the African Agenda 2063, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 and individual country developmental frameworks. All of these frameworks in one way or the other note the progress achieved in the past but also acknowledge the shortfalls. They speak to the need to improve access to, relevance of and the quality of education at every level. While the sentiments about achieving better results for African education are clear, anecdotal evidence would suggest that the approach to addressing the challenge is for the most part still ‘business as usual’ with education finance at the local level still largely being absorbed by re-current expenditure, unsustainable international financing and fragmented programming. Achieving extraordinary results may require adopting a novel approach towards solving the continents’ education challenges.

## 2.2 Zimbabwe

The Republic of Zimbabwe is a small landlocked country in Southern Africa with a geographical area of 390,757 km<sup>2</sup>. The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) projects the population ‘to grow from 13.1 million in 2012 to 19.3 million in 2032 (ZIMSTAT, 2015). Figures from the last census in 2012 also put the population of 3- to 18-year-olds at 40.5 per cent while the primary school age population i.e. ages 6 to 12 accounts for 18.5 per cent. Zimbabwes’ national growth rate stands at 1.1 per cent. The country is a presidential democracy with a parliament and elections take place every five years. Administratively, the country is split into 10 provinces, two of which – Harare and Bulawayo – are metropolitan. The other eight provinces are Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Masvingo, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and Midlands. Provinces are in turn divided into districts and these districts into wards. The country has 16 official languages with English, Ndebele and Shona being the most widely spoken (IIEP Pôle de Dakar - UNESCO, 2016a).

Despite a decade of strong post-independence growth after 1980, recent years have seen economic structural adjustment programmes and national financial crises, one after the other erode the availability and impact of social services. Poverty is on the increase and national extreme poverty (based on the food poverty line of USD 29.80 per person per Month) reached 38 per cent for the period beginning April 2019 and ending

May 2019 (ZIMSTAT, 2020). The International Monetary Fund projects the 2025 Gross Domestic Product at USD 36,9 billion in 2020 down from 2017 (International Monetary Fund, 2024). Furthermore, Zimbabwe in 2016 had a fiscal deficit of approximately 7.3 per cent of GDP or USD 1.042 billion. The country has repeatedly experienced periods of hyperinflation, cash shortages and currently operates in a multicurrency environment (IIEP Pôle de Dakar - UNESCO, 2016).

Zimbabwe has instituted a series of economic blueprints over the last 45 years. The first which ran from 1986 to 1990 was literally dubbed the First National Development Plan. In recent years, examples of national blueprints have included the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation which ran from 2013 to 2018 (P. Makaye, 2016) and the current National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) which will run from 2021 to 2025. All of these have had varying degrees of success with the latest NDS1 designed to address the country goals of the African Agenda 2063 and the Global Agenda 2030 (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020).

## 2.2.1 Education in Zimbabwe

As recently as 2019, the Government of Zimbabwe introduced an Education Amendment Act. The purpose of this was to align the existing Education Act to the 2013 Constitution. Section 75 of the ‘new’ Constitution reads:

*“Every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to (a) a basic state-funded education, including adult basic education; and (b) further education, which the state, through reasonable legislative and other measures, must make progressively available and accessible.”*

Prior to this, only the 1987 Education Act served as the universal legal basis for the provision of Education for Children in Zimbabwe. Specifically, it concerned itself with the following:

*“...the declaration of the fundamental rights to, and objectives of, education in Zimbabwe; to provide for the establishment, maintenance and regulation of Government schools, Government teachers colleges and other Government educational facilities; to provide for the establishment and administration of non-Government schools and teachers colleges, and for the registration and control thereof; to provide for the registration and control of correspondence colleges and independent colleges and for the establishment of an advisory council for such colleges; to make financial provision for schools and teachers colleges; to provide for the transfer of teachers to the Public Service; and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing.”*

Prior to Independence from the Rhodesian Government in 1980, the education system streamed learners along racial lines, limiting black children to blue collar work in areas such as agriculture, building and carpentry (Kanyongo, 2005, p. 65). In 1980 however, the new independent government instituted several educational reforms. Massive expansion in educational enrolment in the two decades after independence (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011, p. xi) catalysed by a declaration of tuition free primary schooling was accompanied by curricula reform, communal building of schools, the localization of examinations (Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council, ZIMSEC) and the centralization of the teacher service at the government level (Maravanyika, 1990, p. 27). The then Ministry of Education and Culture subsequently became responsible for the disbursement of primary school per-capita grants. By 2019, the literacy rate in Zimbabwe at 94 per cent was the second highest on the continent (ZIMSTAT, 2017).

The success of the primary school tuition free programme meant that Zimbabwe quickly achieved Universal Primary education in those early years. However, the Ministry of Education and Culture was not prepared for the problems that were to follow as a result of this expansion. These were shortages of teaching and learning materials and funding constraints (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011). After Independence, the Government introduced the Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC), a rapid teacher-training programme which provided manpower but compromised the quality of teacher training (Kanyongo, 2005, p. 66). At the same time, schools introduced hot seating<sup>2</sup> – a morning and afternoon shift system with two sets of students and two sets of teachers using one set of buildings (Colclough et al., 1990). In 1991, the government made a turn around on tuition free primary education. According to Saunders (1996, p. 4), parents and guardians were once again compelled to pay for their children's education. The introduction of an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) led to Government cuts in expenditure on social services such as education, further burdening the sector (Saunders, 1996). Rural schools were most affected, widening the gap in quality of education. In 2017, 21 and 31 per cent of urban and rural 14 to 19 year-olds respectively were not in school. These numbers did however improve marginally in 2019 (World Bank Zimbabwe, 2017, p. 34). As of 2024, the country had a massive shortfall of primary and secondary schools (ZIMCODD, 2024, p. 10). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary

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<sup>2</sup> Also referred to as 'hot sitting'.

Education called on private companies to partner with government in the building of schools which some did (Zimbabwe Situation, 2023, para. 7). This has not however addressed the ongoing shortages. The government has, since independence, continued to introduce other new reforms such as, the introduction and subsequent removal of incentives from parents to educators to augment meagre teacher salaries, compulsory Early Childhood Education and a massive curriculum overhaul in 2017.

### **2.2.2 Structure of the Education System in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe's education system begins with Infant schooling at age four. This is made up of Early Childhood Development (ECD) which is itself split into ECD A and ECD B and Grades 1 and 2. Thereafter, learners proceed to junior school which is made up of Grades 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 (Education Data and Policy Center, n.d.). Grade 7 primary exit exams are conducted nationwide and the results of these serve partly as selection criteria for entry into secondary school.

Forms 1 up to 4 are dubbed 'Lower Secondary Education', 'Ordinary Level' or simply 'O' Level'. The results of the Ordinary Level exit exam can be used either to enrol in Upper Secondary also known as Advanced level (Forms 5 and 6) or for entry into a Technical-Vocational course or college or a nursing or primary-school teaching college. Typically, college courses run for three years, and industry contributes and benefits from this process by offering limited apprenticeships where students can gain practical experience. Officially, a learner can only proceed to Advanced level after achieving 5 passes with a C or better in English and Mathematics (The southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, n.d., para. 5).

The system is generally pyramid shaped with fewer opportunities the higher up one goes. University accepts new entrants from Advanced level based on the results of their examinations, however, enrolment is limited not only by learner's results but also by the number of university places available for students (IIEP Pôle de Dakar - UNESCO, 2016). In some instances, a learner can gain access into a university based off their work experience and as long as they are older than 25 (National University of Science and Technology, 2025, p. 3). Postgraduate opportunities also exist within the tertiary education sector. At each level, some kind of financial outlay from households is expected. These costs can come in the form of school or tuition fees, levies, uniforms and

payments for Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) and extracurricular activities (IIEP Pôle de Dakar - UNESCO, 2016).

The system also makes provision for Non-formal Education (NFE) in both academic and professional courses in government and non-government institutions. Lessons are offered on a part-time basis and study groups are encouraged. Fees in government institutions are minimal, and teachers are paid by government. Similarly, learners in private institutions pay fees out of which teacher's salaries are paid, and Teaching and Learning Materials are purchased. According to the IIEP Pôle de Dakar – (UNESCO, 2016), the large numbers of dropouts and repeaters have resulted in increased demand for NFE.

### **2.2.3 Types of Schools in Zimbabwe**

The classification of schools in Zimbabwe is broadly categorised into those that are run by the government and those that are non-government. These are then more narrowly defined within their respective categories with Ministries of Education and Training, other government line ministries, city council, district council and town board schools all falling under the auspices of government. Their administration is the responsibility of their respective local authorities. All other schools fall under non-government and are given the following identifiers: church/mission, mine, private company, farm, trust, private individual or other (MoPSE, 2019, section 2.3.4). Regardless of type, all schools must be registered with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

Non-government Schools are distinguished from government schools obviously administratively and because they generally are financially independent of government and fee paying. Mission schools are a prominent example of this dynamic. The first western type schools for black people in Zimbabwe were introduced by missionaries in the late 1800s. These schools were founded in large part by remittances and by the then British South Africa Company which later colonised large parts of Southern Africa. The system by which these schools were funded was known as 'grant-in-aid' and led to the construction of thousands of mission schools in Zimbabwe (Gundani, 2006, section 6). In present day Zimbabwe, the administration of such schools is the responsibility of the parent religious group with general oversight from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Mission schools receive finances from many sources and these funds augment

the fees that learners pay. In addition to schools, missions often run clinics, technical and vocational colleges and farms, all within the same locale. Farm and mine schools are run along similar principles. They are administered and funded by farm and mine management structures. Private companies and individuals may open schools with a profit motive should they so desire (UNESCO, 2021). An interesting phenomenon in Zimbabwe since independence has been the emergence of the trust school. These popularly go by the term ‘private school’ and are independently administered high fee-paying institutions. Zimbabwe also has several special schools across the various typologies (Gundani, 2006; Lemeyu & Chikutuma, 2024).

The operations of the education sector and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) have traditionally been governed by sector wide blueprints which are in turn informed by national and international plans and strategies. Informed by the National Development Strategy 1 and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education’s guiding policy documents, the Education Sector Support Plan (ESSP 2021-2025) covers Early Childhood Development (ECD), primary education, secondary education and Non-Formal Education (NFE), including adult basic education (MoPSE, n.d.). The ESSP reads very authoritatively given that it draws from a broad range of policy documents such as the 2020 Education Sector Analysis and given that it was developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders including Government, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, teacher union representatives, and civil society organisations (MoPSE, n.d.). The Plan outlines key education sector challenges, the prevailing policy environment and costing of the new ESSP among other things.

Guided by the National Development Strategy 1 which prioritises Human Capital Development and Innovation, the ESSP identifies several areas for improvement. These include building and upgrading infrastructure, expanding access especially to traditionally excluded populations, curriculum reviews, and strengthening teacher capacity (MoPSE, n.d.). Noticeably, the Disaster Risk Management and Resilience Plan is also cited as a key reference document, most likely influenced by the recent worldwide COVID 19 pandemic and its impact on education (MoPSE, n.d. p. 47). The National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy also features in the ESSP. Other specific internal MoPSE policies guiding education in Zimbabwe include the draft Inclusive Education Policy, the School Health Policy, and the ICT Policy. Unfortunately, many of the actions outlined in all these documents require funding and will require even

greater finances in the immediate to medium term future. However, the current environment in Zimbabwe makes that very difficult. The ESSP summarises this environment in the risk analysis matrix in table 1 where the shading in row #6 symbolises a low score with a range of 1 to 3. Medium begins at 4 and ends at 14 in rows #2 to #5 and row #1 represents high ranging between 15 and 25.

As the risk analysis matrix in table 2 shows, economic and fiscal instability score very high on all three factors. The country scores within the medium risk zone on most of the other matrices with only education budgeting by the Ministry of Financing falling within the green zone which is otherwise considered low risk.

Table 2: Zimbabwe Education Sector Risk Analysis

#	Main Risk Factors	Risk susceptibility [1-5]	Vulnerability Risk impact [1-5]	Risk Quotient [susceptibility x impact] [1-25]	Mitigation Strategies
<b>Financial</b>					
1	Economic and fiscal instability	4	5	20	At least one conservative financial/costing option severely limiting expenditure
2	Lack of government revenue	3	4	12	Pre- and post-consultation with wide range of partners
3	Lack of commitment by development partners	2	4	8	Strong internal financial and accounting systems
4	Failure to spend budgeted funds by MoPSE	3	2	6	Use draft School Financing Policy as a reference guide
5	Failure to adopt and implement School Finance Policy	1	4	4	Well-developed MoPSE budget formulation and defence
6	Failure of MoPSE budget allocation by MoFED	1	3	3	
<b>Political</b>					
7	Corrupt diversion of funds at all levels	4	3	12	Develop good audit systems and staff at central, province and district levels
8	Poor inter-ministry cooperation/coordination	3	2	6	Develop good relationships with MoFED <sup>3</sup> Education budget officer, MoHTEST <sup>4</sup> and MoPSLSW <sup>5</sup> BEAM <sup>6</sup> staff
9	Failure of government and other line ministries' buy-in/support	2	2	4	Strong communication and lobbying with well-developed budget defence
<b>Capacitive</b>					
10	Failure to prepare adequately for humanitarian and natural disasters, with subsequent major disruption to ESSP implementation	3	4	12	Strong emphasis on DRM <sup>7</sup> policy, planning and implementation at all levels in MoPSE down to and including schools
11	Decentralised staff lack capacity to implement Core Programmes	2	4	8	
12	Senior MoPSE staff lack capacity to plan and implement policies and Core Programmes	1	4	4	Implement strategies under Goal 5 to raise capacity, including strengthening BSp2 <sup>8</sup> cluster system, and liaison with NAPH <sup>9</sup> and NASH <sup>10</sup>
<b>ESSP Implementation Approach</b>					
13	Non-alignment with Provincial or District Operational Plans	3	4	12	Ensure full and wide consultation prior to finalisation and mid-term review and revision of outputs, if necessary
14	Unrealistic/unattainable ESSP outputs	3	3	9	Strengthen MEL and introduce accountability functions, particularly at District and school levels
15	Non-functioning M and E Framework and system with little or no accountability functions	3	2	6	Annually review progress with wide range of stakeholders
16	Insufficient or poor consultation during implementation	2	2	4	

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Finance and Development<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education Science and Technology Development<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare<sup>6</sup> Basic Education Assistance Model<sup>7</sup> Disaster Risk Management

#### 2.2.4 Education Financing in Zimbabwe

The Government of Zimbabwe is mandated by the constitution to provide universal basic education to its citizens. To this end, the Ministry of Finance works together with various education line ministries (Government of Zimbabwe, 2022). Every year, these ministries prepare budget forecasts which they submit to treasury for consideration. It is also the responsibility of the minister of education to lobby for the successful allocation of these funds and this is done with the assistance of a Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education (Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, n.d., para. 2) and various other partners such as the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI). These oversight functions relate mostly to government schools or instances where public funds are channelled towards education. Donor funds can also be administered by the ministry wholly or in part. The management of public funds once distributed to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education falls to the Ministry's finance department. This unit is also responsible for the development of the Ministry's annual budget, monthly and annual internal reports, preparation of annual financial returns and provision of financial advice and support within the Ministry and to oversight bodies such as the Auditor General's office (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2021).

School fees paid at the local level are remitted directly to schools. Their use is guided by the School Services Fund Manual (Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, n.d., p. 23).<sup>3</sup> The Ministry notes that fees account for the greater proportion of non-salary spending. Together, fees and levies (funds for specific budget lines e.g. Textbooks which are charged to households) represent 96 per cent of all non-salary spending in schools. These funds are managed by the School and the School Development Committee. How much each school collects is dependent on household capacity and, consequently, varies greatly. In an effort to address these imbalances, schools receive school or tuition grants from the Ministry (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education & UNICEF, 2016, p. 18). These are per capita grants which in 2012 were set at USD10 per learner. These grants are used to procure Teaching and Learning Materials, Equipment, school running costs and minor repairs (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The Ministry describes these grants as a mechanism for achieving equity as most of the grants go to schools in lower income communities.

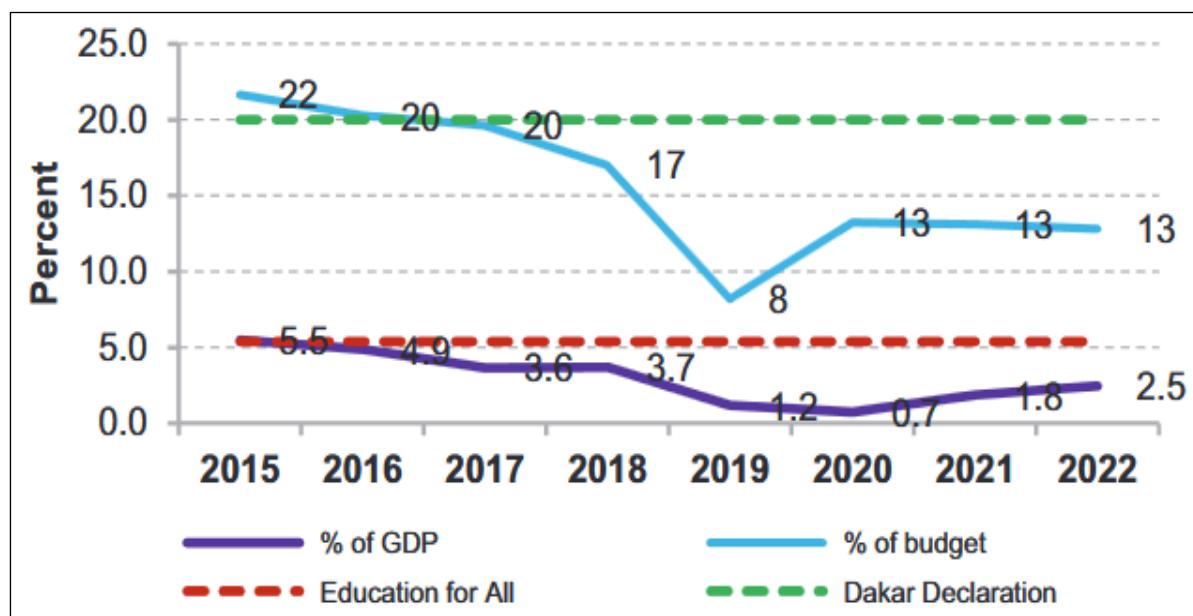
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<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture is now called the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

However, Mavhunga (2004) argues that schools which formerly only served white people during the colonial period still only cater to higher income communities. Such schools tend to have bigger budgets, and wider choices in terms of curricula and extra curricula activities. In addition to sourcing funds from the national budget and fees, schools can also receive resources in other ways. These resources can come directly from communities, remittances from old students' associations as well as funds such as the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) (J. Makaye, 2015, p. 3). Districts and provinces accrue funds from the BSPZ. There are also examples of schools embarking on Income Generating Projects (IGPs) of their own (ECOZI, 2020).

This complex dynamic has led to the development of a School Financing Policy. According to MoPSE, the policy builds on existing ministry documentation on the subject (MoPSE, 2021c, p. 4). Of interest to this study is that the School Financing Policy focuses on addressing the issue of equity and the allocation of government resources and how resources can be made available to prioritize remote and disadvantaged schools with a view to reducing the learning gap between the most and least advantaged children (MoPSE, 2021c, p. 4).

Figure 1: Trends in Education Expenditure in Zimbabwe



Source: UNICEF, 2022

Despite this mandate and the noble sentiments echoed in various national plans, education expenditure as a proportion of the National Gross Domestic Product has declined. In 2014 and 2015, the Government channelled 6 per cent of GDP and 22 per cent of the Government's budget to education respectively. In 2014, Public Expenditure

on Education as a Percentage of GDP) accounted for 7.5 per cent of GDP (Data.worldbank.org, 2018). In real terms, this amounted to 1,012,500,000 United States Dollars (Zimbabwe Human Development Report, 2017). In 2018, this fell to 2.1 per cent of GDP (World Bank Data, n.d.). Since then, proportional public financing for education has shrunk. Education expenditure as a percentage of GDP in Zimbabwe sank to 3 per cent in 2020. The graph in figure 1 illustrates these trends.

The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2021-2025 mentions education finance as a key challenge in the sector and forecasts that the situation is likely to only get worse in the immediate term. The country's economic problems mean that Government and households will have less income at their disposal for fees and levies. This will impact negatively across budget lines for infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, salaries and the Ministry's internal operations. The ESSP 2021-2025 also notes that the capacity of schools to generate their own funds through enterprise is weak. Specifically, it states that "while some schools may derive income through school-based or community activities for day-to-day activities, nationally this will not bridge funding gaps for operational costs." (MoPSE, n.d., p. 23) Perhaps in response, the School Financing policy seems to look towards Public Private Partnerships and internal investment as the mechanisms through which education goals might be achieved (MoPSE, 2021c).

On a more positive front, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe recently took part in a collaborative project meant to help it improve national education finance reporting and systems (IIEP Pôle de Dakar - UNESCO, 2016). This project was conducted in partnership with the Global Partnership for Education under its Global and Regional Activities (GRA) programme. Other partners were the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) and IIEP Pôle de Dakar. In order to improve National Reporting Systems on Education finance flows, the project provided training to eight partner countries, one of which was Zimbabwe. These countries would be expected to develop sustainable Education Finance Management Information Systems (FMIS) for National decision and policy making. According to the IIEP, such systems would encompass public, private and external revenue collection and expenditure (2016).

### 2.2.5 Education Aid in Zimbabwe

Early examples of education aid to Zimbabwe can be found in the missionary work of Catholic orders such as the Jesuits who built schools for Africans. According to Maravanyika (1990, p. 18), the occupation of present-day Zimbabwe by the British South Africa Company in 1890 led to the educational ordinances of 1899 and 1903 which laid down the conditions under which missionaries could receive government aid. Some of the conditions included focusing on vocational education for Africans and avoiding academic studies (Maravanyika, 1990, p. 18). Such aid was channelled towards establishing missions, building schools and hospitals and providing material support to the religious.

Historically, donor aid to the Zimbabwean education sector has come from a long list of bilateral partners and International Development Organisations. A paper from Colclough et al (1990) profiles external support to Zimbabwe between 1985 and 1987 from West Germany, Netherlands, the United States of America, Sweden, Italy, Norway, Great Britain, Denmark and Finland. The paper goes on to highlight Swedish support specifically. Between 1989 and 1990 twenty-eight per cent of Swedish support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) went to education. Support from SIDA in these early years was notable in that by 1988 it accounted for 10 per cent of “total development assistance to Zimbabwe” (Colclough et al., 1990, p. 109). This support, most of it coming in the form of grants, was channelled mainly towards programmes and projects covering the construction of schools, houses and offices for government education officers, and curricula and materials development. A smaller proportion went to a diverse group of other projects and this compartmentalisation is described as having the effect of “spreading out of resources rather thin” (Colclough et al., 1990, p. 111).

The paper notes that while SIDA had traditionally spent most of its support to Zimbabwean education locally (82 per cent between 1987 and 1988), Swedish Government policies on cutbacks forced the organisation to reduce field staff numbers which in turn compelled SIDA to hire consultants in the absence of capacity within line Ministries. This had the resultant effect of actually raising the proportion of external wage expenditure of aid for Zimbabwe (Colclough et al., 1990, p. 110).

The Swedish Government also funded a massive Education Sector Support Programme in 1996 (USD 13.9 million) through which Zimbabwe funded the acquisition

of textbooks, construction of school buildings, Special Needs Education, capacity building and promotion of gender equity in education (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, n.d).<sup>4</sup>

The European Union as an entity also provided a significant degree of support to Zimbabwe after 1980. Similar to the SIDA model, the EU focused on improving rural education outcomes by providing grants for the construction of schools, classrooms and teachers houses although this focus narrowed significantly over the years.

Table 3 describes the proportions of aid committed to education in Zimbabwe by the European Union.

Table 3: EU Aid to Zimbabwe's Education Sector by Year

<b>Estimated Percentage Distribution of EU Aid to Zimbabwe's Education Sector from 1980 to 2005</b>						
Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Percentage	30	21	19	13	8	6

*Source: Gara, H. (2009, p.45). An analysis of European Union (EU) aid to Zimbabwe from 1980 to 2000.*

This aid was however believed to be conditional and declined as donor agendas changed. Only 42 schools were built by the EU between 1992 and 1994 compared to the 1000 schools which were built between 1980 and 1984 (Gara, 2009, p.46).

The introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in the 90's mandated a shift away from support for social services and more towards industry (Mlambo, 1997). This along with hyperinflation after 1997 (Kairiza, n.d.) saw the situation in education deteriorate to the point where primary enrolment and completion rates declined in the period 2000 to 2009. It is at this point that the EU once again began to participate very actively in the country's social sector. The European Union and some of its member states funded a two-phase Education Transition Fund (ETF) to the value of 106 million Euros in total. These funds were channelled towards programmes focused on wide-scale textbook provision, and capacity building of school committees (M. Smith et al., 2018).

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.rbz.co.zw/assets/im\\_san.pdf](http://www.rbz.co.zw/assets/im_san.pdf), webpage no longer available.

An evaluation cited in a 2012 Government of Zimbabwe report of the first phase of the ETF conducted in 2010 noted that “cost effective textbook procurement has delivered far in excess of initial expectations and is a major success” (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012, p. 23). The management of this fund was assigned to The United Nations Childrens’ Fund (UNICEF) and the EU with oversight from the then Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture. At the time of its implementation, the ETF was the only major donor funded intervention in the education sector.

The strained relationship between Zimbabwe and some of its traditional donor partners post 2000 also contributed to the changing landscape of aid relations in the country. Chikowore (n.d., p. 48) argues that Zimbabwe failed to benefit from aid programmes under frameworks such as the MDGs; the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD); the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP); and the Look East Policy (LEP) for this reason. During this period, aid from traditional donors came in the form of humanitarian rather than developmental support. Other types of ODA also dried up due to debt mismanagement with both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund closing off lending windows to the country (Chikowore, n.d., p. 47).

Despite this or maybe because of it, south-south cooperation began to take on a greater role in financing Zimbabwean development thereafter. According to Chikowore, countries such as Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland provided support to Zimbabwe in the decades spanning 1990-2010 (n.d., p. 47). African organisations such as the African Union and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa have also provided more technical than financial support to the country.

In 2012, the second phase of the Education Transition Fund was instituted. It was however rebranded as an Education Development Fund. Its objectives were to strengthen systems and structures for the delivery of education and was funded to the value of USD 118,8 million dollars (KfW Development Bank, 2022). This EDF ran from 2012 to 2015 and was funded by Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the European Union and OSISA and managed by UNICEF (MoPSE, n.d.). In more recent times, the education sector has partnered with several major donors. These include the former Department for International Development (DFID) now Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the German Development Bank (KfW) and the Global

Partnership for Education (GPE) consortium. There is also a very strong United Nations agency presence in the country. Together UNESCO and UNICEF provide both technical and financial assistance. In fact, UNICEF acts as the Secretariat of the Education Coordination Group (ECG). The ECG serves as a platform for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and development partners (donors). The United Nations Childrens' Fund (UNICEF) is also the grant agent of the Global Partnership for Education Programme (MoPSE, 2018). Between 2014 and 2020, this programme pooled USD 61,4 million dollars for education with a further USD 7 million in 2020-2021 as COVID 19 grant supports (Global Partnership for Education, 2021; Universalia, 2019). Outside of the ECG, a diverse group of Non-Governmental, Civil Society and Community Based Organisations also source funds for education and form what is known as the Education Cluster (ReliefWeb, n.d.).

As has already been noted, ODA flows have been on the decline. In 2017, the country received almost USD 200 million less than it did in 2012 (see Table 4).

Table 4: Trends in ODA in Zimbabwe

FLOW	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TREND
<b>Total ODA, all sectors, 2016 constant US\$ (millions)</b>	615	511	487	438	491	472	Fluctuating
<b>ODA as share of GNI</b>	4%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	Fluctuating
<b>Total education ODA, 2016 constant US\$ (millions)</b>	43	52	72	74	60	55	Rising then Falling
<b>Education ODA as % of total ODA</b>	7%	10%	15%	17%	12%	12%	Rising then Falling
<b>% of education ODA going to basic education</b>	83%	86%	84%	81%	83%	68%	Fluctuating

Source: Taken from Universalia 2019, (Data from OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting Standard (CRS): [stats.oecd.org](http://stats.oecd.org)

This analysis of education aid in Zimbabwe will show that over the last 44 years, donor aid has come in various forms, i.e. direct budgetary support, loans and programme and project support. It is however unclear how effective this aid in its various forms has been in the Zimbabwean education sector. Anecdotal evidence from present day Zimbabwe would suggest that the impact of donor aid in traditional forms such as grants has been diluted in recent years as a result of economic challenges. Furthermore, it has not been sustained. It would be beneficial to the idea behind this research to find out just

how much in donor aid has been channelled towards education over the past three decades and in what forms.

Such data can be used to track the effectiveness of aid, information which is currently nebulous. This information on funding or at least a reasonable estimation may be available from the education planning department of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as this unit is responsible for projects and foreign aid. It may also be worthwhile to actively explore other ways of funding education in Zimbabwe.

Policy papers and Ministry statements indicate that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe has endorsed social entrepreneurship in the education sector as a means of additional revenue generation in schools.

As figure 2 shows, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education through its spokesperson publicised its position on allowing schools to run their own businesses on social media.

Figure 2: Education Coalition of Zimbabwe X Discussion on Education Financing

**Taungana B. Ndoro**  
@taundoro

Director of Communications and Advocacy  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of Zimbabwe

⌚ Harare, Zimbabwe   📅 Joined May 2011

**Taungana B. Ndoro** @taundoro · Apr 27

Replies to [@ecozim](#) [@MoPSEZim](#) and 16 others

We need to relook at how we can finance our education. We must start somewhere. Let us start by making our schools business centres that engage in commercial activities.

4   4   4   1

Source: X (formerly known as Twitter) accessed 30 April 2021

### 2.3 Education

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Four on ‘Quality Education’ and identifies ten education targets to be achieved by 2030. These targets are centred on access, equity, quality, skills, early childhood development, infrastructure, teachers and literacy and numeracy at all levels (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.-a). The Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) echoes this vision in its 12 strategic objectives and adds to them a focus on ICT, science, peace education, research and development and education management specifically, all buttressed by Pan-Africanism. These ambitious plans have been explicit about the importance of partnerships and country ownership. The “CESA 16-25 is underpinned by communication, governance and implementation frameworks for its delivery at the national, sub-regional and continental levels” (African Union, 2014). Similarly, the official Sustainable Development Goal website makes the following observations:

- Implementation and success will rely on countries’ own sustainable development policies, plans and programmes, and will be led by countries. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be a compass for aligning countries’ plans with their global commitments.
- Nationally owned and country-led sustainable development strategies will require resource mobilization and financing strategies.
- All stakeholders: governments, civil society, the private sector, and others, are expected to contribute to the realisation of the new agenda (United Nations Sustainable Development, n.d., section: How will the Sustainable Goals be implemented).

These two new macro development frameworks (CESA 16-25 and SDG 4) are quite ambitious. It is critical that a better understanding of what works in education development be acquired and used to make better decisions to meet the ambitious targets of these blueprints.

The justifications for investing in education themselves are quite broad. Sen (1999) for example argues that education is a necessary condition for achieving “participatory freedom” in society. Others argue that investments in better education (and health) have been proven to result in higher incomes. As far back as 2002, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) published a document proposing a positive relationship between individual years of schooling and economic growth (UNESCO Institute for

Statistics & Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2002, p. 8). In their chapter titled ‘Schools, Teachers, and Education Outcomes in Developing Countries’, Glewwe & Kremer (2006, p. 947) cite authors such as Foster and Rosenzweig (1996), Schultz (1999) and (2002) and Strauss and Thomas (1995), who propose that education is important for the uptake of novel technologies in agriculture and for reduced fertility rates respectively. More contemporary research from authors such as Runde et al. (2023) maintains these claims and goes on to argue that in addition to creating established development returns, education is also important for things like peacebuilding. It therefore stands to reason that ‘Getting Education Right’ is one of the most important development goals of our time.

### 2.3.1 Education Quality

The importance of quality education goes without saying. What does however remain somewhat in contention is the definition of quality education itself. Authors like Sifuna (n.d) argue that there is no fixed understanding of quality education. The evolution of the concept in Sub-Saharan Africa was strongly influenced by post-independence developments in the education sector which saw massive expansion in terms of enrolments and a concomitant increase in drop-out rates, widely attributed to overcrowding in classrooms. Despite having been in school, learners were not learning. These features quickly became some of the hallmarks of poor-quality education (Sifuna, n.d). Post 2015, the whole world is geared towards delivering Sustainable Development Goal number four on Quality Education.

But what is quality education and how can it be achieved? To respond to this question, some mental gymnastics may now be required. For this, a consideration of the various definitions of quality education is instructive. A broad 2000 definition of quality from UNICEF is captured in table 5.

Table 5: Elements in the UNICEF definition of quality education

1.	Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities;
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2.	Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;
3.	Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace.
4.	Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities.
5.	Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

*Source: Defining education quality, UNICEF, (2000, p.4)*

This study has already alluded to the targets of SDG 4 on quality education in earlier sections and so this point will not be laboured. Instead, suffice it to say that the fourth SDG on quality education covers many of the same areas as the definition in table 5. However, it is broader in its reach, covering equity of access to quality education up to post-secondary non tertiary level, across gender and expanding the supply of teachers, higher education scholarships and the provision of inclusive infrastructure.

In their report on “Benchmarking the quality of education”, Scheerens et al. (2004, pp. 108-109) outline six perspectives on educational quality as in table 6. The far-left column in the table shows the six perspectives on quality education and how according to this literature review they relate to understandings of quality education. The middle column lists the elements of the UNICEF definition of quality education while the column on the far-right shows which of the targets of SDG 4 on quality education are captured in the perspective on quality education in that row. To illustrate, the productivity perspective in row a.) focuses on setting and measuring thresholds for achievement in education. This way of thinking is reflected in the third and fifth elements of the UNICEF definition of quality education in table 5. The third element for example details the “acquisition of basic life skills as one of the goals of quality education while the fifth element focuses on

educational outcomes which contribute to the attainment of national priorities.” The table also shows which targets of SDG 4 were crafted from a productivity perspective. The first two are centred on ensuring learning outcomes for learners in early childhood care and pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education. Moreover, parameters for these learning outcomes are outlined. All in all, the elements of the UNICEF definition and the targets of SDG 4 echo five out of the six perspectives on education. Table 6 shows exactly which elements and targets relate to which perspective.

Of interest to this study is the clear absence of any mention of efficiency as a building block of quality education within the UNICEF definition or Sustainable Development Goals 4 on quality education or even SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals. This suggests that even as the focus seems to be on the delivery of the goal, little if any emphasis is placed on any sort of cost-benefit analyses in its provision. Aside from targets and indicators, documentation and reporting about efficiency in the delivery of SDG 4 is quite spare. This ‘oversight’, if you will, is likely a consequence of global north hegemony over the development of these goals. The availability of sufficient funding for education in western countries is far less of a problem than it is in the global south. As such, the question of efficiency of spending was likely far less of a priority in the minds of those who crafted the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education. It might also be important to note that SDG 4 on quality education trips itself up somewhat by including “quality education” in its description and targets but does not make an explicit effort to define what is meant by the use of the word “quality education” (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d., Goal 4 section). This again suggests the assumption of issues that are still quite foundational in places like Zimbabwe.

Perhaps the expectation is that the question of efficiency will be addressed through bespoke arrangements as the SDGs are implemented locally. It may be useful to consider regional educational strategies and their structures. The Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 for example notes the importance of efficient management of resources for the delivery of its strategic objectives. Furthermore, one of the guiding principles of CESA 2016 to 2025 is the application of “good governance, leadership and accountability in education management” (African Union, n.d., p.7). The strategy also highlights the need for the efficient implementation of CESA 2016 to 2025. That said, universally, the absence of any clear focus on efficiency as a factor of quality education has likely had negative implications for education overall.

Table 6: Quality Education Matrix

Perspectives on Educational Quality	Elements of the UNICEF definition	SDG 4 Targets
<p><b>a) the productivity view</b></p> <p>According to this view, the success of an educational system is seen as depending on the attainment of the aspired outputs/outcomes, for example in the sense of a satisfactory quantity of graduates that have attained a specific level (which may be formalised as a diploma), or in terms of an acceptable level of employment of students with a certain diploma. According to this view output/outcome/impact indicators are predominant or even the only type of quality indicators that need to be monitored.</p>	3, 5	4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7
<p><b>b) the instrumental effectiveness view</b></p> <p>According to the instrumental effectiveness view there is a clear perspective for the selection of context, input and process indicators, namely their expected effect on outcomes. To the extent<sup>5</sup> that effectiveness or production functions can be completely specified, in other words outcomes can be totally predicted, context, input and process indicators could replace outcome indicators. The value of certain levels and forms of inputs and processes is determined by their instrumental potential. Clearly the instrumental perspective offers more dynamic handles for policy, as it considers not only given constraints but also factors that are policy malleable.</p>	4, 5	4.a, 4.b, 4.c
<p><b>c) the adaptation perspective</b></p>	1, 2, 5	

<sup>5</sup> Written as “extend” in source version.

<p>This view “transcends” the instrumental effectiveness perspective by not only looking at the question how to do things right, but first of all considering the question on how to do the right things. In other words, the adaptation perspective would lead to a critical analysis of educational goals. Conditions that allow for a continuous sounding of changing contextual conditions for the education province would receive emphasis as means, while labour market outcomes or “cultural capital” could be considered as ends, according to this view.</p>		
<p><b>d) the equity perspective</b> When inputs, processes and outcomes are analysed for their equal or “fair” distribution among participants in education with different characteristics, equity is the primary facet of judging educational quality.</p>	1, 2, 4	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6
<p><b>e) the efficiency perspective</b> This perspective can be seen as a further demand on the productivity and instrumental effectiveness view, by considering the highest possible outcomes at the lowest possible costs.</p>		
<p><b>f) the disjointed view</b> Combinations or relations seen within a basic systems model, comprising inputs, processes, context and outcomes (see figure 1 in Chapter 1) were central in the previous views that represent a particular perspective on education quality. An alternative view is to consider each element “on its own” and judge whether it is manifested in an acceptable way, or at an acceptable level. In this way one could, for example, consider levels of teacher training, as a (minimum) requirement for being allowed to function as a teacher, class sizes could be judged in terms of being acceptable for being</p>	1,2,3,4,5	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.a, 4.c

“manageable” units for teachers and students, and teaching strategies could be rated according to norms of good practice. The disjointed view is descriptively the simplest one, although in an evaluative sense it is perhaps the most arbitrary one		
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Source: UNESCO-UIS/OECD, (2002, p. 15)

### 2.3.2 Types of Education Provision

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states unequivocally that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages” (United Nations, 1948, Article 26). Consequently, education globally is by and large provided for by Government and this is commonly referred to as public education. Typically, this sort of provision is facilitated through public institutions i.e. public schools, public colleges, public universities and so on and in such cases, the overall responsibility for funding and management lies with Government. Government can also channel public funds towards education in other ways such as financing private institutions directly. This can be considered a form of sub-contracting or outsourcing education to Non-Governmental Organisations or private institutions. Another route is giving cash subsidies for education to families. Families then have the freedom to select education institutions which suit their needs (UNESCO-UIS/OECD, 2002, p. 15). In a similar manner the UIS and OECD note that public institutions can also receive funds for education from private sources (2002, p. 15). This can come in the form of contributions from philanthropic organisations or even households.

In many instances, private education accounts for a significant proportion of education delivery. Financing costs fall to private households rather than the state although it is not unheard of for the state to make contributions towards the private education sector (UNESCO-UIS/OECD, 2002). Despite the call to provide education for all (UNESCO, n.d), in some countries universal access has not been achieved. Governments, for various reasons, do not have enough public schools. Furthermore, the quality of education within public schools may vary and/or not meet certain standards. It is for these and other reasons that the private education sector has expanded. Non-government schools play a vital role by filling the gaps, gaps which can be based on numbers, quality or content (UNESCO-UIS/OECD, 2002). It is also these varied gaps that illustrate how the term ‘Private School’ can have different meanings in different

contexts. Outside of government, religious institutions may for example also choose to establish their own schools so as to be able to impart specific religious values.

The debate around Public vs. Private Education provision is long standing. On the one hand, governments have an obligation to provide universal education to their citizens. On the other hand, this obligation has not translated into action, and this is at the expense of millions of children globally who are out of school. Even where universal access has been achieved, a myriad of challenges related to quality, poor learning outcomes, teacher shortages, infrastructure and teaching and learning materials abound. Such scenarios make compelling justification for filling the gaps created by government. Tooley (1997) argues that choice is a fundamental freedom and by extension, households should be free to make choices about which schools their children will attend. The logic behind freedom of choice in classical economic theory argues that the availability of multiple options results in efficiencies that accrue to both the providers and consumers of education (Day et al., 2014, p. 41). Providers realising that they are in competition with each other, work hard to produce their best while consumers can channel their monies where they think they will get the best value.

Competing perspectives champion a more egalitarian approach with proponents arguing that private fee-paying education options have an exclusionary effect, keeping out those who cannot pay. As such, the benefits that would ordinarily accrue from competition are only efficient for the few or the elites (Akaguri, 2011). Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the efficiencies achieved in the private education sector relate more to better quality teaching. Examples include greater “teacher presence” and best practice associated with better learning outcomes (Day et al., 2014, p. 45). However, Day et al. argue that studies show only modest differences of learning outcomes between students in public and private education (2014, p. 45). This raises questions around the purpose of private education from the perspective of cost-effectiveness.

Variations in outcomes exist even within the private education sector. Akaguri (2011) cited by the (African Development Bank & Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015, p. 58) describe private schooling outcomes as “highly contextual” arguing that the location of a private school is a determining factor of the quality of education delivered. Akaguri cites evidence from Ghana which references private schools in urban and peri-urban areas which outperform rural private schools (2011). This information suggests that

the greater financial outlay associated with private schooling does not always guarantee greater educational efficiencies across the board.

### 2.3.3 Education Finance

In a definition given in Oxford Bibliographies and proposed by Guthrie & Schuermann (2011), education finance is described as “governmental and organizational processes by which revenues are generated (through taxation, tuition, fees, and philanthropy), distributed, and expended for the operational and capital support of formal schooling.” They argue that education finance encompasses policy issues around ensuring equity, efficiency and freedom of choice. The study of education finance concerns itself with all “financial and in-kind resources available for education” (Education Links, 2019). As has already been noted, such resources in theory can be exclusively public, exclusively private or a mix of both. In practice however, it is often more complex. Determining how much money to channel towards which level of education (primary, secondary, tertiary) and how much to devote towards recurrent expenditure as opposed to capital expenditure are just some of the many variables that education planners contend with. Governments and private institutions alike grapple with projecting, collecting and managing revenue meant to be channelled towards education.

These aspects are made even more complex by factors such as the different administrative levels at which education planning must be conducted (Sale & Levin, 1991). At the same time, the degree of dedication to education, fiscal capacity, and the efficiency in the use of resources are considered to be decisive for the size of the pool of domestic resources committed to education (The Global Partnership for Education, n.d., p. 46). Moreover, education financing is something of a moving target. Schiefelbein (1983, p. 33) notes that as access to education expands, the minimal requirements for jobs increase, creating additional pressure on each successive level of education. These higher levels often require more resources. In some instances, university level education can be 10 to 20 times more expensive than primary education (Schiefelbein, 1983, p. 7). Schiefelbein argues that it is “impossible” to satisfy and finance educational demand for these reasons and also because as the concept of education expands and streams such as Lifelong Learning and Non-Formal Education gain popularity, more resources are required to fund them along with those already in existence (Schiefelbein, 1983, p. 6).

In response to this phenomenon, Rogers (1971) argues that Least Developed Countries (LDCs) should finance education through an elastic source of income i.e. a revenue source which grows faster than expenses (p. 4). In this way, the growth in revenue will not be overtaken by education expenditures which as has been explained tend to grow faster than income. Jalbout and Zyck, (2015, p. 2) suggest the use of alternative financing options in higher education (such as scholarships and loans). These less pervasive mechanisms would work to free funding which can then be made available for basic (primary and pre-primary) education. All these factors and some not mentioned here are suggestive of the potential existence of more non-traditional education financing options.

### **Public expenditure on education**

That said, public financing remains the most pervasive source of funding for education. It is also a common feature of education finance to find that the most comprehensive data is found in the domestic public sector. Of 19 of the education indicators collected by the UNESCO Institute for Education, only three capture education financing data. All three report only public finances (UNESCO, n.d.). Information on external and private financing is not as readily available or as broad. There have been moves in recent years to embed robust Financial Management Information Systems across all sectors. These efforts have been implemented parallel to attempts to adequately resource education from public sources. According to recommendations from Bruns et al. (2003, p. 80) countries should spend at least 20 percent of public expenditure on education. “Government expenditure on education as a % of GDP” is one of the standard indicators for this metric. It is used both as a measure of government commitment to and capacity to generate funding for education and is officially defined as:

*“Total general (local, regional and central) government expenditure on education (current, capital, and transfers), expressed as a percentage of GDP. It includes expenditure funded by transfers from international sources to government”* (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021, para. 1).

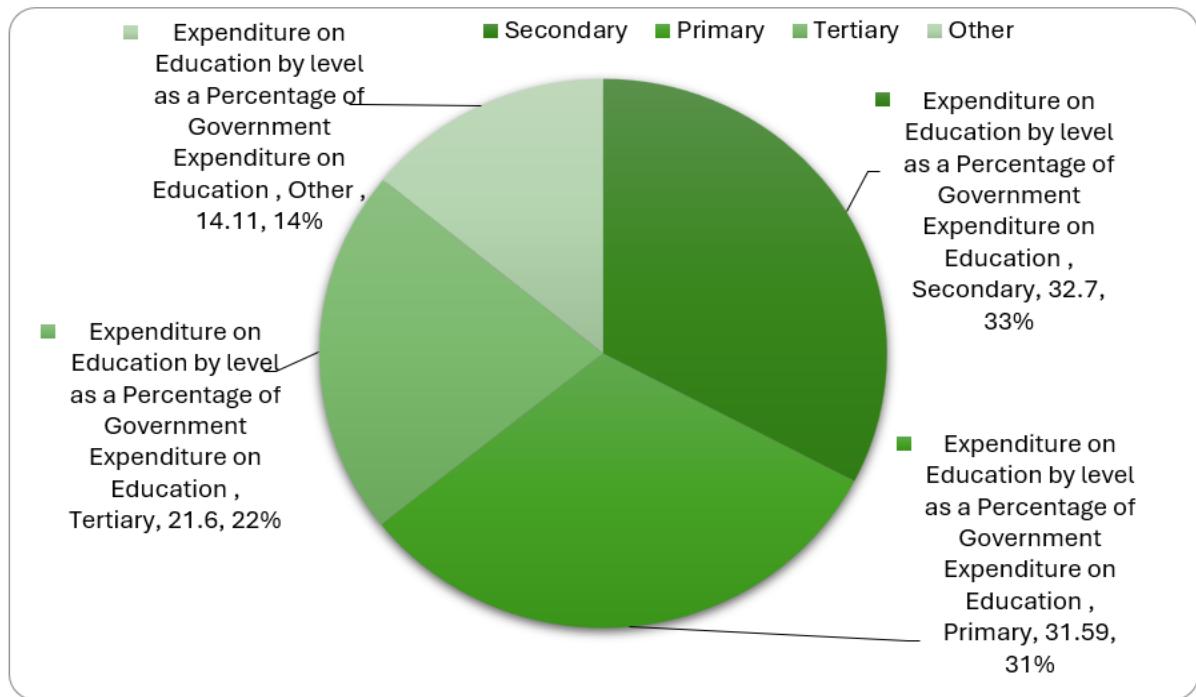
The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is as its name suggests a global fund “dedicated to education in lower-income countries...” (Global Partnership for Education, 2021, para. 1). The GPE along with many other partners works both to fund education and to lobby governments to commit more to the sector and use what is available more effectively. Some of these efforts come in the form of research. To illustrate, the partnership has written extensively on education financing. One such document is a report

titled 'Domestic and External Financing for Education' from the Global Partnership for Education. The document speaks on this aspect expansively and notes that many countries have not yet attained Universal Primary Education. Without saying it explicitly, the report implies that this failure is linked to the fact that these countries spend less than the recommended 20 per cent of public resources on education (The Global Partnership for Education, n.d.). This is despite arguments questioning how additional resources do not always lead to better outcomes. Furthermore, some would argue that using 'government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP' as an indicator of commitment to education masks variations caused by national differences in per capita income.

To address this, some practitioners would prefer to compare the levels of education spending in a country to its income per capita. The argument here is that low levels of national per capita income may translate to inadequate finances for education and therefore a need to find additional sources of financing (The Global Partnership for Education, n.d.). Presumably, this argument would still hold water in situations where expenditure as a percentage of GDP is significant.

The global average of government expenditure on education as a percentage of government expenditure stood at 12.7 in 2021 while global government expenditure as a percentage of GDP was 3.7 the following year (World Bank Group Data, 2024). Figure 3 shows how education funding is allocated across levels albeit in 2013.

Figure 3: Expenditure on Education by level as a percentage of Government Expenditure on Education



Source: World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org> accessed 21 July 2021.<sup>6</sup>

The diagram indicates that secondary education receives the greater proportion of financing globally, followed by primary education and then tertiary. Naturally, individual countries will spend education monies differently depending on their needs, capacity, commitment and agendas and these figures will vary from year to year. To illustrate, there are great differences in public commitments to education within groups of countries considered to be 'developing countries' and those considered to be 'developed'. Data from 2012 show that investments in education among developing countries which partner with the GPE averaged around 5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product. However, the Central African Republic spent 1.2 per cent of its GDP while São Tomé and Príncipe channelled 9.5 per cent. Among members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, spending on education as a percentage of GDP ranged from 3.9 in Japan to 8.7 in Denmark (The Global Partnership for Education, n.d., p. 53). This report from the GPE notes that within its cohort of partners from the developing world and based on available data, expenditure on primary education as a proportion of all education

<sup>6</sup> The World Bank Open Data page only provides Expenditure on Education by level as a Percentage of Government Expenditure on Education for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education. The shortfall of 14 per cent is consequently labelled as 'other' in this study.

expenditure averaged 43 per cent in 2012 (The Global Partnership for Education, n.d., p. 53). According to the GPE, in countries labelled 'Fragile and Conflict Affected' (FCAC) this share represented 46.2 per cent (n.d., p. 53). In real terms these indicators represent billions of dollars. According to Jalbout & Zyck, (2015, p. 3) in 2012, Low Income Countries (LICs) spent USD 11 billion on basic education. In the same year, Lower Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) spent ten times more (USD 110 billion) while Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs) spent USD 263 billion on basic education (Jalbout & Zyck, 2015, p. 3). Despite these large figures, under investment in education remains a cause for concern.

That said, advocacy for greater expenditure in education is yet to fully justify these expenditures given the seemingly nebulous relationship between resources and outcomes in the education sector. Anyanwu and Erhijakpor provide an extensive critique on the subject, citing studies from Card and Krueger (1996), Greenwald et al. (1996), and Krueger (2003) who they argue find a positive relationship between public expenditure in education and effectiveness (2007, p. 5). They juxtapose these arguments with studies from Betts (1996), Hanushek (1986, 1997, 2003) and Al-Samarrai (2003, 2006) all of whom reportedly question findings supporting this positive relationship. Anyanwu and Erhijakpor go on to reference Al-Samarrai's who reportedly even goes as far as to argue for a strong negative relationship between public funds and the effectiveness of educational access and performance (2007, p. 5). Ultimately however, they note that studies attempting to link education financing in developing countries to its effects are thin on the ground and that many of the findings mentioned above probably apply more to developed countries where much of the data comes from.

To say that expenditure on education, public or otherwise, does not automatically lead to better outcomes seems counter intuitive. If it is in fact true that simply spending more money won't do the trick, then what will? Davidson et al. (2008) suggests several factors, drawing from researchers such as Bishop and Wößmann (2004) who themselves submit that learners need to be interested in learning if additional funding is going to make any impact in learning outcomes (p. 44), a position also held by Wang et al. (1993, p. 263). If true, it therefore follows that education stakeholders should prioritise incentivising getting an education.

Another reason that in their view impacts the effectiveness of education financing is how well resourced an education system is to begin with. Well-resourced systems are

already saturated so to speak and can only absorb a limited quantity of resources before additional resources begin to lead to wastage. They borrow from typical economic parlance by referring to the concept of diminishing returns. Accordingly, this line of thinking suggests that resources should be channelled to where the need is greatest and stop once an optimum has been reached. Finally, Bishop and Wößmann claim that the varying vested interests of education stakeholders in any school system can cause resources to be diverted from teaching (Bishop & Wößmann, 2004). They reference localisation of standard and performance control which according to them increases the possibility that resources will be channelled to factors other than teaching (p.19).

Davidson et al. go on to cite Angrist and Lavy (1999) and Barro and Lee (1996) who they quote as positing that the cost of delivering education in smaller class sizes reaps large gains in learning outcomes. However, their paper directs its enquiry towards the usefulness of these findings for the United Kingdom and notes that many of these studies produce composite results for developing and developed countries, making it difficult to understand which context these interventions actually work in. At the same time, they argue that conflicting findings from Goldhaber and Brewer (1997) and Cooper and Cohn (1997) report an inverse relationship between reducing or increasing class sizes and student outcomes (Davidson et al., 2008, p. 46). To add to the uncertainty, Davidson et al.'s analysis references Kirjavainen and Loikkanen (1998) who find a relationship of increased efficiency between resources and output as class sizes grow but also where parents are increasingly better educated. All in all, it would seem that conclusive evidence on the universality of channelling resources towards class size is scarce. The outcomes might just be location specific.

The literature on factors influencing education does not stop at class size and teacher characteristics. In an extensive review of educational research, Wang et al. (1993) identify 228 variables which they use to develop a theoretical framework on school learning. The 228 variables are compacted into six constructs which can be paraphrased as follows with examples of individual variables listed below each:

1. Administration of the Education System
  - a. School district size
  - b. District policies,
2. Community environment
  - a. Socio-economic level of community

- b. Level of peer's academic aspirations,
- 3. School environment
  - a. Schoolwide emphasis on recognition of academic achievement
  - b. Principal actively concerned with instructional programme,
- 4. Teaching and Instruction
  - a. Size of instructional group
  - b. Alignment among goals, contents, instruction, assignments, and
  - c. Evaluation,
- 5. Classroom environment and
  - a. Establishing efficient classroom routines and communicating rules and procedures
  - b. Time on task,
- 6. Student Characteristics
  - a. Prior grade retention
  - b. Attitude toward subject matter instructed. (pp. 254-255)

The findings of their review of the influence of these constructs indicates that factors that are closer to the students' actual learning process have the strongest impact. They find that student characteristics, classroom environment and community environment have the greatest influence on school learning, in that order (p. 70). To digress a little, the examples of student characteristics given above could be expanded to include student engagement which according to Taylor and Parsons (2011) can include "academic, cognitive, intellectual, institutional, emotional, behavioral, social, and psychological" student engagement among others (p. 4). In their view, student engagement is both a "process for learning" and an "outcome" (Taylor & Parsons, 2011, p. 4). As such, they view student engagement as a question of what must be done within the framework of an education system to "help students engage successfully" rather than an input in and of itself.

The findings from Wang et al. (1993) are corroborated in Davidson et al., (2008) who refer to a 2003 report from the National Audit Office titled 'Making a Difference – Performance of Maintained Secondary Schools in England' which singles out school ethos, strong leadership, high-quality teaching, stakeholder engagement and pupil inclusion as important for school effectiveness. A study focusing on academic achievement among learners in public primary schools by Ndirangu (2015) in Mathioya

Sub-County, Murang'a County in Kenya reports similar findings. According to Ndirangu, schools where head teachers motivate teachers and practice instructional leadership witnessed positive learning outcomes. Ndirangu also notes that learners who received academic support from their parents performed better than those who do not (2015, p. 63).

Wang et al. (1993) note that more distant factors, such as the administrative characteristics of the education system at the national level have a weaker effect. They do however caution against the wholesale adoption of their findings and rather propose several caveats. Firstly, that the studies they review may be subject to statistical errors which might have an impact on the validity of their findings. Secondly, they advise that context may influence outcomes differently and education stakeholders should be aware of this (Wang et al., 1993, p. 279).

That said, while the above-mentioned findings relate to the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Sifuna (n.d.) reports similar findings in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Citing Anderson (2002), O'Sullivan (2004) and Verspoor (2003), Sifuna lobbies for the primacy of teacher-pupil interactions and classroom instruction in under resourced environments (p. 59). Naisianoi et al. (2020) expand on this further and describe the disadvantages that pupils in low-resource environments face citing a study from Wambua and Murungi (2018) who interrogate 2016 to 2018 test scores from pupils in Gilgil sub county in Kenya which they report fall far below national averages. They attribute these low scores to "inadequate, inappropriate instructional materials" and "passive learning" (p. 295). They also note that the provision of teaching and learning materials in this context often falls to donors. However, donors tend to operate in ephemeral bursts of activity and once their support is withdrawn, so too is the supply of teaching and learning materials.

The discussion up to this point has leaned towards the interrogation of individual factors which can influence education and their financing in isolation or at the very least ranked against each other. However, factors such as class size as an indicator of student achievement do not work in seclusion and any analysis must take other factors into consideration. Studies indicate the effectiveness of an intervention intended to improve poorly performing schools is tied to the number of factors, or 'elements', that are addressed by the intervention (Hassan et al., 2022; Bryk et al. 2010 cited in Khupe et al., 2013, p. 171). Such factors may also include teacher characteristics such as level of

education, quality of said education and experience as suggested in Davidson et al (2008) presenting their understanding of assertions by Monk (1994).

Monk however reportedly makes the caveat that greater benefits from level and quality of teacher education and experience accrue more in some subjects than in others, making mention of Mathematics and Science specifically (Davidson, 2008, p 49).

Authors such as Khupe et al. (2013) suggest that combinations of factors can also produce significant gains for education. Writing on turn-around strategies for schools in difficult circumstances in a paper with a similar name, Khupe et al. consider various other authors whose work focuses on rescuing schools that are falling behind. Of specific interest to this section is this finding originally from Bryk et al. (2012) which claims that;

*“...schools strong on at least three of five essential elements – effective leaders, collaborative teachers, strong family and community ties, ambitious instruction, and safe and orderly learning climate – were 10 times more likely to improve and 30 times less likely to stagnate than those that were strong on just one or two (p. 171).*

Despite the fact that Bryk et al.’s study focused on schools in crisis, the similarities between these findings and those of Wang et al. are uncanny. Together, they strengthen the case for education expenditure at lower more bespoke levels as a means of delivering quality education and provide justification for funding a mix of initiatives instead of just focusing on the one.

### **Private expenditure on education**

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics defines private expenditure on education as the “sum of direct payments from students/households and other private entities...”. This definition accounts for the whole gamut of education expenditures from tuition and fees to stationery, uniforms and personal living expenses (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021). It might presumably also include expenditures associated with extra-curricular activities. The OECD definition on the other hand explicitly excludes all expenditures which are not channelled directly to educational institutions (OECD, n.d.). The justification for this exclusion simply being that excluded data such as personal living expenses and educational materials purchased outside of educational institutions are difficult to collect.

That said, a study commissioned by Pôle de Dakar – an office of the UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning on a sample of 15 African countries did

find that private expenditure on education accounted for 4.2 per cent of all household spending (Foko et al., 2012, p. 17), quite a significant amount given that it accounted for almost half of what was spent on education as a percentage of GDP in these countries. According to this sample, private expenditure on education was mostly absorbed by school fees, accounting for 54.8 per cent of spending, while households committed 33.9 per cent to school supplies and a further 11.3 per cent to other things (p.18). The report however notes that variations in these trends fall along national lines. Spending seems to be influenced not only by wealth but also by “the necessary character of education, independently of a country’s level of development.” (Foko et al., 2012, p. 18).

The findings of the Pôle de Dakar study indicated that on average, households channelled 45 per cent of their spending on primary education (p. 48). These patterns suggest that in some instances, households are making up for the shortfalls created by inadequate public financing. Referencing examples of countries where government spent less than 50 per cent of the education budget on primary education, in Chad, Madagascar and Mali household financing of primary education accounted for 53, 63 and 64 percent of all primary education expenditure respectively (Foko et al., 2012, p. 48). The situation differs however in countries where government absorbs the bulk of education costs for its population.

These large figures beg the question of why gaps in funding for universal access to education are so pervasive and why so many countries perform poorly on many education indicators. The failure of individual governments to ensure broad based education access singles them out for further study. Questions about where the gaps are and how these gaps can be filled are increasingly gaining attention from even the private sector. Perhaps in response to these gaps, corporate giving is on the increase globally. Dattani et al. (2015) report that in 2013, Global Fortune 500 Corporate Social Responsibility spending on education amounted to USD 2,6 billion. This accounted for 13 per cent of all global CSR. However, the same cohort of companies gave 16 times more to health. Furthermore, although Africa received USD 1 billion in CSR funding for education, this was shared across a population of 955 million people where 43 per cent were children under the age of 14 (World Bank Group, n.d.). This again suggests that there is significant room to expand private sector education expenditure to mirror trends in the health sector.

### 2.3.4 Education Aid

To understand Education Aid, referring back to our understanding of aid in general can be instructive. The IRC definition as given in a 2013 World Health Organization report denotes aid as the following:

*“the international transfer of public funds in the form of loans or grants, either directly: from one government to another (bilateral aid), or indirectly: through non-governmental organisations or a multilateral agency (multilateral aid)”* (Uytewaal et al., 2013, para. 2).

Education aid is therefore aid directed towards education.

Aid can also come from sources other than donor agencies. Individuals, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are important education funders. Foundations and Corporates are also important, however, the data seems to suggest that their focus leans towards post-secondary education e.g. vocational training, tertiary education and teacher training. Generally, information on how much is given by all these other sources is not clear (Steer & Smith, 2015). However, the 2024 Ultra High Net Worth Philanthropy report from Altrata notes that at USD 502.4 billion, individual giving (including giving from ultra-high net worth individuals) represented more than half of all global philanthropic giving (Imberg et al., 2024, p. 7). Although education was the most popular sector to give to, it did not receive the greatest amount (p. 19).

Though widespread, giving towards education is not without its challenges. Steer and Smith (2015) for example identify a number of issues in the sector. The first of these is the high frequency of changes in leadership in the donor community at the expense of recipient countries. Such changes are bound to create gaps in aspects such as coordination (p.6). Secondly, they estimate that up to 30 per cent of education aid monies do not reach recipient countries. They refer explicitly to the term Country Programmable Aid (Steer & Smith, 2015, p. 6). This situation is caused in part by fragmentation in the education aid sector itself. Steer and Smith (2015, p. 6) indicate the donor relationships increased from 1,016 to 1,141 in Low Income Countries (LIC) and Lower Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) between 2008 and 2013. Maintaining these relationships is expensive and a significant amount is lost due to transaction costs incurred as money is moved from one country to many others (E. Anderson, 2012) or even from organisation to organisation (ICRC, 2008, p. 1). Finally, they lobby for more effective financing, specifically

mentioning the need to leverage “new sources of funds and create stronger links between financing results” (Steer & Smith, 2015, p. 7).

They reference innovative financing mechanisms already in existence. These examples include the World Bank’s Programme for Results (P4R). The P4R efforts are directed through recipient country institutions. Furthermore, funding is dependent on achieving results. The Norway–World Bank Results in Education for All Children (REACH) programme is another example of a mechanism which disburses funds specifically for collecting evidence on meaningful education system reforms. The UK’s formally known as ‘Department for International Development (DFID)’ Girls’ Education Challenge is a Programme which runs contextual projects in 17 countries across a range of education challenges. The last example given is the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) which uses a resource allocation model where countries can benefit from an additional variable tranche which is dependent on results (Steer & Smith, 2015, p. 7).

Perakis and Savedoff (2015) also cited by Steer and Smith (2015) reportedly commend this approach arguing that payment for results-based programmes are more likely to achieve results. They seem to propose other advantages of this approach such as greater accountability, and greater flexibility in design and implementation experienced on the part of recipients (p. 57). On the other hand, Steer and Smith, report that the efficacy of such programmes is “yet to be determined” (p. 59). They go further to argue that aside from a greater focus on outcomes, these Results Based Financing mechanisms operate much the way existing aid programmes do. Such programmes for the most part are no more transparent than their traditional counterparts and ultimately remain quite rigid. It is however likely that the focus on results that such programmes bring positively affects government’s ability for Education Management and Planning (Steer & Smith, 2015, p.59).

### **Education Official Development Assistance (ODA)**

Official Development Aid is one of the better developed terms in the aid lexicon and is, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development the biggest single category of aid (OECD iLibrary, n.d.). Over time, the OECD has developed a robust system for managing information on aid flows. The OECD gives a specific definition of ODA as “government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries” (OECD, 2019, Official Development Aid section).

Loans and credit for military purposes are excluded. According to this definition, aid can go directly from a donor to a recipient or can be through a third party e.g., the United Nations or the World Bank. Concrete examples of aid are grants, "soft" loans (where the grant element is at least 25 per cent of the total) and technical assistance. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) expands on this definition describing ODA as "grants or loans to developing countries which are a) undertaken by the official sector, b) have promotion of economic development and welfare as the main objective, and c) have concessional financial terms (if a loan, then it has a grant element of at least 25 per cent) and financial contributions to multi-lateral organizations." Technical cooperation is also included in grants (United Nations, 2004).

Kamibeppu (2002) notes that there are a multiplicity of definitions for the term education aid or aid to education or education related aid. The author however argues that all these definitions are very broad in scope. One of the more round about definitions as posited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is ODA activities in education areas at all levels of education including teacher training, vocational training and research projects undertaken by educational institutions (p. 9).

According to 2014 figures, member states of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) spent over USD 143 billion dollars on Official Development Assistance (OECD Data Explorer, 2014). The group committed close to USD 16 billion dollars to education aid in the form of grants and ODA loans between 2013 and 2015. The share of this to African education was USD 121 million down USD 40 million from USD 160 million between 2010 and 2012 and was expected to fall even further (OECD Data Explorer, 2014). The USD 121 million committed to education was shared among 600 million children in Africa (You et al., 2021, p. 2). This translated to USD 4.9 per capita. In contrast, the average expenditure per child in public school both elementary and secondary per year in the United States of America in 2015 was USD 11,318 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, Table 235.40.). Similarly, in 2014, OECD countries spent an average of USD 9,487 per student per year between primary and tertiary (OECD, 2014).

The Global Partnership for Education notwithstanding, aid to education has been on the decline globally. Localised spikes in aid were witnessed in some countries after they joined the Global Partnership to Education (GPE), an international multi-lateral

made up of donor and recipient countries, other multilateral agencies and civil society. In 2012, the GPE became the biggest donor to the basic education sector. It channelled USD 354 million to its partners in developing countries, spending even more than the United States of America, the International Development Bank and Japan which spent USD 346 million, USD 137 million and USD 135 million respectively (Global Partnership for Education, 2014a, p. viii). From a general perspective however, as early as 2010, the pattern of declining education aid was becoming more apparent with basic education witnessing the greatest change as donors increased their support to other levels of education. The decline in education aid between 2010 and 2012 represented 65 per cent of the decrease in total aid levels (p. vii). Although aid to education once again witnessed an increase between 2017 and 2019, by 2021 these figures had begun to decline, both in real and absolute terms (Donor Tracker, n.d., education section).

While it is unclear just how much aid has been channelled to Africa since 1957, using 2018 to 2022 figures as a proxy would indicate that external education financing in Africa represents approximately one third of DAC financing to developing countries (OECD Data Explorer, n.d., Official Flows by Country and Region section). The same figures also demonstrate the volatility of education finance to Africa whose flows change frequently. Recent data from the OECD indicates that combined bilateral and multilateral ODA to education in Africa has been on the increase again with 2017 figures averaging around USD 5 billion (OECD, 2019) and falling again to USD 3 billion in 2022 (OECD Data Explorer, n.d., Official Flows by Country and Region section). These general figures include monies which do not always go directly to aid recipient countries or aid recipients. Hynes and Scott (2013, p. 13) highlight budget items such as in-donor country refugee costs and student costs which have infamously been given nicknames such as “phantom aid” and even “masqueraid” owing to the fact that the benefits to recipient countries are hard to justify. Growing arguments for more developing country input over aid has birthed models such as the Global Partnership for Education previously highlighted.

### **Education Aid Effectiveness**

The Thematic Study on the Paris Declaration, Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness (2008) defines aid effectiveness as the “arrangement for the planning, management and deployment of aid that is efficient, reduces transaction costs and is targeted towards development outcomes including poverty reduction” (Stern et al., 2008,

p. vii). Khupe et al. (2013, p. 166) put it more succinctly when they propose that any understanding of effectiveness should include how well the initiative meets its “intended outcome”. They distinguish this from efficiency which they define as the degree to which these intended outcomes are optimised vis a vis the inputs and efforts channelled towards that initiative. They expand the discussion by providing a perspective on value for money measures, which they believe ought to be conducted over the long term (2013, p. 166). However, conducting retrospective evaluations requires gaining access to historical data. The further back the evaluation needs to dig, the harder it is to find the necessary records (Levin & Belfield, 2015, p. 409).

Since the Paris declaration, global charters have further refined the aid effectiveness discussion through agreements such the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (OECD, 2008) and the 2011 Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (OECD, 2023).

The Sustainable Development Goals – 2015 to 2030 – also emphasize aid effectiveness. These frameworks have been necessitated by growing concerns around aid effectiveness or the lack thereof. Some early criticisms around aid include the failure by donors and recipients alike to report in a transparent manner.

On the one hand, the failure of donors to report on aid flows compromises the ability of recipient countries to make policy decisions (The Global Partnership for Education, n.d.). Likewise, country failure to report back to donors and their populations negatively impacts planning and tracking results. To this effect, several tools have been developed in an effort to support aid reporting. These include the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), and the Aid Transparency Index (ATI). As of 2013, the ATI had 39 indicators, all meant to measure the information being published by donors and whether this information is “comprehensive, timely, accessible and comparable” (The Global Partnership for Education, n.d.).

In more recent years it would seem that the aid effectiveness agenda has lost traction (Ogbuoji and Yamey, 2019). To illustrate, Ogbuoji and Yamey cite an evaluation on the Paris Declaration by Woods et al (2011) which found that there were differences in effectiveness across countries. The study however was conducted in the health sector and may have limited applicability in education. Some of the more recent reasons that have been offered to explain the challenge of ensuring aid transparency (a component believed to improve aid effectiveness) include waning political will across the board and

the changing landscape of aid flows i.e. less North-South Cooperation. Contrary political behaviours also have a similar effect, and this is illustrated by the following quote from a country representative of a donor agency responding to an aid effectiveness evaluation.

*“Certain decisions made by headquarters for political or geostrategic reasons limit agencies’ actions in the field”* (Ogbuoji & Yamey, 2019, p. 185).

This is despite the fact that the Agenda 2030 – the current Global Development Framework – and many others before it – emphasise aid effectiveness principles. However, even where political will exists to deliver on the promises of policy goals, the actual business of measuring this parameter is rather difficult. The multiplicity of variables in the discussion, the different geographic contexts, currency exchanges, inflation and deflation, the many different indicators on which effectiveness can be measured and a plethora of other factors all contribute to a highly challenging situation. In the education sector for example, education financing is often expected to achieve a raft of goals. One of the most common is access and Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios have for a long time been used as yardsticks for whether aid is achieving education objectives.

These are in addition to indicators on the completion of high-quality pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. Steer and Smith (2015) argue that these education goals have been proven to bring the highest social returns in developing countries and it therefore makes sense to focus on them. Other considerations have in recent years increasingly gained more attention as indicators of education quality. These include learning outcomes and international assessments such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Uwezo in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SEACMEQ) in Southern and Eastern Africa focus on learning outcomes in subjects such as Mathematics, Swahili and English (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, 2005; Uwezo Kenya, 2013).

The African Development Bank and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2015, p. 52) report that consequently, it would seem that studies on cost-effectiveness have tended to be built around the twin facets of participation and quality and have used measurements of enrolment, attendance and standardized tests as their inputs and cite Dhaliwal et al. (2012) and McEwan (2014) to make this argument in their report. The same report notes that securing access to costing information is difficult and this has the effect of pushing

cost effectiveness studies towards subjects where the data is easier to find. This perhaps results in a concentration of research and availability of empirical evidence on aid effectiveness within the same cluster.

To illustrate, the African Development Bank and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2015) again references a meta-analysis of a number of interesting metrics, all on learning in the basic (primary) education sector in developing countries conducted by McEwan (2014). His study focused on school-based interventions and measured the effects of:

- computer-assisted learning,
- teacher training,
- reduction in class size,
- increased ability grouping,
- introduction of contract or volunteer teachers,
- performance incentives, and
- improved instructional materials.

That said, the African Development Bank and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2015) goes on to argue that learning outcomes are highly dependent on a host of individual and environmental factors. As such, trying to calculate the effectiveness of an education intervention on this metric is ‘highly contextual’ (pp. 55, 58).

Aid effectiveness debates and studies also have to contend with the dichotomy between public and private education. Non-government education service providers account for a significant population of the education sector. This is especially the case where the growing demand for education cannot be met by existing public resources. To give an indication of the scale referenced here, according to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in Lagos, Nigeria for example, there were an estimated 22,000 private schools compared to 1,600 public schools by 2017 (2015, p. 58). Such figures present compelling motivation for the study of aid effectiveness to also consider private education (African Development Bank & Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015).

In a book titled ‘Does Aid Contribute to Sustainable Development Goals? Empirical Evidence from a Donor Comparison’, Faust (2017) challenges aid effectiveness through a broad literature review focusing on the period 1990-2014. The book considers types of aid – bilateral and multilateral –, types of donor and donor

personal interests versus needs of recipient countries in its exploration of effectiveness. Others have done similar work. A comparison of bilateral and multilateral systems by Atwood (2011) would seem to support multilaterals as the preferred vehicle for aid. According to Atwood (2011), multilaterals have more authority from a political perspective, can provide technical skills from a wider pool and “can leverage off economies of scale” (p. 2). Atwood however notes that the fragmentation within the multilateral system, specifically the transaction costs and administrative burdens that come as a result of fragmentation weigh heavily on recipient countries (Atwood, 2011, p. 8).

That said, some of the key observations of Faust’s study are that it has proven very difficult to be able to conclusively determine the impact of Aid. Faust’s literature analysis reviewed multiple papers and found numerous studies which provide evidence for aid effectiveness, numerous studies which provide evidence for aid ineffectiveness and even numerous studies showing negative relationships. To illustrate, Faust cites both Weisskopf (1972) who argues that aid has a significantly negative effect on *ex ante* recipient domestic savings and Papanek (1973) who argues on the contrary that there is “significant correlation between aid and growth” (p. 7).

Faust sums up the book’s analysis by referencing a number of studies, all of which “fail to find a significantly positive impact of aggregated aid flows” (cf. Rajan and Subramanian 2008 and 2011, Burnside and Dollar 2000 or Easterly et al. 2004 cited in Faust, 2017, p. 12).

Birchler and Michaelowa (2016) on the other hand cautiously argue for the positive effects of aid on education. Similar to Faust, their study also tweaks its criterion and inputs and by so doing presents findings on different levels of aid effectiveness. According to its results, aid has been found to positively impact enrolment more than it has quality. They project a 6 percentage point increase in primary enrolment for every 100 per cent increase in aid or 0.06 percentage point increase in primary enrolment for every 1 per cent increase in aid (p. 48). When brought to scale, such proportions, they argue, have probably contributed significantly to Universal Primary Education goals. They go on to specify which aid budget lines seem to have had the greatest impact i.e. Education Facilities and Training.

In addition, the various aid models in which ODA can come in further complicate the effectiveness of the aid debate. The OECD for example has given aid to education in

the form of grants and ODA loans (Hynes & Scott, 2013). There has also been a great deal of fluidity in the proportions in which these types of aid can come from year to year, country to country and level to level. Aid to education declined significantly in the aftermath of the COVID 19 pandemic dropping 7 per cent between 2020 and 2021. However, there has been a notable increase in education aid to post-secondary education since 2010 (World Bank et al., 2023, p. 12). Furthermore, the different forms in which aid is disbursed require different considerations. The nature of concessional loans for example may also serve to inflate aid figures but without any corresponding impact on effectiveness. The global financial crisis of 2008 forced interest rates down and some donor countries were able to borrow and relend these funds to recipient countries at higher rates than they had borrowed them – ‘arbitrary 10 per cent discount rates’ (Hynes & Scott, 2013, p. 13). The problem comes through the failure of donor countries to deduct interest payments in arriving at net ODA disbursed. Consequently, when calculating impact, the effects will be spread out over the initial capital and the interest creating a distortion (Hynes and Scott, 2013).

Another reporting inconsistency the aid effectiveness conundrum has had to contend with in the past has arisen as a result of how funds are labelled. Funds from the Global Partnership for Education have, for example, in the past been reported back to the OECD as regional or bilateral unspecified aid. This creates confusion over how this aid is reported by recipient countries. To address these sorts of challenges the OECD has introduced what is called the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) dataset (Global Partnership for Education, 2014). Even then, there are challenges related to the many ways in which aid reaches its intended beneficiaries. Steer and Smith (2015) estimate that 60 per cent of bilateral education aid is channelled through public and multilateral institutions. The remaining 40 per cent goes to NGOs and other private structures (p. 51).

Not only are education aid volumes in question, but there are also questions about how aid is spent and the sustainability of aid volumes over time. Steer and Smith (2015) reference Malawi as an example of ineffective education spending noting that poor quality education and insufficient resources have in the past led to high repetition and dropout rates. This results in a hamster wheel of problems where repeaters crowd classrooms and apply unnecessary pressure on Teaching and Learning Materials and further compromise quality. According to Hall (2015) cited by Steer and Smith (2015) public education systems lose 27 per cent of resources as a consequence of repetition and

dropouts (p. 32). Sustainability questions grow more relevant as donor fatigue sets in, and traditional sources of multilateral funds dwindle.

As such, aid in other forms has also recently begun to feature more regularly in the aid effectiveness lexicon. It would seem that many multilateral agencies have begun to explore alternative means of securing funds. Atwood (2011) makes mention of alternatives such as mobilising resources from middle-income countries and private foundations and ‘innovative financing’ (p. 6). Likewise, Rodriguez (2016) cites the growing cross-section of businesses venturing into solving social problems. Thirdly, new funding strategies are focused not only on securing finances but also on expanding learning opportunities and “improving the efficiency of schooling” (UNESCO-UIS/OECD, 2002, p. 6).

Despite the many negative critiques of donor aid, there is evidence to show that Official Development Aid for education can catalyse successes. To illustrate, several countries report evidence of higher enrolments and lower absenteeism rates as a result of aid in education. In Ghana for example, a 2006 School Feeding Programme financed with foreign aid but implemented by NEPAD produced exciting initial results with doubled enrolment, reduced absenteeism and better retention (UN Regional Coordination Mechanism - Africa, 2007, p. 13). As already highlighted in Birchler and Michaelowa, there is evidence to show that increasing education aid leads to increased Net Enrolment Ratios. Moreover, donor aid allows donors to advocate for greater accountability within recipient country systems, adding their voice to local CSOs, parent’s groups and learners. This is despite the fact that their involvement in education can be viewed as an indication of a weak or broken social system (African Development Bank & Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015).

### **Measuring the Effectiveness of Education Aid**

One of the sub themes of this research is how to measure aid effectiveness. As has already been noted, there are a myriad of factors influencing aid effectiveness and these factors have an impact on how effectiveness is measured. A quick reminder of the working definition of aid effectiveness will also show that the concept itself is made up of many variables. These are the arrangements for the “planning, management and deployment of aid that is efficient, reduces transaction costs and is targeted towards

development outcomes including poverty reduction" (Stern et al., 2008, p. vii). This definition places administration, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and outcomes at its centre.

As the discussion on aid in education evolves, what is not clear is, given the multiplicity of variables in the development conundrum, which factors are necessary and/or sufficient for education financing to produce its intended results as per the grand goals of global and national blueprints. Moreover, even where Cost Effectiveness Analysis (CEA) has been applied in education, the attempts are typically far from rigorous (Ross, Barkaoui, & Scott 2007).

Furthermore, which level of education and/or education finance to study for aid effectiveness is another consideration. One might choose to study Basic, Secondary or Tertiary education or all three. Within these levels, studies could branch off into types of school (public-private), teachers, teaching and learning materials, subjects and so on. Education finance aid effectiveness studies might focus on capital, recurrent, and opportunity costs expenditure. Again, these expenditures can be further broken down. Levin and Belfield (2015) for example point out that education initiatives are often applied to existing programmes e.g. an afterschool programme within an existing school system. Measuring effectiveness of the afterschool programme in this regard also means including the aspects of the school system as well (p. 409).

There are various methodologies to measure aid effectiveness. Faust's study for example uses economic growth as well as social indicators in health and education (Infant mortality in health and primary school completion in education) as metrics of progress. Narrowing the approach down somewhat, Birchler and Michaelowa (2016) test for aid effectiveness of OECD aid between 1996 and 2010 in Education. They create a number of scenarios by using different types of regression analysis, alternating their dependent variable between Lagged Net Enrolment Rate and Net Enrolment Rate and breaking their time periods into three smaller ones. Their study applies five varied methods of regression analysis and multiple data sets. These two examples alone give an indication of just how many ways aid effectiveness can potentially be calculated and interpreted.

These factors also forewarn us of the complexity of measuring aid effectiveness. Even studies within the same field might differ on how they choose to calculate effectiveness. From a purely financial perspective, there are questions about measuring ODA on a cash basis. According to Hynes and Scott (2013) despite the fact that there has been a growing movement towards accruals accounting – measuring economic events

when they occur—the lack of congruence between aid cash accounting and government accruals accounting may prove problematic. The authors argue that cash measurements serve developing countries better as they make it easier to manage aid activities. At the same time, while statistical data on aid flows has historically been recorded on a cash basis, making a change would bring comparison challenges between public and aid funds.

Brodzik's 2018 study illustrates this conundrum well by referencing Verstegen and King (1998) who caution against adopting the findings of production equations which consider only quantitative inputs leaving out qualitative aspects which they argue may have significant implications for students (p. 20). Brodzik (2018) presents arguments from Costrell et al., (2008) to the effect that such quantitative metrics can also be misleading in that while they do help to identify the relationships between average expenditure per educational unit (school, district, etc), the characteristics of these educational units and teaching and learning outcomes, using inputting average expenditure as an independent variable in formulas designed to improve educational outcomes is like chasing a moving target. Schools or districts that commit less than the recommended average are compelled to increase their expenditures. This has the concomitant effect of raising the average and beginning the cycle all over again Brodzik (2018). Ultimately, Brodzik calls for more investigation into education expenditure at the local level for greater understanding of how to make spending more effective.

In an extensive econometric evaluation of the effectiveness of education interventions, Schieffelin (1983) reviews a number of previous studies and finds that the source of funding as well as how funds are disbursed affects the impact of an intervention. The reviewed studies consider the effect of taxes, household contributions in the form of fees, and donations. The evaluation also reviews the impact of vouchers, cash grants, grants and scholarships and finds variations accordingly. The study critiques the advantages and disadvantages of using unit cost measures. One argument, for example, is how different accounting systems across countries consider the unit cost, e.g. the value of a school building. On the other hand, Schieffelin also critiques the use of unit cost indicators at the national level as measures of efficiency arguing that costs are merely projected inputs and do not necessarily reflect actual spending (p. 37). Countries such as South Africa where expenditure per pupil is relatively high but outcomes are poor illustrate this phenomenon. Schieffelin (1983) also considers time differentials, changes

that take place during programming, the technologies in use as well as factors such as inflation.

While measures of education access have also traditionally been used to determine the cost effectiveness of education interventions, it is also important to measure quality at the same time (African Development Bank & Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015). Some of the more commonly used indicators of education quality are ‘percentage who drop out’, ‘percentage who graduate’, and ‘average length of time to completion’. Education planners aim for a balance of quality and access, and this raises questions about what degrees of quality to what proportions of access are ideal and who determines these ratios. Often, these goals are identified by Government and its partners before an intervention is implemented. Achieving these goals can thereafter be considered a measure of effectiveness.

Other commonly used metrics for determining aid effectiveness have been learning outcomes. These have already been discussed in some detail in previous sections. However, it is interesting to note that there are studies which deal with how institutions of learning are managed and how their learners perform academically. Evaluations by UNESCO suggest that such studies have not been able to identify any clear patterns. Conventional wisdom for example would argue that private schools would produce better learning outcomes but International Assessments such as the *Primer Estudio Internacional Comparativo (PEIC) Sobre Lenguaje, Matematica, y Factores Asociados, para Alumnos del Tercer y Cuarto Grado de Laeducación Básica 2001* and the OECD have not found compelling evidence to conclusively substantiate this position (UNESCO-UIS/OECD, 2002, p. 18).

The wider impact of aid is also considered as an indication of effectiveness in some sectors. The Global Partnership for Education for example not only tracks how much money it disburses but also how much money is channelled towards education in its partner countries after they join the GPE (The Global Partnership for Education, n.d.).

How and where aid is labelled and reported is likely to distort measures of efficiency. As earlier noted, refugee and student expenses are sometimes spent within the donor country (Voituriez et al., 2017, p. 21). Despite this being contested, the practice continues. Such monies are currently being reported as ODA and it might be wise to decide beforehand how to treat any analysis of aid effectiveness where such budget lines are included. Various international aid assessments such as Australia’s Multilateral

Assessment (2012), Sweden’s Organisational Assessments (2011), the Dutch Scorecards of Multilateral Organisations (2011), the United Kingdom’s Multilateral Aid Review (2011), and annual reports by the multi-stakeholder Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) have in the past attempted to do just this (Atwood, 2011, p. 7).

These assessments are conducted at the level of individual organisations mostly for the benefit of donors who use the outcomes of these assessments to inform what and who they fund. It also provides a measure of accountability. Atwood (2011) notes that the expected outputs of these assessments are aid funds direct return on investment rates as well information on the capacity of the organisation under assessment to execute its goals (p. 7). The capacity of an organisation to deliver is a good indicator of likely impact but obviously not a guarantee of the same. Consequently, the criteria assessed can include “organisational effectiveness, development results, and the relevance of the organisation to the donor’s preferences” (Atwood, 2011, p. 7). Of note is the focus on verifying from the perspective of recipient countries and other beneficiaries (Atwood, 2011). Other parameters against which Aid Effectiveness can be measured include principles outlined in the Rome (2002), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011) High Level Fora on Aid Effectiveness.

Alternatively, Levin and Belfield (2015) propose ideas from Edwards (1992) on the use of “utility weights” which are derived by assigning values to different outcomes. These weights, they argue can then be used to find a single average quantitative value of effectiveness (p. 408). This method is common in the field of Multi-Attribute Decision Making and Social Multi-Criteria Evaluation, both offshoots of Multi-Criteria Decision Making (Etxano & Villalba-Eguiluz, 2021; European Commission, 2024). Authors such as Jana et al. (2020) and Lewis et al. (1994) value these methods for their applicability with regards to comparing, selecting or ranking multiple options in situations of complexity and uncertainty.

## 2.4 Social Entrepreneurship

Swanson and Zhang (2012) present a number of definitions on social entrepreneurship from authors such as Wolk (2008, p. 1) who they report defines social Entrepreneurship as any sustainable ventures that combine “business principles with a passion for social impact” (Swanson & Zhang, 2012, p. 171). Swanson and Zhang (2012,

p. 171) also reference Wolk (2008, p. 1) who according to them defines social entrepreneurs as those who “strive to create social value as a primary organizational objective by employing business concepts to sustain their operations in pursuit of this objective”.

It is generally agreed that there is not yet one widely accepted definition of social entrepreneurship. Three of some of the foremost recognised actors in the social entrepreneurship sector offer these definitions: The Schwab Foundation defines Social Entrepreneurship as “...the use of new approaches to solve old social problems” (Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, 2015, p. 3). Their definition argues that all social enterprises share certain characteristics. The first is innovation. The second is leveraging market forces and the third is the focus on solving social and environmental challenges. The third and fourth characteristics are openness to learning and being driven by values respectively.

Similarly, Ashoka Changemakers offer a number of definitions for social entrepreneurs. They posit that a social entrepreneur is “an individual who conceives of, and relentlessly pursues, a new idea designed to solve societal problems on a very wide scale by changing the systems that undergird the problems” (Ashoka Changemakers, n.d.). From this an extrapolation of the definition of social entrepreneurship can be made, i.e. ‘The implementation of new ideas which are designed to solve societal problems on a very wide scale by changing the systems that undergird the problems’.

The third definition is provided by Martin and Osberg (2007) who studied the characteristics of entrepreneurs such as Jeff Skoll. They argue that social entrepreneurship has the following characteristics:

- *The identification of a stable but inherently unjust equilibrium that causes the exclusion, marginalization, or suffering of a segment of humanity—a group that lacks the financial means or political clout to effect transformational change on its own,*
- *the development, testing, refining, and scaling of an equilibrium-shifting solution, deploying a social value proposition that has the potential to challenge the stable state and,*
- *the forging of a new stable equilibrium that unleashes new value for society, releases trapped potential or alleviates suffering. In this new state, an ecosystem is created around the new equilibrium that sustains and grows it, extending the benefit across society (p. 35).*

The following comparative analysis of the definitions offered by these three social entrepreneurship giants will show some differences. However, the three also speak to several of the same concepts. These can be classified into the same groups as per table 7.

Table 7: Components of Social Entrepreneurship

	Issues	Ethos	Ideas	Instruments	Effects
<b>Schwab Foundation</b>	Social problems	Driven by values	New approaches Innovation Openness to learning	Business practices Market Forces	
<b>Ashoka Change makers</b>	Societal problems		New Ideas Changing the systems		Wide Scale
<b>Martin &amp; Osberg</b>	Unjust equilibrium	Social Value Proposition	Challenge the Stable State	Equilibrium-Shifting Solution	New value for society Extending the benefit across society

*Source: Researchers' own*

The table above classifies and orders the central tenets of the definitions of social entrepreneurship as addressing issues inspired by a particular ethos guided by ideas and using instruments leading to the desired effects. And so, social entrepreneurship can be defined to mean 'being driven by values to address social problems by innovating and applying business principles, market forces and other equilibrium shifting solutions to create wide scale benefits for society.' The characteristics of social entrepreneurial enterprises include openness to learning and being driven by values.

#### 2.4.1 Growth in Social Entrepreneurship

One of the most profound trends shaping social entrepreneurship is the growing interest in the sector. The 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's (GEM) Social Entrepreneurship Report estimated that 3.2 per cent of individuals in the world population were in the process of starting social ventures (Bosma et al., 2015). In 2024 the Global

Entrepreneurship Monitor celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. According to Sweta Mangal, the co-founder of MUrgency, a medical services start-up, by 2019 there were approximately two million social enterprises in India (Naismith, 2019, para. 6). This trend is mirrored in other countries such as the United Kingdom where according to Naismith (2019, para. 6), in 2019, social enterprises enjoyed a start-up rate three times that of mainstream small and medium sized enterprises.

This growth is likely fuelled by a growing social awareness among consumers (Trahant, n.d., para. 80), which they also expect from their service providers and duty bearers. According to the Deloitte 2018 Global Human Capital Trends Report, 86 per cent of Millennials believe that “business success should be measured in terms of more than just financial performance” (Deloitte, 2018, p. 4). The webpage ‘The Triple Pundit’ suggests that as many as one third of all start-ups globally state “social good as their core mission” (Naismith, 2019, para. 1). As argued by Naismith (2019, para. 1) social entrepreneurship practitioners contend that this growth is likely to continue as global movements towards more ethical practices grow. The Skoll Foundation notes some of the more frequently mentioned themes currently influencing social entrepreneurship include technology, climate change, youth, migration, and emergent populist and nationalist movements (The Skoll Foundation, 2017).

That said, it would seem that social entrepreneurship as understood in the mainstream continues to replicate North-South development aid patterns with many social entrepreneurs coming from countries in the global North (with the possible exception of India) but providing solutions to countries in the global South. To illustrate, the Thomas Reuters Foundation conducted a poll on the 10 best countries to be a social entrepreneur in 2016 and 2019. The lists in both years do not show any African countries and a minority of South American countries with this trend worsening in 2019 (Thomas Reuters Foundation, 2019). Similarly, according to the 2019 *Global Social Franchising Index*, African countries ranked in the top ten of beneficiaries of social entrepreneurship and social franchising. These were: Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Liberia, Lesotho, Mauritania, Niger, Swaziland, and Togo (University of New Hampshire Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics Rosenberg International Franchise Center, 2019). This is not to say that African, Asian, Caribbean and South American countries are not fostering Social Enterprises. The 2023/2024 Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring

Report reports increasing rates of Total Early-stage Activity (TEA) among 18- to 64-year-olds in Columbia, Guatemala and South Africa showing notable activity in these regions.

### **Demographics in growth of Social Entrepreneurship**

A more thorough reading of these detailed reports shows the various levels of social entrepreneurial engagement by geographic region, economic development level and demographics. Men significantly out-represent women in all but five of the 46 economies studies in the 2023/2024 report (GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor), 2023). In 2015, the population of nascent social entrepreneurs in the 18- to 34-year-olds age range is larger than that of 35- to 64-year-olds starting up commercial enterprises in Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Europe (Bosma et al., 2015). This *prima facie* suggests a relationship between developing economies and developing social entrepreneurship. This trend has changed over time to show the percentage of budding social entrepreneurs in both developing and developed nations in the 18- to 34-year-olds age group outpacing that of older social entrepreneurs (GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor), 2023, p. 69).

### **Institutionalisation of Social Entrepreneurship**

As the sector matures, there would seem to be an increase in the availability of institutional arrangements that support the development of social entrepreneurship. Multiple frameworks for measuring impact are now available. Examples include the Impact Reporting and Investment Standards (IRIS) developed by the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) for measuring, managing, and optimizing impact (Global Impact Investing Network, n.d.). A second example is an impact assessment tool from B Labs called the Global Impact Investing System (GIIRS). The Rockefeller Foundation which commissioned the GIIRS has had a profound impact on the development of valuation instruments in the sector B Labs also provide data analysis software and supportive programmes mission-aligned legal structures to promote good governance in the sector (B Lab, 2020). Companies can achieve ‘b-certification’ or become B Corporations through the use of these support systems. According to analysts, over 2,655 companies in 150 industries across 60 countries are certified B Corporations. Famous brands include *Warby Parker*, *Danone North America*, *Patagonia*, *Natura*, *Etsy* and *Ben & Jerry’s* (Malpani, 2019, para. 11).

Institutionalisation is also reflected in the growing availability of executive education courses for Social Entrepreneurs aiming to scale “up business by rethinking revenue streams or launching a new social arm.” (The Economist Executive Education Navigator, 2016, para. 8). Similarly, for-profit companies wanting to broaden their corporate social responsibility activities are increasingly enrolling management in these kinds of programmes. This trend is not limited to companies alone but has also been seen in government. The Economist Executive Education Navigator notes the participation of the head of an economic development agency in Denmark in one of its previous INSEAD Social Entrepreneurship Programme (ISEP), an executive education course (2016, para. 8).

Other ways in which the sector is increasingly institutionalising are through the creation of separate share indices for ethical companies, and higher public expectations for good governance (Consolandi et al., 2009, Abstract section). Bi- and Multi-lateral institutions are also joining the fray. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), formerly the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) are proponents of an approach within the school of Social Entrepreneurial thought known as Making Markets Work for the Poor, M4P or Market Systems Development. This approach works to remove obstacles to trade and investment faced by poorer countries and by so doing allow those who rely on markets to improve their outcomes (Ram & Harper, 2020).

In keeping with the move towards institutionalisation, the sector has also seen greater focus on attracting good human resources. In an industry traditionally associated with many non-market-based principles such as philanthropy and volunteerism, attracting staff with the right skills might typically prove difficult. This is changing however as donors pour more funding into the sector.

#### **2.4.2 Technology in Social Entrepreneurship**

Given the growing importance of big data and data analytics generally, anecdotal evidence suggests that these will influence social entrepreneurship at a growing rate in the future. The Deloitte Human Capital report of 2018 mirrors this idea and argues that technological change is in the top three of big drivers pushing the social entrepreneurial sector by changing the way work is done, hopefully for good (Deloitte, 2018, p. 4). In keeping with this idea, social impact management consultant Lynn Thurston posits that

as data becomes more affordable, “social impact entrepreneurs” will find it easier to use data analytics to do their work and support disadvantaged communities (Malpani, 2019, para. 20). Already, social enterprises have begun to use tools more commonly associated with for profit business such as measuring and using data to measure the benefits they generate and their cost-effectiveness (Javits, 2016, para. 2).

Others include the impact investment firm Acumen which has created a lean data initiative. The use of the term “impact investing” in mainstream conversation is on the increase (Horoszowski, 2019, para. 7). This refers to the practice of funding projects that “aim for social, environmental, and financial returns” (Emerson 2003, cited in Burze, 2021, p. 178). Acumen’s platform designs impact measurement tools and projects for social enterprises which they can use to collect data directly from their stakeholders. Likewise, a plethora of social enterprise incubators and accelerators use data to better improve the social impact of their clients. One such example is the Emory University and Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) Global Accelerator Initiative (GALI) (ANDE at the Aspen Institute, 2023).

Another very interesting trend disrupting the social entrepreneurship intellectual property equilibrium is the practice of ‘Crowd brainstorming’. It is also referred to as a ‘Hackathon’. This voluntary activity involves people joined by one common theme convening in order to discuss an idea, its implementation and impact further. It focuses on solving social and/or business goals and leverages on the convening power of technology (Faludi, 2023, p. 1). Famous examples include periodic Hackathons organised by Facebook and other independent groups on Facebook. The use of cellular technologies is another increasingly common phenomenon in the social entrepreneurial space (Engineering for Change, 2016).

#### **2.4.3 A Blended Approach**

Perhaps in keeping with the idea of innovation, Social Entrepreneurs are creating “ecosystems” with a vision to realising greater impact (Javits, 2016, Ecosystem approach critical to long-term success section). These ecosystems may provide partnerships that engender success and mutually beneficial support systems.

The integration between business and the third sector is also two-way with business increasingly adopting some of the principles of philanthropy, specifically thinking about ways to create Social Impact. Traditionally for-profit companies are rising

to the occasion and engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility at a growing rate. The 2018 Deloitte Human Capital Report states that 65 per cent of companies surveyed rated “inclusive growth” in their top three goals (Deloitte, 2018, p. 2). Similarly, “Citizenship and social impact” were rated as critical or important by 77 per cent of respondents (p. 8).

The 2023 version of the same report notes that more than 80 per cent of surveyed organisations count things like purpose and sustainability (Deloitte, 2023, p. 7). The blended approach concept fits well with the new move among corporates to create a novel model within the organisational structure dubbed the “Symphonic C-Suite” (Bersin, 2018, para. 7). This new concept aims to dismantle traditional systems, where executives within organisations manage their departments in silos and independent of each other and replace these with integrated teams. Such a model can better help organizations respond to social problems in a strategic manner (Bersin, 2018, para. 7).

Table 8: Social enterprise ecosystem

<b>Components of a Social Entrepreneurial Ecosystem</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private and public sector employers who hire their employees and purchase their goods/services,</li> <li>• Philanthropy that provides the financial support to build their capacity and better serve their employees,</li> <li>• Government agencies that fund additional training and income stabilization to social enterprise employees, as well as enterprise growth capital and,</li> <li>• Human services agencies that provide employee supports.</li> </ul>

*Note: Adapted from “Five Trends in Social Enterprise” by Carla Javits, 2016, Council on Foundations, Ecosystem approach critical to long-term success section, <https://cof.org/blogs/re-philanthropy/2016-12-07/five-trends-social-enterprise>, copyright 2016 by Council on Foundations accessed 05 May 2021.*

#### 2.4.4 Financing Social Entrepreneurship

Sources of funding for social entrepreneurship have also become more diverse and have expanded from mostly grants to include investments. Projects funded through a mix of grants and impact investment funds have become more common place. Tools such as Demand Dividend Vehicles are impact investment packages whose returns are tailored to the investors risk, offer a capital exit and flexible payments schemes, are aligned to

investors and entrepreneurs' interests and they provide interesting examples of impact investment models (Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship, 2013, p. 2).

Similar arrangements include mixing for profit and non-profit business models and a greater interest in financial independence for social enterprises. In a YouTube video, Susan M. Rushworth suggests that as the number of social enterprises increases, so too does funding pressure grow. This suggests that even though funding models are evolving, the pot itself is not growing at a rate commensurate with the need for financing (Rushworth, 2016, mm. 2.10-2.46).

Similarly, Impact Investors have become more tempered in their expectations of a ROI. The data shows that returns in the sector are lower and slower, and this has given rise to the concept of Patient Capital, that is, investing with the understanding that the results may not be forthcoming in the short or medium term (Acumen, 2018).

The interest in crowd funding in the social entrepreneurial sector is another developing trend. Platforms such as KickStarter and *Indiegogo* offer an alternative to traditional funding sources such as banks and donors Miglo (2022; Torres et al., 2024). The social entrepreneurship sector is also seeing a rise in impact investments and shared value. This phenomenon merges philanthropy and profit and aims to achieve both. Although the methodology of strictly for-profit investment might be the same, impact investors are different in that they finance initiatives which aim to create social returns. Furthermore, they may even be willing to make these investments at less than market rates making access to finance friendlier for social ventures (Steer and Smith, 2015).

Over time, the impact investment sector has seen more development finance institutions enter the fray, joining private foundations, high net worth individuals and families, fund managers and development agencies. Examples include the UK's formerly Department for International Development in the UK (now Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)) DFID impact programme for South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to an actual impact fund, the programme also seeks to create an enabling environment for impact investments and businesses which positively impact the low-income demographic (Steer & Smith, 2015, p. 65).

While more donors and philanthropists adopt the use of innovative financial solutions like impact investing, these are mostly adopted for use alongside traditional sources of finance. Sub-Saharan Africa is the big winner here as respondents report expecting to increase the share of their allocations to this region (Saltuk et al., 2015, p.

29). Figures from the former UK Department for International Development now FCDO of a sample of 103 organisations involved in impact investment show that in 2014, impact investment in Sub-Saharan Africa was valued at USD 11,1 billion (Department for International Development (DfID), 2015, p. 7). This represented 22 per cent of global impact investment. African countries benefiting from these funds included Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The education sector attracted USD 1,4 billion of Impact investment funds in 2013 with developing countries receiving USD 1 billion of this (Steer & Smith, 2015, p. 66).

#### **2.4.5 Ownership**

Social entrepreneurship would seem to have come full circle with social enterprises now focusing on remaining profitable. Reporting from the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) flags the creation of the Co-operative bank of Kenya, a bank which was birthed through cooperative structures and is now the third largest bank in the country (Co-operative Bank of Kenya, 2020; International Cooperative Alliance, 2015). Statistics from the ICA indicate that there are 3 million co-operatives globally and that 12 per cent of the world's population are in a cooperative. Encouragingly, cooperatives are providing employment and account for 10 per cent of all employment (International Cooperative Alliance, 2018, Facts and Figures section).

Given the diversity and growth in this sector, the trends associated with it are also diverse. Developing countries are leapfrogging across some social entrepreneurship rites of passage. Costa Rica for example, has moved to create a Social Innovation Council and by so doing accelerate the development of public policies for social innovation (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo BID, 2016). Social enterprises are also steadily involving consumers as co-creators rather than just as clients. In the exciting new frontier of social entrepreneurship, it is likely that these and other trends will continue to develop to complement the evolution of global social problems and their solutions.

#### **2.4.6 Challenges for Social Entrepreneurship**

Expectations from stakeholders increase as the sector evolves. There is increasing concern around how social entrepreneurship can successfully address social problems (Kibler et al., 2018). Questions about whether or not to scale programmes and if so, how, abound. Both require resources such as finances and staff which are not always easily or

readily available and which require creating a new equilibrium. However, according to Social impact management consultant Lynn Thurston, over time expectations from Government and investors to scale will become more realistic and there will be less pressure for small and niche entrepreneurial activities to grow (Malpani, 2019, para. 3). The conundrum of choosing between open-source franchising of social enterprises or creating multinational social enterprises represents another grey area.

This awareness of these uncertainties has led to the establishment of hybrid mechanisms where donor aid serves to catalyse and support a form of social entrepreneurship through impact investment. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for example funds pilot projects and takes on the risk and liabilities associated with promising but untested projects (Voituriez et al., 2017, p. 18). Should the projects prove to be successful, the expectation is that they can then be adopted for scale up by governments and companies which would otherwise not pour money into previously unproven ideas. This novel approach as argued by Voituriez et al. (2017, p. 19) transforms aid from being a catalyst of innovation into an innovation itself.

Impact investing is still unequal in many ways with money largely flowing from the North to the South or South to South but very rarely South to North. It is also apparent that there is a need in the sector for more innovative impact investment vehicles. At the same time, these financial inflows towards social entrepreneurial activities experience a significant degree of volatility and high elasticity of demand. Micheal Cooke, the Co-Founder of One Good Thing notes that during economic downturns, the tendency or desire to procure social products declines (Malpani, 2019, para. 4). Consequently, social entrepreneurship funding also needs to be sustainable.

While innovating using natural resource wealth to fund social problems is a promising opportunity and can help communities determine how resources are used for their own benefit, such funds, much like any other source of potential income, are also at risk of being misused by elites and politicians. To avoid this, there might be need to build in additional checks and balances into such social funds.

African Development Bank & Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2015) propose that such funds need to be autonomous and need to build in autonomy. According to them, doing so can help to ensure that resources are used ‘effectively, transparently and accountably’ (p. iv). They argue however that these funds can enable local communities to take the lead in identifying investments to reduce inequities, and their more

autonomous nature can protect them from capture by political elites (African Development Bank & Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015, p. iv). Two other challenges associated with social funds from natural resource reserves noted in African Development Bank and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are the possibility of Governments failing to integrate these funds into existing public systems threatening sustainability and the risk of Governments channelling the savings created to other sectors and by so doing, producing no net funding gains (2015, p. iv).

That said, impact investing presents its own set of challenges. In addition to providing lower and slower returns, conducting due diligence on impact investment vehicles is difficult. Although several tools for measuring impact investing exist, the use of these is not always easy. The diversity of the social enterprise sector means that impact measurement tools need to provide both standardisation and customization, something that is not easily achievable. Furthermore, existing frameworks such as IRIS+ require some capacity building if they are to be used meaningfully. According to Barman (2020), one such area for capacity building for users of the Global Impact Investing Reporting Standards (GIIRS) is the creation of a common understanding of impact which Barman concludes is no easy feat (p. 32). In the case of the GIIRS, Barman argues that the GIIR were developed by borrowing from Corporate Social Responsibility principles which are viewed as mutually incompatible with the fundamentals of impact investing (Barman, 2020, p. 46). Consequently, the use of the GIIRS can lead to companies tailoring their activities to suit the demands of GIIRS reporting rather than actual social or environmental impact (Barman, 2020, p. 47).

#### **2.4.7 Education Through Social Entrepreneurship**

Innovative financing in the global education sector continues to be very limited, as education is still largely perceived to be a public good and, accordingly remains the responsibility of the public sector (Filipp et al., 2013). Philanthropic spending on education in developing nations for example is only a tiny fraction - 5 per cent - of what is given in Official Development Assistance to these countries (African Development Bank & Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015).

Other methods of funding education include earn and learn schemes. Available literature on the subject in Zimbabwe is highly concentrated around the Tanganda Tea Estates earn and learn scheme which has since been closed down (Mapiko et al., 2018).

In this particular example, the tea company built and funded several schools on their tea estates by purchasing teaching and learning materials, picking up the costs of extra-curricular activities and subsidising teachers' salaries. At the same time, learners enrolled in these schools worked long hours picking tea on the tea estates which they earned a salary for in addition to learning at the school for free. Writers such as Bourdillon (n.d.) and Mapiko et al. (2018) highlight both the perceived benefits and criticisms of the programme. On the one hand, child labour laws in Zimbabwe which prohibit the hire of children below a certain age have rendered such options obsolete (Labour Act [Chapter 28:01], 2019, part IV section 11). Furthermore, existing literature highlights the difficult working conditions that learners within the earn and learn scheme faced, raising questions about the morality of such a scheme (Bourdillon, n.d.).

Finally, the current Government of Zimbabwe's' own constitutional obligation to make education free and universally available, in theory, contradicts the need for such earn and learn schemes.

Figure 4: Earn and Learn School in Zimbabwe

#### **Tanganda Tea Estates Earn and Learn Programme**

Avontuur Secondary School in Chipinge for many years ran an Earn and Learn programme. The School sits on a Tea Estate and the Tea Estate belongs to one of the bigger publicly listed companies in the country. Prior to 2013, secondary school students officially above the age of 16 could service their own fees by working mornings and late afternoons picking tea during term time. In exchange they also received free lodging, meals and a salary. The working conditions were tough as children were expected to be up early and in the fields by 5 am before beginning lessons at 8 am. Living conditions and meals were also very basic with outdoor cold-water bath and toilet facilities. A number of children's rights groups began a successful campaign to have the direct labour facility within the school scrapped citing child labour laws. This was successfully achieved while parents were at the same time informed of children's right laws and statutes. Enrolment initially dropped but increased marginally over time. More recent information on the school is not publicly available.

Source: <https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/21945:the-unions-of-zimbabwe-unite-against-child-labour> accessed 27 July 2021.

On the other hand, despite this constitutional obligation, according to Bourdillon (n.d.) and Mapiko et al. (2018, p. 67) the reality of limited affordable educational opportunities led to high demand for earn and learn arrangements. Both papers argued that there was strong support for the arrangement within the local community. Similarly, testimonials from former students who went on to find employment indicate a gratitude

for the scheme despite the hardships they went through (Bourdillon, n.d., p. 9). However, it is also important to recognise that financially constrained households may be less inclined to criticise earn and learn schemes in general. This is partly as they do not have other options and expect to reap the rewards of the education services provided in the future (Bourdillon, n.d.).

Ultimately, while earn and learn schemes do present an alternative form of funding for education, they are fraught with controversy and very difficult to implement, particularly for companies' dependent on international endorsement.

Social entrepreneurship in education can also come in the form of what are known as Social Impact Bonds (SIB). This is also known as pay-for-success (PFS) financing in the United States of America (Merrill Lynch Bank of America Corporation & Social Finance, 2014, p. 1). Using this mechanism, social services are paid for through private funding. These funds are refunded by government but only after the expected outcomes are achieved. Alternatively, these refunds can be made by donor agencies or foundations and in such instances are dubbed Development Impact Bonds. This variation is more often found in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (Clarke et al., 2019). The uptake of such models does seem to be rather slow. In 2010, the first SIB was implemented in the UK and between then and March 2015, only another 40 more were contracted globally. Four of these focused on education albeit only one out of the four was deployed in the global south (Steer & Smith, 2015, p. 65).

According to Steer and Smith (2015), Social Impact Bonds offer lessons for innovative financing. They specifically reference Gustafsson-Wright et al. (2015) who propose several benefits related to SIBs. In brief, not only do they attract private financing, but they also prioritize prevention of negatives given that prevention is cheaper. As payment is dependent on outcomes, these outcomes become the focus. Furthermore, they argue, SIBs reduce risks for Government. Business principles such as sustainable scaling, innovation and performance management are also perceived positive features of this approach (Steer & Smith, 2015, p. 65). Despite these and other potential attributes such as the stimulation of collaboration across stakeholders and monitoring and evaluation, SIBs are yet to conclusively demonstrate better outcomes and sustained impact. Steer and Smith caution against making generalisations about the overall success of the methodology given that at the time of writing their study findings, too few

programmes had successfully reached the repayment stage for practitioners to draw conclusions (Steer & Smith, 2015).

Since then, more recent studies critiquing SIBs have been conducted and have helped to highlight some of the challenges that Social Impact Bonds face and present. Tse and Warner (2018) review SIBs implemented in three cities in the United States of America. In their introductory text, they summarize some of the now known shortcomings of SIBs in general. They argue that Social Impact Bonds are expensive not only in terms of money but also effort. Citing authors such as Edmiston and Nicholls (2018), Maier, Barbetta, and Godina (2017) and Warner (2013) and Tse and Warner highlight how SIBs require highly individualised and complicated structuring which in turn raises the cost of implementing them.

They also require a lot of paperwork, “model fidelity” and precise assessments (Tse & Warner, 2018, p. 816), none of which necessarily foster simplicity or cost-effectiveness. To put the nail in the coffin, Tse and Warner also reference Lowe and Wilson (2017) and Heinrich and Choi (2007) who they state argue that the tendency towards managing for results and achieving measurable outcomes (in order to get payouts) also encourages unscrupulous behaviour (2018, p. 816).

Social entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe however remains, for the most part, quite traditional with the caveat that much of it is donor led. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has in the past supported many programmes which included projects with social entrepreneurial components. One of these, the Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education (IGATE) project was implemented by World Vision. The project which ran in three provinces was designed to impact 467 schools and over 100,000 rural girls (World Vision International, n.d.). Its social entrepreneurial component focused on improving the ability of households to support girl's education. World Vision aimed to establish 5,000 Village Savings and Loans (VSLs) Clubs which would fund education (World Vision International, n.d.). The same FCDO then DFID programme also funded a project run by CAMFED dubbed ‘New Equilibrium for Girls’ as well as a second Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education programme (Foreign Commonwealth Development Office, n.d.; UKaid, 2016). It also targeted a large number of learners, 60,000, during much of the same period. It differed from the first in that bursaries for secondary school girls were paid directly by the fund while also giving local

female secondary school graduates micro-loans to start their own businesses (FCDO, 2022).

#### **2.4.8 Limitations of Measuring Education Interventions in the Social Entrepreneurial Sector**

One of the greatest limitations of measuring social entrepreneurship in the education sector is how to determine which components make up education. School meals for example can be recorded as an educational expense. They can however also be reported as a health expense (Schiefelbein, 1983, p. 30). This creates the danger of misallocating the expense to health alone or double counting it under both health and education.

Similarly, deciding what to measure complicates the evaluation process itself. Education indicators run the gamut from context to input to process and finally to output indicators (Scheerens et al., 2011). Barman (2020, p. 34) notes the tensions that arise out of attempts by multiple stakeholders to arrive at a common understanding of value. According to Schiefelbein, this, coupled with the difficulty of trying to achieve cross country and cross-cultural comparability of different education systems renders measuring education financing problematic (1983, p. 30). It therefore stands to reason that these complications would extend to the contribution of social entrepreneurship towards education as well. As such, it is therefore important to clearly delimit the educational boundaries of what you want to measure before trying to determine value.

Data gaps also constrain our ability to assess the contribution of social entrepreneurship towards financing education. The African Development Bank and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2015) report on the lack of education finance data and how difficult this makes it to measure effectiveness. According to the African Development Bank and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation report, researchers such as Levin et al. (2001) and McEwan (2014) note that although many impact evaluations have been conducted on education, most of these do not provide data on the financing of these interventions.

Citing McEwan (2014), the African Development Bank and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation note that most such cost-effectiveness evaluations are conducted with Non-Profits and Academia in mind but leave out government (2015, p. 58). This, they argue, has implications for potential scale up especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where

many learners are enrolled in public schools and colleges. In cases where scale up is the goal, government cooperation is important.

Ultimately, the social entrepreneurial sector is still relatively young and there are a lot of gaps in knowledge about how to use this framework to solve social problems. It's multidisciplinary nature, straddling education, public policy, economics and others presents specific challenges related to how to measure social entrepreneurial interventions in the education sector.

## 2.5 Previous Studies Conducted

In a paper titled 'Aid and Growth: The Current Debate and Some New Evidence' by Radelet et al. (2004) the authors discuss several different arguments for and against aid in development. While no explicit mention of social entrepreneurship is made, the debate does touch on the various ways in which aid is believed to work and not work and provides some insight into alternative ways in which aid programmes can be implemented to make them more effective, or so the authors suggest. The authors cite for example Milton Friedman (1958), Peter Bauer (1972), William Easterly (2001) all of whom, they argue, dispute the efficacy of aid. Arguments attributed to the trio that aid has "enlarged government bureaucracies, perpetuated bad governments, enriched the elite in poor countries, or just been wasted" (p. 1) are presented and Radelet et al (2004) call for drastic changes to aid programmes. According to Radelet et al., Bauer (1972) claims that aid has the effect of creating disincentives for investment (p.2). Furthermore, Bauer is quoted as proposing that in addition to actually inhibiting development, aid undermines the private sector. Radelet et al. note that while Bauer's work has been very prominent, his arguments have not been substantiated by empirical evidence (2004). In a separate paper, Radelet et al. (2006) again write that analysts attribute aid effectiveness to donor practices but also note that again, very little systematic research has been conducted on this idea indicating another gap in the literature (p. 11).

It is perhaps prudent at this point to discuss the seminal work by author Dambisa Moyo titled "Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is Another Way for Africa" (2009). The book contends that the USD 1 trillion in aid that Africa had received by 2009 since the 1940s has in fact made the continent poorer. She states quite critically that "... it is virtually impossible to draw on Africa's aid-led development experience and argue that aid has worked." (Moyo, 2009, p. 38). Her argument dismisses assertions by

aid apologists who point to successes such as the Marshall Plan as a reason to conclude that aid for Africa can be effective. Moyo points out that in contrast to the African experience, the Marshall Plan focused almost solely on the reconstruction of physical infrastructure in economies that were already on the road to recovery, and which had the capacity to absorb and direct the received aid through existing and robust institutions (Moyo, 2009, pp. 45-46) . Furthermore, incoming aid accounted for no more than 3 per cent of GDP and this framework only lasted from 1948 until 1952 in any of the recipient European countries in the post-World War 2 context (pp. 45-46).

Aid for Africa on the other hand has flowed unceasingly from as far back as the 1960s (Moyo, 2009). Aid to countries such as the then Zaire from the USA can even be argued to have propped up the dictatorships of presidents such as Mobuto Sese Seko (Marysse & Ansoms, 2006, p. 7: Moyo, 2009, p. 27) thereby disincentivising good governance. Moreover, while the Marshall Plan accounted for only a small proportion of GDP in Europe, Moyo reports that in 2009, aid to Africa represented 15 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product, fostering dependency and again disincentivising economic development (2009, p. 46). Moyo's' analysis offers economic perspectives on aid at the macro level and goes on to suggest alternatives, specifically the issuing of government bonds by African countries through which they can raise money for development and more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (2009).

Perhaps inspired by critiques such as Moyo's, in more recent years donors such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID), now FCDO, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) have adopted an approach to international development cooperation known as Making Markets Work for the Poor or M4P. This system attempts to address one of the criticisms of international aid specifically that donor efforts could be better spent if channelled towards removing the obstacles to trade and investment that poorer countries face. A paper prepared by the Springfield Centre (2009) titled 'A Synthesis of the Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) Approach' outlines the basis of the M4P approach. This is simply that the poor are reliant on markets for their livelihoods. As such, in order to improve their outcomes, these market systems must be changed to allow them to work more "effectively and sustainably for the poor" (The Springfield Centre, n.d., foreword section). This approach draws many parallels to the previously highlighted definitions of social entrepreneurship and distinguishes itself by its name, its use mostly by development agencies, targeting of

weaknesses within market systems and the fact that it does not necessarily require innovation.

The M4P approach defines market systems as common features which cut across both markets and basic services such as health and education. Simply put, their argument is that both markets and basic services share characteristics such as regulation, information, delivery, appropriate incentives and capacities. The two also reportedly display multi-player characteristics. The paper cited three case studies from South Africa, Uganda and Bangladesh on expanding financial services, improving business related radio programming and improving vegetable cultivation respectively. The paper found that in all three case studies the proponents worked to change the underlying conditions inhibiting success. These were information processes and capacity of service providers. According to the paper, all three projects achieved their desired objectives in a sustained manner. Furthermore, they reportedly also managed to scale up their activities and benefits. The synthesis however is clear that the benefits reported have not been empirically compared to projects using different (conventional) methodologies. This limits the applicability of the M4P approach.

In a narrower review of five SADC countries, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Mahonye & Zengeni (2015) review donor aid with respect to the nature of this donor aid in the aforementioned countries. They also consider the origin and goals of this aid and ultimately its effects. Their paper finds a strong relationship between aid flows and colonial relationships with the United Kingdom for example donating 87 per cent of all its aid to its former colonies (Mahonye & Zengeni, 2015, p. 164). With regards to its effectiveness, their paper, perhaps unsurprisingly finds that the effectiveness of aid varies (p. 164). They cite Bjornskov (2013) and Hansen and Tarp (2000) who argue for the positive effects of aid on growth in real GDP per capita and impact of aid for reconstruction respectively (p. 165). On the other hand, they also reference authors such as Moyo (2009) who as has already been shown is quite critical of aid and its deleterious effects on the self-sufficiency, good governance and the local industries of recipient countries (pp. 165-166). Mahonye and Zengeni cite Bjornskov (2013) who, they argue, accounts for variations in the effectiveness of aid by suggesting that these diverse outcomes can in part be explained by the different types of aid. This finding suggests that further research into the different types of aid and their effectiveness can offer meaningful insights for development. Their study leans heavily towards critiquing the political and

economic effects of aid and only skims over the social outcomes of aid, leaving room for a more nuanced investigation of the impact of the different types of aid in different sectors.

A more recent paper from Angrist et al. (2020) retrospectively reviews the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of 150 interventions in the education sector spanning 46 countries. Although the paper focuses on interventions at state level, its findings could be useful for donor aid and social enterprise funded initiatives. This particular study draws retrospectively from evaluation reports and uses the Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS) metric. This metric, developed within the World Bank group, accounts for both the number of years of schooling a learner achieves as well as the quality of the learning undertaken during this time (Filmer et al., 2020). The authors argue that such a measure helps to compare the success of the education project given that countries with similar years of learning can experience different learning outcomes (p. 2).

They develop their cost-effectiveness calculations based off a sample of interventions for which cost data is available and find that “many” initiatives add no value in this regard (Angrist et al., 2020). Such initiatives include “cash transfers, additional stand-alone inputs (e.g. textbooks, technology hardware, uniforms, school grants, or reducing class size without complementary reforms), and general skills teacher training” (pp. 15-16). The cost-effectiveness measure indicates that while such activities might reap some benefits, these benefits when measured against what is spent, fall short. Cash transfers for example are reported to only make an impact in low quality education systems where they increase access to schooling but have zero impact on learning outcomes and all at a significant cost (Angrist et al., 2020, p. 17).

The same paper also shares which types of initiatives within the cohort of 150 studies are cost-effective, benchmarking their findings per USD 100 spent per learner (p. 17). They report value addition in order of the magnitude of the mean impact achieved where campaigns which provided “targeted information on benefits, costs and quality” of education come out on top (Angrist et al., 2020, p. 17). Angrist et al. (2020) rank initiatives addressing teaching at the appropriate “learning level” as opposed to teaching by grade and initiatives which strengthen pedagogical aspects of instruction in second and third place respectively. Here they reference things like systematic learning frameworks and related teaching and learning materials (p. 17). They are however careful to acknowledge that their findings show significant variation even within some of the

same types of initiatives-projects involving the community- while others show very little-targeted information campaigns. These variations, they argue, indicate the importance of considering the context in which any initiative is implemented (p. 16).

This brief analysis would seem to indicate that there is further room to explore viable alternatives to traditional donor aid in the education sector. While studies and literature on aid effectiveness abound, information on the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of this aid is harder to find. It is rarer still to find empirical evidence backing any alternatives to aid. Nevertheless, the development community continues to seek better ways to bring about change and is increasingly interrogating the potential of business towards mitigating these problems. Approaches such as Social Entrepreneurship could benefit from further comparison with traditional donor aid. The objective of this would be to establish whether it can be used *in lieu* of established methods on a wider scale. Current donor aid practice is without question beset with inefficiencies both in terms of input and outcome and struggles to prove effectiveness, especially in the long-term. The public and communal nature of these funds and their expected impact is compelling enough reason to conduct a thorough study at Doctorate level on social entrepreneurship as an alternative to traditional aid in the education sector. This proposed study will test the efficiency and effectiveness of initiatives designed, funded and sustained through using social entrepreneurship and compare these efficiencies and areas of effectiveness to those of initiatives funded through donor aid.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Education remains one of the most pressing concerns of our time. Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education, the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 and numerous international and country level commitments over the years are evidence of this. Despite these written and verbal commitments, progress has been slow. The Government of Zimbabwe through its Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) explicitly states that it will not be able to adequately fund education in the 2021-2022 year.

The complexity of providing high quality education in different contexts and at various levels has contributed to this challenge. Education planners still differ over which education subsector brings the most rewards while industry and commerce also stress the

need for skilled labour. At the same time, education competes with other priorities such as health for funding. Too many governments, the Zimbabwean Government included, are not committing the recommended minimum of public resources to education for a myriad of reasons. The expectation is that this situation is not going to change in the immediate term. This means that far too many children and young people will be left behind.

Zimbabwe has since Independence experienced several different education financing regimes. Initially, the socialist leaning Government made basic education entirely free, and communities were mobilised to help build schools. After adopting an IMF Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), education was converted into a household expense that over time became out of reach for many. This created bottlenecks in the education system with fewer learners reaching each successive level of education. All this while, the country maintained good relations with donors and to this day works with several developmental partners and receives donor funding for education.

Determining the effectiveness of these funds and their interventions is difficult for the reasons already mentioned and because historically, comprehensive data on donor funds for education has not been easily accessible. That said, recent investments in better Education Financing Management Information Systems at the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education might make these data more readily available. While the vast majority of these data pertain to funding from traditional sources of aid such as donors and Official Development Aid (ODA), there are recent examples of education financing projects that use social entrepreneurial methodologies. Furthermore, the government has endorsed and even encourages social entrepreneurship in schools. A comparison of the performance of these two models would be interesting and might at the very least, shed more light on where impact in education financing is being realized.

The literature shows that many of Zimbabwe's education challenges are yet to be met. The Global COVID 19 pandemic, political and fiscal instability have reversed many of the educational gains of the past decade. The 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report notes that inequality and exclusion are more pervasive given that vast numbers of young people did not have access to education for the greater part of the school year in Zimbabwe in 2020. Those with the means, continued learning online at their better financed schools or with tutors. Even then, the quality of learning may not have been at

the desired standard because education in times of emergencies is not as robustly developed.

Zimbabwe presents an interesting case study in that it aims to widen access to education and improve quality at the same time. It has a long history of working with many different types of partners and has a research unit situated within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Its policy environment provides an encouraging basis for research into education financing, its efficiency and effectiveness with a particular focus on donor aid and Social Entrepreneurship.

### 3 Research Methods

#### 3.1 Introduction

Zimbabwe has committed itself to the attainment of the 4<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education, the African Union Continental Education Strategy for Education 16-25, and its own Education Sector Support Plan (ESSP) 2021-2025. That said, education financing in the country continues to be underfunded at every level. These gaps in public and third sector funds make room for questions and research around how education finances can be better generated and used. Knowing the effectiveness of existing funding streams is also valuable as such information can serve as a launch pad from which to improve education financing management and how if at all, alternatives to longstanding means of funding such as donor aid financing might prove to be more effective.

The discussion on alternatives has already begun. According to Chiapello & Knoll (2020, p. 1) the supposition that “private investors and foundations” should invest more in social causes is on the increase. At present however, such discussions remain largely conjecture with little empirical evidence from which to draw from within the context of Zimbabwe. This gap in the literature served as the key motivation for this research.

#### 3.2 Research Approach

Before settling on a research approach, the researcher took several factors into consideration. The first factor was the original research title itself, “To what extent can Social Entrepreneurship be an alternative to Donor Aid in the Education Sector in Zimbabwe?” This topic intimated the need to measure both donor aid and social entrepreneurship and this need in turn directed the researcher to explore how such a comparative assessment could be achieved.

The initial literature review informed the researcher about what facets to consider in the quest to assess social entrepreneurship and donor aid against the backdrop of the education landscape in Zimbabwe. One of these facets was time. The funding landscape in Zimbabwe has over the last 25 years experienced several profound changes. These education outcomes in general can be measured over a long period. This is often done to see what, if any, lasting impact education initiatives have on any given cohort.

Such time affected research is of interest for developing health policy (Fischer, 2019), predicting future earnings (Card, 1999) and planning for and explaining economic

growth (Mincer, 1984). It therefore seemed appropriate to conduct retrospective research as this would help to compare the impact of the two funding modalities on these and other aspects over time.

As previously noted, education financing in Zimbabwe has experienced a number of significant changes. These include several large-scale donor aid funded programmes as well as policy statements on local fundraising mechanisms to be specific. The aforementioned changes have created a novel context as well as an opportunity to compare the two poles of donor aid and social entrepreneurship. This novelty invited the exploitation of a research approach that would concern itself with discovery as well as the generation of theory. This led to the exploration of the choice of grounded theory as the methodology with which to conduct this research.

In a 2006 edition of their seminal work, ‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research’ Glaser and Strauss (2006) outline the procedures with which research using the grounded theory methodology can be conducted. Much of their treatise is concerned with qualitative data where they devote two whole chapters to this method of research. The researcher was therefore thoroughly advised about the role of qualitative data and methods in grounded theory and made use of these in the execution of this study.

Researchers such as Strauss and Corbin (2008) and Levin et al. (2017) reportedly describe qualitative research as an inductive approach to research (Mohajan, 2018, p. 1). Mohajan goes on to explain that qualitative research uses non-numerical data (p. 2) and is capable of capturing the intricacies of the information it works with. Others such as Family Health International (n.d.) expand on this view by arguing that “qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations.” (p. 1).

Mohajan citing Dezin (2011) proposes that qualitative research is not exclusively aligned to any particular “theory or paradigm”, neither is it limited to any particular “methods or practices” (2018, p. 6). That said, Mohajan does mention the necessity of being guided by research questions when using this kind of approach. Furthermore, Ugwu and Val (2023, pp. 24-25) take care to outline common data collection methods associated with qualitative research such as interviews, observation, Focus Group Discussions and surveys. Beginning from its inception, this research sought to understand the problem area in as much detail as possible. Similarly, it gave precedence to beneficiary

perspectives. Using the aforementioned qualitative research methods allowed it to do both, all while being a good fit for grounded theory. Despite its misleading title, the groundbreaking book ‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research’ does not limit grounded theory to only qualitative research. It instead offers an entire chapter dedicated to the “theoretical elaboration of quantitative data” (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). The chapter argues for the potential of quantitative data in theory generation. Referencing what we now view as typical grounded theory methods such as theoretical sampling (p. 189) as well as the identification of properties and categories (p. 193), the authors propose that the flexible use of quantitative data in grounded theory can advance theory generation. They also offer guidelines on how *not* to use quantitative methods in the generation of theory.

Straussian grounded theory does not deviate from the general sentiment of classic grounded theory in this regard. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory researchers can make use of quantitative methods. What they simply ask is that the researcher consider “when and how” quantitative methods might be useful for the goal of theory building (p. 28). Most of all, they stress the importance of ensuring the synergy among whatever methods are chosen. These guidelines from the godfathers (and mother) of grounded theory laid the foundations, so to speak, for the use of quantitative methods in this research. Once legitimate scientific grounds for the inclusion of quantitative methods in this study had been established, the researcher went on to consider several other factors.

The literature also showed that the question of donor aid and social entrepreneurship is not so much a question of the amounts but rather what can be achieved with these amounts using either funding modality. Consequently, in an environment of scarcity, this research focused on the metrics of “efficiency” and “effectiveness” as yardsticks against which social entrepreneurship and donor aid could be measured.

Given the focus on efficiency and effectiveness, two terms that have traditionally been associated with numbers and measurement, the researcher also wanted to employ additional methods which would provide a quantitative response to the questions of efficiency and effectiveness while at the same time not excluding qualitative interrogation. Similarly, the strategic importance of education, its status as a public good and education financing deemed generating research that would appeal to policy makers a priority. Research, for all its value, often goes unused by policy makers who

unfortunately tend to avoid “long explanations” in favour of the more concise (Roller & Long, 2001, p. 708). Roller and Long (2001) note for example how the use of a “lightening-rod statistic” (p. 710) helped to catalyse the enactment of the 1998 Reading Excellence Act in the United States of America. A lightening-rod statistic can be described as an attention-grabbing number which captures the gravity of the situation and catalyses a response.

Thus, quantitative research can be used to identify such statistics where they exist and, in this way, offers additional value to policy makers. The literature review also indicated that existing studies of a similar nature in the sector in Zimbabwe tend to exclude quantitative analysis for various reasons. Consequently, a mixed methods study which used both qualitative *and* quantitative methods might be able to offer new knowledge in the area. Yu et al., (2017) recommend only using mixed methods design if the end goal of the research is a comprehensive understanding of a subject matter where there has been difficulty finding clarity and this is the case with education financing in Zimbabwe.

Finally, the researcher correctly anticipated that many different types of data would be encountered in the study. It was for these and other reasons that a decision was taken to adopt a mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative methods were used as this would offer more ways in which these data could be collected and analysed.

According to Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017, p.108) who cite Johnson (2007, p.123) in this regard, mixed methods research is defined as “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”.

The reader will find that; indeed, a mix of qualitative and quantitative tools were used throughout this study. To illustrate, a proportion of the research was devoted to a case-by-case Social Return on Investment analysis. This was done using quantitative methods such as valuation but also made use of qualitative interviews.

Any concerns about using both qualitative and quantitative methods in a grounded theory study were allayed by Howell Smith et. al.’s view on the matter. The authors propose that the use of mixed methods in grounded theory is “particularly

complementary" (2020, p.185) and reference Glaser and Strauss's (1967) who themselves did not preclude the analysis of quantitative data in grounded theory. Perhaps, of greatest interest to this study is their understanding of how grounded theory can *explain* the findings produced from the quantitative part of a mixed methods research. Furthermore, Mcchesney and Aldridge argue that mixed methods is a particularly suitable approach for studying education as it enables "full engagement" with the complexities of "understanding teaching and learning" (2019, p. 226). This full engagement allows for interrogating all aspects of the teaching and learning project including how teaching and learning are financed.

Mixed methods research designs can follow a number of strands which guide the sequence in which the researcher engages with the data (Guetterman et al., 2017, p. 181). The three strands, convergent, explanatory and exploratory mixed methods research prioritise the sequence in which the research is done. According to Guetterman et al. (2017) in convergent mixed methods design, the qualitative and quantitative work are conducted as standalone activities, the results of which are only then integrated at the interpretation stage (p. 181). Guetterman et al. (2017, p. 181) indicate that in explanatory mixed methods design, the quantitative phase precedes the qualitative strand and can help find subjects for further qualitative research. Alternatively, the qualitative strand serves to further explain the quantitative results. The third type, exploratory mixed methods, begins with qualitative research. The quantitative strand is introduced thereafter and can be used to test units identified during the first phase.

Regardless of design, the work of integrating these two strands can be done in three ways. Two of these, 'connecting' and 'merging' (Guetterman, 2017, p. 181) are of interest to this study. Merging refers to the process of repeatedly comparing the qualitative and quantitative results in a structured manner while using samples to make connections in the data (Guetterman, 2017, p. 181). Ultimately, this research fell within the category of an exploratory mixed methods design where the Social Return on Investment analysis was connected and merged (or integrated) into the grounded theory.

The initial proposal of this research included the use of a multi-methodological grounded theory methodology and a Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology study. However, as data collection progressed, it became clear that not enough cost data would be available to allow an all-encompassing Social Return on Investment analysis. Consequently, the research maintained its mixed methods stance but pivoted away from

a multi-methodology approach. Instead, the final study adopted a mixed methods grounded theory methodology using qualitative and quantitative methods (Bakker, 2019) from grounded theory and Social Return on Investment.

Citing Urquart et al., 2009, Walsh (2014, p. 150) argues that according to the original grounded theory *ala* Glaser and Strauss, the research design “must be rooted in data and not preconceived/imposed on data”. This argument substantiated the decision to revise the methodology along the way.

And now to mixed methods-grounded theory (MM-GT). Championed by authors such as Guetterman et al. (2017), Walsh (2015 Johnson and Walsh (2019), Creamer (2018; 2021; 2022) and others, it is alternatively referred to as mixed grounded theory (MGT) or MM-GTM. It reflects a resurgence in the use of quantitative and mixed qualitative and quantitative data in grounded theory (R. Johnson & Walsh, 2019) and efforts to frame this new wave in research canons. According to authors such as Creamer (2018; 2021; 2022) it distinguishes itself from the simple use of quantitative data or mixed methods in a grounded theory study by offering even greater analytical depth, borrowing the logic and analytical procedures from both methods, the interaction of data from different sources, its ability to both build and test theory and offering the potential to explore “discordance” between qualitative and quantitative results.

And so, Shim et al. (2021, p. 62) define mixed methods-grounded theory or (MM-GT) as “a research methodology that relies on the use of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods data, approaches, logics, and strategies for the purpose of developing a good explanatory theory.” They, along with authors such as Creamer (2022) reference the increasing popularity of mixed methods-grounded theory based on the advantages of both mixed methods and grounded theory and their capacity to be used alongside each other which will be outlined in more detail further on in this report. These characteristics made MM-GT a good fit for this research.

### 3.2.1 Epistemological Perspective

This mixed method grounded theory approach was conducted from a single paradigm epistemological perspective. This was despite the literature showing that there are schools of thought that advocate for the use of more than one paradigm in research. Mcchesney and Aldridge, (2019, p. 228) offer some arguments for a dual or dialectical stance in scientific enquiry. They cite various authors, (Greene and Hall 2010; Greene

and Caracelli 1997; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009) who themselves suggest concrete reasons why researchers can use more than one epistemological perspective and how this can be done Mcchesney & Aldridge, (2019, p.228). The arguments lean towards how multiple paradigms can add depth to research by building on each other.

Another purported advantage is the flexibility that comes from being able to design research questions within a wider set of epistemologies, thereby offering more than just one “worldview” (Mcchesney & Aldridge, 2019, p.228). Similarly, Moseholm and Fetters reference Johnson (2015) who himself invites researchers to consider the use of multiple paradigms as a singular construct which he terms a “metaparadigm” (2017, p.2). Nevertheless, the researcher chose a single paradigm stance as it seemed sufficient for the purposes of this study. Furthermore, in their discussion of a single paradigm stance over a dual or dialectical stance, Mcchesney and Aldridge note that the use of multiple paradigms in research is still a subject of contention (Mcchesney & Aldridge, 2019). Such studies, they argue, can struggle to produce a composite study which at the same time equitably reflects both perspectives (p. 229).

Finally, given the dual subject matter of the study, donor aid and social entrepreneurship, and the further splitting of the analysis by efficiency and effectiveness, the choice of a single paradigm stance presented a means to offer a more composite perspective on such a multi-faceted research area.

### 3.2.2 Paradigmatic Assumptions

Having taken these factors into consideration, the post-positivist paradigm was adopted. According to Levers, (2013, p. 3), who bases this argument off references to Annells (1997), post-positivism is viewed as the understanding that the generation of knowledge should be pursued in a manner that is not independent of human perception. This they term ‘objective epistemology’. Annells goes on to make an ontological distinction between positivism and post-positivism using critical realism. Citing Crossan (2003, p. 53), the author differentiates between the two by arguing that post-positivism goes further than positivism by adding to “the need for rigour, precision, logical reasoning, and attention to evidence”, the study of phenomena that cannot be “physically observed” (Levers, 2013, p. 3). These intangible phenomena can include, among other things, the “implicit bias” of the researcher (Phoenix et al., 2013, para.15).

The researcher came into the study aware of certain preconceived notions formed through a decade of working in the education development field. It was therefore important to adopt a research paradigm that would take these preconceived notions into account and channel them continuously towards empiricism.

Post-positivism curtails the limits of science, arguing that while absolute truths and universal laws may exist, they are nearly “impossible” to discover (Levers, 2013, p.3). Rather, Levers argues that according to post-positivists such as Clarke (1998), discovery can always be questioned all while continuously drawing closer to the truth using empirical research (Levers 2013, p.3).

In general, it is this continued pursuit of the external reality in its totality in the face of imperfect measurements and human bias that motivated for the adoption of mixed methods of data collection and analysis in this research. In the post-positivist tradition, the exclusive use of quantitative methods in social science research cannot fully explain complexity (Phoenix et al., 2013). However, the results of various approaches can be pooled together in an effort to increase methodological rigor as well as the reliability and validity of results (Phoenix et al., 2013, para. 21; Yen, n.d., p. 361). Thus, quantitative research is buttressed by qualitative methods, taking the best from both worlds, if you will. Even while quantitative significance and generalisability of findings on large populations is sought, post-positivists make use of qualitative research to collect and understand the views, feelings and effects of their study area on individuals. According to Pheonix et al., (2013), these individual experiences are important for policy makers especially as it is their responsibility to translate research findings into social goods. Phoenix et al. (2013, para. 16) cite Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) who view the mixed methods design as a “pragmatic” approach to research.

This post-positivist response to the complexity of capturing the breadth and depths of meaning suited the challenges presented by this multi-faceted research topic. Moreover, Mcchesney and Aldridge (2019) argue that the use of particular research methods need not be confined to particular paradigms. Rather researchers can, with great thought and deliberation, tailor their choices to the aims of their research (p.226).

As earlier stated, the research concerned itself with the study of two different education funding modalities. It was the researchers’ intent to offer a quantitative analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of both, as the literature seemed to indicate a dearth in this type of data for this education sector. At the same time, and drawing from experience,

the researcher also wanted to investigate these same concepts from the perspectives of the beneficiaries they were intended for. Qualitative tools were deemed more appropriate in this regard. Ultimately, the end goal was to generate empirical research from different perspectives that would work in concert to add depth to the research findings.

### Tools of the Post-Positivist Paradigm

Triangulation was used to bring the two methods together. Denzin, (1989) referenced in Fusch et al. (2018, p. 20) describes triangulation as “... the employment of multiple external data collection methods concerning the same events...enhanced by multiple external analysis methods.” Kötting (2005, p. 66) contends that triangulation can be used to collect and connect varied perspectives during research. For example, in their paper titled “Paradigmatic approaches to studying environment and human health: (Forgotten) implications for interdisciplinary research”, Phoenix et al., (2013, p. 6) collate multiple findings around a central result. Kötting also introduces arguments from Kelle and Erzberger (1999) who, according to Kötting, present the triangulation of qualitative *and* quantitative methods as a means of increasing the validity of the findings of research (2005, p. 66).

The decision to use triangulation in this study was arrived at not only because it seemed likely that the data collection process was likely to encounter different types of data but also because as Fusch et al. explain it, triangulation presents the opportunity to add depth to data and increases the reliability of findings (2018, p. 20). In search of a deeper, valid and multi-layered understanding, this study adopted triangulation at various stages in the research process.

Yet another feature of the post-positivist paradigm is its evocative presentation style. According to Ryan (n.d., p. 24), it is the researchers’ responsibility to communicate their findings in a manner that is expressive and eloquent while simultaneously providing a theoretical interpretation of the findings.

### 3.3 Research Methodology

This mixed methods-grounded theory study embedded five Social Return on Investment Analysis cases within it. As such, it is important to say some words about both the grounded theory (GT) methodology and the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework.

### 3.3.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory was developed upon realising the need for a method which could help ‘discover’ theory coming out of data. This contrasted with the then prevailing system of testing existing theory or deductive verification of theories. Rather, this new school of thought sought to conduct research in an inductive manner (Simmons & Gregory, 2003). Grounded theory has its roots in both quantitative analysis and symbolic interactionism, tools which its creators, Glaser and Strauss respectively, had experience in (Stillman, 2006). In fact, Birks et al., (2019, p. 2) and Chun Tie et al., (2019, p. 2) are of the view that Glaserian grounded theory is positivist.

The methodology has evolved and produced various methodological off shoots grounded in critical realism, interpretivism, constructivism, and post-positivism, among others. Two of these, constructivism and positivism are of particular interest to this study as they provided leading clues towards the eventual selection of a post-positivist paradigm within which to conduct this study. Constructivism as proposed by authors such as Charmaz (1995a, 2000, 2006), Hayes (2000, p. 8) and Holt (2002, p. 264) argues that there is no objective reality. In other words, a person’s context bears heavily on the social meanings they create. Consequently, constructivism advocates for the adoption of a phenomenological approach to the study of people. Positivism on the other hand prioritises parameters such as evidence, objectivity and quantifying variables (Birks et al., 2019). These two paradigms appealed to the researcher for the following reasons.

Oftentimes the information on initiatives in the education sector in Zimbabwe that is publicly available is provided by the initiators of these initiatives rather than the beneficiaries themselves. This skewed dissemination of information reflects obtaining power structures. According to Ryan (2004, p. 5) communication in its various forms can to some extent construct “reality and experience”. Borrowing from Foucault’s concept of discourse, Ryan argues that this power to construct is aided by access to or control over scientific knowledge (p. 5). Hearing from beneficiaries therefore became a means of including their understanding and perspectives in the production of scientific knowledge on this subject as well as broadening understanding on the topic of efficiency and effectiveness with regards to both donor aid and social entrepreneurship in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Juxtaposing the perspectives of beneficiaries against traditional seats of power in knowledge production also created a tension relating to how these measures

of impact are understood. It was hoped that this tension would open new avenues for discussion and discovery.

At the same time, and as previously stated, it was important to anchor the study in evidence, both qualitative and quantitative. It was therefore left to the researcher to ensure that the choice of the grounded theory methodology would agree with post-positivist precepts. Levers, referencing Charmaz (2002), argues that Strauss and Corbin's' early work in grounded theory did just that even if the term post-positivism might not have been mentioned explicitly (2013, p.2). According to Levers (2013, p. 2), Charmaz argues that the initial work of Strauss and Corbin focused on accurately representing reality through objective research. In their book 'Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory' (1998, p.12), Strauss and Corbin confirm this position when they explain what they mean by their use of the term "grounded theory". According to their definition, grounded theory is "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process". They go on to propose that "the creativity of researchers is also an essential ingredient" in grounded theory and cite Sandelowski (1995a) in this regard (1998, p. 12). In their words, "analysis is the interplay between researchers and data" where the creativity previously mentioned becomes responsible for helping the researcher create order out of a disorderly mass of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.13). This emphasis on the part of the researcher in creating meaning out of data reflects the post-positivist view which perceives the researchers' influence on the data as a fact which ought to be addressed proactively.

Grounded theory distinguishes itself from other frameworks by suspending the action problem at the start of the research. Simmons and Gregory (2003) explain the reasons for this suspension by arguing that it is a way of keeping an open mind. They propose beginning data collection with open ended observations and using a broad range of data sources and locations, not just those seemingly closely connected to the action problem.

Simmons and Gregory (2003) also cite Glaser (1978) who cautions against conducting a preliminary literature review arguing that doing so will hinder the unbiased emergence of categories. This however somewhat contradicts Glaser's own assertions in Weed (2005) on the researcher conducting the analysis with some basic prior awareness of the subject matter being studied. Glaser (1978) dubs this awareness "theoretical sensitivity". Others such as (Bowen, 2006) refer to "sensitizing concepts".

The subject of when to conduct a literature review in grounded theory has been a matter of extensive debate with glaserian (otherwise known as classic) grounded theory advocating for a literature review after data has been collected and analysed. According to Elliot and Higgins (2012, para. 4) Glaser's' objections to preliminary literature reviews stems from his reticence about researchers embarking on their research with a preselected theoretical framework. However, even Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that no researcher can approach the data as a completely blank slate with Glaser (1978) in some of his later work going on to encourage researchers to explore literature unrelated to the subject of enquiry (Elliot & Higgins, 2012, para. 4).

Scholars such as Dunne (2011) provide an extensive analysis on the topic arguing for the merits of doing a literature review particularly in the preliminary stages of grounded theory PhD research. Dunne cites authors such as McGhee et al. (2007) and Coyne & Cowley (2006) who propose that an early literature review can help the researcher develop a robust rationale for their study, one which may be needed for the purposes of obtaining permission to conduct research, and Strauss and Corbin (1998) who support the idea that a literature review can help build theoretical sensitivity.

Further justification for conducting an initial literature review is provided by Morse who raises concerns around novice researchers getting bogged down in data and subsequently failing to frame their own results within "the existing body of theory" (2001, p. 9). Morse instead offers suggestions around how grounded theory researchers can conduct preliminary literature reviews and still maintain objectivity. She proposes that researchers create a silo within which they store their initial understanding from literature and later on juxtapose this store house of information with their own findings (2001, p. 9).

Other tips provided by Dunne et al., include using gerunds or 'ing' words when coding e.g., 'replicating' and conducting the literature review in stages (2020, para. 24). The first stage is the preliminary literature review, the second takes place during the process of developing the grounded theory. The final literature review helps to fully develop the grounded theory, making it generalisable while at the same time presenting this emergent theory for interrogation alongside existing ideas in the literature. This penultimate literature review is also used to demonstrate how the study findings carve out a place for themselves with regards to making new contributions to scientific knowledge (Dunne et al., 2020, para. 24). Ultimately, it would seem that there is sufficient

justification for conducting a preliminary literature review when doing grounded theory research as was the case with this study.

In using the grounded theory methodology, researchers engage in data collection in an iterative manner (Weed, 2005, para. 30). The researcher collects data and thereafter codes it. This coding is defined as the process of identifying concepts in the data and naming them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.102). Mills and Birk go as far as to define “everything as a concept” (Birks & Mills, 2023, p. 162) and in one of their earlier works, ‘Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria’ Corbin & Strauss (1990, p. 5) describe grounded theory as the process of integrating concepts so as to be able to provide a “theoretical explanation of social phenomena...”. By this definition, the process of conceptualisation of meaning is extended throughout this research methodology. And so, the ultimate aims of grounded theory are to be able to identify, label, relate and explain what is encountered in the study. These arguments help to situate the coding process as an essential part of grounded theory which the researcher cannot afford to get wrong.

According to (Saldaña, 2016), coding can be done in two cycles. During the first cycle, one has a choice of seven coding methods, most of which can be further expanded by sub-group. Under what are known as ‘elemental methods’ for example, the researcher can employ Initial, Process and In-vivo coding methods (p. 59). Saldaña (2016, p. 59) proposes that in the second cycle, the researcher graduates to a new set of coding methods, three of which include Focused, Axial and Theoretical coding methods. Other authors however, Strauss and Corbin specifically, use the terms ‘Open’, ‘Axial’ and ‘Selective’ coding in that sequence (1990, 1998) in lieu of the terms Saldaña uses to label coding from one cycle to the next.

In the initial stage of coding-open coding-provisional labels of meaning (concepts) are assigned to smaller sections of the data. These codes can be developed around actions and processes-both social and psychological (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p.5). Alternatively, the researcher can study whole texts and documents and reflect on the question, ‘what is happening here?’ or try to identify what distinguishes that particular document from others in the research (Hull, 2013, p.11). Hull references Strauss and Corbin who argue that through such reflection, the researcher can pick up on differences and similarities in the data (2013, p. 11).

Coding can also be done using what is termed as in-vivo coding. Strauss defines in-vivo codes as codes that are based on the respondents' own words (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 23). According to Chun Tie et al., (2019, p. 5) who themselves quote Charmaz (2006), codes are best recorded in a form that is as close to the original data as possible, even if that specific form is not taken verbatim from the data. One can alternatively assign a code that denotes a "new way" of thinking about something (Strauss & Corbin, p. 105). At this initial stage, the process of analysing codes for patterns and similarities begins. The same can be said for the properties and their dimensions of the codes. Moghaddam (2006, para. 25) references Goede and Villiers (2003) who reportedly define properties as the common characteristics among related codes whereas dimensions are a measure of the codes, e.g., duration. The relationships identified from these analyses form the basis by which these codes are grouped and compacted into categories.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 130), categories denote phenomena. By this, they refer to the process of assigning labels to groups of similar concepts which together are known as categories and which in turn "stand for" phenomena (p. 101). In Straussian grounded theory, the distinction between a category and a phenomenon is a conceptual one, as a category is quite simply a conceptualised representation of a particular phenomenon, arrived at through the coding process. In summary, the phenomenon exists. It is, through research, duly identified. The researcher proceeds to name the phenomenon using either an in vivo label or a different best fit label. This label is termed a concept (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 103).

Interestingly, developing categories can, depending on the grounded theorist in question, extend beyond the boundaries of a particular coding stage. Saldaña, (2016) for example, outlines how second stage coding methods work with specific reference to focused, axial, and theoretical coding which:

*"...literally and metaphorically constantly compare, reorganize, or "focus" the codes into categories, prioritize them to develop "axis" categories around which others revolve, and synthesize them to formulate a central or core category that becomes the foundation for explication of a grounded theory"* (Saldaña, 2016, p. 51).

While Saldaña confidently lumps all three of these steps into second cycle coding, other grounded theorists are not in as much of a hurry and rather denote each step as a key feature of each respective cycle of the grounded theory methodology. Axial coding for example is typically considered by many as the second cycle. The term 'axial coding'

favoured by Strauss and Corbin (1990:1998) is derived from this idea of relating categories found in the first stage of coding to each other. As has already been noted, these relations are made based on their properties and dimensions. Axial coding also involves how categories might relate to each other or to their own sub-categories. The axial coding stage is also the stage at which the researcher teases out the conditions, actions and interactions, strategies and consequences of the particular entity or phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 126).

This nomenclature was developed by the originators of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss. In later work on grounded theory, Corbin, and Strauss (1990) defined these terms within the framework of what is called a ‘coding paradigm’. A coding paradigm is composed of phenomena and conditions which are in turn separated into causal conditions and intervening conditions. Together, these causal and intervening conditions make up the context within which associated phenomena obtain. The causal conditions catalyse the occurrence of phenomena while intervening conditions act on the causal conditions in such a way as to alter these causal conditions. The manifestation of a phenomenon then motivates for the creation or adoption of strategies in response. The results of applying these strategies are termed consequences (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Delve, n.d).

The excerpt from Saldaña (2016, p. 51) details the constant comparative process, an important tool for analysing data as per classic grounded theory tradition. Strauss and Corbin offer a slightly different perspective when they propose the additional use of what they term theoretical comparisons, not to be confused with constant comparison (1998, p. 67). Rather than only focusing on building relationships and comparing incidents, their version seeks to also identify the properties and dimensions of codes and categories (Scott & Howell, 2008, p. 1) during coding and indeed throughout the research process. These properties and dimensions and the circumstances around them then help to highlight and explain differences in said data. This process extends to groups of categories.

Glaser (1998) also proposes that the researcher write analytic memos made up of ideas and thoughts that may come to the researcher during coding. Such thoughts may include the researchers’ own biases (Elliot & Higgins, 2012, para. 15). Acknowledging them helps to maintain the sincerity of the coding and data analysis process and separate grounded findings from those that may be unduly influenced by the researchers’ prior perspective. Another way Glaser suggests a researcher can foster objectivity is by running

their data and ideas past other scholars or experts. This is referred to as ‘Peer Debriefing’ (Elliot & Higgins, 2012, p. 169).

With regards to *how to code*, grounded theorists also offer direction. Vollstedt and Rezat (2016, p. 87) present their understanding of Strauss and Corbin (1990) who they report advise that the researchers use their own experiences and prior knowledge to ask themselves what they call ‘sensitizing questions’ of the data. The researcher asks the typical ‘who, what, where and why?’ questions, to which they add ‘how, whereby and what for?’ Asking these questions should direct the researcher to identify novel findings, findings which will make up the components of the coding paradigm. For example, asking ‘what?’ isolates the phenomena, asking ‘when?’ and ‘how?’ leads the researcher towards sub-categories framed as dimensions and properties and asking ‘whereby?’ uncovers strategies.

According to Vollstedt and Rezat, Strauss and Corbin (1990) believe that by using this tool “the researchers’ own and other peoples’ suppositions in relation to the phenomenon are questioned and investigated” (2016, p. 87).

Thereafter, findings from the data can be selected for further investigation using theoretical sampling. This is a process of going back into the data collected, selecting the findings which may prove helpful for theory building and identifying related subjects to study further in order to better understand them (Dudovskiy, 2015; Qureshi, 2018, p. 20218). Theoretical sampling also directs the researcher towards new potential sources of information and ultimately determines the study sample. In short, grounded theory does not typically use any sort of sampling frame. Rather, the process of analysing data and discovering nuggets of information which invite more detailed enquiry generates the sample otherwise known as a theoretical sample (Elliot & Higgins, 2012, para. 25). It is important to note that the cycle of data collection and analysis is not fixed, and theoretical sampling can occur several times. The process of data analysis is repeated until it seems as though all the streams of ideas that can be found have been highlighted in the analysis. This is known as ‘theoretical saturation’ (Weed, 2005).

Furthermore, and according to grounded theory, the researcher is engaged in an iterative process of constant comparative analysis throughout the analytical section of the research (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 3). In this way, codes are compared with codes, codes with categories, categories with categories and so on. Throughout this process, Straussian grounded theorists continue to make explicit comparisons at the level of properties and

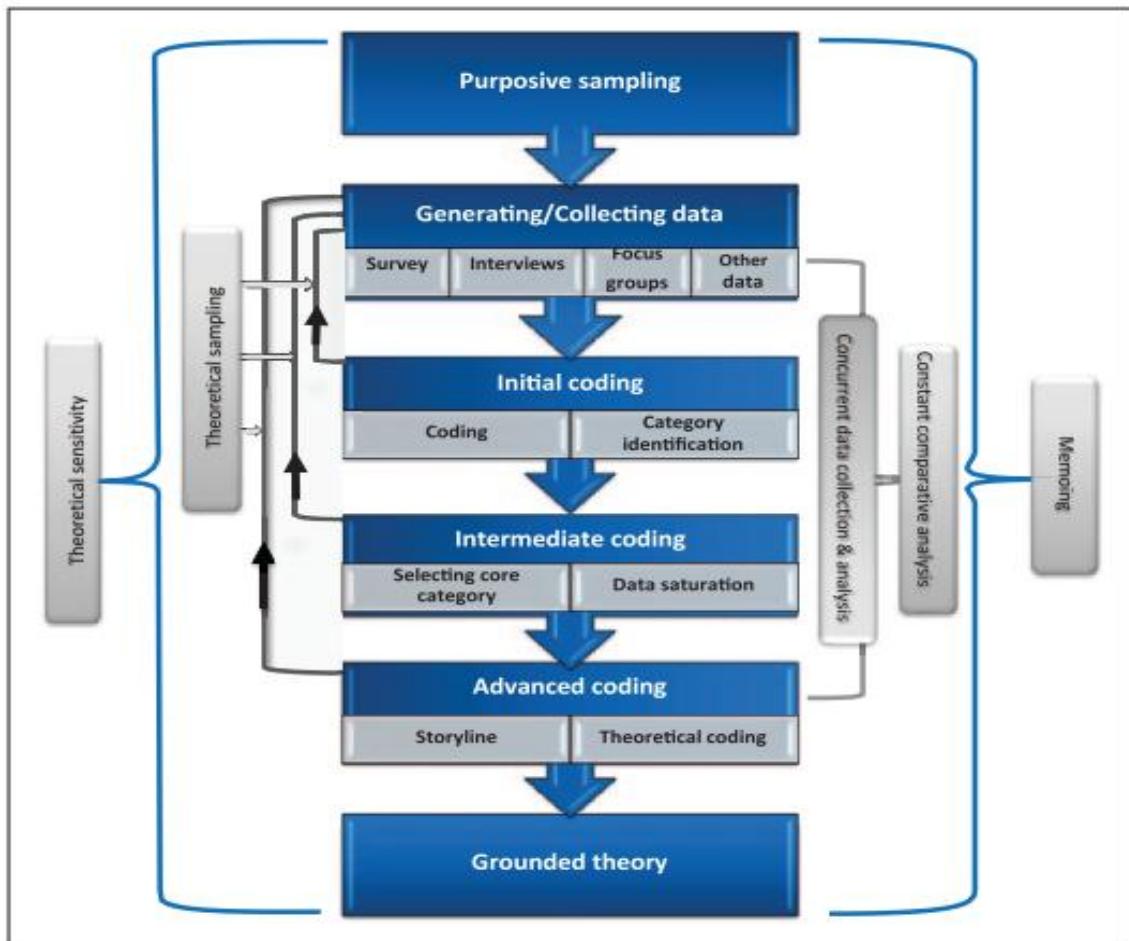
dimensions via theoretical comparison. This final stage, or selective coding, involves refining the main categories around a core category through identifying among other things, these properties and dimensions (QDAcity, n.d.; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

According to Mills and Birks (2023, p. 261), the final results of this comprehensive iterative analysis should be one central category (also known as a core category) and one central phenomenon. These are used to generate the explanatory theory ergo inductive theory development from data. In the interests of clearing up any potential confusion, it is important to reiterate that the category and its associated phenomenon are the same thing, distinguished only by their conceptual labelling.

Both Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 116) and Mills and Birks describe the core category as “a central phenomenon” (2023, p. 163) and Strauss and Corbin even use category and phenomenon interchangeably when referring to coded data (1998, p. 130). Thus, a grounded theory study culminates in the development of a theory stitched together using a series of concepts in the form of codes and then categories which describe, represent and then explain phenomena.

The flowchart below taken from Chun Tie et al., (2019, p. 3) in figure 5 describes the processes in conducting a grounded theory study.

Figure 5: Grounded Theory Flowchart



Source: (Chun Tie et al., 2019), *Grounded theory research: A design framework for novice researchers*, Sage

Data analysis that involves more than one language or translation, for example data collected in a language other than that in which the coding will be done or in which the report will be written, raises a particular set of often unrecognised challenges (Tarlozzi, 2013). In the case of this study, which is presented entirely in English, there was an expectation that many of the interviews would be conducted in Shona and Ndebele, two Zimbabwean languages. The research design would consequently need to contend with translating the data from these languages into English with as much integrity as possible. Potential hindrances included losing meaning during translation and prolonging the research process due to the added work of having to translate data. Interviews conducted in Ndebele would prove to be even more problematic given that this is not the researchers' language and this would necessitate engaging a Ndebele language translator. Involving external translators is an exercise in trust where the researcher can only hope the translator faithfully transmits the intended meanings of the data. This applies less in instances where

the researcher collects and translates the data themselves. However, such researchers have their own set of translation challenges to contend with. Bogusia Temple and Alys Young, (2004) highlight the power dynamics that arise in representation through translation while Ho et al., (2019) argue that translation in research and data analysis is not yet well defined. They do however make mention of several recommended practices such as back translation-translating the once translated text back into the original language to check for congruence, involvement of translators during data analysis and making the final translation as late in the data analysis process as possible (Ho et al., 2019). Online research communities have also weighed into the discussion. In response to a question on whether to translate qualitative research into English, some contributors on a Researchgate thread even argue for analysing the data in its original language and only translating quoted sections (Researchgate, 2017).

Some of the characteristics of grounded theory which made it a good choice for this research are its flexibility even while it remains structured (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 1). Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in a grounded theory study. According to Creswell and Plano (2018), compact design methodologies which they dub core designs can be embedded within grounded theory studies. In addition to its flexibility, grounded theory was a good choice of methodology for this research as it distinguishes itself as a good means of discovery in obscure fields or subject areas (Chun Tie et al., 2019).

As has already been noted, the effectiveness of donor aid remains debateable (Ogbuoji & Yamey, 2019). Furthermore, social entrepreneurship is still a relatively young discipline. Studied together, the relationship between education donor aid and social entrepreneurship is even more obscure. The current zeitgeist in Zimbabwe shows interest on the part of government and its partners to improve education financing. As such, grounded theory presents a great choice for this research.

Despite this choice, grounded theory is not without its shortcomings. By virtue of its iterative design, the grounded theory methodology tends to generate a lot of data. This can overwhelm the researcher and make generalizing results hard or alternatively lead to the production of theories which are too complex (Fendt & Sachs, 2008). Specifically, Fendt and Sachs (2008) reference Backhaus & Plinke (1977) who point out that the specific nature of the results that come out of grounded theory research limit the “synthetic height” of findings and this in turn can culminate in “atheoretical, status-quo-

analytical [empiricism]” (p. 437). Thus, the researcher is more likely to produce a substantive theory rather than a more generalizable formal one.

Gibson et al., (2005) provide a thorough analysis of the literature on the weaknesses of grounded theory as argued by various writers. They cite scholars such as Charmaz (1995a, 2000, 2006), Clarke (2003) and Seele (1999) who propose that grounded theory could benefit from more constructivist leanings, and Dey (1999, 2004) who criticises gaps in grounded theory which fail to account for failure to speak conclusively on matters such as theories coming out of observation or on the *hows* of categorising in science. Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont (2003) recommend that grounded theory be viewed not as a set of procedural rules set in stone, but rather as more general guidelines and as a tool for interpretation instead. Adopting this view might help to address the weaknesses argued by various scholars already mentioned.

Such critiques served as a reminder to the researcher to maintain the integrity of the branch of grounded theory chosen for this study, in this case Straussian. Being able to show how the research was conducted gives readers confidence that generally accepted scientific methods were employed, whatever their misgivings about that scientific method might be. Moreover, Dey's concerns about developing theories from observation can be assuaged by the knowledge that Strauss and Corbin (1998) do not claim that their method is the be all and end all. Rather, they acknowledge that theirs is just one of many (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 24). Thirdly, the findings of this particular study are open to scrutiny from the public and subject matter experts and can be revised in future. Finally, the theory presented in this research is buttressed by literature, related theories and Social Return on Investment analyses, all of which help to strengthen the case being made here.

### 3.3.2 Social Return on Investment

Social Return on Investment (SROI) has been posited as a holistic Value for Money framework (Banke-Thomas et al., 2015, p. 3). Aduragbemi Oluwabusayo Banke-Thomas et al (2015, p. 3), offer a definition of SROI based off a citation from Nicholls et al's' (2012) which defines SROI as “a framework for measuring and accounting for the much broader concept of value. It seeks to reduce inequality and environmental degradation and improve wellbeing by incorporating social, environmental, and economic costs and benefits”. Although the paper from which this quote is taken is a product of the health sector, this definition is still relevant in sectors such as education

where the benefits can be both social and economic. Norman and MacDonald (2004, p. 245) describe it as a framework capable of capturing the wider social, economic, and environmental impact of interventions widely referred to as the “triple bottom line”. The use of the framework is open to private businesses, Non-Profit Organisations and social entrepreneurs as well as funders, indicating a great deal of versatility.

Figure 6: What is SROI?

<b>Who changes?</b>	Taking account of all the people, organisations and environments affected significantly.
<b>How do they change?</b>	Focusing on all the important positive and negative changes that take place, not just what was intended.
<b>How do you know?</b>	Gathering evidence to go beyond individual opinion.
<b>How much is you?</b>	Taking account of all the other influences that might have changed things for the better (or worse).
<b>How important are the changes?</b>	Understanding the relative value of the outcomes to all the people, organisations and environments affected.

Source: (*Social Value UK, n.d., p. 3*)

### Using Social Return on Investment

Social Return on Investment studies can be carried out as forecasts-projecting future value derived from yet to begin interventions or as evaluations when applied to past interventions or those that have already begun to record outcomes. The SROI Network proposes seven principles to apply when conducting a SROI study. These principles are:

- i. To involve stakeholders,
- ii. Understand what changes,
- iii. Value the things that matter,
- iv. Only include what is material,
- v. Do not overclaim,
- vi. Be transparent,

vii. Verify the result (Social Value International, n.d.)

In 2021, Social Value International proposed the inclusion of an eighth principle. This principle has since been adopted and included as follows:

viii. Be responsive (Social Value International, n.d.).

The first, third and eighth principles align very well with the rationale of grounded theory. The eighth principle in particular places an imperative on organisations (and other stakeholders) to respond to the results of these impact assessments accordingly. According to Nicholls et al. (2012), SROI studies will vary in complexity based on the reason for the study. The SROI framework also indicates slight degrees in variation in what is involved and the order in which activities take place. To illustrate, 'A guide to Social Return on Investment' begins with a delimitation of the study, proceeds to collect and value data, map outcomes, establish impact, calculate the Social Return on Investment and finally report on findings, in that order (Nicholls et al., 2012). The practical guide for Measuring Social Return on Investment for Community Schools developed by The Finance Project, a Non-Profit financial advisory services think tank, also begins with defining the boundaries of the study and identifying key stakeholders. However, determining values takes place just before the SROI is calculated (Martinez et al., 2013). The literature shows congruence in terms of what must be done and seems to leave some room to alter the order in which the different steps take place.

Commonly, in the second step, the researcher can consult with stakeholders in order to determine the degree and nature of their involvement. For each group of projects, donor aid and social entrepreneurship, the study can identify and select key actors. These are actors who are affected by the projects or who affect the project or both. Tools such as an 'influence-importance matrix' can be used (Salverda, 2016, para. 10). The researcher together with stakeholders can then outline the outcomes expected or experienced (theory of change or impact map) as a consequence of the intervention (Social Value International, 2019). In the case of evaluative Social Return on Investment studies such as this one, impact maps are borrowed from archival documents such as whatever theory of change was developed at the start of the intervention (Nicholls et al., 2012). The researcher then gathers key information from stakeholders and secondary sources such as documents identified as important to the study. In their guide titled 'Measuring Value, a guide to Social Return On Investment', (NEF, 2008, pp. 14-15), they

propose a set of questions to ask when determining key sources of information. These are:

- “Who are the direct beneficiaries?”
- “Who are the indirect beneficiaries?”
- “Who contributes to the project, either financially or otherwise?”
- “Who else either makes the project happen or is affected by it, even if only peripherally?”

### **Ascribing Value**

Ascribing value to social outcomes is a complex and difficult affair (Johnson Center at Grand Valley State University et. al., 2013). This study was not spared from these vagaries and a quick look at its research area would immediately give the reader an indication of the multiplicity of factors that were considered when observing for outcomes. The research initially looked at primary and secondary education but eventually added data from pre-primary and post-secondary non-tertiary sectors. Data from social entrepreneurial and donor aid funded activities were the central topics of investigation. At the same time, even the way funding was applied within these two different centres of investigation varied widely with some initiatives targeted towards individuals, while others targeted groups and others still, entire systems. Given this multiplicity of data sources, developing a degree of theoretical sensitivity towards the concept of ascribing value was critical, not least because it would enable multi-level comparison which according to Freitag (2014) is increasing in popularity.

The SROI framework lexicon refers to ‘inputs’, ‘outputs’, ‘outcomes’ and ‘impacts’ (Social Value International, n.d.; SROI Methodology, n.d.; Moody et al., 2013). As previously noted, inputs are qualified as the monetary value of the costs incurred/the investment made. Monetary values are also given to the opportunity costs where obtaining. The New Economics Foundation (nef) defines outputs as the “direct results” of the work done using inputs, outcomes as “longer term” or “more significant” results and impact as the resultant change (2008, p.20). Despite these seemingly simple definitions, during the study, the business of determining inputs, outcomes, and impact proved complex. Not least because inputs could not always be reduced to a given monetary value, but also because outcomes are often long term and therefore require tracking – a resource intensive exercise. Furthermore, distinguishing between outputs and outcomes is difficult and the two are often conflated (Mandl et al., 2008). Lastly, isolating

impact is complicated. This is especially true where multiple initiatives are applied concurrently or where an initiative is fragmented into activities which can be expected to produce their own individual effects.

To aid understanding on how best to use these concepts in ascribing value, it is helpful to borrow from extant discussions on Social Impact Measures in the education sector such as Value for Money (VfM). Davidson et al. (2008) for example note that determining Value for Money in a school environment involves reaching into both quantitative and qualitative data sources and being realistic about what data is on hand for analysis (p.10). In determining VfM, data should be comparable while the resources and the amount of effort that go into accessing the data should be within reason (p.13). That said, the spectrum of potential data to draw from is very wide. To illustrate, Namara (2018) lists inputs such as teaching and learning materials, infrastructure, teaching methods, internal and external supervision of schools and curriculum coverage as important factors affecting the quality of basic<sup>7</sup> education in Nyagatare district, Rwanda. Similarly, the American Texas Education Agency (TEA) cites leadership effectiveness, learning time, family and community engagement, the school environment and teacher quality as “critical success factors” for school improvement planning (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). In their argument, they introduce the idea that within a basket of factors that impact student achievement, there will be inputs which have a greater effect than others. They propose for example that Classroom Instruction, has the biggest impact on attainment. This is followed by School Leadership (Texas Education Agency, n.d., para 4, sect. 3).

At the primary level, play has been found to have a positive relationship to neurological development in children. A study of the education systems of seven countries from Asia, Central America and Europe as well as the Bologna Project of Higher Education of the European Union and the New University Project in Brazil cites Government policies and how they shape education systems, teachers and family involvement in education as “the basic factors of success of education systems” (Alcoforado, n.d., p. 1).

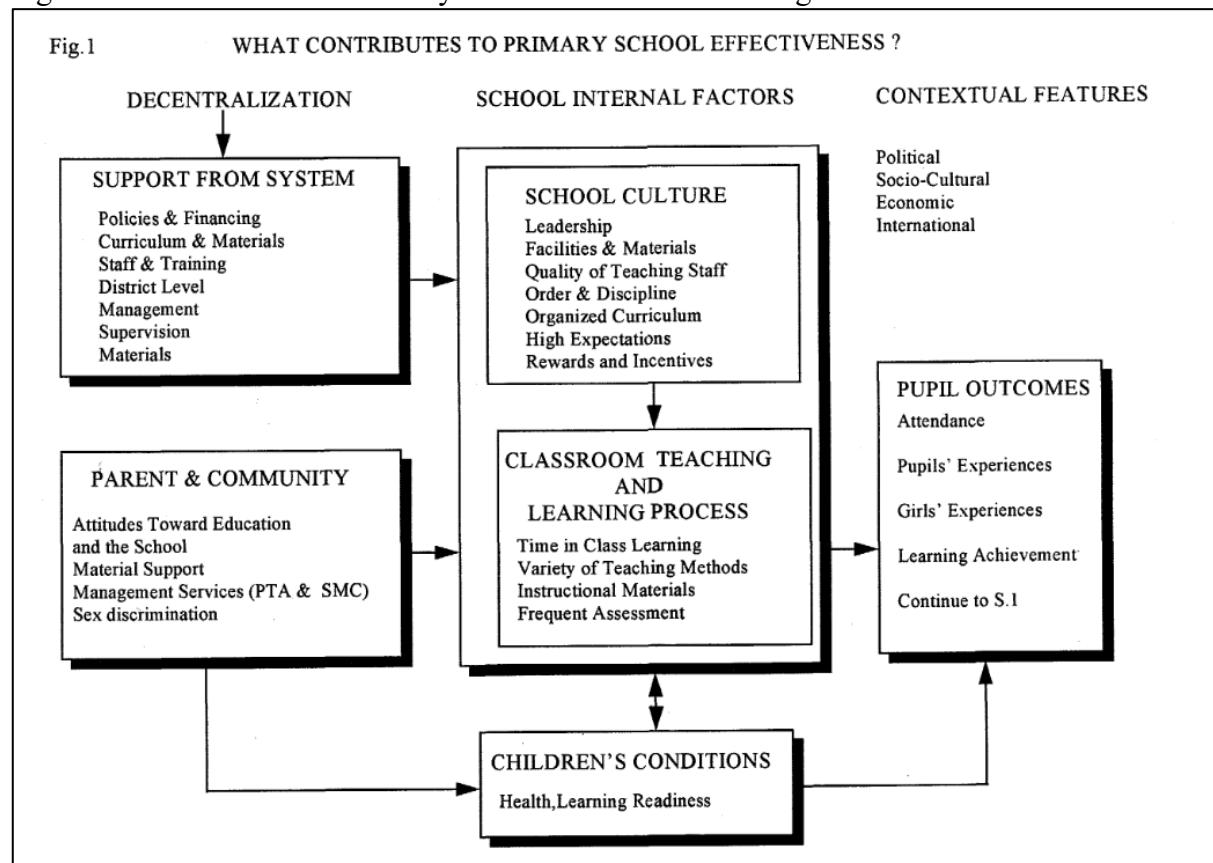
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<sup>7</sup> The first 9 years of schooling (Namara, 2018).

Naisianoi et al. (2020) who cite Wambua and Murungi (2018) attribute poor learning outcomes in Gilgil Sub County in Kenya to a lack of teaching and learning materials and teacher shortages.

In yet another study, also in Kenya, the researcher considers the impact of Head Teachers on instructional supervision, motivating teachers, providing teaching, and learning materials and involving parents in school administration and in the schoolwork of their children (Ndirangu, 2015). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2000) also references healthy and prepared learners in supportive families and communities and further discusses conducive and safe environments as well as the availability of resources, facilities, content and good processes in the provision of quality education. Figure 7 summarizes findings from a 1996 baseline study on primary education in Uganda. Although rather dated, it would seem that the information captured in the graphic is still very relevant and continues to be reflected in findings from more recent studies across various contexts, some of which have already been referred to here.

Figure 7: Contributions to Primary School Effectiveness in Uganda



Source: Carasco et al., (1996, p. 4)

These studies and several others from a broad range of contexts seem to consider similar inputs, suggesting that the factors that influence education can be categorised. The researcher used these findings as a basis for identifying educational inputs and qualifying them under the following classifications:

- I. School Leadership including but not limited to facets such as instructional supervision, the work of school boards and empowered staff.
- II. Socio-Economic Situation referring to the learners' background, nutrition, health and safety, parents' education, parents' involvement in learners' education and income demographic.
- III. Quality of Teaching i.e. Teacher qualifications, teaching and learning time, engaged and motivated teachers etc.
- IV. Teaching and Learning Materials being textbooks, laboratory apparatus, equipment, blackboards, ICTs, chalk among others and finally,
- V. Learning Environment which refers to pupil inclusion, physical infrastructure such as classrooms, playgrounds, sports fields (and distance children need to travel to reach these facilities) and the curriculum.

As previously noted, while outputs and outcomes are frequently conflated, there does seem to be consensus around capturing outputs as a count of the direct products or results of an initiative. However, some authors apply this same definition to outcomes although outcomes more frequently refer to a longer-term achievement (Mazise, 2011). Davidson et. al, (2008) for example specifically investigate the effectiveness of initiatives in schools by considering improvements in examination scores as their primary output indicator. These data fall within the realm of readily available data which are easy to quantify and can be compared across space and time (Davidson et al., 2008).

Other authors also suggest using test scores but add to that graduation rates from schools as output measures (Mandl et al., 2008). These can be used for entire systems and individuals. Mazise (2011), on the other hand, adopts the use of current student achievement scores as well as "social skills" and "participation" in school activities as outcomes (p. 40). A 2000 UNICEF paper titled 'Defining Quality Education' provides an extended definition of outcomes, relating them to "knowledge, skills and attitudes" also known as competences. The paper also considers national education objectives and "positive participation in society" as the outcomes of quality education UNICEF (2000,

p.3). Given this multiplicity of perspectives, this study chose to capture the value of both outputs and outcomes (Costa, 2013, para. 1) making sure to label each clearly.

Outputs featured in the calculation of the SROI ratio as they were easier to define and give value. Outcomes were mentioned with the narrative sections of the SROI analysis as part of longer term analysis. Once an understanding about the metrics involved has been gained and a position taken on what to measure, data can be collected through surveys, interviews, desk reviews, Focus Group Discussions etc. Such information includes factors such as costs, time, and ultimately changes as perceived and/or experienced by informant stakeholders. Data on the nature of outcomes such as benefits or lack thereof, duration, relative importance or ranking can also be collected.

When calculating the SROI ratio a comparison is made of the investments (inputs) on the one hand and the financial, social and environmental returns (outputs and/or outcomes) on the other (Nielsen et al. 2021; Watson & Whitley, 2016). Indicators are assigned for each expected output/outcome, and these indicators are assigned a monetary value as per predetermined metrics, metrics which can be developed consultatively with beneficiaries, those applying the intervention and other stakeholders (NPC, 2012). When available, actual financial values can be used. These should be adjusted in real time and for context using Purchasing Power Parities and discount rates. Non-financial values can be given values through techniques such as asking stakeholders to ascribe value to outcomes, deriving value from similar goods and services which already have known prices, using value ranking where the value of a good or service is ascribed based on where it lies in order of preference to other goods whose values are known or adding up the values of parts of the entity that is being measured (Nicholls et al., 2012, p.47 ; Krlev et al., 2002). Other ways include using already developed proxies for similar studies, goods, or services. These techniques are by no means a simple exercise, and Nicholls et al., wrap up some of the complexities of valuation as follows:

*There are problems with each of these techniques [of coming up with valuation], and there are no hard and fast rules as to which you would use in given situations. We offer them to support you in deriving proxies. Nonetheless, this section requires creativity and research on your part. There is obviously a role for engaging stakeholders here. However, be careful how you approach this. Stakeholders will be able to guide your thinking particularly on the relative merits of different types of value. However, some stakeholders may find it more difficult to attach a financial value to something. Again, you need to use some judgement as to the appropriate way to involve stakeholders to assess the relative importance of the outcomes that they experience (Nicholls et al., 2012, p. 48).*

While doing the study, the researcher should take note of certain important points. The first of these is to ensure that valuations are not factored in more than once. This phenomenon is known as double counting. A guide to Social Return on Investment provides this tip. “To distinguish between the two, ask yourself: am I counting the same value, for the same stakeholder, twice?” (Nicholls et al., 2012, p. 42).

It is also very important to calculate attribution during a Social Return on Investment study. Attribution refers to how much of the changes experienced in a study population is a result of the intervention. However, determining the cause of a particular outcome is no light work, particularly in cases where tools such as randomised trials, commonly used to establish cause and effect relationships, cannot be applied or cases that are plagued by data scarcity (Pearl et al., 2016). Here it may be helpful to borrow from other methods of causal determination such as the ingredients method proposed by Levin (1988) which proposes breaking an intervention down into its various components or ingredients and determining the value or cost of each as well as the cost per unit of effectiveness of each of these components.

This method can be particularly useful, especially in education where education interventions often consist of many different components or “ingredients” (Hassan et al., 2022; Levin, 1988). Methods which adopt a similar approach include Chambers and Parrish Resource Cost model (Levin, 1988, p. 4) and Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) which also requires that an initiative be analysed according to its criteria and thereafter weighted for importance or utility (Barretta et al., 2023; Jana et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 1994). Methods such as the MCDM offer more value than the practice of analysing the whole with no regard for the fact that different components will have different impacts. However, splitting hairs makes the task of establishing individual and ultimately aggregate effectiveness and benefits metrics more complex, especially where information is limited. Furthermore, the resultant findings are not precise values but rather approximations (Barretta et al., 2023, p. 78).

As previously noted, in situations of data paucity, typical methods of determining cause and effect cannot be used. In such cases, science turns to more subjective tools. Fields such as economics, health, psychology and to a lesser extent education have been using subjective measures to assign value which can then be used in cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses.

Pearl and Mackenzie (2018) argue that there are many instances where it is impossible to determine causal relationships simply because the vital information needed to make the necessary calculations is not available or measurable (p. 15). They suggest collecting more information or “making simplifying assumptions (at the risk of being wrong)” instead (p. 15).

In a 2016 paper titled ‘Causal Inference in Statistics: A Primer’, Pearl et al. (2016) state that assumptions are “simple and natural methods” with which to determine causation, i.e. what causes what. Furthermore, they propose that these assumptions can be given quantitative values and can be used to calculate or rather estimate effect (p. xii). Although their theses go on to provide extensive statistical causation models, their basic argument supports the use of assumptions as proxies for unknown data.

Similarly, Ross (2008) expands on several studies to show how researchers can use subjective metrics such as assumptions to estimate effectiveness. For example, Fletcher et al. (1990), collect scores ranging from 1 to 20 from stakeholders on different education criteria referred to as ‘attributes’ in their paper. Lewis and Kallsen (1995) on the other hand adopt the use of a cost-utility analysis, one which not only identifies the criteria to measure but also collects stakeholder scores and uses these scores to assign weights which eventually serve as utilities (Ross, 2008, para. 14). A study from Lewis et al. (1994) using what they dub Multi-Attribute Utility, an offshoot of Multi-Criteria Decision Making, also applies subjective scores from a small group of expert stakeholders to assess three different special education programmes (Pearl & Mackenzie, 2018).

Such MCDM and utility studies often follow a multi-step process of first identifying the change in the outputs or criteria or attributes being measured. To illustrate, we might use the case of a bursary for learners. The first step would then be to measure the change in readily available data since the introduction of the bursary. Secondly, we identify the costs of the initiative using Levin and McEwan’s ingredients methods which in this illustration are the costs of each item within the bursary. These might include the number of textbooks bought, the value of school fees, and any other associated costs. The third step involves collecting expert stakeholder estimates of the weight of each output. This refers to the expected utility (benefits) of each on the learner outcomes. Teachers and parents might be asked to give a weight to their perceived impact on learners caused by the availability of textbooks and changes in attitude towards learning for example. Their expert scores are multiplied by the change in output, i.e. the number of textbooks x

perceived weight of textbooks on learner outcomes such as change in pass rates or attitude towards learning as a fourth step. Lastly, a sensitivity analysis is conducted using different assumptions. Such a sensitivity analysis might include using counterfactual reasoning which Pearl & Mackenzie (2018) argue, offer reasonably reliable and replicable judgements about likely outcomes based off real world structures (p. 8). The processes mentioned previously can be adopted for use within a SROI analysis by breaking down components and using experts to assign subjective but reliable values which can in turn be used to arrive at a final SROI ratio.

The final step in a cost-utility process also fits very nicely with standard Social Return on Investment analysis which also benefits from calculating the counterfactual or deadweight, that is information about changes that might have occurred anyway in the absence of the intervention. Determining the counterfactual is possible through the use of test and control groups i.e. comparing the study population to a similar population and recording only those changes that happened to the population where the intervention is applied, before and after comparisons and even through stakeholder consultations (Nicholls et al., 2012).

Easy proxies for the counterfactual such as the National Economic Growth rate or macro increases in Net Enrolment Rates can be used (Nicholls et al., 2012, p. 56). Similarly, the study can attempt to account for displacement which measures if any benefits are being moved from somewhere else to support the intervention. In short, no additional value is created (NEF, 2008). Attribution and deadweight are reported as percentages and once identified, are subtracted from the ultimate value identified. The theoretical calculations adapted from Nicholls et al. (2012) in figure 8 illustrate how this can be done. A sensitivity analysis helps to determine which variables in your model have the greatest impact on your ratios. Knowing this information can give guidance on which aspects of the project require the greatest degree of management and attention (NEF, 2008).

Figure 8: Calculating Attribution using weights

Total outputs are equal to number of outputs x value of each outcome

Total outcomes  $110 \times \$15.8 = \$1738.00$

Total outputs minus attribution, which is calculated as a percentage, in this case 72 per cent

Less attribution  $\$1738.00 \times 0.72 = \$1251.4$

New total outputs less deadweight, which is calculated as a percentage, in this case 7 per cent

Less deadweight  $\$1251.4 \times 0.07 = \$87.6$

$\$1251.4 + \$87.6 = \$1339$

Value of new total outputs = \$1339

*Source: Researcher's own.*

The newly calculated values can then further be adjusted for time where enough information is available, and a final ratio is derived. The quantitative determination of the ratio is found by first projecting the value of all future outcomes derived (NEF, 2008). This is done after ascribing a monetary value to an output or outcome and then multiplying this value by the number of years that this impact is expected to be felt. Presumably, in the case of an evaluative study, the number of years of impact is already known and can therefore be applied. This final value less the 'drop-off' or degree of loss of impact per year is then used to calculate the Present Value using a determined discount rate. The Net Present Value is the sum of the present value generated in each year of impact being studied minus the total input. It is possible to then calculate both the Social Return on Investment Ratio and the Net Social Return on Investment Ratio respectively by dividing the Present Value and the Net Present Value by the value of the total inputs should need be.

Social Return on Investment is referred to and used by some as a methodology (Banke-Thomas et al., 2015; United Nations Development Programme, n.d.-a) and by others as a framework (Pathak & Dattani, 2014; Salverda, 2016). According to Salverda (2016) one of the advantages of the Social Return on Investment framework is its versatility. It can be used on its own as a methodology or embedded into other evaluation designs as a framework. This was of particular interest to this study given the mixed

methods grounded theory research design which combined grounded theory with SROI. Salverda (2016) goes on to say that SROI can offer direction in participatory development settings.

The methodology can also create effects beyond simply finding information. Its nature can foster relationships between stakeholders born out of a new understanding of interconnectedness and can help stakeholders expand their perceptions of value and the importance of creating said value with the inputs made. Watson and Whitley (2016) also refer to the benefits of being able to present intangible outcomes in comparable values and by so doing, facilitate discussion around them (p. 880).

Authors such as Nielsen et al. (2020, p. 432) posit SROI as a solution to the challenge of measuring social value that has dogged traditional financial methods. They also argue that analysing which outputs are derived from which inputs is a means of thinking through how money is spent with more logic and reason. Finally, they reference a case in their paper involving an organization that wanted to report its impact back to its stakeholders. The Chief Financial Officer of the said organization opted to use a quantitatively aligned SROI framework arguing that using monetary values aids communication as “people can relate to numbers”.

Nielsen et al., (2020, p. 431) citing Bagnoli and Megali (2011) propose additional advantages such as the ability of the methodology to use diverse sources of information and report back in both figures and narrative. They argue that this mix promotes understanding and transparency.

Some of the perceived shortcomings of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework are that it struggles to provide comparability across organisations. This is according to Pathak and Dattani (2014, p. 93) and their understanding of Nicholls et al. (2009, p. 77) whom they quote. These assertions are reminiscent of Barmans’ arguments bemoaning the complexity of measuring impact in the face of “multiple ambiguous and contradictory definitions” of the term (Barman, 2020, p. 35). Although SROI uses ‘Return on Investment’ and not ‘impact’, the question of semantics applies in both instances.

Pathak and Dattani do however provide a caveat as outlined by the SROI Network (2012). Their argument posits that SROI can be used for comparison across organisations if and only if these comparisons are ‘based on the full analysis entailed by the framework – engaging stakeholders, understanding what should be measured and constructing a

theory of change' (Pathak & Dattani, 2014, p. 93). Pathak and Dattani, (2014) also reference Mulgan (2010) who notes that another of SROI's shortcomings is that it is over ambitious in its efforts to achieve too many strategic objectives. The reduction of outcomes to numbers and then ratios and subsequent loss of some information can also be considered one of its weaknesses. This is an especially sore point among third sector institutions (Pathak & Dattani, 2014, p. 93). The calculation method of Social Return on Investment also leaves room to wrongly estimate values, either up or down.

A Social Return on Investment analysis is, according to Nicholls, Mackenzie and Somers (2007), time bound. They limit SROI analyses to five years arguing that as time progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to attribute any impact to the initiative being measured (Nielsen et al., 2020). In addition, using the SROI framework is an expensive exercise and requires a lot of time (Nielsen et al., 2020, p. 431). In a paper titled 'The Seven Principle Problems of SROI', Fujiwara (2015) outlines these seven problems in detail. This section however will outline them only in summary. According to Fujiwara, the first problem is that SROI lacks a clear principled normative approach (2015, p. 6). Fujiwara notes that the uncertainty around what is meant by 'Social Impact' leaves the field open to subjective debates around the various ways in which impact can be perceived and measured.

Secondly, the paper discusses how SROI is silent on interpersonal comparisons and perversely places greater weight on the outcomes of the rich (Fujiwara 2015, p. 9). This challenge basically concerns itself with how SROI fails to account for how individuals experience impacts differently leading to weighting biases which favour the wealthy.

The third and fourth problems as given by Fujiwara read, 'SROIs' views on stakeholders can be too narrow' and 'The ratio calculation is susceptible to biases.' It is not always possible to achieve broad stakeholder involvement during the valuation process. This naturally affects whatever ratios are eventually derived. The calculation of these ratios themselves is also subject to some variation. It is to these variations that Fujiwara attributes calculation biases.

Fifth, Fujiwara also notes that statistical methods for inferring causality are problematic. A Social Return on Investment ratio must account for deadweight,

attribution, displacement and drop-off.<sup>8</sup> Fujiwara argues that how to do so is not comprehensively discussed in SROI guidance literature while questioning the reliability of the methods that have traditionally been used for the purposes of determining causality in SROI, referencing using control groups as an example. The sixth problem with SROI, as Fujiwara puts it is, that the valuation theory and methodology in SROI are incomplete and have not kept up with developments in Social Impact Measurement. Finally, the paper argues that the meaning of the ‘Investment’ in SROI is vague citing the different ways in which the costs incurred in an initiative can be calculated, specifically either the investment or the investment and the opportunity cost respectively (Fujiwara, 2015, p. 15).

Despite this extensive critique, Fujiwara does offer some recommendations on how to get around the challenges of using the SROI framework. One such recommendation is to include opportunity costs when calculating outcomes for interventions targeted towards public (social) goods (p. 16) and to clearly state how ratios are to be calculated (p. 11). In the case of this study, the recommendation on including opportunity costs in the calculation of a SROI ratio were rendered moot given that the comparison of two different funding modalities – donor aid and social entrepreneurship – assumed that the choice of one over the other represented an already existing opportunity cost. That said, most of Fujiwara’s other concerns about biases can be addressed by triangulating. Using multiple methods and sources of data to confirm or negate adds validity to a finding as was the intention in this study. Furthermore, Watson and Whitley (2016), who apply SROI to a post occupancy analysis study on a set of buildings in order to determine user experiences, reference the sixth stage of using the SROI framework. This stage encourages practitioners to “assess whether SROI has effectively captured the social value of the case buildings.” (p. 881). Its general applicability fosters using only valid data in decision making.

### 3.3.3 Mixed Methods Grounded Theory

The explication of mixed methods research, grounded theory and the Social Return on Investment framework provide a good foundation for the presentation of mixed

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SROI Methodology, n.d.; Watson & Whitley, 2016)<sup>8</sup> Deadweight is the changes that would have taken place without the initiative, Attribution refers to that part of the outcome that was caused by others, Displacement is how much an outcome has replaced a different outcome elsewhere and Drop-off measures the reduction of the outcome over time (SROI Methodology, n.d.; Watson & Whitley, 2016).

methods grounded theory (MM-GT). Described as a methodology by Shim et al. (2021, p. 62) and both a method and methodology by Creamer (2022), it allows researchers to pair grounded theory methods with qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

Shim et al. (2021) outline the basic qualities MM-GT beyond just the use of different approaches to research. The methodology is suited to “pure exploration/discovery” and is framed by guidelines of some sort (p. 62). They also argue for its versatility as a methodology which can help the researcher arrive at both particular-“idiographic”- and universal-“nomothetic” – explanations. While like grounded theory, mixed methods-grounded theory generates theory it goes further to allow the said theory to be tested or confirmed and, another way in which it distinguishes itself from grounded theory (Shim et al., 2021, p. 62). Shim et al. (2021) go on to argue that this explanatory theory generation is a must for MM-GT (p. 63).

Furthermore, the capacity of theories generated through this methodology to zoom in from the general to the local and the potential this creates for “practical” (Shim et al., 2021, p. 62) application in the ‘real world’ proved a yet another particularly compelling reason for its use.

Aside from these guidelines, Shim et al. (2021, p. 63) argue that in situations where empirical researchers’ needs are not met by existing designs, bespoke hybrid designs become an imperative. This idea is based on similar sentiments from Tashakkori et al. (2021) who conclude that the mixed methods research offers “numerous possibilities as needed by the investigator” (p. 126) and use this to argue the same for mixed methods-grounded theory.

Citing various authors, herself included, Creamer distinguishes MM-GT from the simple use of quantitative data in grounded theory and from mixed methods as a stand-alone methodology in that mixed methods grounded theory approaches the integration of different sources of data in various ways which themselves are iterative (Creamer, 2022a; Mccurrach, n.d.) *and* interactive (Creamer, 2022a, p. 20). In this way, the data influence each other.

Furthermore, Creamers’ understanding of Fielding (2009, 2012) led her to the conclusion that the use of mixed methods as in MM-GT can not only confirm findings but also to add “multi-dimensional” understandings of social phenomena and by so doing, complement the work of theorizing in grounded theory (Creamer, 2022, p. 10). She uses this idea to present rather novel ideas about MM-GT as an abductive rather than inductive

theory building methodology, that is “alternating between an exploratory and a confirmatory stance” (Creamer, 2021, p. 559). Finally, she contradicts Johnson et al (2010) who she reports argue that in MM-GT “qualitative and quantitative data are collected about different constructs and for different purposes” e.g. identifying causes of phenomena and uncovering their outcomes respectively or building and testing theory. In Creamers’ view, in mixed methods grounded theory qualitative and quantitative data can come from the same source and be used for the same goal (2022, p. 10).

That said, authors such as Guetterman et al. (2017, p. 184) have limited their understanding of MM-GT to studies which employ grounded theory methods for the qualitative strand of their work. Furthermore, and according to Shim et al. (2021, p. 63), in a newer article, Guetterman et al. (2019) reportedly do not prioritise theory construction, a departure from their 2017 stance. This in some ways represents a narrower understanding of the methodology. Others still have not insisted on the test phase of MM-GT. McCurrach (n.d.) omits the testing phase all together while Moncrieff (2020, p. 19) quoting Walsh (2015) argues that the purpose of the methodology is not to test or adjust existing findings but rather to broaden the comprehension and reach of the subject matter. Moncrieff, in a study of their own, goes on to use the MM-GT to break “away from testing methods by creating new meaning from the combined results, as well as any dissonance or agreement during their comparison” (p. 20). (Howell Smith et al., 2020) do something similar by designing what they term a mixed methods exploratory instrument development design with sequential phases of grounded theory, instrument design, testing grounded theory and grounded theory revision.

Ultimately, MM-GT is recognized as a methodology *in situ* (Guetterman et al. 2017; Shim et al. 2021, Creamer, 2022). Perhaps emboldened by the versatility of both mixed methods and grounded theory which themselves are constantly evolving (Creamer, 2022, p. 14) MM-GT continues to be used in varied ways, one of which is this study where qualitative and quantitative methods from Straussian ground theory and the SROI framework complemented each other to investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurial initiatives. To illustrate, the sample of SROI cases used in this study were taken from the same population and allowing the findings to feed back seamlessly into the rest of the study.

Although a Social Return on Investment analysis is not a test of theory in the conventional sense, it nonetheless adds to the ways in which the data can be interrogated,

adding analytical depth and multiple dimensions as alluded to by Creamer (2021; 2022). This follows on from Guetterman et al. (2017, p. 190) who propose that MM-GT can be used to test the “findings from grounded theory” and not necessarily the theory itself. To strengthen validity within this flexible methodology, Guetterman et al. (2017, p. 191) *inter alia* recommend that MM-GT practitioners comprehensively detail their research procedures and provide “evidence” of their “systematic methodological decision making.”

The following sections proceed to do just that and extend the work of Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998), Creamer (2018; 2021; 2022) Johnson and Walsh (2019), Howell Smith et al. (2020) and others by presenting a mixed methods grounded methodology. This methodology used an exploratory design, conducting interactive and integrated qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis with both grounded theory and SROI analysis methods and produced a inductive grounded theory.

### 3.3.4 Data Analysis Software

When conducting qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods studies, Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) can make the process of transcribing, coding and categorising data easier. It can also provide a means of storing and sharing the data. Manual transcriptions using Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software are perceived as preferable to using fully automated software so as to get a better feel for the data (*Software for Qualitative Analysis*, 2010).

Grounded theory studies are compatible with the use of Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) (Kuckartz, 2014). A host of Programmes such as MAXQDA, Atlas.ti, Nvivo, F4analyse and many more offer a variety of data analysis functionalities. In the comments section of a Researchgate Qualitative Data Analysis discussion on the best CAQDAS, Mayring (2013) champions the use of Atlas.ti for grounded theory studies while others argue that this particular tool is slightly limited in terms allowing for visualisations of data. The MAXQDA programme is one of the more frequently cited QDA tools but however stands out for being comparatively pricey. The programme F4analyse is also notable for its ease of use when transcribing, its ability to integrate with other Qualitative Data Analysis packages, its foot pedal and its pricing structure. Nvivo is another seemingly very popular option. Ultimately, it would seem the best choice of which tools

to use in Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software will depend on the nature and volume of data generated and practical considerations such as money and availability.

Social Return on Investment Computer Aided Data Analysis software options include *Sopact*, *Sametrica*, *Restore the Earth Foundation*, among others. Social Value International assesses these tools and provides certification indicating how comprehensively the tools meet the social value principles as determined by their standards. To illustrate, the software tools are measured for aspects such as whether they allow the user to create descriptive indicators, descriptions of outcomes, create memos and so on. The choice of which software to use can be made using the ratings given by these assessments as well as the cost of purchasing the tool (Social Value International, 2021). Alternatively, the number crunching can be done using Microsoft software, specifically Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (Martinez et al., 2013). Data can be inputted and sums such as Present Value calculated (NEF, 2008). The actual data analysis process can benefit from following step by step processes outlined in SROI guides.

### **3.4 The Research Design**

The Research Design was informed by the context and the research objectives of the study. This mixed methods grounded-theory research was conducted over the course of four years and four months and involved field work, desk research, data analysis and presentation.

#### **3.4.1 Research Aims and Objectives**

The study took place in Zimbabwe where the primary aim was to investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship respectively. These results were then juxtaposed against each other, with a view to determining the extent to which social entrepreneurship might be more efficient and effective than donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe and as such, an alternative.

The theoretical objectives of the study were to:

- a. Build a deeper understanding of the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe.
- b. Develop a grounded theory of the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

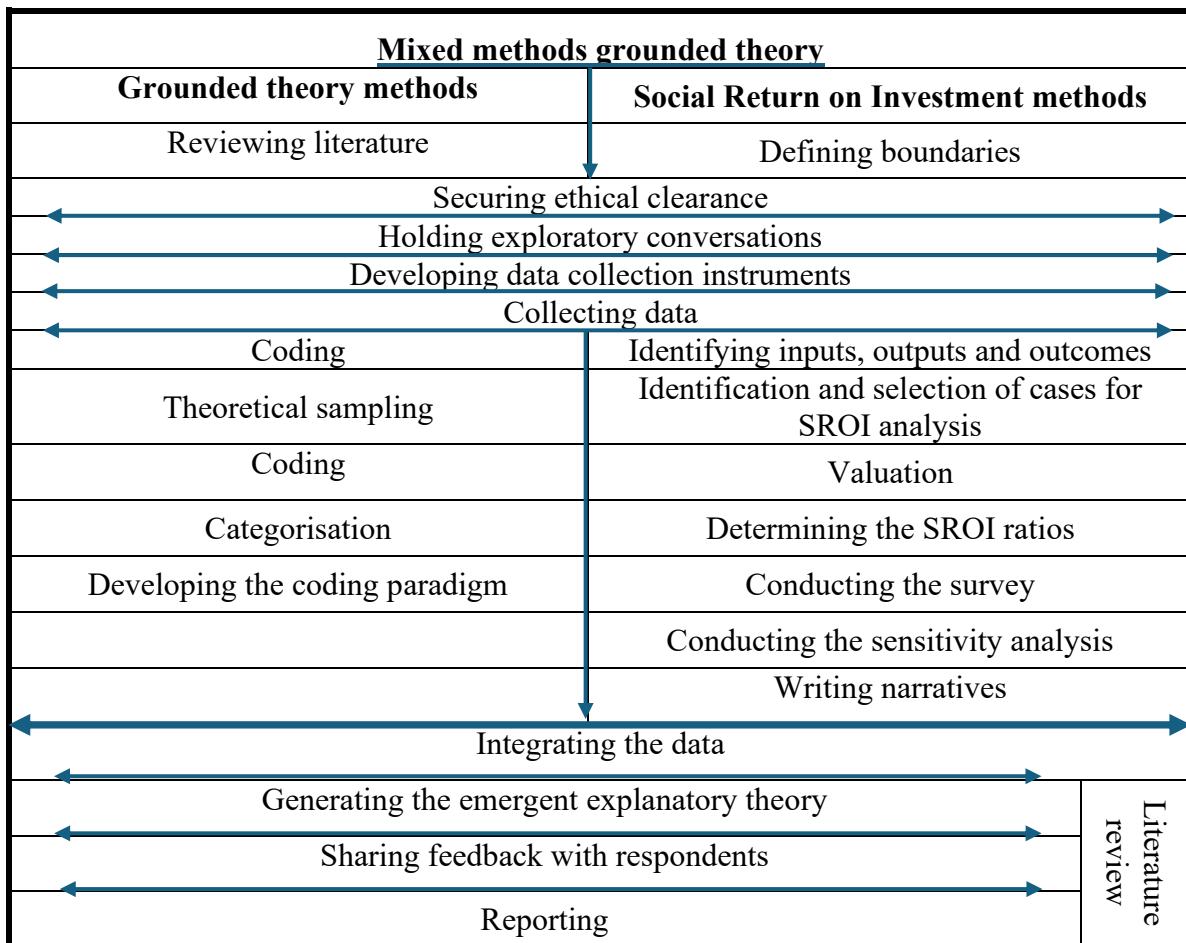
The practical objectives of the study were as follows:

- a) To compare the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid to social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe using mixed methods grounded theory.
- b) To create a foundation for further discussion on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing among education stakeholders in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

### **3.4.2 Study Methods**

This study employed a research design of mixed methods taken from grounded theory and Social Return on Investment. The grounded theory methodology assumed primacy in this mixed methods research and generated mostly qualitative data but served as the primary source of the study's' quantitative data. The SROI analysis on the other hand enriched the study with both quantitative and qualitative data. A final integrated and inductive theory on efficient and effective education financing in Zimbabwe was one of the main outputs of this study. To this end, data was collected through a variety of tools and analysed using coding and theoretical comparison. The Social Return on Investment framework employed Multi-Criteria Decision Making methods to come up with metrics and assessments with which to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurial financed education initiatives. The products of this SROI analysis fed into the grounded theory methodology at various stages and likewise. Although different, the grounded theory strand and the SROI framework phase were dovetailed so that the respective complementary activities were conducted parallel to each other and fed into subsequent stages. Table 9 gives a general outline of the sequence of activities.

Table 9: Steps in this mixed methods grounded theory methodology



### 1. Reviewing Literature and Defining Boundaries

The initial literature review in the grounded theory sequence was conducted concurrently with the delimitation sequence of the Social Return on Investment analysis. The findings of the literature review helped to define some of the boundaries of the SROI section of the study. These boundaries included what was to be studied and which methods to employ. Given that this was a mixed methods grounded theory study, these boundaries remained subject to review as new information came to light. The literature review was guided by the following key words and terms:

- Education in Zimbabwe
- Education Finance in Zimbabwe
- Donor Aid in Zimbabwe
- Official Development Assistance in Zimbabwe
- Social Entrepreneurship
- Social Entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe

- Efficiency
- Effectiveness

## 2. Ethical Clearance

Ethical clearance from the Research Council of Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as well as the Ministry of Social Welfare was obtained by making the necessary applications and paying the necessary application fees. Additional permission to visit specific provinces and schools were sought and secured as necessary. Applying for ethical clearance required that the researcher prepare draft data collection instruments. These were submitted as part of the application packages.

## 3. Conversations

Securing permission to begin research in earnest took longer than anticipated. The researcher used the time in between to hold conversations with knowledgeable members of the education sector in and outside of Zimbabwe. Having conversations sharpened the researchers theoretical sensitivity without violating ethical principles.

These conversations were held in a downwardly cascading manner with the first point of call being the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Through this, the researcher was able to participate in field visits as part of annual Joint Monitoring visits to schools in the capital city.

Secondly, a general call to the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) was made seeking respondents who would be interested in holding a conversation with the researcher. A similar call was made to the education Commission of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference. This led to a number of observer visits during routine monitoring visits. Lastly, the researcher visited schools independently of any institutional visits in a bid to make observations that would not be influenced by the presence of officials. These visits yielded insights into education post-COVID, donor aid and the state of social entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe.

All respondents were advised of the goal of the conversations which was to sharpen the researchers' theoretical sensitivity about where to eventually conduct interviews and where to look for data. It was also advised that once the ethical clearance was approved, the conversations would be converted into official data that would be included in the study.

## 4. Developing Data Collection Instruments

Guided by the preliminary literature review and the initial conversations held, the researcher proceeded to draft the data collection instruments (see annex 1). Central to this was the desire to collect efficiency and effectiveness perspectives from the point of view of beneficiaries and other stakeholders within the education sector in Zimbabwe. All in all, data collection focused on teachers in primary and secondary education, district and provincial education officials, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education head office officials, Non-Governmental Organisations (CSO's, FBO's) officials, Multi-Lateral Organisation representatives, donor organisation representatives, social entrepreneurs, company representatives and beneficiary students.

The “neutral stance” afforded through the grounded theory method alluded to by Abdellah (2016, p. 13) motivated the choice of open-ended interview questions. These were preceded by the collection of biographic data of the respondents, their experiences with donor aid and social entrepreneurship respectively, and a few questions on the respondents understanding of the meaning of the words ‘efficient’ and ‘effective’. Biographic data were collected in the hopes that possible patterns between responses and individual characteristics could be identified during data analysis. The discussions on the definition of ‘efficient’ and ‘effective’ were necessary given the multiplicity of definitions in the literature. They also helped to frame the interview from the perspective of the individual respondent while also helping to ensure that the respondent and interviewer were processing meaning from the same understanding. The initial interview questions were as given in figure 9.

Figure 9: Interview questions

2.4 Do you have any experiences of donor aid financed activities? If yes, please share.

2.5 In what ways were these donor aid financed activities efficient and effective? Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.6 In what ways were these donor aid financed activities **inefficient and ineffective?** Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.7 Do you have any experiences of Social Entrepreneurial financed education activities in the education sector? If yes, please share.

2.8 In what ways were these Social Entrepreneurial financed activities efficient and effective? Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.9 In what ways were these Social Entrepreneurial financed activities **inefficient and ineffective?** Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.10 Any other comments?

These questions were designed to address the research questions of this study and were suitable for both grounded theory and Social Return on Investment analysis. The request for concrete examples of amounts dates, locations and numbers gave weight to respondents' submissions against which the researcher could try to cross check the validity of data and provided fodder for the quantitative analysis that would later take place.

## 5. Collecting Data

At every stage of the data collection process, informed consent from the respondents was sought. All interviews were held with interviewees above the age of 18. Consequently, only research permission from the Research Council of Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Social Welfare was required, sought and obtained. The interviews were conducted in English, Ndebele and Shona, the three working languages of the regions which were visited.

The research employed a variety of data collection methods in keeping with the mixed methods part of the research design. All in all, seven data collection methods were employed as outlined in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Data Collection Methods



*Source: Researcher's own*

As noted in figure 10, the field data collection exercise collected both qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FDGs), conversations, observations and interviews and some records in the form of evaluation reports and log frames were also used as secondary quantitative data.

Interviews in Zimbabwe were conducted in the field, that is the researcher went to the schools and places of employment of the respondents. In two instances, the researcher met with beneficiaries in a public area as this was what they preferred. All the interviews were recorded using professional audio data capture instruments. These data were downloaded and stored on to the researcher's machine and on a drive. The researcher also transcribed the interviews into a notebook in real time. Memos and notes of follow up questions were also written down.

Focus Group Discussions were organised by the schools themselves. The researcher simply submitted a request to conduct face to face interviews and found in all the cases that the school would arrange for more than one person to be present. The open ended questions were then subsequently submitted within the group.

Observations included tours of the various income generating projects as well as the official joint monitoring exercise carried out by the Ministry and its partners. The research took advantage of this serendipitous opportunity. As they took place before the researcher had secured ethical consent to conduct the research, no interviews were held. Instead, the researcher took notes and made memos e.g. the choice of income generating projects differing between rural and urban schools and evidence of donor support in the form of promotional materials in schools and so on.

Collecting secondary data helped to substantiate some of the information given. In some cases, the documentation also provided a wealth of information which the researcher might have otherwise had to physically collect. Secondary data also provided quantitative data for the SROI as well as further data for triangulation.

As previously mentioned, the iterative nature of this mixed method grounded theory research required that several respondents be interviewed multiple times with new questions being added to the interview process as necessary. In this tradition of iteration, an online survey questionnaire was also used to glean follow up information. The online survey was designed specifically for the Social Return on Investment analysis and, as such, used a combination of open and closed-ended questions with a quantitative focus (See link in annex 2). Given the researchers' limited timelines and the cost of travelling to and within Zimbabwe to collect additional data, these online surveys were emailed to participants or shared via WhatsApp as a means of asking follow-up questions remotely.

Although still contested in some sectors, the use of WhatsApp as a means of communication in research is gaining wider acceptance primarily because of how easy it is to use and its convenience (Mwanda, 2022, p. 80). Verheijen & Stoop, (2016) and Zayed (2021) make note of the many fields, education included, in which WhatsApp has already been used to collect data. In a paper titled 'Text, Voice-notes, and Emojis: Exploring the use of WhatsApp as a responsive research method for qualitative studies' Mwanda (2022) references authors such as Chen & Neo, 2019; Nyembe & Howard, 2020; Colom, 2021 who have in recent years used social media to collect data (p. 78).

Mwanda (2022) refers to challenges in the South African context such as the limited time that respondents have to participate in research and resource challenges, specifically internet connectivity. These challenges also apply to Zimbabwe and using WhatsApp can help circumvent these challenges to allow research to continue.

In the case of this research, internet connectivity and resource constraints experienced by the respondents proved to be a real obstacle to speaking to research participants remotely. This necessitated conducting some interviews using WhatsApp calls rather than Zoom or Microsoft Teams meetings as WhatsApp requires less data. The turnaround time for contacting respondents via WhatsApp and then proceeding to do interviews was also much quicker than having to arrange Zoom meetings (Mavhandu-Mudzusi et al., 2022, p. 2). Furthermore, the researcher was able to receive documents and images via WhatsApp reducing the burden of data transfer on the research participants. Mavhandu-Mudzusi et al. (2022) makes a case for emboldening social science researchers to continue to innovate in the application of WhatsApp in their work by quoting Shahid (2018) to this effect. Other authors again as cited by Mavhandu-Mudzusi et al. (2022) remind researchers who use social media for research not to neglect rigour and ethics. In order to ensure that data collected via WhatsApp was still obtained ethically, respondents were sent transcripts of the interviews as prepared by the researcher and asked to confirm their validity.

Two respondents requested that their interview data be anonymised. This presented something of a challenge as their informed consent forms would naturally also include the participants contact number. Furthermore, initial contact was often made via WhatsApp where their contact details and sometimes names were accessible. Montag and Baumeister (2023) debate the difficulties of maintaining anonymity within a field that places a lot of importance on producing reliable and traceable data. They however recommend that identifiers-information that could identify the respondent-be replaced with placeholders and cite multiple authors in defence of this position. Borrowing from this line of thinking, the research transcribed these two interviews and labelled them with reference only to the organisations the respondents were employed by.

## 6. Coding

The collected data were transcribed using *F4transkript* and coded using *F4analyse*, a Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software or CAQDAS. This process began before all the interviews were completed. New data were then transcribed and coded as interviews were conducted and as more secondary data became available. Data were transcribed verbatim, and as most of the interviews were conducted in Shona and Ndebele, a decision was made to code directly from these local languages into English. This aided in maintaining the integrity of the developed codes. An official

translator who also doubled as a research assistant was engaged to attend and conduct the Ndebele Interviews which is not the researchers first language. The translator and the researcher discussed the interviews immediately after to ensure that they had the same understanding of the information that was shared. These interviews were then transcribed directly into English by the translator. Early transcription of the Ndebele interviews into English was decided on so that the researcher would not have to repeatedly revert to the translator in the event meanings were no longer clear. A second tool employed to ensure integrity of the codes derived from these data was to share content and coded findings regularly with peers and in colloquia. Memo writing accompanied the entire coding process, helping to give order to thought and ideas and single out particular aspects for further investigation.

As per the Straussian grounded theory methodology, the collected data were coded in four stages. The first of these was the open coding stage where the data was broken up into smaller discrete pieces of information using *F4analyse*. The coding at this stage was separated into descriptive labels that best suited the data known as ‘concepts’. Some data were coded *In Vivo*, that is given labels extracted directly from the text while others were given paraphrased but appropriate labels instead. These concepts were compared “for similarities and differences” with comparable concepts which helped to identify phenomena being grouped together as categories under an abstracted label (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). Likewise, the work of identifying the properties and dimension of these codes and categories began. A common feature of the coding process at this stage was the presence of many sub-codes, that is codes that demonstrated perhaps only a small part of another code. The memo below highlights this process.

*“I’m not generating codes as fast anymore. However, I am finding different ways in which the same code can be presented, giving a nuanced picture”*. – 11 July 2022.

At the conclusion of the open coding stage, the research produced both quantitative and qualitative data.

### **6.i. Identifying Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes**

At this point, the research turned to teasing out useful and comparable quantitative data from what was collected. A respondent would for example make mention of an initiative which they would thereafter be requested to provide supporting information for. Such data included monitoring and evaluation log frames, expenditure reports, enrolment and pass rate information. Where such information was not readily available, proxies

were used instead. One such example is claims of improved learning outcomes. This information was sought from the schools themselves, and the district or provincial offices were possible. The research also turned to media reports on things like pass rate etc. As far as possible, the research sought to extract comparable timeseries data as such data would allow for the calculation of year-on-year changes in outcomes. This task, particularly accessing financial records and pass rate data, proved extremely difficult to execute. Gaps were filled in where possible with proxy data from the literature or other sources.

### **7. Theoretical Sampling**

Theoretical sampling based on appropriate and interesting leads from the literature review and then the conversations determined the direction the research took to uncover more data for collection. The first port of call was the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Thereafter, other stakeholders such as local donor aid funded organization representatives, school heads, bursary beneficiaries and an African Enterprise Challenge Fund official were also interviewed with points and ideas raised in preceding interviews informing the choice of where to go next. One of the early conversations highlighted an example of an educational institution which, according to the interview respondents, had received significant donor funding to provide Technical and Vocational Education and Training in a very remote part of the country. This same case was mentioned by a second respondent after which a decision was made to include it within the research sample and visit it in order to conduct interviews.

Similarly, one location visited benefitted from a brand-new donation from a big multi-lateral organisation. Respondents at the site of this donation questioned why a brand-new donation was made when the Multi-Lateral could have just as easily repaired existing infrastructure at a lower cost. This question was the added to the interview guide that was later administered to a representative from the concerned Multi-Lateral organisation.

Given the iterative nature of the research, most of the data were collected in three waves. The first wave targeted mostly institutional level interviews. The second involved going into the provinces and visiting educational institutions and beneficiaries. Their selection was informed primarily by some of the information collected during the first wave. The third wave was conducted mostly remotely and included the online survey and several participants who were interviewed again remotely to get clarity on patterns in the

data and new or overlooked pieces of information. The eventual sample size was arrived at using this method. As a labour of discovery, the data collection exercise saw the researcher visiting multiple locations across Zimbabwe including rural, urban and peri-urban locations and five provinces in total.

### **7.i Identification and Selection of Cases for Social Return on Investment Analysis**

It was at this stage that the selection of cases for the Social Return on Investment analysis began. Out of the 42 cases in the study, five cases, also defined as bounded “singularities” by Dumez (2015, p. 46), were selected for further Social Return on Investment Analysis. Although a small number, Vavrus and Bartlett (2022) present arguments from Gerring (2004) to the effect that investigating even a “single unit” in depth can offer value with regards to “understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (p. 1).

According to Lee (2020) researchers can use their discretion to decide which cases to study. In this instance, the researcher had to make this decision taking the following considerations into account. Firstly, the different types of cases did not produce homogenous data e.g. School level donation initiatives which produced quantitative data on teaching and learning materials vs teacher training programmes which focused on number of teachers trained as a measure of output. Secondly, the level of record keeping and awareness of details was very different across cases. In one instance, the donor was no longer operational in Zimbabwe and the respondents did not have full access to the records of the project. Thirdly, some of the inputs, outputs and outcomes were of an intangible nature making them difficult to quantify. Fourth and quite interestingly, in some cases even where information should have been readily available or a matter of public record, it was not. In two instances, requests for data from ODA funded organisations were not responded to. Lastly, respondents in the education sector are a very mobile group. Reaching them for interviews proved to be a complex undertaking.

These factors compelled the selection of five cases where a significant amount of reliable data was made available during the field trips and where there was a reasonable assurance that valid data from other sources could be used to fill in the gaps. Together they represented 1 initiative of a for-profit Social Enterprise in a government high school, 1 rural faith-based primary school, 1 donor funded school grants programme in a mine affiliated rural school, and 2 beneficiaries of a country level donor funded programme.

## 8. Valuation

Parallel to the qualitative data categorisation was the valuation of the quantitative data derived from the SROI data collection exercises as indicated in Table 2. Each initiative was analysed using *F4analyse* and its individual inputs, outputs and outcomes were identified. Borrowing from the tenets of the grounded theory methodology, the data being analysed within the framework of the Social Return on Investment were taken apart and broken into pieces during the open coding stage. This led to data on who the beneficiaries were, when they received support, what form that support took, in what amounts, in what ways the funds were used and fragmented and what the consequences or outcomes were. The next step was to convert these inputs, outputs and outcomes into monetary value either by using the exact figures given by respondents or in records, or by finding similar proxies with known values. One example is the amount of labour committed towards the execution of a project, programme or intervention, whatever the case may be. This labour would then be converted into wages or salaries using National Salary Scales. This process yielded traceable and justifiable monetary values which were later used to calculate the Social Return on Investment (SROI) ratios. Where monetary values could not be established because of the unavailability of data, no Social Return on Investment calculations were made. Rather what limited information was available was included in the narrative.

## 9. Categorisation

The second level of coding, axial coding, involved relating the categories to each other using theoretical comparison. This involved comparing the different categories against their sub-categories at the level of their properties and dimensions. Theoretical sampling served to reconstruct the data and flesh out the categories in greater detail. The process of conducting axial coding benefitted from the involvement of stakeholders in the study who critiqued the derived codes and offered opinions.

A deliberate effort to find sub-categories, that is the “where, when, why, who, how and with what consequences” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 119) of the various categories was also made.

The questions “what is happening here?” and “what conditions catalyse this event?” were central to this process and helped to identify phenomena and abstract related codes into these higher order categories. Categories were further refined by their properties and dimensions. For example, the codes “**Continuous Improvement**”,

“Increase in dropouts post 2020” and “Presence of **numerous** donor organizations in education” were subsumed into the category “Sustaining Initiatives”. Through categorisation and comparison, the major categories were eventually identified and developed in more detail (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143).

## 10. Determination of the Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Determining the SROI rather than theory building took precedence in this process, allowing the SROI findings to feed into subsequent data analysis and the development of the grounded theory. Davidson et al. (2008) warn against trying to capture value or lack thereof using only single simplified calculations. Therefore, in the absence of comprehensive data, a process which combined the basics of calculating Social Return on Investment ratios and triangulation of data from various sources was developed and used. These other data included scores on a scale of 1 to 6 given by key interviewees on their perception of the efficiency and effectiveness of a given initiative. The final contribution was to collect narrative data derived from interviews and secondary sources on the perceived costs and benefits or inputs and outputs/outcomes as one would have it. Together, these three facets provided a well-rounded view of the Social Return on Investment of the cases included for this analysis. Five cases in total were selected for further Social Return on Investment Analysis. The choice of which cases to select were informed by the tenets of Theoretical Sampling. Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007, p. 27) argue that using Theoretical Sampling can help researchers identify cases which can, to paraphrase somewhat, “illuminate and extend relationships among constructs” rather than just providing representativeness.

### Social Return on Investment ratio

The data from interviews was used to identify the inputs, outputs, outcomes and monetary values of these where possible. Where there were data gaps, values were augmented with information from follow up surveys, secondary data and other proxy variables. The identification of some suitable proxy variables was informed by literature, marking the point at which the study began to expand on the initial literature review. A decision to refer to these metrics as ‘found’ was taken in order to show that some metrics were not given explicitly but rather generated from a combination of sources. To illustrate, although the input ‘Ordinary Level exam fees’ was mentioned frequently in interviews and secondary data, the monetary value of the input was at no point stated

explicitly. Consequently, the cost of these exam fees was found by consulting public records from the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) and newspaper reports. The cost of this input would thereafter be referred to as a ‘found input’.

Five typologies, be they related to inputs or outputs, but which are important for educational outcomes, were delimited. This step was guided by the tenets of Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) which requires that elements (also known as criteria or components) be identified and evaluated as discrete units (Barretta et al., 2023; Jana et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 1994). The factors were grouped into their typologies, labelled and applied to each intervention accordingly. This helped to show how monies from the various initiatives were spent and fragmented if at all. These typologies were based on findings from an extensive review of research on how education funding in Sub-Saharan Africa influences education outcomes by Hassan et al. (2022). This “review of reviews” considered both supply and demand side initiatives in education looking at:

- New schools,
- Electrification,
- Infrastructure,
- Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers (CCTs and UCTs respectively),
- Facilities such as desks,
- Reducing the cost of schooling,
- Scholarships,
- The provision of pedagogical materials,
- Teachers and teaching aids,
- Additional resources,
- Teacher training,
- Teacher incentives,
- Teacher performance based/incentives,
- Pedagogical changes,
- Bilingual instruction and,
- Remedial education.

It covered public secondary education in 11 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), namely Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Mali, South Africa, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Benin, Mozambique, and Ghana. The findings generally indicate that infrastructure, teachers and teaching methods and performance-based incentives for

learners have a significant and positive impact on learning outcomes (p. 6). Several other authors list factors which they also deem important for learner outcomes such as the acquisition of a qualification (Dickson & Smith, 2011), school culture, leadership, participation and quality of teaching, (Davidson et al., 2008) and, provision of textbooks and uniforms and building of classrooms (Evans & Ngatia, 2021). As indicated, after having read through the literature, five typologies were delimited and are presented in Table 11.

At this point, it became clear that a simple SROI analysis would not be possible largely because the bulk of initiatives encountered in the study were made up of a mix of inputs and outputs across several factors. One of the bursary schemes in the study paid school fees but also provided uniforms to learners as well as teaching and learning materials among other things. Similarly, in the case of a nation-wide school improvement grants programme used as one of the SROI cases, the expenditure of the funds donated to a school was fragmented into five different outputs i.e., the purchase of textbooks, the purchase of physical infrastructure-desks and chairs, start-up funding for a social entrepreneurial project and so on. Although most of the cases were officially reported on as a single initiative in publicly available reports, visits to the schools showed that most of these single initiatives were made up of different outputs across different factors.

At the same time, several initiatives were made up of multiple outputs (also referred to in this study as ‘sub-criteria’) even within the same factor. To illustrate, one such case involved improving the learning environment for learners in five different ways. This indicated that each of these five ways or outputs would have its own impact and as such would need to be weighed individually. In order to do this, the study borrowed the weights principle from the Multi-Criteria Decision-Making method. An average of these sub-criteria was found by dividing the sum of the value of these outputs by five, the number of sub-criteria of that output.

In this way, the research was able to use a single value for the factor ‘learning environment’ and avoided using multiple values for this one factor and single values for all the others which would have skewed the calculation.

Table 10: Typologies of education factors

Factors	Labels	Weights
School Leadership (school head qualifications, supervision, community involvement etc)	SL	10
Socio-economic situation (background, parents' education, income demographic, gender etc)	SES	40
Quality of Teaching (teacher experience, teacher qualifications, teaching time etc)	QT	10
Teaching & Learning Materials (textbooks, teaching guides, chalk, boards, ICT etc)	TLM	30
Learning environment (pupil inclusion, physical infrastructure, services etc)	LE	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

The weights were arrived at by asking a group of expert stakeholders to weigh each one of the factors in table 10. The total of these weights came up to 100. These experts were teachers whose combined experience involved working in both rural and urban areas, with primary and secondary learners, males and females, working with school level social entrepreneurial projects and as school leaders. This was done in order to be able to fulfil Lewis et al. (1994) selection tenets of credible and representative experts for the task (p. 84). Once a table of weights for all five factors had been determined, the research moved to establishing the estimated benefit of each output by multiplying its monetary value by the corresponding weight for whichever factor it represented. To illustrate, the output of textbooks represented the Teaching and Learning Materials factor. The value of the textbooks purchased was multiplied by the perceived weight that textbooks contribute to learning outcomes.

A ratio based on the sum of the found outcomes minus the sum of the found inputs, divided by the sum of the found inputs was then calculated only in instances where the figures were clearly given or where a suitable proxy could be found. Davidson et al. (2008) reference the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) which derived a similar “educational productivity” ratio of outputs to inputs (p. 11).

## 11. Developing the coding paradigm

A particular emphasis was placed on unpacking codes and categories using the coding paradigm outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1998). This involved identifying the causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and consequences of each category as in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Example of use of coding paradigm

**Category:** Regulation of funds  
**Codes:** Using Funds, accounting for funds  
**Sub-codes:** Funding core business, reducing cash payments  
**Causal conditions:** Mission statement, corporate governance statutes  
**Context:** Limited funds, widespread need, multi-currency economy  
**Intervening conditions:** New government regulations, hyper-inflation  
**Action/interaction strategies:** Regulation of funds by schools and banks  
**Consequences:** Fluctuations in number of students supported, administrative costs  
29 September 2023

## 12. Conducting the Survey

Respondents from specific cases were asked to ascribe value on a scale of 1 to 6 to the initiatives they benefited from where 1 was the worst possible score and 6 was the best possible score. As noted by Nicholls et al. (2012) respondents can be roped into ascribing value to the outcomes of the programmes that they were beneficiaries of. In this case, the scale was adapted from an Ex-post evaluation report of the Zimbabwe Basic Education Assistance Model (BEAM) produced by the KfW. This scale was chosen because it has already been used in an evaluation which aimed to measure the “overall developmental efficacy” of a national education programme funded by Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Zimbabwe (KfW, 2015, p. 5).

Moreover, the scale descriptors (See Table 11) were designed to measure effectiveness and efficiency, two aspects pivotal to this study, as well as the relevance and the overarching developmental impact of the intervention (KfW, 2015, p. 5).

Table 11: Respondents Valuation Scale

Value	Description
1	The project has had no impact, or the situation has actually deteriorated
2	Clearly inadequate result – despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate
3	Unsatisfactory result – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
4	Satisfactory result – project falls short of expectations, but the positive results dominate
5	Good result, fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
6	Very good result that clearly exceeds expectations

Adapted from: KfW (2015), *Ex post evaluation – Zimbabwe*, KfW [https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/PDF/Evaluierung/Ergebnisse-und-Publikationen/PDF-Dokumente-R-Z\\_EN/Simbabwe\\_OVC\\_2015\\_E.pdf](https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/PDF/Evaluierung/Ergebnisse-und-Publikationen/PDF-Dokumente-R-Z_EN/Simbabwe_OVC_2015_E.pdf).

### 13. Sensitivity Analysis

Due to the paucity of data, the study was not always able to apply a sensitivity analysis, that is to determine which factors had the greatest impact on the ratios. As such, a conservative approach was adopted. Where insufficient data was available, a simple SROI ratio was given. Where more information was available, multiple scenarios were presented showing what the ratio would be in its most simple form and with the application of the percentage attribution, deadweight, displacement and drop off whatever the case would be (see figure 2). In those cases where finding a valid quantitative measure of attribution, deadweight, displacement and drop off was not possible, these were reported on in the narrative as qualitative data and consisted of the perceptions of respondents or proxy information from secondary data.

### 14. Narratives

Finally, the narrative section collected qualitative feedback from respondents' interviews and secondary data and compiled this in the form of a narrative on each Initiative. These narratives serve as a complementary data source, i.e., "the stories that complement the numbers (ratio)" (Betterevaluation.org, n.d.). Given that the final ratio obtained gives an incomplete account of the context in which the change is taking place, narratives helped to fill in the gaps by capturing nuances which the SROI ratios left out.

These three metrics together helped to substantiate or contradict each other and by so doing arrived at a more honest evaluation of the Social Return on Investment.

The calculation of the SROI analysis is displayed below as follows:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{Investment (\$) - Outcomes (\$)} \\
 \hline
 \text{Investment (\$)} & + & \text{Valuation out of 6} & + & \text{Narrative}
 \end{array}$$

## 15. Integrating the Data

Interviews were conducted in three languages. Data analysis was done based off the codes generated in English using *F4analyse*. However, the original versions in their varying languages were referred to repeatedly in order to be sure the translation, understanding and analysis maintained the integrity of the original message. Secondary data in the form of reports was also analysed using *F4analyse*. All such records were provided in English. As such, there was no need to translate any of this particular data.

After producing the Social Return on Investment analysis, the research returned to the analysis of the major categories. Through an iterative cycle of data analysis, several patterns in the data began to emerge. This took place throughout the data analysis process which consisted of comparing the codes with codes, codes with categories and categories with categories and discussing the findings with colleagues and stakeholders.

The researcher struggled with a certain degree of bias towards social entrepreneurship. This bias was eventually overcome through external intervention from peers who pointed this proclivity out and by accepting this bias and acknowledging the need to critique social entrepreneurship honestly so as to eventually be able to provide solutions for its shortcomings. Repeated reference towards grounded theory literature also helped to clarify how to analyse the data. Up to this point, the researcher had already identified four major categories but was struggling to find the core category which bound them all together. Once however, this problem of bias was addressed, the core category, elevated and therefore independent from both donor aid and social entrepreneurship, began to take form and shape the development of a theory.

The findings from the SROI analysis also fed into the grounded theory analysis. The SROI ratios and valuations provided certain striking contradictions which called for further interrogation. Through comparison of these contradictions and their related data, grounded theory was able to offer explanations for the findings of the SROI analyse and incorporate these into the final theory.

## 16. Explanatory Theory

The explanatory theory drew from the four major categories and was developed around the core category. The research once again made use of the coding paradigm to relate the major categories to each other along their causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies and consequences. These increased the explanatory power of the theory and also helped to identify common concepts. This also improved the wider applicability of the theory by moving from the specific to the general. Theory building also benefited from presenting findings in diagram form showing the relationships between the four major categories, the core category and the theory.

The preliminary literature and an additional literature review helped to buttress and confirm some of the findings and related these to existing theories. It also helped to clarify some of the arguments presented. The SROI analysis also fed into theory development, by giving the researcher an expanded understanding of how funding is deployed and its impact highlighting striking patterns, as well as by being able to provide proof of the properties and dimensions of efficiency and effectiveness of particular cases. Towards the end of the study, memos written during the research study were reviewed once again to see if the questions in them were addressed through the selective coding process and ultimately within the explanatory theory (Engward, 2013, p. 5).

## 17. Sharing Feedback with Respondents

As is the iterative nature of this process, the first draft explanatory theory was shared with stakeholders, particularly the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Very minimal revisions from respondents were received and included as necessary, not because the results were perfect, because of the very same challenges that made collecting data from Zimbabwe remotely so difficult. Respondents tended to ironically be unresponsive when faced with digital queries. Much of this had to do with the prohibitive cost of being online for many of them. Many struggled with network availability. Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education officials also indicated being very busy.

## 18. Reporting

Results were written out in the final thesis under the section on presentation of findings. Not only did this section report back on the SROI ratios derived as well as other financial findings, but it also included qualitative data detailing the social value being created by each project as well as explaining the decisions made thorough the study

(Social Ventures Australia Consulting, 2012). The emergent explanatory theory was presented as the apex of this thesis alongside recommendations for potential implementation and further research. The limitations of the study were outlined before the thesis was concluded with some final remarks.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

As previously mentioned, the nature of this methodology is that it was reliant on data. It was therefore critical that these data were verified at every stage of the collection process and even during analysis through triangulation and other means. The need for verification applied to both quantitative and qualitative data. It was especially useful for building and maintaining trust and ownership amongst the different stakeholder perspectives of the intervention. The complexity of this particular research design required frequent reflection to make sure the grounded theory methodology and Social Return on Investment framework were aligned as per mixed methods grounded theory tenets and that the study remained valid.

## 4 Presentation of Data Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

The title of this doctoral thesis reads ‘To what extent can Social Entrepreneurship be more efficient and effective than Donor aid in the Education Sector in Zimbabwe? During the course of research, the study encountered data from social entrepreneurially funded contexts in education, data from donor aid funded contexts in education as well as data from contexts where a hybrid of donor aid and social entrepreneurially funded education initiatives obtained. A mixed-methods methodology employing both qualitative and quantitative methods was used. Furthermore, data was collected and analysed using a variety of mixed methods. The Social Return on Investment framework used both quantitative and qualitative methods and qualitative “theory-building methods” from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 8). This was done to glean efficiency and cost-effectiveness metrics in particular.

The findings showed a lot of diversity and as well as frequent instances of inconsistently available data. To address this challenge, this study, which is guided by post-positivism championed by authors such as Calman (2007), adopted the concept of ‘layering of research findings from different methods of data collection’ (Phoenix et al., 2013, n.p) otherwise known as triangulation. Using these methods of triangulation in data presentation, this chapter will weave together findings from various sources of data, a tapestry if you will, to help the reader develop a comprehensive understanding of the results. Alongside two initial descriptions of the context in which the study took place, visual aids such as tables, diagrams and graphs will also be used to aid in *Verstehen* or understanding (Fox, 2008) of the complex interplay of findings presented here.

This chapter is split into five sections. These are data presentation, Social Return on Investment, grounded theory, recommendations and conclusion.

#### 4.1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Study

Before proceeding to present the results of this study, another reminder of its goals will help to frame these findings for the reader. The aim of this study was to investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship respectively. These results were then juxtaposed against each other, with a view to determining the efficiency and effectiveness of both donor aid and social entrepreneurship and

consequently to what extent social entrepreneurship can be an alternative to donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

The theoretical objectives of the study were to:

- a) Build a deeper understanding of the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe.
- b) Develop a grounded theory of the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

The practical objectives of the study were as follows:

- a) To compare the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid to social entrepreneurship financing in the education sector in Zimbabwe using mixed methods grounded theory.
- b) To create a foundation for further discussion on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship financing among education stakeholders in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

#### **4.1.2 Research Questions of the Study**

The questions guiding this research were as follows:

- I. How efficient and effective are social entrepreneurship and donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe respectively?
- II. What are the Social Returns on Investment of donor aid and social entrepreneurship in the education sector in Zimbabwe respectively?
- III. Based on the comparison of efficiency and effectiveness (question I.) and Social Returns on Investment (question II.) to what extent can social entrepreneurship serve as an alternative to donor aid in Zimbabwe's education sector?

#### **4.2 Data Collection**

The research employed a combination of data collection methods in keeping with the mixed methods research design. Seven data collection methods were employed as outlined in Figure 10. These were face to face to interviews, WhatsApp interviews, observations, secondary data collection, online surveys, observations, conversations and Focus Group Discussions.

#### 4.2.1 Location of Interviews

The overwhelming majority of face-to-face interviews were conducted in rural areas where 77.04 per cent of primary and 75.83 per cent of secondary schools in Zimbabwe are found (Global Partnership for Education et al., 2023; Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2022, p. 12). In this study, of the 16 schools that were visited, 12 are rural. The only technical and vocational college in the study is also rural. Four schools are faith-based, and it must be noted, that while all four are rural by geographic location, they have more resources at their disposal than would a typical public rural school.

#### 4.2.2 Primary Data Collection

This researcher conducted fieldwork in 17 locations in the country in schools and institutions. These were both rural and urban. Most of the physical data collection took place between February 2022 and July 2022 in intermittent phases. All the schools and institutions visited are classified as low (P1 and S1) to middle-income schools (P2 or S2).<sup>9</sup> Both Government and non-government faith-based schools and colleges were visited. Three initial school visits were conducted for the purposes of observation. These observations and unstructured Focus Group Discussions informed the design of the interview guide. After the interviews were concluded, follow up data collection exercises were carried out online using WhatsApp calls, chats and Google Surveys beginning August 2022 and ending August 2023. A total of 57 individual respondents took part in this part of study.

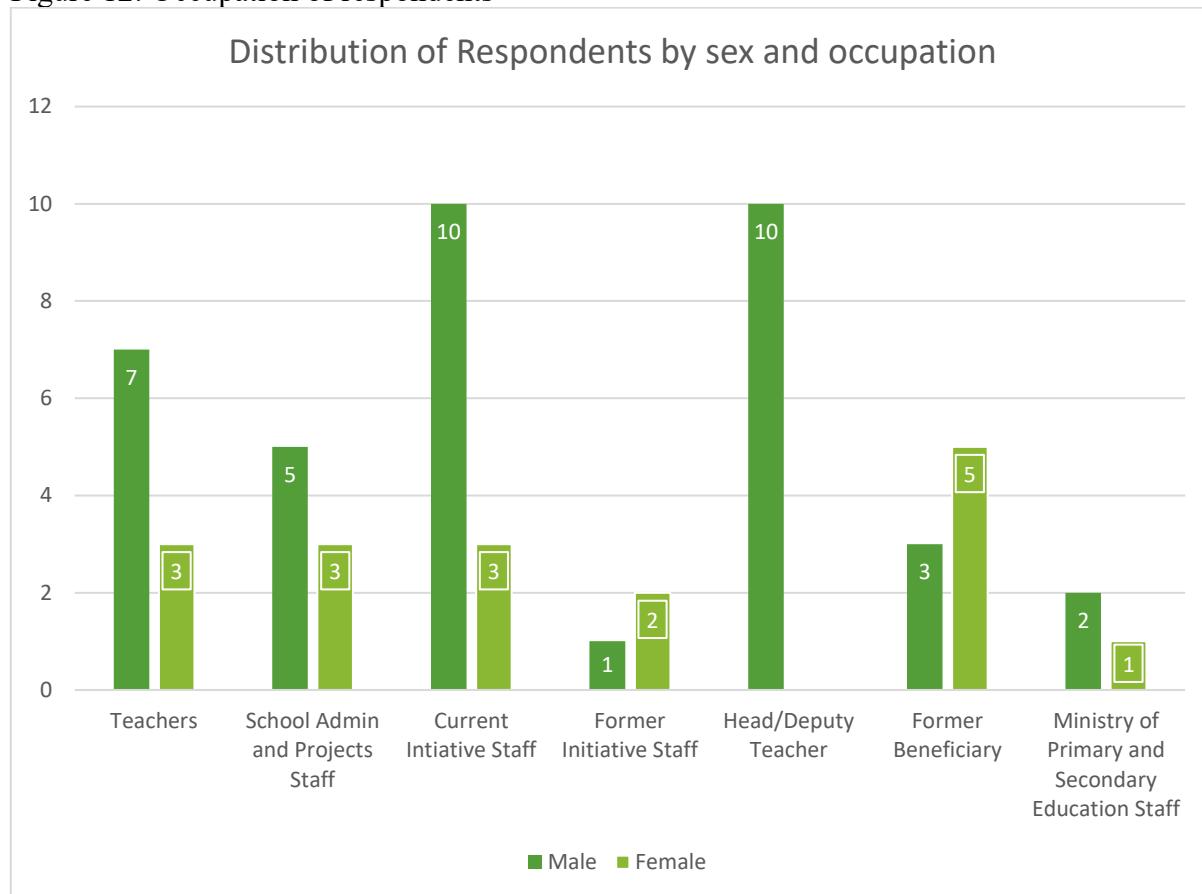
In addition to visiting schools and colleges, interviews were conducted with experts working for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe, donor agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations, teachers working with students, development organisations and innovation hubs. Thirty eight respondents were male. This perhaps reflects the tendency to put male teachers in charge of income generating projects as well as the higher numbers of male than female Head teachers in Zimbabwe. School level respondents worked in schools as teaching, administrative or project staff. This mix

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<sup>9</sup> P1 and S1 schools are schools in low-density urban areas and some elite schools regardless of location where 'P' stands for 'Primary' and 'S' stands for Secondary. P2 and S2 schools are high-density areas. P3 and S3 schools are schools in rural areas (MoPSE, 2021).

of informants was a result of the demands of the study and provided a diverse set of perspectives on education financing and its sources. Of those listed as 'current Intervention Staff' and at the time of being interviewed, a total of 11 interviewees worked for their respective donor agencies or donor aid funded Non-Governmental Organisation while two worked for a company involved in some sort of Social Entrepreneurship. Finding social enterprises proved difficult, hence the limited representation of this sector in this study. These two respondents worked for an incubation hub and a mine with a Corporate Social Responsibility component directed towards the school on its premises.

Figure 12: Occupation of respondents



Three former employees of two separate donor aid funded interventions were also interviewed and only 3 high level Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education officials (2 Directors at Head office and 1 Provincial Education Director) took part in this research as respondents. This collection of respondents represented 'knowledgeable informants' from diverse backgrounds and with varied but relevant experience. Such respondents can mitigate against biased responses (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Of the 5 female former student beneficiaries in this study, 4 were part of the same donor aid funded programme which provided them with high school bursaries. The fifth

respondent was part of a now defunct Earn and Learn programme where students worked in exchange for a wage, board, and free enrolment within the company's school.

The over representation of female interviewees reflects the interest this study took in girls' education particularly as there has been a large amount of funding channelled towards this sector in Zimbabwe in the last decade.

Table 12: Distribution of respondents by method of data collection

<b>Face to Face Interviews</b>	<b>Telephone Interviews</b>	<b>Conversations</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Focus Group Discussions</b>	<b>Online Surveys</b>
21	6	3	9	7	9

Data from 51 respondents representing a total of 42 cases was collected using a mix of data collection methods. Twenty one of these were face to face interviews (where two of these were dyadic interviews with two respondents each). Three initial data collection conversations were conducted over the telephone while remote methods (WhatsApp calls) were used to execute six structured interviews. Tours of Official Development Aid funded projects (donor aid), and school Income Generating Projects (social entrepreneurship) were carried out in 9 schools at a ratio of 4 as to 5 respectively. A total of 7 Focus Group Discussions where conducted. All of these were conducted with beneficiaries who represented either students or school authorities. Follow-up online survey questionnaires were sent to 14 of the first phase respondents who together represented 9 cases. To illustrate, 4 of the respondents who received the online survey were beneficiaries of the same donor aid funded programme. Another two respondents were the head teacher at a school and the human resources clerk of that schools' sponsoring company. For a full list of data collection methods used per number of respondents, see table 12.

As earlier indicated, 14 follow up online survey questionnaires were distributed to respondents who together provided information for 9 cases.

Table 13: Follow-up online survey respondents

Institution	No. of Respondents
Avontuur Secondary School Earn and Learn programme	1
Brompton Primary School	1
CAMFED/FCDO	4
Coronation Primary School	1
Chipinge College of Horticulture	2
Norwegian Refugee Council	1
Forum for African Women Educationalists in Zimbabwe	1
Regain37	1
Sikato Primary School	1
St Columba Primary School	1

### Interview Questions

The main interview instrument collected data in two sections.

Section I – Biographical and geographical data

Section II – Interview Questions

The section of interview questions was further split into four subsections where the first subsection dealt with determining the respondents understanding of the key phrases in the study, that is donor aid, social entrepreneurship, efficiency, and effectiveness.

In the second and third subsection, the questionnaire asked the following questions:

Figure 13: Interview protocol

2.4 Do you have any experiences of traditional Official Development Assistance grant financed activities? If yes, please share.

2.5 In what ways were these donor aid grant financed activities efficient and effective? Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.6 In what ways were these donor aid grant financed activities **inefficient and ineffective**? Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.7 Do you have any experiences of social entrepreneurial financed education activities in the education sector? If yes, please share.

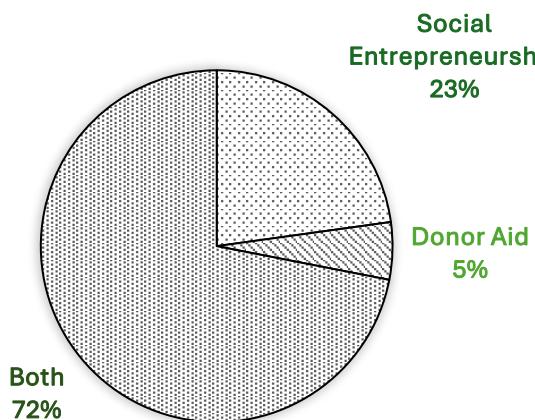
2.8 In what ways were these social entrepreneurial financed activities efficient and effective? Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.9 In what ways were these social entrepreneurial financed activities **inefficient and ineffective**? Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

The overwhelming majority of respondents from the interviews phase (41) had experiences with both education finances generated from donor aid related sources and through social entrepreneurship. Only two schools out of the 13 visited did not report receiving any donor aid while only three respondents had experiences of funding experiences from only donor sources.

Figure 14: Experiences with sources of education funding

### EXPERIENCES WITH SOURCES OF EDUCATION FUNDING



#### 4.2.3 Secondary Data Collection

Analysis of data from secondary sources was also conducted. Three Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) reports from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education were analysed. These were EMIS spreadsheets on the sources of income in schools in 2021 as well as the EMIS 2020 and 2021 reports. The research also analysed 17 Annual Reports from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom (FCDO) funded Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education Programme implemented by CAMFED. Other reports included 15 Joint Monitoring Reports<sup>10</sup> provided by the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) and one end of programme evaluation from World Vision Zimbabwe's FCDO sponsored Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education programme.

A total of sixty three documents were coded using *f4analyse*. These encompassed the reports mentioned above as well as another 48 documents made up of interviews, Focus Group Discussions, dyadic interviews and conversations. During the data analysis and write up, several other documents were reviewed as a means of cross checking against emerging phenomena. Furthermore, and where possible, interviewees were asked to provide records substantiating their submissions. Secondary data sources dated from as far back as 2007 and go up to 2022.

#### 4.2.4 Profile of Schools Visited

After conducting data collection in the field and reviewing official documentation, a picture of the typical school sampled in this study emerged as outlined in figure 15:

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<sup>10</sup> Joint Monitoring Reports are an output of Joint Monitoring and Evaluation visits conducted by education stakeholders of the Global Partnership for Education and Education for Development Fund in Zimbabwe.

Figure 15: Profile of schools visited

*Source: Researchers' own.*

#### 4.2.5 Social Return on Investment

These data together with findings from interviews and quantitative data, specifically education indicators and household survey data were triangulated to come up with as comprehensive an assessment as possible of the Social Return on Investment of the cases included here. Similarly, as the intention of this study had been to combine the Social Return on Investment framework within the grounded theory methodology in a structured and comprehensively comparable manner, the absence of data from many sources as well as the withholding of data from some respondents meant that this study had to single out cases where sufficient evidence could be collected with which to calculate the Social Returns on Investment ratios of activities funded either by donor aid and or through social entrepreneurship. Such evidence was also augmented with proxy values and information from similar cases. This is in keeping with recommendations from Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 44) who themselves reference Begley (1996) and Sandelowski (1996) on the merits of triangulating various data sources. The method of triangulation used here is referred to specifically as ‘Data Triangulation’ (Bans-Akutey and Tiimub, 2021).

In research, the choice of which cases to select can be informed by the tenets of Theoretical Sampling. Theoretical sampling focuses on identifying cases which can “illuminate and extend relationships among constructs” Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, p. 27). As such, it allows for the selection of those cases that are able to expand understanding of interactions between the said constructs. Five cases were selected for further Social Return on Investment analysis. The data from interviews was used to identify the inputs, outputs, outcomes and monetary values of these for each case where possible. These values were augmented with information from follow up surveys, secondary data and proxies where data gaps exist. A decision to consider these metrics as ‘found’ was taken in order to show that some metrics may not have been included because they were not identified by respondents or the researcher. They may also have been left out of the estimation process because there was not enough information to come up with a reasonably reliable or valid figure.

Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) principles were applied to help give value to the elements in the cases. A set of five factors which influence learner outcomes were organized into typologies. These typologies were determined based on the literature. For example, the purchase of textbooks for students or teachers would fall into the

category of Teaching and Learning materials. Thereafter, these factors were weighted for attribution as per the tenets of Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) by an expert group made up of teachers in Zimbabwe. The weights add up to 100.

Table 14: Attribution weights

Factors	Label	Weights
School Leadership (school head qualifications, supervision, community involvement etc)	SL	10
Socio-Economic Situation (background, parents' education, income demographic, gender etc)	SES	40
Quality of Teaching (teacher experience, teacher qualifications, teaching time etc)	QT	10
Teaching & Learning Materials (textbooks, teaching guides, chalk, boards, ICT etc)	TLM	30
Learning Environment (pupil inclusion, physical infrastructure, services etc)	LE	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

*Source: Teacher experts*

The weights were explained as follows:

- School Leadership (school head qualifications, supervision, community involvement etc)- School leadership was given a weight of 10. The teachers argued that in the context of Zimbabwe where education is highly regulated and where constitutionally, public schools are not allowed to turn learners away for non-payment of school fees, Head teachers and other school leaders do not have the necessary tools to positively influence learning outcomes. Furthermore, they argued that in schools that are well resourced, school leaders “do not have to do much”. Community involvement in the running of the school through organs such as School Development Committees (SDC) is also constrained by the same factors as the activities of SDCs are also regulated by Government.
- Socio-Economic Situation (background, parents' education, income demographic, gender etc)- Here teachers pointed out that parents, guardians and the wider community have an important role to play with regards to influencing their children to take their education seriously. They therefore gave this typology a weighing of 40. Furthermore, parents who are not educated are less likely to see the value of education, neither would they be able to assist their children with homework and assignments in the home. Parents can also close the gap between what poorly resourced schools are able to provide to the learner and what the learner needs. This can be by buying extra teaching and learning materials, paying

for after-school assistance and allowing learners the time to focus on their education at home. The children of parents and guardians who cannot afford to bridge this gap remain at a disadvantage. Teachers gave examples of parents who might have a child stay home from school to do chores because they cannot afford household assistance.

- Quality of Teaching (teacher experience, teacher qualifications, teaching time etc)- Teacher qualifications and teaching time are again regulated. Teacher experience may vary to some extent. That said, these teachers still require teaching materials. Similarly, teaching learners who do not have their own learning materials within a restricted timeframe can only realise so much impact. Furthermore, the influence of the quality of teaching on students will likely not be greater than that of the learner's own motivation, other learners, their parents, guardians, peers and community. As such, the expert group argued that the influence of the Quality of Teaching in the Zimbabwean context warranted a weight of 10 out of 100.
- Teaching & Learning Materials (textbooks, teaching guides, chalk, boards, ICT etc)- Teaching and Learning Materials earned a hefty 30 of 100, accounting for just under a third of the weight of factors that influence learner outcomes. The teachers in the expert group argued that the availability of these in adequate amounts vastly aid the teaching and learning process. Beyond the basics of stationery and textbooks, things like laboratory instruments and Information and Communication Technologies help young people learn practical skills which they are often examined on in the Zimbabwean context.
- Learning environment (pupil inclusion, physical infrastructure, services etc)- Teachers once again assigned a weight of 10 to these typologies arguing that although these are important, they do not on the whole have a significant impact on learner outcomes in general. They noted again that well built schools, good services and the feeling of being included on the part of the learner do not supersede socio-economic background and the adequate availability of Teaching and Learning Materials. While a lot of teaching takes place in schools, a large part of learning also takes place at home or in remedial spaces.

Outputs and outcomes were classified according to the appropriate factor and then multiplied by their respective weights.

Where a factor appeared more than once in a case, the monetary value of these sub-criteria were calculated, multiplied by the corresponding weight, added together and then averaged. This step produced one figure for outputs weighted for their utility or attribution (utility weights). The final step was to calculate a ratio based on the sum of the outputs minus the sum of the investments, in this case inputs, divided by the sum of the investment (inputs). A positive ratio suggests that the outputs exceeded the input and by how much. For example, a ratio result of 0.87 would mean that the outputs were 87 per cent greater than the inputs, ergo, the social returns would be greater than the investment made. A negative ratio on the other hand, points to lower outputs than the initial investment while a ratio of zero indicates that the value of the outputs is the same as the value of the inputs.

Finally, respondents from the five cases were also asked to score the interventions that impacted them. This score together with the narrative text and the found Social Return on Investment ratio were used to build a comprehensive picture of each case. This fulfilled the requirements of research question II which sought to determine the Social Returns on Investment of donor aid and social entrepreneurship in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

### **Brompton Primary School**

Brompton Primary School is a rural local school run by the local administrative council. The school sits on the property of a Mine which is operated by a private company. The school's enrolment stood at 545 at the time of the interview, ranging from Early Childhood Development to Grade 7-the last year of primary school.

### **Brompton Primary School Improvement Grant**

For the purposes of this analysis and to avoid double counting, as the SIG fund was used both for once off purchases and to fund the schools' IGP which was a poultry project, a separate presentation of the Social Return on Investment of the Poultry project was necessary. In this analysis, the SIG fund that Brompton Primary school received was treated as two separate inputs amounting to USD 1,850. The first input was valued at USD 1,453.50.

Table 15: SROI analysis case 1 - Brompton Primary School

Brompton Primary School									
Type of funding	Programme	Metric	Nature	Duration of funding/years	Units	Attrition	Currency	Units	Total Value in USD
Donor Aid	SIG	Input	Grant	1	1		USD	1	1,453.50
Donor Aid	SIG	Output	Benches	1	26		USD	26	758.25
Donor Aid	SIG	Output	Textbooks	1	50		USD	50	307
						Only buckets still in use			Interview, Survey, Records and Observation
Donor Aid	SIG	Output	PPES	1			USD	90	LE 10
Donor Aid	SIG	Output	Paid running costs	1	1		USD	1	100
Donor Aid	SIG	Output	Paid bank charges	1	1		USD	1	10.13
Type of funding	Programme	Metric	Nature	Duration of funding/years	Units	Attrition	Currency	Units	Unitary Monetary Value
Donor Aid	SIG	Input	Grant for poultry project	1	1	5 birds	USD	1	396.50
Donor Aid	SIG	Output	Annual Caretaker salary	1	1		USD	1	1,296
Donor Aid	SIG	Output	Annual Guard salary	1	1		USD	1	1,344
Donor Aid	SIG	Output	Annual Bursar salary	1	1		USD	1	1,416

### **Social Return on Investment of donor aid (SIG) ratio for Brompton Primary School**

Step 1.

Total weighted Learning Environment outputs: ((LE output 1 x attribution) + (LE output 2 x attribution) + (LE output 3 x attribution) + (LE output 4 x attribution))

$$((758.26 \times 0.1) + (90 \times 0.1) + (100 \times 0.1) + (10.13 \times 0.1)) = \text{USD } 95.84$$

Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs: (TLM output 1 x attribution)

$$(307 \times 0.3) = \text{USD } 92.1$$

Step 2.

Average weighted Learning Environment outputs: Total weighted Learning Environment outputs divided by number of outputs.

$$\text{USD } 95.84 / 4 = \text{USD } 23.96$$

Step 3.

Social Return on Investment ratio: (Total weighted Learning Environment outputs) plus (weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs) minus (Input) divided by (Input)

$$\frac{(\text{USD } 23.96 + \text{USD } 92.1) - (1453.50)}{(1453.50)} = \underline{\underline{-0.92}}$$

The ratio shows that the SIG realised a negative social return on investment meaning the inputs outweighed the returns by 92 per cent. The focus on only two factors, one of which has a limited weight for learning outcomes in the context of Zimbabwe probably accounts for part of these low returns. However, it may also be an indication that realising returns to education in general requires a significant degree of expenditure. To illustrate, according to Birchler & Michaelowa (2017, p. 62) in order to achieve a 6-percentage point increase in net enrolment rates, aid expenditure would need to double

every year for five years back-to-back. Such metrics indicate the degree of heavy lifting required to make certain types of impact in education.

It is likewise important to note that this data reflects only one year of use of the outputs-textbooks, desks etc- measured here. It can be assumed that holding all things constant, over time, the returns generated by these outputs will increase. However, once-off expenditures such as bank charges would not have the same effect. Similarly, attrition in the form of damages to textbooks and desks can be expected and this will also lower the impact of the investment.

### **Social Return on Investment valuation of donor aid for Brompton Primary School**

The Head Teacher at Brompton School scored the donor intervention, specifically the School Improvement Grant (SIG), at a six out of a possible six. An intervention with a score of six is one which is a 'very good result that clearly exceeds expectations'.

### **Social Return on Investment narrative on donor aid for Brompton Primary School**

According to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, "the immediate purpose (of the School Improvement Grant) is to provide adequate and well targeted levels of funding to financially constrained schools to cover non-personnel and non-capital resource demands in the school which will enable it to meet a minimum set of school functionality standards" (n.d).

These SIG funds were used to purchase 26 textbooks and 26 benches in a school with a population of 545 students. The number of books purchased per grade ranged from two in Grade 6 and Grade 7 (the final year of primary school) to eight in Grade 2. The reported resultant pupil-textbook ratio was 10 as to 1, lower than it had previously been but still extremely high. At the same time, although the new books were student editions, they were mostly used by teachers as substitutes for teachers' manuals given that teachers were also under resourced.

The new benches also alleviated the furniture situation somewhat. According to survey data, pupil-desk ratios were 3 as to 1 but there were sitting places for each learner. Other expenditure line items under the SIG fund included water and sanitation utensils and running costs and bank charges. A bucket used for handwashing in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic was observed at the entrance of the school, however other Personal Protective Equipment had since gone out of use. This does not negate the intangible

contribution that these outputs made. Although minimal, some children and teachers may have felt their benefits. Their impact does not however seem to have been significant.

Very little change in learning outcomes were observed in the year the school received the SIG. Infact, the school head noted that there was a decrease of 7.5 percentage points in the 2021 Grade 7 pass rate and attributed this decline to challenges brought about by COVID 19 and the new curriculum. In the same year however, national Grade 7 pass rates increased by 3.98 percentage points. Moreover, according to Newspaper reports, the national Grade 7 pass rate in 2020 was 37 per cent while the school reported a 38.5 per cent pass rate. This suggests that lower pass rates at the school were not influenced by COVID 19 but rather local factors.

Although the Headmaster gave the SIG fund a very good score, when quizzed more closely about its impact, he did point out the inadequacy of the fund. The tension between the SROI analysis result and the valuation given by the headmaster of the school can possibly be explained by gratitude bias (Mosse, 2005; White, 1996). Given the impoverished nature of the school, any donations were deemed welcome and viewed positively even if they may not have had the intended impact.

### **Social Return on Investment of Social Entrepreneurship for Brompton Primary School**

Step 1.

Total weighted Learning Environment outputs: ((LE output 1 x attribution) + (LE output 2 x attribution) + (LE output 3 x attribution)):

$$((1,296 \times 0.1) + (1,344 \times 0.1) + (1,416 \times 0.1)) = \text{USD}405.60$$

Step 2.

Average total weighted Learning Environment outputs: Total weighted Learning Environment outputs divided by number of outputs.

$$\text{USD}405.60/3 = \text{USD}135.20$$

Step 3.

Social Return on Investment ratio: Total weighted Learning Environment outputs minus Input divided by Input:

Outputs (USD135.20) - Input (396.50)	<hr/>	<u>= -0.66</u>
Input (396.50)		

The ratio shows that the SIG realised a negative social return on investment of 66 per cent less than was invested into the school's income generating project. The poultry project only ran for one year and given that the profits generated from it were channelled towards ancillary staff salaries, the negative Social Return on Investment is understandable.

### **Social Return on Investment valuation for Brompton Primary School**

The head teacher at Brompton School also scored the Income Generating Project, specifically the School Poultry Project, at a six out of a possible six. An intervention with a score of six is one which is a 'very good result that clearly exceeds expectations'.

### **Social Return on Investment narrative for Brompton Primary School**

As already noted, the SIG was a once off payment which was used to start an Income Generating Project. The initial financial investment of USD 396.50 was part of the USD 1,850 grant. In order to avoid double counting, this USD 396.50 was treated as a separate input with its own outputs and outcomes. This generated additional socio-economic benefits in the form of salaries for three ancillary staff-guard, caretaker and bursar- for a full year to the value of USD 4,056. The roles that the guard, caretaker and bursar fulfil are meant to improve the functionality of the school in three separate functions. These are security at the school, maintenance of the school premises, and the school finance function.

Although the outputs in terms of salaries generated from the Income Generating Project amounted to USD 4,056, the weights attributed to learning outcomes using the factors identified accounted for just a tenth of this amount. Consequently, the calculated Social Return on Investment ratio was -0.659. This suggests that although the Income Generating Project proved to be profitable, the returns to learners' outcomes were limited. Furthermore, the headmaster of the school indicated that the school would have still paid

these salaries indicating quite some deadweight. What the poultry project simply did was it allowed the school to free up finances for other things which the headmaster did not name.

The school was built by the mine in 1982. According to estimates from the Mine Clerk, the school was built at an estimated cost of between USD 59,500 and USD 80,000 and in 2022 celebrated 40 years of existence. This investment produced a future benefit of 40 years of learning. When multiplied by an average of 545 enrolments per year, this amounts to 21,800 school years. The school's functionality is also aided by Corporate Social Responsibility contributions from the mine in the form of payment of electricity utility bills estimated at USD 240 annually or approximately USD 20 per month and free provision of water. However, only the administration block and computer room are electrified. Fee advances to the school also aid functionality. The bulk of learners at the school are the children of mine employees. At the time of the study, Brompton mine was advancing a termly school fees lumpsum payment of 4,000 rtgs or USD 23 per child. These lumpsum payments stabilised cashflow into the school, giving the administration room to plan and to make purchases at the beginning of each term.

Once again, the school head gave the Income Generating Project a good valuation. This too can be explained by gratitude bias. It also reflects the genuine financial returns which accrued to the school.

The Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education (ZGSE) programme beneficiary #1 also known as CAMFED beneficiary #1 received a bursary from CAMFED. The bursary covered school fees, bought uniforms, sanitary wear, stationery supplies and some boarding fees. It must be noted that the respondent joined the CAMFED programme in the second term of Form 4 in 2016. Strictly speaking, the total years she was a beneficiary are 2,67 which was rounded off to 3 for ease of calculation. In the absence of raw official data on the direct expenditure per student, a decision was taken to reconstruct an average annual bursary value per student from the costs of the different line items that make up the ZGSE bursary rather than using the average annual bursary costs indicated in the ZGSE report. This is because the average annual cost in the reports is normally guided by fees structures for day scholars. An additional USD 205 was added to the value of this particular bursary as half board termly fees given that the respondent indicated having been supported to attend Advanced Level at a government boarding school where she received half board.

This USD 205 is an estimate based on the cost of attending a mission school as highlighted in the ZGSE 2019 report which ranged between USD161 and USD250. This information was used to create a proxy value by using the average value of the two. The values here concern 2016, 2017 and 2018, the period during which the learner was sponsored by CAMFED within the Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme.

### Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme beneficiary #1

Table 16: SROI analysis case 2 – Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme beneficiary #1

Type of funding	Programme	Metric	Nature	Duration of funding/years	Attrition	Currency	Exchange Rate pounds to USD	Units	Unitary Monetary Value	Total Value in USD	Factor	Attribution	Source of data
CAMFED Beneficiary #1													
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Average Annual Bursary	3			USD		3		1,663.93			Interviews and ZGSE reports
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Annual Stationery supplies	3			Pounds	1,327	3	4	15.92	TLM	30	Interviews and ZGSE reports
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Half board termly fees	2			USD		6		205	1,230	LE	10 Interviews
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	0 Level Exam fees				USD		1		80	80	LE	10 Interviews
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	0 Level Exam fees	3			USD		1		78	78	LE	10 Interviews
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Annual Uniforms	3			Pounds	1,327	3	31	123.41	LE	10	Interviews and ZGSE reports
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Annual Sanitary wear	3			Pounds	1,327	3	9	35.83	LE	10	Interviews and ZGSE reports

## **Social Return on Investment of donor aid for Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme beneficiary #1 ratio**

Step 1.

Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs: (TLM output 1 x attribution)

$$\underline{(15.92 \times 0.3) = \text{USD}4.78}$$

Total weighted Learning Environment outputs: ((LE output 1 x attribution) + (LE output 2 x attribution) + (LE output 3 x attribution) + (LE output 4 x attribution) + (LE output 5 x attribution))

$$\underline{((1,230 \times 0.1) + (80 \times 0.1) + (78 \times 0.1) + (123,41 \times 0.1) + (35,83 \times 0.1)) = \text{USD}154.72}$$

Step 2.

Average weighted Learning Environment outputs: Total weighted Learning Environment outputs divided by number of outputs.

$$\underline{\text{USD } 154.72/5 = \text{USD}30.94}$$

Step 3.

Social Return on Investment ratio: Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs plus Learning Environment outputs minus Input divided by Input:

$$\text{Outputs (USD}4.78 + \text{USD}30.94) - \text{Input (USD}1,663.93)$$

$$= \underline{-0.978}$$

$$\text{Input (1,663.93)}$$

The SROI ratio of -0.978 indicates that the investment realised a negative return of -97.8 per cent. This suggests that the investment contributed only marginally to the eventual learning outcomes of this case.

## **Social Return on Investment Valuation for the Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education Programme for Beneficiary #1**

The first CAMFED beneficiary scored the Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme with a six out of a possible six. An intervention with a score of six is one which is a 'very good result that clearly exceeds expectations'.

## **Social Return on Investment Narrative for the Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education Programme for Beneficiary #1**

One of the expected outcomes of the ZGSE was "Strengthened scope and quality of educational services enhances student access, retention and achievement in the secondary cycle, with special attention to disadvantaged girls" (ZGSE Annual Review 2013, p. 2). Despite the -0.973 ratio, this CAMFED beneficiary went on to successfully complete her Advanced Levels and afterwards attained a tertiary education qualification valued at USD 3,000. This raises the question of why this beneficiary experienced such good outcomes despite the low weights ascribed to the outputs that this beneficiary received.

In this instance, these could be explained by deadweight or the counterfactual which are described as changes that might have occurred anyway in the absence of the intervention. During validation of these particular metrics through a follow-up targeted interview, the respondent described herself as follows: "hard-working, focus as well as passion of getting something tangible as far as career is concerned". She also noted that prior to being placed in the ZGSE bursary programme, she had already demonstrated an aptitude and eagerness for learning. Furthermore, the learner and some of her teachers bankrolled aspects of her studies such as purchase of food and uniforms where her family could not or during the period when she was not on the bursary.

Notwithstanding the existence of some literature supporting the provision of outputs such as uniforms and stationery, evidence from African countries implies that the impact of these on learning outcomes is negligible. Gentile and Imberman (2012, p. 8) found-with some caveats- that the provision of uniforms to girls in America increased attendance by 0.5 days per 180-day school year. In Kenya however, Evans and Ngatia (2021) in their research on long-run outcomes of school uniforms suggested that despite initially reducing absenteeism, provision of school uniforms did not result in any long-term impacts (p. 706). A separate study by Oduro and Domfe (2020a; 2020b) on the effect

of the provision of sanitary wear to girls in Junior High School in Ghana concluded that the evidence for provision of sanitary wear to schoolgirls for absenteeism and drop-out was inconclusive and universal provision was “not the best way to tackle high drop-out rates among adolescent girls” (p. 33). Other authors such as Austrian et al. (2021) were also not able to find any correlation between provision of sanitary wear and increased attendance among girls in upper primary school in Kenya. In contrast, Okongo et al. (2015) who cite Mwiria (1985) argue that the quality and quantity of stationery supplies positively influence student performance (p. 135), a position which the group of experts weighting supports. It may therefore be possible to ascribe the deadweight to this particular beneficiary’s own intrinsic motivation, her aptitude for learning and support from her teachers all while acknowledging the positive impact that outputs such as stationery had on her academic journey.

That said, the valuation of six is in keeping with the learner’s description of the CAMFED programme. In her own words, “CAMFED changed my life”. Where previously financing her education had been problematic, to the point where sometimes she was sent home from school for non-fees payment, she now had an assured sponsor. She singled out the provision of uniforms and sanitary wear as helpful for helping her feel comfortable at school. She also noted that being funded to attend Advanced Level at a boarding school was also life changing in that she had the opportunity to interact with people from outside her normal environment. This exposed her to new career aspirations and inspired her to pursue the tertiary degree she now possesses. Financing her A’ levels in her view would have been even more challenging than her O’ levels and in this way, CAMFED was instrumental in her education. This valuation however seems to reflect the benefits she experienced as an individual as she noted in her interview that she was the only learner in her cohort of CAMFED bursary recipients to pass her exams and proceed to Advanced level.

### Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme beneficiary #2

Table 17: SROI analysis case 3 – Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme beneficiary #2

CAMFED Beneficiary #2												
Type of funding	Programme	Metric	Nature	Duration of funding/years	Attrition	Exchange Rate	Units	Unitary Monetary Value	Total Value in USD	Factor	Attribution	Source of data
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girl's Secondary Education	Input	Average Annual Bursary	4	USD	4	2,795.08					Interviews and ZGSE reports
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Output	Annual Stationery supplies	4	Pounds	1,455	4	4	23.28	TLM	15	Interviews and ZGSE reports
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Output	Mission schools termly fees	4	USD	12	205	2,460	LE	10		Interviews and ZGSE reports
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Output	O level Examination fees	1	USD	8	13	104	LE	10		Interviews, ZGSE reports, Media reports <sup>1</sup>
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Output	Annual Uniforms	4	Pounds	1,455	4	31	180.42	LE	10	Interviews and ZGSE reports
Donor Aid	Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education	Output	Annual Sanitary wear	4	Pounds	1,455	4	9	52.38	LE	10	Interviews and ZGSE reports

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/o-a-level-exam-subsidies-scrapped/>.

In the absence of raw official data on the direct expenditure per student, a decision was taken to reconstruct an average annual bursary value from the costs of the different line items that make up the ZGSE bursary rather than using the average annual bursary costs indicated in the ZGSE report. This is because the average annual cost in the reports is normally guided by fees structures for day scholars. In this case however, the beneficiary attended a Mission school. According to the 2019 ZGSE report, school fees at mission schools ranged between USD161 and USD 250. As such, a proxy termly school fees value was arrived at by using the average value of the two. This student was a CAMFED beneficiary from Form 1 to Form 4 between 2014 and 2017.

### **Social Return on Investment of Donor Aid for the Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education Ratio Beneficiary #2**

Step 1.

Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs: (TLM Output 1 x attribution)  
(23.28x 0.3) = USD6.98

Total weighted Learning Environment outputs: (LE Output 1 x attribution) + (LE Output 2 x attribution) + (LE Output 3 x attribution) + (LE Output 4 x attribution)

((2,460x 0.1) + (104 x 0.1) + (180.42x 0.1) + (52.38x 0.1)) =USD279.68

Step 2.

Average total weighted Learning Environment outputs: Total weighted Learning Environment outputs divided by number of outputs.

USD279.68/4 = USD69.92

Step 3.

Social Return on Investment ratio: Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs plus Learning Environment outputs minus Input divided by Input:

Outputs (USD6.98 + USD69.92) – Input (USD2,796.08)

= - 0.973

Input (2,796.08)

A SROI ratio of -0.973 suggests a negative return of a little under 97 per cent. In simple terms, the bursary likely had little effect on the learning outcomes of this particular beneficiary, despite the costs incurred.

### **Social Return on Investment Valuation for the Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education Programme for Beneficiary #2**

The second CAMFED beneficiary scored the Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme with a one out of a possible six. An intervention with a score of one is one where 'The project has had no impact, or the situation has actually deteriorated'.

### **Social Return on Investment narrative for Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education programme for beneficiary #2**

This respondent wrote 10 O' Level subjects and passed 7 of these. Unfortunately, these 7 O' Level subjects did not include O' Level English and O' Level Maths, two subjects which are a prerequisite for promotion to Advanced Level in the Zimbabwean education system. Consequently, this particular beneficiary was compelled to re-write her O' level examinations. The cost of re-writing these exams was picked up by her family. The SROI of -0.973 and the informants' own valuation of the ZGSE programme reflect findings in the literature which suggest that in the context of Zimbabwe, the provision of outputs which influence learning environment such as uniforms and the paying of school fees have limited impact on learning outcomes.

This respondent was one of three CAMFED beneficiaries interviewed from the same school and cohort and who went through a full cycle of secondary education with bursary and socio-psycho support from the ZGSE programme at the same school. Although all three did not pass their O' level examinations at the first try and had to rewrite their exams with financial support from their families, two out of the three noted that they greatly appreciated the material assistance they were given. Their poor O' Level results were, according to them, a consequence of their own lack of commitment to learning as well as peer pressure.

After her O' levels, the respondent in this case received a loan sourced through CAMFED to begin a poultry project. Unfortunately, this coincided with the start of the

COVID 19 pandemic induced lock downs in Zimbabwe which negatively affected the business. The valuation score of one out of six likely reflects the informants' disappointment with not receiving further academic support from CAMFED after she initially failed her Ordinary Level exams despite reportedly being promised as much as this is a factor she mentioned in her interview.

### **Highfields High School 1 Connected Communities programme**

Highfields High School 1 bought a solar powered Local Area Network (LAN) based Edu-Content system from Regain37 Pvt Ltd within what they call their Connected Communities programme. The system includes a LAN server, a database of educational content, a few computers, solar panels and a smartboard. The system was paid off over the course of nine months rather than the expected 36 months.

### **Social Return on Investment of Social Entrepreneurship for Highfields High 1 Connected Communities ratio**

Step 1.

Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs:  $((TLM\ 1\ x\ attribution) + (TLM\ 2\ x\ attribution))$

$$((5,727 \times 0.3) + (5,839 \times 0.3)) = \text{USD}3,469.80$$

Total weighted Learning Environment outputs: (LE Output 1 x attribution)

$$(13,500 \times 0.1) = \text{USD}1,350$$

Step 2.

Total average weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs: Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs divided by number of outputs.

$$\text{USD}3,469.80/2 = \text{USD}1,734.90$$

Step 3.

Social Return on Investment ratio: Total weighted Learning Environment outputs plus Total Teaching and Learning Materials outputs minus Input divided by Input:

$$\frac{\text{Outputs} (\text{USD}1,734.90 + \text{USD}1,350) - \text{Input} (\text{USD}11,566)}{\text{Input} (11,566)} = -0.73$$

The SROI ratio of -0.73 also indicates a negative Social Return on Investment from the Connected Communities project within the first two years of purchase. However, the solar-powered package has a 5-year guarantee, suggesting that holding all things constant, a 33 per cent return can be expected from the project at the lapse of the 5 years as indicated in step 4.

Step 4.

Social Return on Investment ratio in five years: Total weighted Learning Environment outputs plus Total Teaching and Learning Materials outputs minus Input multiplied by 5 divided by Input:

$$\frac{\text{Outputs } ((\text{USD}1,734.90 + \text{USD}1,350) \times 5) - \text{Input } (\text{USD}11,566)}{\text{Input } (11,566)} = \underline{0.33}$$

Table 18: SROI analysis case 4 – Highfields High 1 School Connected Communities programme

Highfield High School									
Type of funding	Programme	Metric	Nature	Duration of funding	Attrition	Currency	Exchange Rate ZWL to USD	Units	Unitary Monetary Value
Social Entrepreneurship	Connected Communities	Input	Connected communities	1				1	11,566
Social Entrepreneurship	Connected Communities	Output	Solar powered Edu-content system			USD	1	5,727	5,727 TLM
Social Entrepreneurship	Connected Communities	Output	Solar powered ECD Edu-content system			USD	1	5,839	5,839 TLM
Social Entrepreneurship	Connected Communities	Output	Litres of fuel saved per year			USD	9,000	1.50	13,500 LE

## **Social Return on Investment valuation for Highfields High 1 Connected Communities programme**

Survey respondents scored the Connected Communities programme with a five out of a possible six. An intervention with a score of five is one which is a “Good result, fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings”.

## **Social Return on Investment narrative for Highfields High 1 Connected Communities programme**

The Connected Communities programme was introduced into the school by Regain37 pvt Ltd, a Social Impact For Profit Enterprise in mid-2020. Regain37 pvt Ltd itself won a USD 250,000 grant from the African Enterprise Challenge Fund. This fund allowed Regain37 pvt Ltd to supply schools with solar powered digital learning solutions on a pay-as-you-use basis. At the time of conducting the study, Regain37 pvt Ltd had accessed half of this amount, USD 125,000. This allowed them to install Solar Powered edu-content teaching and learning materials in at least 20 schools and purchase stock for more installations. Each package consisted of a 5KVa or 1KVa Solar system, a Local Area Network (LAN) server, seven Mini HD processors and seven white boards. The high school was one of the first beneficiaries of this programme. It purchased two 5 KVa based solar system packages on a pay-as-you-use basis. According to the head teacher, the school was given 36 months to pay and managed to do so in 9 months. Thereafter, the school reported saving significant amounts of money on the fuel it had previously been buying to power its 45Kva generator during power outages. The monies saved from fuel purchases were used to start poultry and gardening projects at a cost of USD 2,151.94 and USD 3,365.72 respectively. The profits from these projects were used to pay salaries for caretakers and some teachers. Further savings over the course of the year were reportedly used to buy new textbooks. However, the value of these books was not shared. The school also cut back on the carbon dioxide emitted by running the generator. In addition to supplying the school with its digital packages, Regain37 pvt Ltd met with students and School Development Committee members about the packages and to create Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) clubs which would use the content on the LAN servers. The school reported improved Ordinary Level computer sciences pass rates in the first year of use of their Edu-Content packages, impacted by the unbroken supply of solar energy to the school’s computer labs. They also introduced an Advanced

Level computer science class in 2021. Although only 4 students wrote the exam, all 4 are reported to have passed. The following year, 2022, the benefits from the Connected Communities programme impacted the 1,693 learners enrolled at the time.

### **St Columba Primary School Banana Project**

In 2002, the school received donor support in the form of a water tank and related components. This improved the schools' water supply. Unfortunately, the cost of the donation at the time was not shared. However, this water source and system allowed the school to embark on several income generating projects, including the Banana project under study.

### **Social Return on Investment ratio St Columba Banana Project (Hybrid)**

#### **Scenario 1.**

Step 1.

Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs: (TLM Output 1 x attribution)

$(29,700 \times 0.3) = \text{USD}8,910$

Total weighted Learning Environment outputs:  $((\text{LE Output 1} \times \text{attribution}) + (\text{LE Output 2} \times \text{attribution}) + (\text{LE Output 3} \times \text{attribution}))$

$((20,350 \times 0.1) + (49,500 \times 0.1) + (1500 \times 0.1)) = \text{USD}7,135$

Step 2.

Total average weighted Learning Environment outputs: Total weighted Learning Environment outputs divided by number of outputs

$\text{USD}7,135/3 = \text{USD}2,378$

Step 3.

Social Return on Investment ratio: (Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs) plus (Learning Environment outputs) minus (Input) divided by (Input):

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{Outputs (USD8,910 + USD2,378) - Input (USD2,700)} & & \\
 \hline
 & = & \underline{3.18} \\
 \text{Input (2,700)} & &
 \end{array}$$

The SROI ratio of 3.18 also indicates a positive Social Return on Investment. The initial once-off input of the water system and the banana plants were used to buy more plants and generate more income over several years, thus recouping the investment and creating additional benefits. Scenario two below reflects the returns generated from the purchase of Banana plants alone.

## Scenario 2

Step 1.

Total weighted Teaching and Learning Materials outputs: (TLM Output 1 x attribution)

$$\underline{29,700 \times 0.3 = \text{USD8,910}}$$

Total weighted Learning Environment outputs: ((LE Output 1 x attribution) + (LE Output 2 x attribution) + (LE Output 3 x attribution))

$$((20,350 \times 0.1) + (49,500 \times 0.1) + (1500 \times 0.1)) = \text{USD7,135}$$

Step 2.

Total average weighted Learning Environment outputs: Total weighted Learning Environment divided by number of outputs

$$\underline{\text{USD7,135/3} = \text{USD2,378}}$$

Step 3.

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{Outputs (USD8,910 + USD2,378) - Input (USD200)} & & \\
 \hline
 & = & \underline{55.44} \\
 \text{Input (USD200)} & &
 \end{array}$$

Table 19: SROI analysis case 5 - St Columba Primary School banana project

St Columba Primary School									
Type of funding	Programme	Metric	Nature	Duration of funding/output in years	Attrition	Currency	Units	Unitary Monetary Value	Total Value in USD
Donor	Water System	Input	Materials	1	80	USD	1	2,500	2,500
Social Entrepreneurship	Social Banana Project	Input	Banana plants	1		USD	1,000	0.20	200
Social Entrepreneurship	Social Banana Project	Output	Computers and Printer	11		USD	3	900	29,700
Social Entrepreneurship	Social Banana Project	Output	Renovating the school windows	11		USD	17	108.82	20,350
Social Entrepreneurship	Social Banana Project	Output	Landscaping the school	11		USD	1	4,500	49,500
Social Entrepreneurship		Output	Termly School fees	5		USD	10	30	1,500
Source of data									
Interviews, secondary documents, technical documents <sup>1</sup>									
Interviews and secondary documents									
Interviews and secondary documents									
Interviews and secondary documents									
Interviews, Secondary documents and WhatsApp conversations									

## **Social Return on Investment Valuation for St Columba Primary School Banana Project**

The donor funded water project, and the banana project respectively were both scored with a six out of a possible six. An intervention with a score of six is one which is a “Very good result that clearly exceeds expectations”. These scores reflect the initial sentiments expressed during the interview phase.

## **Social Return on Investment narrative for St Columba Primary School banana project**

The SROI ratio in scenario two indicates how crucial the prior donation of the water project to the school almost 10 years earlier proved to be for the profitability of the banana plantation given that banana production is a water intensive industry (Zarate & Kuiper, 2013). Water in this rural school is not billed as the school built its own pipeline from the water source with the help of donor aid and is therefore recorded here as is with no added costs. Additional benefits generated by the banana project for the school but whose economic value could not be determined included school feeding for pupils during sporting trips. The school also reported periodically hiring unemployed parents of learners to work in the Banana plantation. Through this, these parents were able to pay their children’s school fees and also earn an additional income. The banana plantation was also used as a practical site for agricultural lessons for learners, creating another level of learner centred benefits.

In 2019, the banana project began to encounter challenges around the time the schools’ water supply was choked off by users up stream. The involvement of the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) failed to address these challenges. The following year, the COVID 19 pandemic further stressed operations as staff and children were no longer able to regularly attend to the banana plants as part of their regular duties. In 2022, the school and surrounding community again received a donation from a different donor of a water project. This also included a tank and related components as well as a solar pump. The reported value of this 2022 water project was, as related by one of the interview respondents, USD 50,000. Unfortunately, the donated water project was not able to supply enough water to satisfy domestic demand from community users and the school’s own irrigation needs.

Not included in the SROI calculations was the donation of two classroom blocks made up of two classrooms each to the school in 2002. The classroom blocks built by Plan International reportedly improved the schools' learners per classroom ratio. However, overtime, school authorities reported that with increasing enrolment, the school still had too few classrooms for learners with 50 learners to a room instead of the recommended 40. However, the classroom itself was reportedly well built and was still in good condition at the time of conducting this study.

This section attempted to respond to the question 'what are the Social Returns on Investment of donor aid and social entrepreneurship in the education sector in Zimbabwe respectively?' A comparison of these findings would help to shed light on the extent to which social entrepreneurship can be more efficient and effective than donor aid and therefore an alternative to donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

The findings indicate that independent of funding modality, investment into fixed assets and infrastructure generated the highest returns over time. In the same way, providing tailored support to individual learners tended to produce lower returns but with the potential to increase in the long term, in the event that the individual learner in question gained an educational qualification on the back of the said support. Social entrepreneurial projects, while profitable from a purely financial perspective, also tended to reap low rewards if the incomes generated from the various projects were not channelled towards learner centred expenses deemed to have the greatest impact on learner outcomes.

One of the most striking features of the results of the SROI section has been the realisation that what funding in the education sector in Zimbabwe is spent on will lead to different outcomes. Each case presented in section 4.2.5 was considered not as a lumpsum, but rather as the sum of its parts with each part producing a different effect. For example, the benefits of providing stationery differed from the benefits of buying sanitary wear for female learners, even for the same child. The case of the lone CAMFED scholar who passed her O' Level exams illustrates this point. This shows how the financial expenditure on activities which have a low return on investment can drag down the cost-effectiveness of initiatives in general and vice versa. Some might argue that although such investments have a limited influence on learning outcomes, they reap positive social returns in the form of the welfare of learners. When presented with such arguments, decision makers must make tough choices about how to spend money or even whether

they can increase their financial outlay to cover both initiatives focused on improving learning outcomes *and* those focused on improving learner welfare.

Another interesting feature of the results of the SROI analysis is the overwhelming number of cases which reported a negative social return on investment ratios. From the bursary scheme to the School Improvement Grant right through to the school-based Income Generating Project, the majority showed that their investment into education reaped a lower reward. As previously mentioned, one explanation for this is that reaping rewards to education is an expensive endeavour (Birchler & Michaelowa, 2016b, 2017). Returns in the form of economic growth from education aid typically take decades before they are realised (Radelet et al., 2004, p. 7). Any expenditure below a certain tipping point would consequently typically run a loss. Likewise, initiatives might only produce negative outcomes before the end of the break-even period. Follow-up SROI analyses in a few years might result in better findings given that aside from St Columba primary school and the building of Brompton primary school, none of the reviewed cases had run longer than a decade. In fact, the Brompton primary school (SIG) and Highfields high school were a little over a year into their investments.

Another potential explanation for the negative returns to education may be the inadequacy of the investments made. Conducting the SROI helped to expose how already limited funds were further fragmented, diluting their efficacy. Now, the tendency in public reporting is to quote lumpsum figures which on their own seem quite significant. However, using a weighted approach to the SROI analysis highlighted the details of what is spent and the impact of each ‘small’ decision and what this meant for overall outcomes. The concept of the tipping point has already been alluded to. It may be instructive for policy and decision makers to channel funding *en masse* towards activities until the said activities begin to have an impact, rather than spreading resources thinly across many different activities.

And so, to answer the question of whether social entrepreneurship is more efficient and effective than donor aid and after having integrated the results of the SROI analysis, it is clear that social entrepreneurship is not intrinsically a better option than donor aid. Rather, the impact of social entrepreneurially funded initiatives is dependent on what the monies generated by social entrepreneurship are what spent on. Similarly, donor aid funded initiatives have a better chance of producing returns on their investment if they were spent on things that maximised benefits to learners which catalyse their

progression towards a qualification. Furthermore, the longevity of both donor aid and social entrepreneurial activities have an impact on the potential of a project to reap rewards. Projects need to run for long enough to break even and begin to operate beyond the payback period.

Interestingly, every single valuation in this section and four others which are not presented here was either a 5 or a 6, that is, rated very highly. This often likely reflects the gratitude bias referred to earlier, where beneficiaries were just grateful to receive anything in a context of scarcity. They could also potentially be an indication of a lack of understanding about what factors lead to the best outcomes. From a purely aesthetic perspective, learners in neat new uniforms do offer value. However, and as evidence from literature will show and indeed even evidence from this study, these uniforms did not seem to improve academic performance or even things like attendance and retention. As will be explained in the rest of the study, sometimes giving of uniforms led to learners being singled out in negative ways.

Ultimately, the tendency to evaluate programmes positively, even where there is little evidence to show for these positive evaluations could be hurting development in education because it obscures the need to make improvements to underperforming initiatives. A more sincere approach on the other hand may inspire a greater investment in finding solutions that work.

#### **4.3 Mixed Methods Grounded Theory**

The reported shortcomings of donor aid and the increasing popularity of social entrepreneurship as a potential solution to social problems inspired this research. Using the mixed methods grounded theory methodology supported by the findings of five Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, the research explored whether and where social entrepreneurship and donor aid are efficient and effective. These findings were used to respond to the question of whether social entrepreneurship can be an alternative to donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe. The main objective of this inquiry was to develop a theory grounded in the data which ties all the variables in this study together and suggest responses to the challenges of financing education in Zimbabwe.

The working understanding of the key terms used in this study drawn from the literature defined donor aid as " funding projects or distributing in-kind goods and services as part of humanitarian assistance and/or designed to promote the economic

development and welfare of developing countries" (OECD ILIBRARY, n.d.; UNOCHA, n.d.). Social entrepreneurship on the other hand referred to addressing social problems by innovating and applying business principles, market forces and other equilibrium shifting solutions to create wide scale benefits for society (Ashoka Change Makers, n.d; The Schwab Foundation, n.d; The Skoll Foundation, n.d; Wolk (2008) in Swanson & Zhang, 2012).

In the case of the two measures of impact guiding this study-efficiency and effectiveness-, the literature highlights the following aspects as indications of aid effectiveness:

- mutual accountability,
- transparency,
- alignment of initiatives to desired outcomes,
- the ability to plan and manage initiatives,
- reducing transaction costs,
- tracking results with comprehensive, timely, accessible and comparable data, and
- the achievement of relevant results based on specific indicator targets among other things (Eriksson & The Management Group, 2009; Khupe et al., 2013; OECD, 2005; Steer & Smith, 2015).

Frequently mentioned indicators in the discussion about aid effectiveness in education include Gross and Net Enrolment Rates, learning outcomes, attendance and completion rates. Alongside the perspectives of beneficiaries, these aspects were used to guide the understanding of effectiveness used in this research. Although in some definitions, efficiency is included as an aspect of effectiveness, this study distinguished between the two and adopted a separate but also quite broad understanding of efficiency. Limited waste, limited fragmentation, continuity, stable leadership, were all summed up by defining efficiency as the use of resources and energy (inputs) to maximise the results (outputs) of teaching and learning (Johnes et al., 2017; Lockheed & Hanushek, 1994). These definitions were used as a basis for reaching a common understanding about effectiveness and efficiency between the researcher and respondents before interviews. They were also used to guide the analysis of data. Using these definitions, and as the data presentation section showed, a varied spectrum of initiatives were investigated.

#### 4.3.1 Open Coding

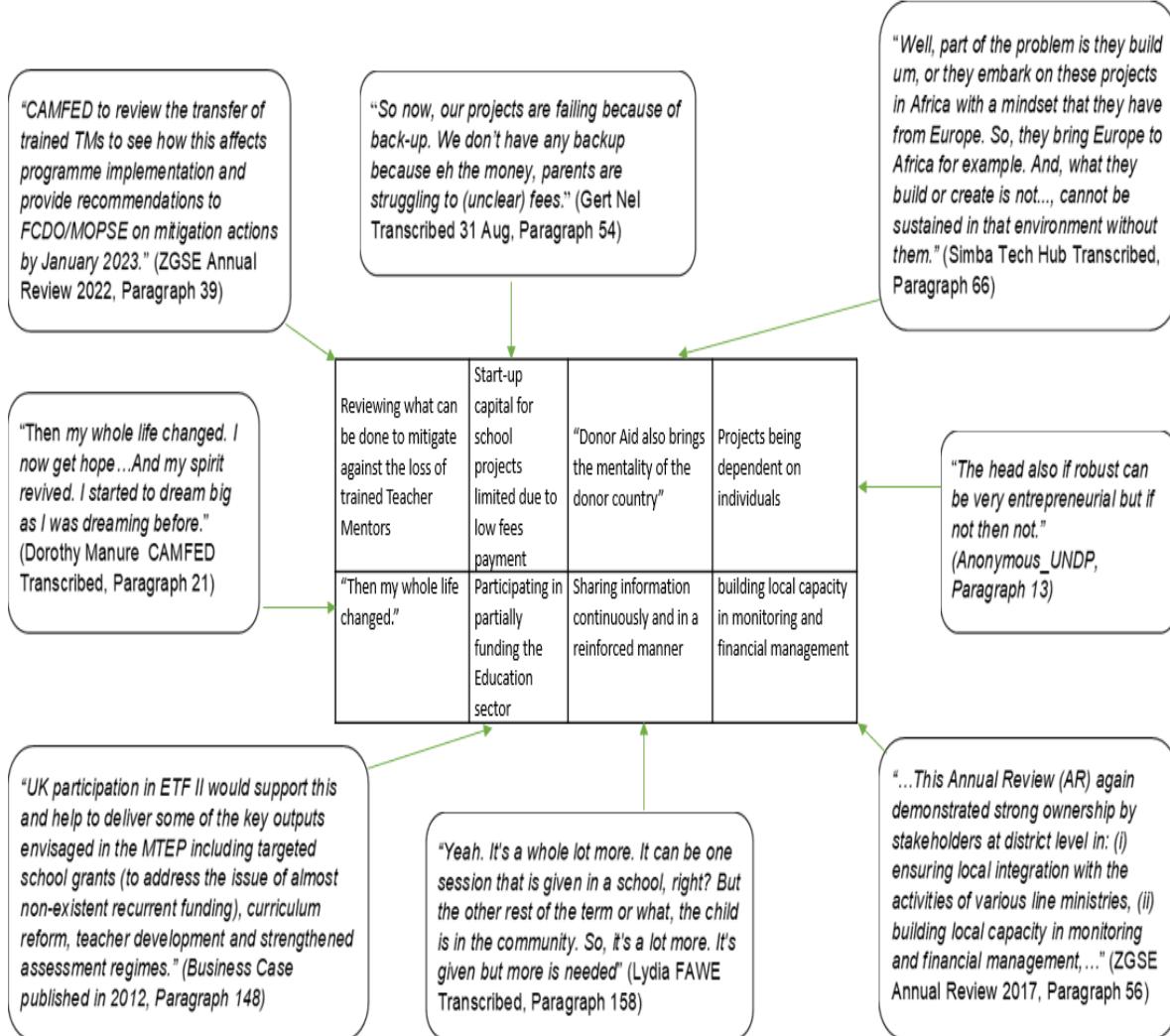
Line by line coding of interviews and secondary data sourced from the data collection process produced literal and abstracted codes examples of which are highlighted in bold in this section. These included codes such as **Verification of the attendance and wellbeing of beneficiaries** which suggested certain Monitoring and Evaluation efficiencies and was derived from passages such as the following:

*“CAMFED maintains a high level of routine monitoring of beneficiaries and schools. In every district, every term, every school and every beneficiary are visited by the CDC. This includes inspection of financial records and physical verification of the attendance of beneficiaries and their wellbeing.”* (ZGSE Annual Review 2016, Paragraph 210)

Similarly, the open code **70 per cent of cooperatives still in existence a year later** was singled out from an interview with a former employee commenting on the establishment of cooperatives that her former organisation had put in place. *“At the time of doing the evaluation, the results seemed to show that we had 70 per cent of the groups still existing.”* (Emily Chipinge Transcribed, Paragraph 81). This finding alluded not only to evaluation but also to the degree of effectiveness of training as well as the action of forming cooperatives.

The open coding process produced hundreds of codes and subcodes. A few more examples of these open codes and their related text are presented in figure 16. Further examples can be found in annex 3.

Figure 16: Open codes and related text



#### 4.3.2 Axial Coding and Major Categories

Through a sequence of several iterations of comparison of codes to codes, codes to categories and sub-categories and categories to sub-categories, the axial coding process produced first 47 and then finally eight axial codes. These were:

1. Sustainability of initiatives
2. Adequacy
3. Being influenced by external factors
4. Internal efficiency and effectiveness and inefficiency and ineffectiveness
5. Limited capacity of social entrepreneurship to scale
6. Wide and thin scope of donor aid
7. Varied control of information and
8. High dependency on Individual Characteristics.

These codes reflected ideas around which the groups of open codes could be related. With a focus on their properties and dimensions. To illustrate, the axial code **Adequacy** literally represents the property of ‘adequacy’. Open codes such as **Start-up capital for school projects limited due to low fees payment** and **Fragmentation** denoted the partiality of the dimension of adequacy, already suggesting aspects of inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Similarly, the code **Sustainability of initiatives** was inferred from open codes which included **Reviewing what can be done to mitigate against the loss of trained Teacher Mentors, Training disabled children to be able to fend for themselves**, and **Unaffordable exam fees**. Again, the words ‘loss’, ‘able’ and ‘unaffordable’ harkened to the dimensions around the property of longevity. So, for example, the effect of previous investments into their education was not sustained for learners who failed to pay their final exam fees.

*“ZIMSEC had raised its fees to be now largely unaffordable level for most families.”* (ZGSE Annual Review 2020, Paragraph 145).

*“So when it came to raising the fees to register for O’ level, that’s the part where things got difficult.”* (Dorothy Manure CAMFED Transcribed, Paragraph 21).

In addition to comparing the codes with each other and as illustrated in figure 11, the conditions, causes, strategies and consequences that denoted patterns and relationships in the research were identified and analysed in the tradition of Straussian grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This produced the four major phenomena in this study. These phenomena are conceptualised here as major categories.

Efficiency and effectiveness were demonstrated in the four major categories that were found in the data. These were Managing Information, Individual Characteristics, Sustaining Initiatives and the Shifting Scope of Initiatives. These categories stood for prominent phenomena which typified “repeated patterns of happenings, events, or actions/interactions...” undertaken or explained by actors in this study as a “response to the problems and situations in which they found themselves” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 130). They were discovered through the processes of theoretical and constant comparison of the codes. The codes presented represent different facets of the coding paradigm with some codes, for example, representing context while others represented strategies etc. This is according to Strauss and Corbin quite normal, and it was the responsibility of the researcher to assign them the appropriate conceptual significance (1998, p. 129).

These contexts, conditions, and strategies that make up the circumstances laid the foundations for the initiatives to experience considerable variation, notwithstanding the modality of funding.

### Managing Information

The first of the four categories, managing information, stood out in the research as an important phenomenon, capable of both influencing the degree of efficiency and effectiveness of an initiative and being a measure of the same. In the case of donor aid, managing information was an important part of many initiatives as demonstrated by the careful collection, storage, curation, packaging, dissemination and withholding of data. This was evidenced by the many reports shared by donors, their significant online presence as well as the various programme documents such as log frames that were encountered in the study. Managing information within donor aid was often funded by the donor through the **Monitoring and Evaluation** function. Although much of this information related to recipients and their outcomes, efficient management of this information became an imperative due to the demands placed on donor organisations by their stakeholders. Furthermore, the process of managing information was often led by the donor who largely determined what information was relevant and when it would be required. These patterns showed the external nature of managing information. In this way, managing information seemed highly exogenous, that is, its origin and locus came from the donor and not from the system in which the information was being generated.

Consider these two excerpts taken from the CAMFED Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education programme and World Visions' Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition, and Education (IGATE-T) programme.

*“This indicator is the backbone of this programme. The value of the inclusion of the CAMFED Community structures, their contribution to the ZGSE outcomes in strengthening capacity to manage bursary schemes at school and at district level (for example in selecting bursary beneficiaries in their schools) and involvement in monitoring through the district level structures - outweighs the financial investments towards enabling this oversight role as set out in the performance narrative above. This year, the cost of monitoring is at 2.3% of the 2020/21 budget and shows strong effectiveness in terms of value for money.” (ZGSE Annual Review 2021, Paragraph 250).*

*“...<sup>11</sup>It suggests strong buy-in from the district level of the MoPSE, as well as an effective monitoring and accountability system to ensure that IGATE activities are being fully and effectively implemented.”* (IGATE Endline Project Evaluation Report 2021, p. 89).

And so, monitoring and evaluation were viewed not just a means to an end but also a key measure of internal effectiveness and efficiency and as a predictor of the effectiveness of donor aid funded initiatives.

Interestingly, donors also seemed to be particularly efficient with regards to withholding information on expenditure, despite other information seeming to be widely publicly available. In this regard, managing information on donor finances proved to be highly endogenous i.e. originating from or being found within the donor aid system. Despite repeated direct communication through formal channels to the responsible authority, all four of the donors approached in this study, UNICEF Zimbabwe, the Norwegian Refugee Council, CAMFED and World Vision Zimbabwe failed to supply specific raw financial data on their programmes to the researcher nor did they respond to requests for the same or no longer had the information stored.

Given the vast scale of information on donor aid funded activities, donors must make decisions about how long information can be stored. In the case of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), it was impossible to access physical records of their activities as their Zimbabwe country office closed in 2015. In communication with international NRC staff on the matter, it was brought to light that the organisation does not store financial data for longer than 10 years and so even some digital information may no longer be available. This has negative implications on evaluation particularly for projects and programmes that are expected to have a long-term impact and for reporting on sustainability. In a nutshell, while donor aid seemed to be particularly efficient and effective when it comes to producing and disseminating information, this research found that the information was skewed towards processes, activities and outputs and weak on finances, outcomes and impact. Critically, the property of getting access to and verifying the quality of the information available proved to be quite challenging.

The strategies employed to avoid providing detailed financial information included **stone walling**, i.e., simply not responding to follow up requests. This occurred with three out of the four donors approached despite them acknowledging the initial

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<sup>11</sup> Three dots denote text that is extracted from the middle of a sentence or before the end of a sentence.

request by the researcher for information. The fourth donor did not respond to any of the researchers requests at all. Other strategies included tying accessing data to climbing up a long chain of command. The researcher also failed to get this information from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. What information was available at the Ministry was aggregated data and some financial information collected through the EMIS on which schools in the country received donor aid. However, this information did not say which donors supported which schools or how the funds were used. Schools themselves do not always seem to be privy to the amounts involved in the initiatives they benefitted from. When asked about the value of the water projects they received, two representatives of two different schools which both had boreholes drilled for them on site by two different donors indicated that they were unaware of how much was channelled towards these projects. These sentiments were exemplified in the following data.

*“UNICEF for example you never know what is there, we don’t know the original amount. We work with the amounts we are given. Maybe the head office of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is aware.”* (Respondent-Provincial Education Director, Paragraph 10).

*“We don’t ask how much money goes into these projects. We are satisfied with whatever we get.”* (Respondent 1 and Respondent 2- St Columba Primary School, Paragraph 15).

Limiting access to the raw data which can be used to analyse the impact of donor aid is itself a measure of ineffectiveness. The fourth principle of Effective Development Co-operation of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-Operation reads, “Countries and their development partners are accountable to each other and their respective development constituents. They are jointly responsible for ensuring development co-operation information is publicly available (Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation n.d.). Similarly, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2008 (p. 2) references “mechanisms for mutual accountability” as one of 5 indicators for mutual accountability. This researcher found that in the case of this study, such mechanisms were not always comprehensive.

One might argue that because donors readily produce and share reports, various other types of information and subject their initiatives to independent evaluations, they display a high degree of efficient mutual accountability which itself supports the occurrence of effective development. It can just as easily be said however, that the production and dissemination of this information is managed in such a way that critical

financial information and even information on impact and outcomes are not always open to scrutiny from stakeholders such as the “development constituents” referenced in the Paris Declaration (p. 2).

This is however not always the case. One head teacher indicated being advised of the value of the donation of a borehole and the water reticulation system his school received. Furthermore, this same project is said to have been endorsed by the district administration office. This suggests that there were varying levels of access to financial information. These levels might even have followed a descending hierarchy where those with full financial information sat at the very top – the donors – and those with the least amount of information, the beneficiaries, occupied the bottom rung. Such dimensions recall the post-positivist concept of discourse and the ‘relationship between language and meaning’ (Ryan, n.d., p. 22). According to Ryan, competing discourses vie for power and influence. Those who therefore have greater access to information have a distinct ability to control narratives. This power dynamic is also reflected in the beneficiaries “no questions asked” acceptance of and gratitude for initiatives and conceptualised in the code **Accepting donations without necessarily being aware of the value**. This again brings to mind the idea of gratitude bias brought to light by the positive Social Return on Investment valuation scores from stakeholders, many of whom were grateful for the assistance they got without necessarily interrogating the actual benefits further. This code also harkens back to the acceptance of the donation of a library despite not having the capacity to hire a librarian and library books which were deemed rather outdated and not entirely suitable for the school’s needs by the school authorities.

The library was later converted into a classroom. The community and school administration could have clarified their needs beforehand. However, they did not and accepted the donation instead as it was.

The OECD identifies mutual accountability as one of 5 principles. In the wake of the lukewarm adoption and implementation of the Paris Declaration, a 2009 progress report goes on to make follow-up recommendations to this effect: “All development partners should adopt the highest possible standards of openness, transparency and access to information”, noting that “Civil Society Organisations need to exercise transparency and primary accountability to their constituencies and stakeholders, while accounting to donors and governments for the use of public funds” (OECD, 2009, p. 127). While on paper, this sort of information should be shared, none of the interviewees in this study

indicated that they knew how much was being committed to their projects. How then could they be expected to take meaningful ownership of the said projects?

Furthermore, now that we have established that giving donations also passes on the cost of ownership, we can also conclude that it would have been prudent to share this information before-hand so that the recipients would be fully aware of the responsibility that they were taking on. Moreover, the fact that donations were handed over to beneficiaries who were not fully appraised is an indication of the perhaps bigger problem of the asymmetrical flow of information, power dynamics and the passive participation of beneficiaries in matters that are supposed to benefit them.

How information was managed was also deemed to contribute to effectiveness in other ways by beneficiaries. One respondent noted that as a beneficiary of the CAMFED Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education (ZGSE) programme bursary, she and the other bursary holders received information from the CAMFED teacher mentors in her school in the form of counselling and after-school support etc. She also noted that this information was not cascaded to the rest of the school. This led to the danger of peer voices diluting the teacher mentors messages making the ZGSE programme less effective. The code **Sharing information continuously and in a reinforced manner** captured this respondent's suggestion for how the ZGSE programme might be able to realise more impact. This idea was eventually partly introduced in 2016, four years into the programme. Lessons and materials on Sexual Reproductive Health were taught to more learners than just the CAMFED ZGSE bursary holders. This may have had a positive impact. According to ZGSE reports and their log frame, the rate of dropouts fell from 8.8 per cent in 2016-2017 to 1.4 per cent in 2019-2020 before climbing again in 2020-2021, most likely due to COVID 19.

The respondent also noted the importance of informing the beneficiaries of the goal of the bursary programme. It seems an almost common-sense assumption that a beneficiary would understand that receiving a school bursary would be for the purposes of **changing their lives**. However, this does not, at least in the case of this programme, seem to have been the case. Other ZGSE beneficiaries who took part in this study also seemed to have grasped the first part of the programme's impact statement, that is the achievement of "gender parity in the secondary cycle" and far less so the second part which reads "with consequent wide-ranging social and economic benefits" (CAMFED ZGSE Business Case, 2012, p. 9).

According to their responses, the programme's goal was to finance girl-child education as well as any entrepreneurial activities she might want to embark on. However, they did not recognise that this support had the end goals of improved learning outcomes and better life chances in mind. This slight misalignment between donor and beneficiary expectations may have been the difference between those who capitalised on the opportunity the bursary presented by passing their Ordinary Levels and those who did not.

Social Entrepreneurship in this study focused on schools or organizations working with schools or students. Managing information in this regard appeared very rudimentary. There was little evidence of schools producing externally directed reports of their activities, neither were any special funds set aside for this. Use of the information generated was mostly endogenous. Even in cases where projects were effective, information on these projects tended to be centralised around one or two responsible individuals within that educational institution, neither was there any evidence of **succession planning**, again alluding to endogeneity. This would likely have long term negative implications for the sustainability of these projects. This suggested that in this regard, more endogeneity led to less effectiveness.

Reporting which served other purposes tended to be externally initiated. This was encountered where hybrid situations obtained where, for example, donor aid was used to fund the start-up costs of social entrepreneurial projects. The code **Developing measuring tool to capture community contributions** illustrated the action taken by the donor to collect information on how much philanthropical support CAMFED had catalysed through its work with start-up community social entrepreneurial projects. As a direct consequence, CAMFED was able to report comprehensively on this. Another example of the greater availability of information associated with hybrid arrangements was the only for-profit social impact enterprise this research encountered. This enterprise in this study readily shared their information with the researcher and even put the researcher in contact with some of their client schools for further research. However, the social impact enterprise seemed to have very few reports and publications to share on their website. Furthermore, while the African Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF) which supported them with a grant did share basic summaries of the investments made into the company, it was not willing to release raw financial data, citing Non-Disclosure Agreements.

The cause of this sparsity of data in social entrepreneurship as well as the more casual Management of information in general in the social entrepreneurial sector in education in Zimbabwe may be a result of the novelty of social entrepreneurship as a source of financing education. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has only recently institutionalised social entrepreneurship for financing of education in schools. During one interview, a Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education official made mention of a cabinet paper produced by MoPSE on commercial ventures in Schools. This code, **Existence of a cabinet paper on commercial ventures in schools**, led to further enquiry around this aspect. Media reports indicate that in 2021, Cabinet in Zimbabwe approved schools “engaging in Commercial Ventures” (StartupBiz Zimbabwe, 2021; The Herald, 2022). Prior to this, it can be assumed that the impetus to engage in some kind of income generating project by those schools already doing so came from some other source. In the meantime, the sector has been growing seemingly rather organically with few standards for information management in place. This point is illustrated by the fact that the 2021 School Financing Policy of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education makes no mention of Commercial Ventures in Schools (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2021d). The Ministry itself also acknowledged that

***“It is very difficult to measure something which is not standardised, and which varies from school to school.”*** (Respondent- Director Research, Policy and Planning, Paragraph 11).

### **Individual Characteristics**

This category explains how individuals influence and determine the efficiency and effectiveness of initiatives through their actions and motivation. It also explains how individual circumstances influence the same. The research encountered examples of beneficiaries of donor aid funded initiatives responding to the initiatives differently depending on their respective characteristics. The FCDO sponsored CAMFED ZGSE programme provides an important case with which to demonstrate this assertion. The researcher interviewed four young ladies labelled as CAMFED #1, #2, #3, and #4 respectively, who were alumni of this bursary scheme. Three of the four beneficiaries, CAMFED #2, CAMFED #3 and CAMFED #4 were enrolled at the same school at the same time and were on this bursary for the four years of their secondary education. All three did not pass the required number and combination of Ordinary Level subjects and

were forced to rewrite their exams. This is despite attending a school that, although rural, has a reputation for academic excellence. They did not seem to come from severely impoverished families either. This is evidenced by the fact that after failing their O' levels, all three rewrote their exams with support from their families. The open codes **Failing O level and Rewriting O level** were drawn from the submissions below.

*“And then I rewrote and rewrote and all in all have six O’ levels.” (Respondent-CAMFED #3, Paragraph 17).*

“I repeated Form 4 and then I rewrote my exams.” (Respondent-CAMFED #4, Paragraph 20).

Furthermore, two out of three of these beneficiaries were supported to get tertiary education qualifications, again by their families. All three lived near the school and therefore would not have had the excuse of having to travel long distances to school.

The fourth beneficiary CAMFED #4 only received a bursary in the final year of Ordinary Level and attended a very rural and disadvantaged school. Despite this, she was able to pass enough subjects to allow her to proceed to Advanced Level. The CAMFED respondents also referenced students in their cohort who failed their Ordinary Levels because they had limited study time, no electricity, had limited access to food or were acting as carers to their siblings. Donor aid was not able to address all of these issues. In the case of the CAMFED ZGSE programme, efforts were made to give learners school uniforms and shoes, stationary, pay their school and exam fees, give them mentorship support, influence the communities around them to support them in their education and provide school feeding. In later years, the CAMFED ZGSE programme even built a few boarding facilities in some schools for learners who lived far away or bought such learners bicycles. This was previously coded as **raft of measures towards a problem**.

Despite all of these measures, the ZGSE programme still seemingly did not produce better learning outcomes. The 2014 ZGSE report, the last year for which such an analysis is publicly available, notes that the percentage of ZGSE beneficiaries, the percentage of peers who were not on the programme and the percentage of peers in a sister programme known as the Girl’s Education Challenge (GEC) who passed their O’ Levels, all stood at 10 per cent. Furthermore, what little information is available indicates that aggregate pass rates of all the beneficiaries of the bursary scheme showed little improvement over the 10 years that the programme was running. This suggests that the initiative was not the deciding factor in helping disadvantaged girls to attain secondary

education but rather an enabler. This strengthens the case for pass rates in the programme being determined largely by Individual Characteristics.

What then can explain how the investments made into these girls' education led to very little improvement? To go back to this study's four CAMFED alumni, after controlling for socio-economic background, the distinguishing factor between the learner who passed her O' Levels and the learners who did not was the fact that she worked harder than the others. The four beneficiaries themselves indicated that those with less motivation performed poorly while the highly motivated student performed well. They also cited peer pressure as a negative influence on their performance. Several other respondents reiterated the sentiment that learners' own actions influence their learning outcomes.

The conditions that cause these Individual Characteristics to manifest differently are tied to the local environment. According to several respondents, learners are heavily influenced by their communities and circumstances. The efforts of donor aid are diluted where negative peer pressure or community influence is strong. This may be the case for example for girl children who live in communities where the cultural expectation to marry young is high and the premium on education is low. This can lead to **Failing due to lack of community support** — or **Lacking parental supporting contributing to dropouts**. Teacher responses capture this sentiment.

*"Ya. Another factor that we think matters is parents. Because these learners are selected from disadvantaged families. Some of them do not value education. Their parents that is. Much as the school explains the criteria of learners who will be selected, these criteria, these criteria etc and after having identified learners who fit these criteria, their parents, don't, they don't value the importance of it. Even should the learner decide to dropout, the parents are not likely to make any effort to get the learner back in school."* (Respondent- Teacher Avontuur Secondary former Earn and Learn School, Paragraph 150).

The best efforts of a beneficiary in such circumstances were not likely to succeed because of the individual circumstances surrounding them. Furthermore, many donor aid funded initiatives were not able to address these problems because they were not designed to provide bespoke solutions to individual challenges. Here, the Individual Characteristics of other stakeholders come into play. These other stakeholders included parents, guardians, peers, and teachers. The code **Teacher Initiatives** was coded after Beneficiary CAMFED#1 indicated that she received a lot of support from her teachers before and while on the CAMFED ZGSE bursary. This assistance helped to keep her in school in the

period while her family was not able to pay her school fees. In some instances, this even extended to financial and material support. These teachers also lobbied and succeeded in securing a CAMFED ZGSE bursary for her just before her Form 4 examinations allowing her examination fees to be paid and facilitating her to write her O' Level examinations. The quality of her educational experience also improved as she had access to uniforms, stationary and sanitary wear.

In the same way, schools which shared similarities, and which embarked on similar Income Generating Projects witnessed differences in outcomes. In one example, two neighbouring government schools, one a primary school and the other a high school where the primary school served as a feeder school for the high School, both embarked on animal husbandry and gardening projects using a mix of donor aid and school funds to help start-up their projects. While both schools demonstrated longevity of projects, efficiency in record keeping and effectiveness in as far as using their profits for the benefit of their learners, this was to differing degrees. The first school reported consistency in their project management going as far back as an initial donation of a borehole in 1999 from the Japanese Embassy to Zimbabwe. In addition to involving teachers and students in their projects to optimise teaching and learning, the school **also employed a dedicated project manager**. They used sustainable farming practices and were also effective in realising profits which were channelled back into the school for the purchase of infrastructure as shown by how well painted and landscaped it was.

Notable was the schools' ability to buy a tent as an emergency stop gap measure in which children could learn during The COVID 19 pandemic at a time when the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education had mandated social distancing requirements. The school would not have been able to fulfil these at such short notice otherwise, given the limited number of classrooms they have. Both efficiency and effectiveness in this case were attributed to endogeneity, that is the **leadership** of the head teacher as well as the knowledge and skills of staff in the school. They also referenced using the '**Whole School Approach**' and suggested that their capacity for running projects well attracted even more donor aid, both local and international.

The second school also involved students and staff in their projects. Parents at this school seemed quite involved with a local **Mothers Support Group** running the tuckshop and growing vegetables in the school garden. The school authorities reportedly already had a history of embarking on income generating activities for the benefit of learners

before they began to receive the donor aid they were receiving at the time of the study. They initiated their garden and school feeding projects without donor aid. They had also been teaching students beadwork as a means of making an extra income. Project profits were channelled back to their school feeding action as well as to purchase sanitary wear for female students. The school however reported shutting down or scaling back on three projects. In two out of these three cases, the reason cited was the increasing cost of doing business. That said, the school did continue to run their tuckshop and goat projects. They also reported being able to pivot from their broiler project to a layers project<sup>12</sup> after their broiler project was affected by an untimely power outage which coincided with the slaughter of a large number of their chickens.

This school seemed more run down than its primary school, with bucket hand washing facilities compared to the piped facilities at the primary school, buildings in need of new paint, no paving and very few trees or landscaping. Although perhaps not one of the first things one would consider when trying to determine efficiency and effectiveness, authors such as Muhammed & Chima, 2016, p.5) who cite Mgbodile (2013) argue that well maintained schools foster learner interest in school and when utilised right, such well-maintained schools can lead to the realisation of ‘efficiency gains’. Not only did the difficulties that the school experienced with keeping their beading and broiler projects running indicate challenges with responding to externally induced change, but the rundown image of the school in comparison to the appearance of the primary school suggested critical differences in the way the two schools were being run.

Furthermore, as both schools seemed to operate under the same conditions, were separated by no more than 2km, served the same community, and seemed to have committed staff members, accounting for the differences in their outcomes seemed to come down to leadership and management. The projects in the second school were managed with heavy involvement from their donors, Plan and CAMFED. This suggests that the advantages of engaged staff members in the school were diluted as critical decisions were made in partnership with donors. While on paper such a partnership would seem like an ideal situation, in this instance it seems to have stifled individual ingenuity in contrast to the first school. Respondents from the primary school explicitly credited good leadership and teamwork for their success. They also stated that they do not rely on

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<sup>12</sup> Broilers are chickens kept for consumption while layers are chicken kept for laying eggs.

donor aid, rather donor aid is used to complement their activities. This principle seemed inverted in the case of the high school.

These examples were mirrored in other schools visited in the study. Schools which displayed and reported successful projects also ascribed their achievements to the interest and skills of staff members and support from their leadership whereas those schools that struggled referenced external factors such as the COVID 19 pandemic or structural challenges. If it were possible to ascribe human characteristics to a school system, one might say that those schools with engaged and knowledgeable employees and stakeholders had a strong internal locus of control while those that did not displayed a strong external locus of control. Consequently, the research argues that the phenomenon of Individual Characteristics, made up of skills, actions, motivations and circumstances etc of individuals influences the efficiency and effectiveness of both donor aid and social entrepreneurship in the education sector in Zimbabwe.

Individual Characteristics also influenced the efficiency and effectiveness of Social Entrepreneurial initiatives for groups or individuals within educational institutions. Specific reference can be made to instances in the data where learners were equipped with technical and vocational skills or organised into project groups by International NGOs such as the Youth Education Pack programme run by the Norwegian Refugee Council. After receiving training, students were organised into cooperatives and given business start-up kits. According to a former staff member and based off an evaluation carried out one year after the establishment of these groups, the majority of these cooperatives were still functional at the time. This code, **70 per cent of cooperatives still in existence a year later** led to further enquiries about the status of the cooperatives at the time of this study. Due to a lack of information, no hard figures could be given but some respondents reported that some cooperatives were still going.

Individuals also continued to use the training they received, and this was again attributed to individual characteristics. One of the respondents had this to say:

*“But a few carried on. In business, of which some of them, especially on the Cosmetology side, they carried on in business and they are still doing that. Some work as seamstresses or tailors, they carried on..., because sometimes, I think it depended on the passion that the individual has.”* (Respondent -Former NRC Youth Education Pack employee, Paragraph 69).

Respondents also referenced circumstances as a contributing factor for the efficiency and effectiveness of social entrepreneurial initiatives in the education sector in

Zimbabwe. The CAMFED ZGSE programme, in addition to providing bursaries for students in some schools, also put some learners through Technical and Vocational Education short courses, after which they were also given start-up funding to begin their own businesses.

Again, very little information was made available about what percentage of businesses are still operational and exactly what kinds of businesses these CAMFED ZGSE Alumni were supported to undertake. However, respondent CAMFED #1 felt that “some” recipients of these start-up funds and training “really” benefitted from this component of the ZGSE programme. In her opinion, the deciding factor was supporting beneficiaries to start projects which fit their context. This was coded as **the need to support projects that are context appropriate**. Agricultural projects seemed appropriate as rural beneficiaries typically already had the knowledge needed to be able to manage them. Furthermore, she noted that it is important to consider the circumstances of the location of the project and whether one would be able to find a market for whatever goods and services they might offer. This highlighted the significance of the locus in determining efficiency and effectiveness.

The study also considered the effectiveness and efficiency of one now defunct Earn and Learn programme. In previous years Tanganda Tea, a tea company in Zimbabwe ran an ‘Earn and Learn’ programme where learners received free board, access to education in estate schools and wages in exchange for picking tea. The two-part motivations for the establishment of the school and scheme as reported by research participants were providing education to disadvantaged children and perhaps cheap labour for the company. This system was made permissible initially by a lack of Government support for education for **disadvantaged communities**. The Tea Company also had the financial resources and land to facilitate the construction of these schools and payment of wages to children and school staff making the programme attractive and accessible to inhabitants of these communities. Providing boarding facilities also opened the programme to external students. The region in which this programme was found also sheds some light on the how such an earn and learn programme was readily accepted. In this subsistence farming region, young people working as labourers for others, or their families, is not uncommon.

These factors demonstrate how the catalysation, and location of these schools by the Tea Company led to the effective provision of education for disadvantaged students.

From a purely economic perspective, the programme was able to efficiently enrol and accommodate large numbers of students and offset some, if not all their costs by engaging the learners as labourers. The factors also show how child rights were not upheld and how Safety and Health concerns were also ignored. Children worked long hours without protective clothing out in the open, exposed to the elements.

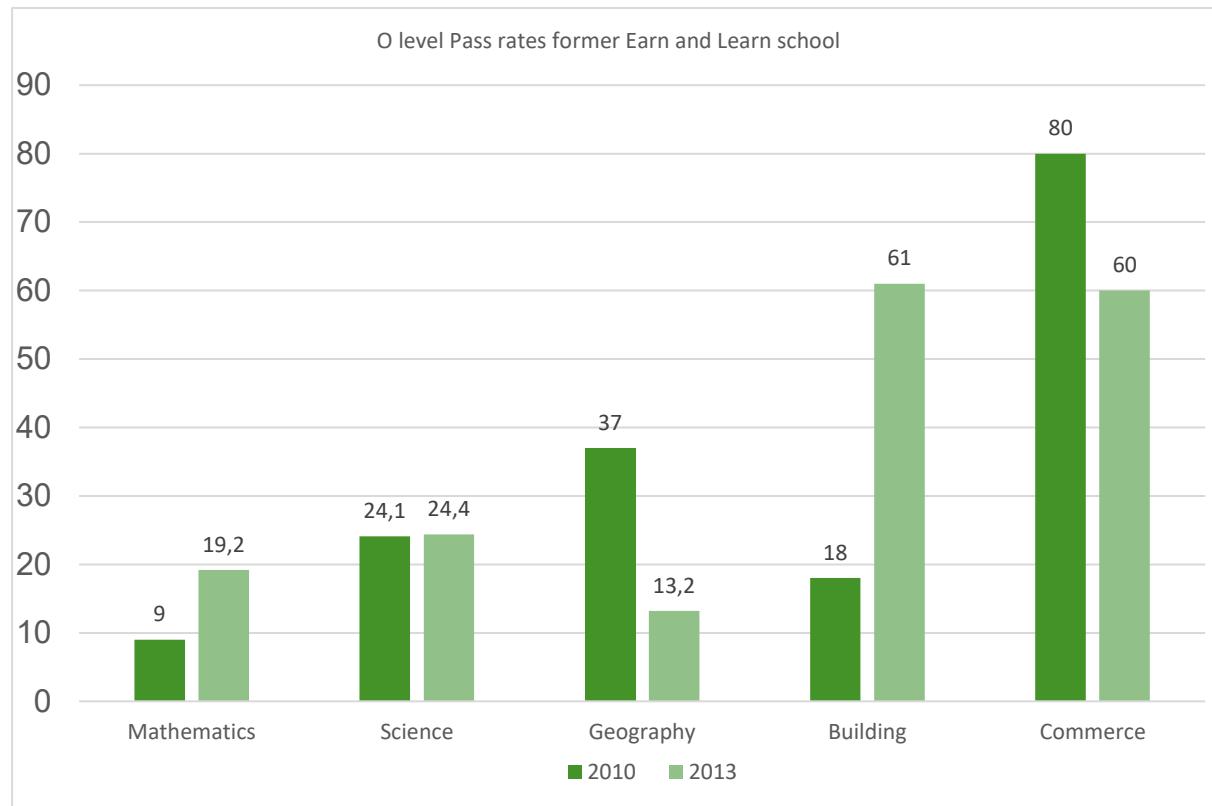
Publicly available information on the schools' academic performance is limited. However, historical records viewed at one school showed that academic performance after the programme was shut down showed significant improvement in Building and Mathematics while three other core subjects either stayed the same or declined noticeably (See Fig. 17). This suggests that the school itself, while determining outputs and the conditions in which learners were accommodated, was not the determining factor for academic achievement. Instead, respondents accounted for academic achievement as being determined by the individual **motivation** and **circumstances** of the learner. Several former students and teachers interviewed reported that some learners adjusted to the tough working conditions while others did not and eventually dropped out. Similarly, examples were given of students in extremely difficult circumstances who preferred the school over going back to their homes where the situation was even harder or who were breadwinners and supported their siblings using their tea picking incomes. These motivations and circumstances, each particular to the individual determined their outcome at the school.

That said, the Global Policy on Child Labour eventually had the effect of forcing the company to revoke the Earn and Learn programme. As this policy and even ethos did not originate within this community, it is considered in this research to have been exogenous. The policy and subsequent activism from NGOs and other lobby groups as well as International Certification Standards led to the company ending the programme in 2013 and learners dropping out of school as a coping strategy. One teacher respondent reported that enrolments in 2022 still had not returned to pre-2013 levels. The conditions created by the Global Policy on Child Labour intervened to neutralise the impact that a learners' motivation or circumstances had on the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme. In the absence of adequate funding for education, it can be argued that no amount of motivation or no matter how dire the circumstances of the learner were, they still would not have access to education at that school, at least in the short term.

The causal conditions leading to the Earn and Learn scheme also describe the contextual conditions in which it obtained in general. The Tea Company is said to have

introduced the Earn and Learn scheme as a means of assisting over age out of school youths to get an education. According to a World Bank report, between 2006 and 2011 about 50 per cent of Zimbabwean youths ages 15 to 24 were out of school because they had dropped out, had completed their secondary education or had just never been in school in that order (Inoue et al., 2015). The scheme would therefore be fulfilling an important need in that region. Between 2007 and 2009, this need probably increased due to the economic meltdown the country was experiencing at the time.

Figure 17: O level Pass rates former Earn and Learn



Source: *Earn and learn school historical pass rate data*.

Justifying this need against the working conditions learners were facing proved too difficult for the tea company and it eventually capitulated to demands from activists as well as global certification boards to do away with the programme. Unfortunately, this was the companies only response to these actions. At the time of doing this study and nine years after the end of the scheme, the company had not replaced it with any sort of bursary or sponsorship programme. The problems of low enrolments, low pass rates, gender disparity in enrolments, dropouts and pass rates have persisted.



### Sustaining Initiatives

The third category illustrating the influence of the origin or locus of an initiative on efficiency and effectiveness was Sustaining Initiatives. The tendency was towards unsustainability in initiatives with some exceptions. This cut across both donor aid and social entrepreneurship. The research encountered several projects funded through donor aid and several projects funded through social entrepreneurship which quickly became unsustainable. In the case of donor aid, projects tended to fold once the donor aid had withdrawn indicating that it was an exogenous source of funding and/or organisation that was keeping the project afloat. Much of the impact realised would also then be tied to said donor aid. Such projects also illustrated inefficiencies in that the investment of resources into establishing these initiatives would be lost once the project folded. The life span of many projects did not go very far beyond the exit of the donor from the project. One employee of an NGO estimated that this lifespan does not exceed a year.

Many donor-funded initiatives themselves have short durations or experience changes within them which negatively impact sustainability. This is often attributed to the limited funding available for these initiatives coming from donor countries. Donor aid tends to start strong but over time, declines in amount, sometimes just at the tipping point. This was reportedly the case for the UNICEF managed School Improvement Grant which scaled back on funding schools “*just as real change was beginning*” (Smith et al., 2018, p. xiii). This tendency to cut programmes short, close them down wholesale, reduce funding for them etc is one of the actions taken to mitigate resource constraints but had the unintended consequence of diluting the effectiveness of donor aid funded initiatives over time. The Social Return on Investment analysis of Brompton Primary School, Highfields High School and St Columba Primary School illustrated the importance of making sufficient investments in initiatives to get them to the point where they would begin to realise returns.

Another consequence of reduced and limited funding is the proclivity towards designing rapid initiatives, compromising their quality and affecting the sustainability of the impact of these projects themselves, creating a vicious cycle of aid ineffectiveness.

The excerpt below captures this sentiment.

*“Some of the disadvantages is that the time frame for training is short and is done as fast as possible when built on donor funding. Graduates are not as polished as graduates from VTC’s.”* (Respondent- CARE employee anonymous, Paragraph 8).

These patterns are captured in the code **Diminishing returns**. There were however exceptions manifest in individuals who were able to realise sustained impact from donor aid funded initiatives. These seem to commonly be referred to as ‘**Success Stories**’ in development aid lingo and are codified as such. As earlier mentioned, intrinsic motivation in such cases seemed to be the deciding factor.

*“errm since I also joined FAWEZI, although we have not registered 100 per cent success rate, we have success stories.”* (Respondent- Director African NGO, Paragraph 142).

Exogeneity was also made noticeable in the tendency among donors to make donations which, although noble, did not suit the context of the beneficiaries. This was embodied in a submission from a respondent to the effect that **the needs analyses are conducted from the point of view of the donor**. Two such examples are the donation of bicycles to rural schools to help learners get to school earlier and the donation of a library building and books to a school library. In the first example, the cost of maintaining the bicycles eventually proved to be beyond the recipients, neither did there seem to be any bicycle technicians within these communities. Riding bicycles to school is a common global north phenomenon but very unusual in the Zimbabwean context, more so in rural areas. The donation of a library and library books in the second example was guided by the mission of Aussie Books for Zim (ABZ), which is to donate second-hand books from Australia to schools in Zimbabwe and build libraries to house these books. The grant application submitted by ABZ outlines how a well-meaning community member with no formal ties to the school approached ABZ about building a library for the community.

Given the rural nature of the community itself, it was decided to build the library on the school grounds. This stakeholder together with school administration submitted a request to ABZ for the library. However, it seems no needs analysis was done at the school level prior to making these donations as it was later realised that the library would need a librarian who would also need to be paid which at the time of data collection was not possible. The library has since been converted into a classroom by the school authorities who reported that their school does not have enough classrooms. Furthermore, while they expressed gratitude for the donations, they indicated that the books were very old and not particularly relevant to their context. The original intention of giving children books to read and a place where these books can be stored and read was not effectively sustained.

In a similar way the research encountered evidence of social entrepreneurial activities in schools which were catalysed by the government directive endorsing commercial ventures in schools rather than from any interest from school stakeholders. The choice of what ventures to embark on was often influenced by what neighbouring schools were doing, again rather than through any local initiative or competitive advantage that that school had. Research participants attributed unsustainability of initiatives in large part to these sorts of externally generated motivation. Sustainability in the case of school based social entrepreneurial projects also seemed tightly bound to individual characteristics. Those schools that had long serving knowledgeable and committed staff members running or leading their projects reported running projects for longer and with significant outcomes to show from these projects. There was evidence of sustained school feeding programmes, renovation of facilities, payments of bills and utilities, all financed with the proceeds of their income generating projects.

Unsustainability of initiatives in the social entrepreneurship sector in education in Zimbabwe seemed to be tied to factors such as poor planning, a lack of resources, inflation or *force majeure*. Of the 17 educational institutions in the research, five reported ending their commercial ventures at some point since 2013 due to any one of these challenges. In an example of one such failed project, the concerned school began a pig rearing project by building pig sties and buying a few pigs and some feed. Their expectation was to replenish stock feed supplies out of contributions from parents. However, unsurprisingly, these contributions did not materialise given the levels of disadvantage in the community the school serves. The project eventually collapsed, and this was coded accordingly as **Pig project stalling because of lack of feed**. This represents something of a waste given the financial outlays made towards the pig project which will not be recouped. Several other reasons representing the contextual conditions leading to the collapse of these mostly agriculture based IGPs were challenges with utilities. Many rural schools in Zimbabwe do not have access to electricity or running water. Both are necessary for the running of water intensive agricultural projects and the necessary investments would need to be made to support the projects. Responses from respondents to this effect were coded as **schools not having ways to sustainably maintain projects**.

Exceptions where sustaining initiatives seemed easier, and which this research takes great interest in, seemed to be projects which provided infrastructure where a need for the said infrastructure had been identified, where sufficient funding was made

available to ensure completion of the projects and where the users had the capacity to utilise and maintain the infrastructure. Several examples of construction projects which were still functional in schools and being used by and for learners over 20 years later, were encountered during the research. These include classroom blocks, infrastructure for water piped to a school as well as the construction of an entire college. This seemed to be the case regardless of whether this related to donor aid or social entrepreneurship.

*“We have bigger infrastructural projects where we cannot identify individuals but it’s a benefit to the system.”* (Respondent-Provincial Education Officer, Paragraph 19).

The results of the SROI analyses of St Columba primary school and Brompton primary school indicated as much. In such instances, it was possible to encounter endogenous and exogenous factors working together to achieve sustainability. The causal conditions in which this sustainability obtained seem to be where the infrastructure fulfilled a **recognised need** and met the necessary building standards. According to the Independent Impact Study of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) in Zimbabwe, head teachers also cited construction of new infrastructure (such as classrooms) as the biggest need not being met by SIG payments. Focus Group Discussions, interviews and reviews of secondary data also cited this as a major challenge, noting that the grant amount became “insufficient anyway for major construction” as it decreased (Smith et al., 2021, p. 21). Similarly, respondents in the field repeatedly mentioned building classrooms as one sign of the effectiveness of donor aid and well-built classrooms as a product of the efficiencies of donor aid.

Initiatives to provide, repair or renovate existing infrastructure also had a positive impact. Take the example of the rural technical and vocational college visited in this study. This college was built in 1994 through donor aid from the Kellogg Foundation and later handed over to the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (UCCZ) under the Supervision of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. In 2012 the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) introduced the Youth Education Pack programme to the community through the college. The NRC made extensive renovations to the college premises, provided all the inputs for the youth skills programme and managed it as well. It was mentioned as an example of a wasted investment in one of this researcher’s early interviews by a respondent who had heard that it had closed after the NRC ended the programme. Upon visiting the college however, it was found that at the close of the programme in 2013, the NRC handed control of the buildings, Teaching and Learning

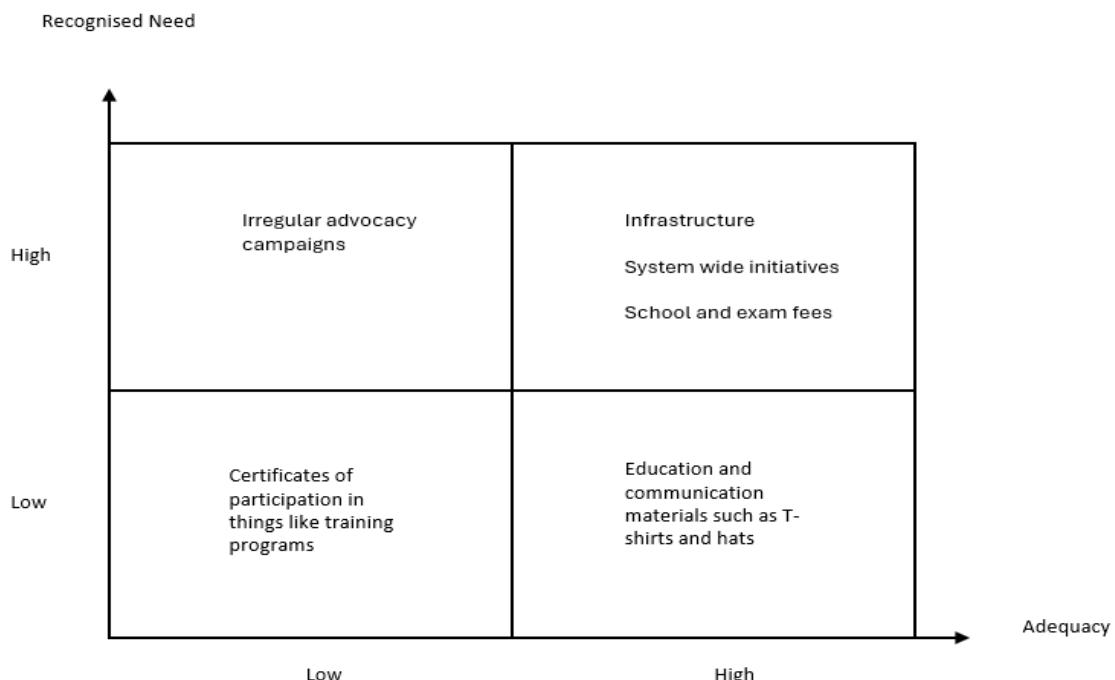
Materials and equipment back to the UCCZ. After a lapse of five years, the college was reopened by the UCCZ which has continued to offer these short courses and has even expanded enrolment using the donated TLMs and capitalising on the renovations made. A former employee of the NRC noted that one of the criteria that the NRC used to select partner institutions for the Youth Education Pack programme was whether these potential partners had infrastructure. She argued that this infrastructure also contributed to the long-term sustainability of the programme the NRC introduced.

*“...But sustainability sometimes is dependent on the will. That is, the will to continue running the programme. So, I think maybe for UCCZ, it was an opportunity for them. Because they had the structure. Yes. The College, in terms of the horticulture aspect was not using all of its buildings. So, I think they realised that yes, because when we were identifying even the initial partners, it's one of the key issues we were looking at, like, are there structures on site? ....”* (Respondent -Former NRC Youth Education Pack employee, Paragraph 113).

As far as providing an explanation for the challenges associated with ‘sustaining initiatives’ respondents frequently mentioned donor dependence and its negative impact on sustainability. It may also be instructive to consider once again the dimensions of the funds. As already noted, these dimensions are characterised by **inadequacy**. Factors like short-time frames, budget cuts, declining aid, were encountered repeatedly in the data. Moreover, as initiatives were introduced into communities, perhaps not enough care was taken to determine whether the beneficiaries had the capacity to maintain the donations or keep up the momentum of the programmes being run using donor aid. This lack of capacity was evident at various levels, touching even on the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Government of Zimbabwe. There was also evidence of donors superimposing ideas that just do not fit in the recipient community or working with flawed theories of change. Drawing from these gaps, figure 20 proposes that sustainability is best achieved where the need for an initiative is recognised by stakeholders and is also supported by adequate funding and gives examples. The activities in the top right-hand quadrant are likely to generate a sustainable impact as the recognition for their need is high and the resources for their provision are adequate. The activities in the top left-hand quadrant, while still leading to sustainable impact, would do so to a lesser extent given the limited availability of resources for them. The two bottom quadrants both realise limited sustainability. However, certificates which have no value besides acting as tangible evidence of having participated in some kind of training are

even less sustainable than printed T-shirts and hats which last longer and which can at least reach a wider audience when worn in public.

Figure 18: Recognised Need, Adequacy and Sustainability Matrix



Source: Researchers own.

One respondent indicated that the most sustainable and efficient way to fund education initiatives would be to domesticate funds through the Government. Unfortunately, this was not possible at the time in Zimbabwe due to political reasons. And while this may be true, there was also evidence from the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) of the Government of Zimbabwe's own limited capacity to manage these funds or take over funding projects from donors. This evidence was corroborated by respondents. The BEAM programme has since been handed over to the Government of Zimbabwe, which has struggled to keep up with payments of fees for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) to schools. Other examples include the MoPSE failing to expend its budget in 2021 due to a late fourth-quarter disbursement and associated bureaucratic challenges.

Under these circumstances, the expense of channelling money through the third sector instead of through the Government may be justified.

*“Secondly Government does not receive direct support which means you need structures such as grant managers and there after at least two layers down and*

*each layer takes funds from the finances. More efficient would be to give the money to the Government.”* (Respondent-Former Multi-Lateral Employee, Paragraph 7).

### Shapeshifting of the Scope of Initiatives

The final category, Shapeshifting of the Scope of Initiatives also helped to highlight how exogeneity and endogeneity function to influence efficiency and effectiveness. In this research, ‘shapeshifting’ refers to how the scope of funding changes in different contexts while ‘scope’ refers to not just what the funding is used for but also *inter alia* properties such as duration, amounts and where the initiatives are deployed which have to some extent already been mentioned in this section. With regards to donor aid, the shapeshifting of the scope of initiatives manifested in **expansion** or contraction. One such example of expansion was the response to the 2019 Cyclone Idai which ravaged large parts of Eastern Zimbabwe. Several schools were damaged, and Teaching and Learning Materials were destroyed. This necessitated a large-scale response to this education emergency to renovate damaged school property and to replace Teaching and Learning Materials. In the face of limited Government of Zimbabwe capacity to respond to immediate challenges, donor aid was able to mobilise international resources very quickly. In this case, efficiencies in terms of rapid responses to education can be directly attributed to the exogenous nature of donor aid.

Donor aid was also able to expand the scope of social entrepreneurial activities. The data interrogated examples of wide scale start-up funding programmes such as the School Improvement Grant which reached schools across the country which were made possible by donor aid. This was once again against a backdrop of limited Government financial support for the same.

Contraction of donor aid on the other hand seemed to lead to inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Such contractions were often caused by changes in donor policy or international education blueprints. The global COVID 19 pandemic also led to donors shifting funding and attention away from education and towards battling the **crisis**. The tendency of donor aid to scale back had effects on the size of projects, how many people were reached, how much time could be committed towards addressing education related challenges and so on. This compromised effectiveness and sometimes even efficiency in that any investments made up to that point could no longer be supported at the same level. The case of the rural Technical and Vocational College earlier mentioned illustrates this point well. Over the years, the college hosted various donor aid organisations- including

the NRC- which ran different training programmes there. The level of support from these organisations varied and in all but one instance, their withdrawal signalled the end of the programme. This example shows how the scope of initiatives shifted in response to the availability of donor aid. At the same time, donor aid in this context often raised the level of efficiency that the college operated at. Day to day processes were supported by additional NGO staff. Resources such as vehicles and Teaching and Learning Materials were availed using donor funds and by so doing elevated the learning and teaching experiences of students and staff combined.

It may be important to note that the contraction of donor aid might only have led to ineffectiveness and inefficiency where a relationship of dependence had been established. The rural TVET college for example initially closed when the donor withdrew but was able to reopen independently within some years. Although at a much-reduced level of quality in terms of provision of TLMs and accommodations, enrolments have steadily increased and much of the materials bought and donated to the college remain in use. This again demonstrates the interplay between exogeneity and endogeneity (in this instance donor aid and local motivation respectively) and how these together impact efficiency and effectiveness.

The scope of initiatives in social entrepreneurship tended to shift due to endogenous factors. The research encountered schools which grew their Income Generating Projects using funds from fees, or the profits of existing projects and sometimes even parental support. This was once again tied to the individual characteristics of staff members or parents who were successfully able to grow projects. This is not to say that the scope of initiatives in social entrepreneurship was not affected by exogenous factors. The difficult economic climate in Zimbabwe had a negative impact on some projects, especially where there seemed to be little resistance from staff or parents who seemed incapable or disinterested in mitigating these challenges. However, the challenges caused by exogenous factors were overcome in schools where stakeholders were really engaged. A comparison of cases where donor aid provided start-up funding and cases where start-up funding was generated internally, showed that the projects that expanded in scope shared the endogenous quality of engaged stakeholders in common.

### 4.3.3 Selective Coding and Core Category

To arrive at the theory, the research integrated and refined the four major categories through the process of Selective Coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This stage of the research sought to find and interpret the relationships that exist between these four categories as understood based on Strauss and Corbin and Glaser and Holton's definition of a core category which they argue should provide a nexus around which the other categories can relate (1998, p.147;2004, para. 40). Through the process of integrating and refining these categories, the research identified the core phenomenon represented by the core category. This core category, understood as a summary explanation of what the research concerned itself with formed the foundation by which to respond to the aims, objectives and research questions of this research.

Without the benefit of context and explanation, to the average reader, it might at first be very difficult to see how the four major categories might be reduced into a core category, let alone a substantive or general theory about the extent to which social entrepreneurship can be an alternative to donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Indeed, the researcher wrestled with the data for months, constantly coming back to the questions, 'what is happening here and why?' and reviewing how the four categories were related to each other.

The researcher initially chose some early potential core categories. These early choices were 'Adequacy of Initiatives', 'Directness of Initiatives' and 'Individual attributes and circumstances.' These proved to be significant but were eventually subsumed into parts of the coding paradigm and helped to further explain the core category. Reflecting on how and why the efficiency and effectiveness of social entrepreneurship and donor aid might be tied to inadequacy, being direct or indirect or individual attributes and circumstances highlighted that these factors are related to whether the initiative had an internal or external origin or locus.

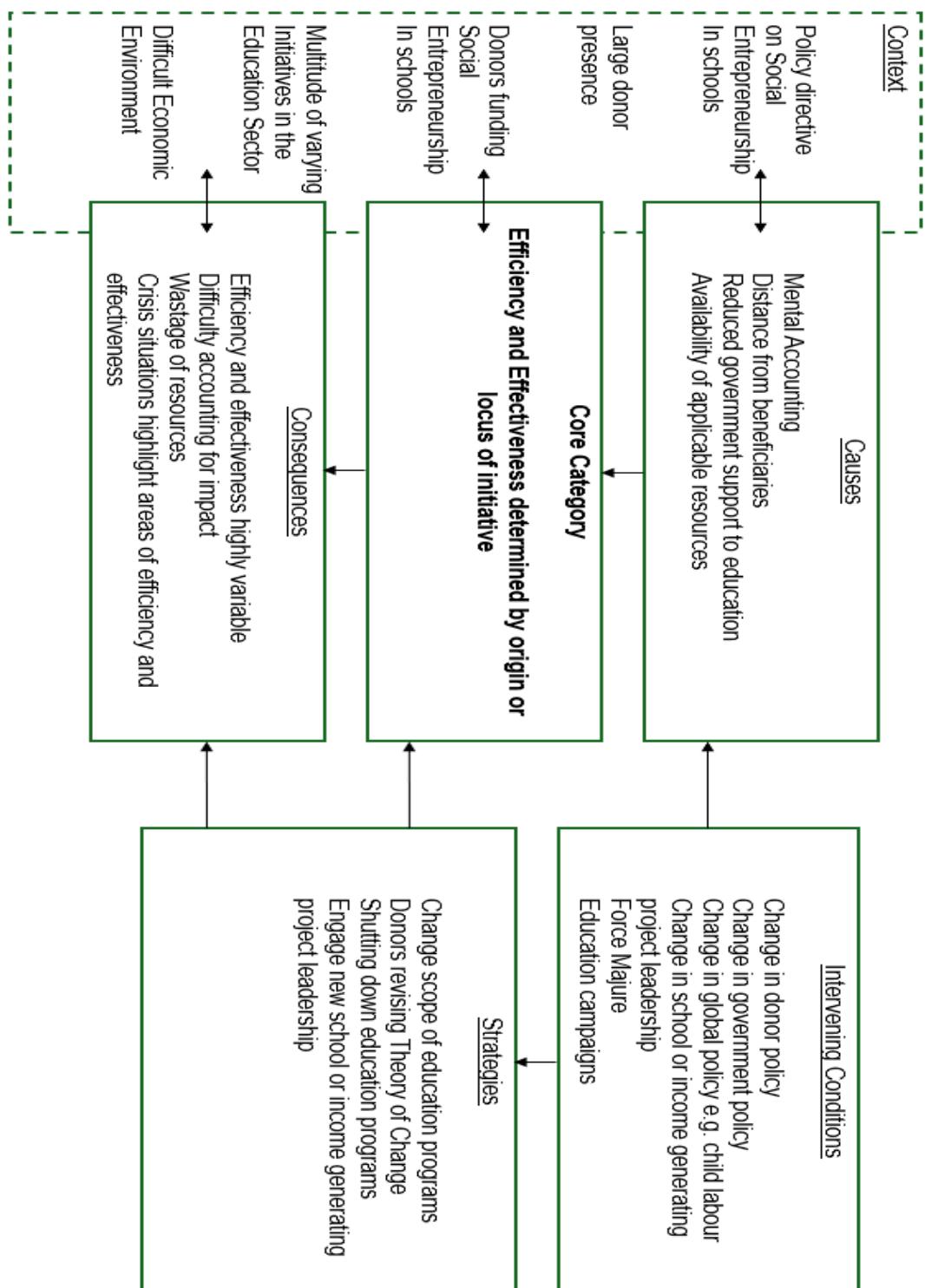
Consequently, after considering these factors and returning to the four major categories uncovered during the selective coding phase, the research findings converged around a central category. This core category, 'origin and locus determine efficiency and effectiveness of an initiative in the education sector' formed the foundation of the emergent theory in this research. Of importance to this study was whether the origin or locus of an initiative was external or internal denoted by the terms 'endogenous' and 'exogenous'. The paradigmatic conceptualisation of the relationships making up this

category were expanded in the tradition of Straussian grounded theory. Understanding the interplay between context, causes, intervening conditions, strategies and consequences helped to explain this category rather than just simply describe it (See figure 21). This nuanced understanding of the core category ‘origin and locus determine efficiency and effectiveness of an initiative in the education sector’ also guided the design of recommendations for responses to the challenges of efficiently and effectively funding education in Zimbabwe.

This core category, that is the label given to this core phenomenon, was not drawn from the data in any literal sense. It did not borrow from in vivo statements or even from any pre-existing code or category. This was however not problematic as the focus was properties and dimensions. Strauss and Corbin (1998, pp. 156-157) go as far as to encourage the use of new terminology for the core concept if no other suitable alternatives which meet the criteria of a core category can be found verbatim in the data and products of data analysis.

The core category of the origin or locus determining efficiency and effectiveness is important because typically, the debate up to this point has been characterised by binary discussions comparing one funding modality against the other or one-sided critiques on resource allocation as though their intrinsic value is infallible (Easterly et al., 2004; Smith & Nemetz, 2009; Karanda & Toledano, 2018). Thirdly, after witnessing renewed interest in the decade after the turn of the Millennium, the discussion of aid effectiveness and its alternatives has slowed down somewhat. It remains however relevant in the Zimbabwean context where both donor aid and social entrepreneurship are significant features of the education system. Furthermore, this theory finds congruence in theories of Complexity Science which study “non-linear dynamic behaviour” in systems (Bauer & Herder, 2009, p. 613). According to these authors who themselves cite Axelrod (1997), Colander (2000) and Holland (1995), such systems display significant variation within them represented as multifaceted relationships. They argue that “this may lead to emergent behaviour, i.e. overall complicated system behaviour that transpires out of simple lower system level behaviours and rules.” (p. 613). These ideas mirror the findings of this study.

Figure 19: Core category coding paradigm



## Context

This research sought to respond to questions at the nexus of two different funding modalities in the education sector in Zimbabwe. This required studying not only the context of education in Zimbabwe but also the context in which these two funding modalities operate. But first, to Zimbabwe. As the literature review has already indicated, the Zimbabwean education sector is made up of many different types of schools. These differences fall along many lines including income, responsible authority, geographical authority and even curricula. Despite this diversity, access to education particularly at higher levels of education, is limited. It is critical to note the bottle necks in the system reflected in the code a **lack of genuine opportunities for personal betterment (i.e., A-levels and beyond)**.

The Zimbabwean situation has been characterised by long standing economic instability with brief periods of reprieve. The country's education sector was naturally affected by these waves. Study respondents commonly referred to more recent occurrences such as inflation in 2019, and how this led to resource constraints across the sector. The value of teacher salaries was eroded resulting in undermotivated teachers in schools, teacher flight and subsequent teacher shortages in the sector. The capacity of parents and guardians to pay for education was also compromised. Codes such as **boarding needs are expensive, underpayment of fees, under resourced schools and unaffordable exam fees** help to illuminate the state of education in the country when economic instability was at its most severe.

At the same time, the Government of Zimbabwe has made **Constitutional provisions for free education**, and this is also enshrined in the 2019 Education Amendment Act (Veritaszim, n.d.). The Government's capacity to fund these provisions has been neither constant nor comprehensive. During the 2008 economic crisis, parents and guardians were compelled to augment teacher incentives by paying **Fees and Levies for school**. Social entrepreneurship on the part of schools was niche and voluntary and certainly not guided by policy. At other times, public financing for education improved. For example, when the FCDO sponsored CAMFED Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education programme began in 2012, the country's risk rating was pegged at 3 or medium. During this period, Government **prioritised the payment of teacher salaries** at the expense of capital expenditure (see figure 2).

In 2022, however, the overall risk rating including economic risk had moved to major.

Figure 20: MoPSE expenditure 2013 to 2015 and budget 2016 to 2018 in US Dollar '000

Item	Expenditure			Budget Appropriation <sup>15</sup>		
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Employment	\$733,519	\$788,289	\$872,166	\$797,310	\$797,310	\$797,310
Non-employment recurrent	\$6,536	\$6,025	\$4,697	\$7,241	\$7,407	\$7,810
<b>All recurrent</b>	<b>\$740,055</b>	<b>\$794,314</b>	<b>\$876,863</b>	<b>\$804,551</b>	<b>\$804,717</b>	<b>\$805,120</b>
Capital	\$7,033	\$2,152	\$2,799	\$5,880	\$7,137	\$8,450
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$747,088</b>	<b>\$796,466</b>	<b>\$879,662</b>	<b>\$810,431</b>	<b>\$811,854</b>	<b>\$813,570</b>

Source: image taken from Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Zimbabwe & UNICEF, 2016, p.50.

The country has over the years received donor aid from a broad spectrum of education stakeholders. The research alone encountered evidence of funding from FCDO, Plan International, Mercy Corp, WVI, NRC, USAID, Japanese Embassy in Zimbabwe, UNESCO, UNICEF, Save the Children, KfW, GIZ, FAWEZI, AECF, SIDA, GPE as well as smaller NGO organisations under the umbrella of the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) among others. Donor aid to education is therefore delivered in a highly **fragmented** context with different schools and communities being supported in different ways by various mixes of donors. In fact, one respondent from ECOZI noted that there are likely many education NGOs operating in Zimbabwe that have not registered with the coalition and that the coalition is not aware of.

The advent of widespread social entrepreneurship in schools in Zimbabwe began in 2021 with a policy announcement from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education encouraging schools to embark on what are termed 'Commercial Ventures in Schools' and otherwise known as Income Generating Projects (IGPs). Prior to this, the policy environment had been mostly silent although the research did come across schools that had been practicing social entrepreneurship as far back as the 1990s. The operating environment of such social entrepreneurial activities also displayed a lot of change over time, most notably, changes caused by volatility in the economy. Contextual factors such as the availability of land, water, electricity and a market for whatever goods and services were being produced influenced the success of mostly agriculture based IGPs. Historically, many rural schools in Zimbabwe have not had access to electricity or running water putting such schools at a disadvantage given that agricultural IGPs tended to be the most prolific as far as this research found. **Unsupportive communities** were also referenced as another contextual condition in which projects might fail. This lack of

support reportedly manifested through deliberately herding animals onto the school grounds and into school gardens to graze, or carelessly allowing it, not buying school produce or not providing support for school projects which needed tending during holiday periods when the teaching staff responsible might be away.

At the same time, schools were not spared from the vagaries of doing business in Zimbabwe's difficult economic climate. This economic climate can on the one hand be viewed as a causal condition in that led to unsustainability problems such as hyper-inflation acting negatively on any profits generated by commercial ventures in schools. On the other hand, it was also the broader context in which these commercial ventures were operating in.

## **Causes**

### **Mental Accounting**

As alluded to earlier, the typical response to education challenges has been to initiate some kind of action to address the problem. These actions are made possible through the provision of resources. Within the donor aid funding modality, these resources are often in the form of money or technical support, normally also made possible by a financial outlay. In social entrepreneurship, resources (often money) generated using business principles are channelled towards addressing problems. Using the definitions of donor aid and social entrepreneurship, these monies or resources are in and of themselves only tools, a means to an end. In economic terms, said resources should be fungible, that is interchangeable or easy to replace with an identical item. Simply put, a donation of 500 dollars to a school should have the same value as 500 dollars that the school generates through any commercial activities of its own.

Evidence of this fungibility was seen to some extent with schools reporting borrowing from one budget line in order to fund income generating projects and then later replacing these funds with the proceeds of their economic activities. However, the research also encountered numerous occasions where this was not entirely the case and where instead, study subjects practiced what is known as 'Mental Accounting', a concept in behavioural economics popularised by Richard Thaler (1999). This refers to how people give subjective values to money based on the source of that money, what it will be spent on and how this consumption makes them feel (Thaler, 1999). Thaler argues that

“violations of fungibility” i.e. not perceiving money in the same way are based on how the money is budgeted, labelled, its locus and its origin (2009).

The research findings showed that this tendency applied to both social entrepreneurship and donor aid. There was a definite proclivity towards ‘easy come, easy go’ attitudes to donor aid funded initiatives in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Recipients reportedly did not invest much effort in keeping donor aid catalysed initiatives running in the absence of said donor aid. This sort of compartmentalisation was summarised by one participant as follows:

*“The projects were effective and efficient when the funder is still in the picture. Once they exit, the project suffers. This is to do with issues of sustainability and ownership. The ODA is misconstrued as ‘just donor funds’. As soon as people know that it is ‘funding’<sup>13</sup>, it becomes very difficult to sustain ownership. However, when people generate their own funds, they tend to become more accountable.”* (Respondent-Non Governmental Organisation Employee).

This was the case even where donor aid was used to catalyse social entrepreneurial projects. Examples from the field include a school poultry project funded through the School Improvement Grant which did not last beyond the COVID 19 pandemic, as well as the high number of Village Lending and Savings Clubs established by World Vision for parents of learners which dissolved once the donor withdrew. To address this challenge, some donors made it a requirement that beneficiaries commit financial resources of their own to any projects that they would then jointly fund. A school which reportedly received a donation of a borehole and piped water system from GIZ was obliged to buy their own fencing material for their school garden project and the African Enterprise Challenge Fund has made their grants contingent on the beneficiaries raising their own matching funds.

Mental Accounting seemed to also influence how organizations managed information around their successes and failures. According to Thaler (1999) who presents data from Burgstahler and Dichev (1997) and Degeorge, Patel and Zeckhauser, in work cited as ‘forthcoming’, companies use their discretion about how to report on their earnings and losses to manage perceptions (p. 190). This thesis proposes that this behaviour is applied to profit and non-profit making entities alike with donor funded organizations reporting in such a way as to minimise the perception of poor results and sharing only the information that they want to share. The CAMFED ZGSE programme

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<sup>13</sup> Donor funds in Zimbabwe are commonly referred to as “funding”.

for example did not provide year on year pass rates of their bursary recipients. Instead, they provided aggregate information on district and national pass rates. This is despite bursary recipients averaging less than 10 per cent of district enrolments at any given time during the 10 years for which ZGSE reports were analysed. To sum it up, perceptions about where funds come from and whom they affect have important implications for efficiency and effectiveness. It has been perhaps rather simplistic of development practitioners and social entrepreneurs to assume initiatives possess an intrinsic integrity that stakeholders cannot respond to in such a way as to alter their intended impact.

### **Proximity to Beneficiaries**

The research findings indicated that efficiency and effectiveness varied depending on the proximity of the origin or locus of initiatives to their beneficiaries. This proximity related not just to spatial distance but also to how closely the initiative suited the context of the beneficiaries and met their actual needs. To a lesser degree, this proximity to the beneficiary also related to how the reporting of the situation mirrored the actual outcomes of beneficiaries or rather, how accurate the data was. This last aspect is important because accurate reporting on the situation and outcomes of beneficiaries before and after the implementation of any initiative provides information on how efficient and effective any intervention might be. In their issue brief titled “Using data to improve the quality of education”, the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO IIEP) points out that decision making for better learning outcomes is based on data. It therefore follows that data that does not reflect the reality of beneficiaries can lead to the continued implementation of poorly designed initiatives. With regards to learners, the IIEP also explains that the further away from the learners that decisions about them are made, the more general the data used to make these decisions becomes and the longer the intervals between data collection are (UNESCO, IIEP, 2023, para.4). This loss of specificity has implications for inclusivity and individual outcomes.

Thirdly and as noted in the literature review, global north understandings of quality education tend to shy away from discussions about efficient provision. Scheerens et al. (n.d., p. 108) highlight six perspectives on quality education. Only one of the six, the efficiency perspective, speaks to efficiency as its name suggests, i.e. producing “the highest possible outcomes at the lowest possible costs.” (p. 109). Leading perspectives on quality education ignore the efficiency perspective, capturing instead the other five.

Authors such as Levin & Belfield (2015) lament the limited use of cost effectiveness analysis in education, despite the fact that doing so can help decision makers choose the “most effective interventions they can afford for a given budget, or the least costly interventions that result in a desired outcome.” (p. 401).

The 2000 UNICEF definition of quality education in Table 4, while very broad, makes no mention of the outcomes of education provision when considered against their cost. The same can be said about the targets of SDG 4 on quality education and even SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d., Goal 4 Targets and Indicators section; Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d., Goal 17 Targets and Indicators section). Ergo, the definition of quality education is itself devoid of any discussion about efficiency. It can perhaps be argued that the question of efficiency is best left to individual education stakeholders and will be addressed through bespoke regional and national plans. However, just the fact that the concept is not embedded in high level blueprints suggests that it is perhaps considered as peripheral to the discussion about quality education. These high level blueprints are typically designed in the global north where adequate funding for education is a foregone conclusion, rendering discussions about efficiency moot. This view may have had a knock-on effect on how donor aid is used. Indeed, a quick scan of the mission and vision or “what we do” sections of the websites of CAMFED Zimbabwe, Care International, FCDO, Plan International and World Vision International indicates no references to efficiency. The text and memo below capture the point at which an awareness of this gap began to take form.

The ZGSE programme does not focus on passing it would seem. It focuses on Retention and Completion and wide ranging social and economic benefits. Is this then a metric I can measure them on? - 13 August 2022.

Hassan et al. (2022) citing authors such as Asongu et al. (2020) note the urgent need for effective and cost-effective initiatives in education in Sub-Saharan Africa where resources are scarce. However, the reality is that cost-effectiveness in education evaluation seems to be an afterthought with stakeholders pooling data on these metrics together only after completion of projects and even then, only after deciding that the project will be scaled up (Levin & Belfield, 2015).

During data collection, three types of social entrepreneurship in the education sector and a fourth class, which although not strictly considered as social entrepreneurship

was treated as such due to the similarities it shares with more traditional forms of social entrepreneurship, were encountered. Another five types of donor aid funded Initiatives were identified and together these nine types are presented in the table 21.

These nine types intimate what sort of spatial and contextual relationships the different initiatives had to their recipients. While they all shared the context of Zimbabwe, there were distinctions along *inter alia*, theme, level and geographical lines. International donors initiated projects outside of the communities they worked in with some respondents arguing that donor aid brought with it its own agenda.

Local initiatives often were initiated in the same community although, the example of the Zimbabwean owned and managed for-profit social enterprise studied during this research could to some extent be considered as external being that it was headquartered in Harare the capital city and benefited from international funds.

Table 20: Types of Initiatives

<b>Social Entrepreneurship</b>	<b>Donor aid</b>
Local for-profit social enterprise supplying schools with IT Infrastructure	Local and international donors supporting individuals with educational inputs
Local companies building and supporting schools	Local and international donors funding educational infrastructure development
Local schools running their own Income Generating Projects	Local and international donors funding the start-up of school income generating projects
Government establishing social entrepreneurship policy for education	International donors funding government operations
	Local and international donors funding and participating in national monitoring activities

Source: Researchers' own.

It seems almost intuitive to assume that those initiatives which originated or were located close to beneficiaries would perform better in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Indeed, several theories and approaches such as Participatory Development, Community Development, Social Proximity, Decentralization Theory, and Embeddedness Theory all argue in one way or the other for the benefits of proximity to beneficiaries with proponents contending that being a part of or having knowledge of the local context can support the development of more suitable solutions. They also argue that this proximity fosters greater trust, better relationships, and a shorter turnaround time on decision making and implementation (Dinbabo, 2003; Evans & Ngatia, 2021; Faguet, 2021; Granovetter, 1985).

A number of respondents themselves suggested that initiatives that suited the context of the beneficiaries performed better. This would perhaps explain the proliferation of agricultural income generating projects in the education sector in rural areas in Zimbabwe. One urban secondary school mentioned embarking on setting up a driving school, something which suited that context. However, others mentioned the difficulties of raising capital in low-income communities. This suggests that contextually appropriate projects in resource constrained environments might realise efficiencies with regards to early adoption and acceptance but inefficiencies and eventual ineffectiveness as far financing and sustainability are concerned.

More data from the findings confirmed that a positive relationship between close proximity to beneficiaries and efficiency and effectiveness should not automatically be assumed. To illustrate, the local companies that built and supported schools generated decades of learning years through their initial infrastructural investments. As both schools sat on company property, the schools also benefited from communal benefits such as paid utilities. The mine school seemed to enjoy a cordial relationship with the mine management such that they could request bridging finance for small activities such as sporting outings. The tea estate school enjoyed similar privileges. However, this same proximity negatively impacted the schools when their parent companies withdrew their support or were no longer able to provide it.

The research has already highlighted how the failure of some international donors to adequately consider the context of their beneficiaries in the planning of various initiatives led to the implementation of less than suitable solutions. Here reference can be made to the example of the library provided by Aussie books for Zim which was later turned into a classroom. This conceptual distance could also be seen in the provision of bicycles to learners in rural areas to solve the problem of children having to walk long distances to school. While certainly innovative, once bicycles started breaking down, the lack of bicycle technicians in these rural areas compromised the sustainability of the project. Another set of beneficiaries, who as alumni had left the CAMFED ZGSE bursary programme and were volunteering as after school support to CAMFED ZGSE bursary holders who were still in school or had been given start-up funding to begin businesses also in rural areas received smartphones with which to communicate with the donor and with their mentees. However, a respondent noted that the poor cell phone signal that characterises some parts of rural areas limited the effectiveness of this initiative.

The very same CAMFED ZGSE programme created community-based structures such as peer, teacher, parent and community member groups. The FCDO reports that these groups monitored the progress of learners in their communities at a lower cost than would otherwise have been spent without this level of decentralisation (FCDO, 2022). In this way, proximity of these community groups to beneficiaries realised financial efficiencies. However, White (1996, p. 11) notes that involving communities in monitoring does not take account of the cost to them in terms of time lost. This is particularly true for women and the poor who have less agency when it comes to clearly articulating the arrangements that they would prefer. That said, the programme did try to focus on meeting learner needs and made use of what it dubbed ‘tailor-made packages’ for learners. That is, in addition to paying for basics such as tuition and exam fees, girls in the ZGSE programme were also supplied with uniforms, stationery and mentorship opportunities.

The directness of donor aid and social entrepreneurship also affected efficiency and effectiveness. This was in turn affected by exogenous and endogenous factors. Here the thinking turns to examples already highlighted above where donor aid funded programmes included a raft of measures, ostensibly to buttress core activities. The success of these components to support the achievement of the goals of the project was difficult to determine. Buying uniforms and sanitary wear for students for example while righteous and noble did not seem to directly impact learning outcomes, nor did these activities seem to translate to wide-ranging social and economic benefits. Such complementary activities raised the cost of Initiatives but without necessarily seeing any improvement in key performance indicators.

However, some multi-lateral support for Ministry level activities seemed effective as reported by Ministry of Primary and Secondary (MoPSE) staff citing examples of onsite training and partnering of donors with the MoPSE to implement Water Sanitation and Health (WASH) projects. These and other examples demonstrate how the proximity of an initiative to beneficiaries caused the origin or locus of that initiative to influence its efficiency and effectiveness. Where exactly these points of proximity lay in relation to the beneficiaries also required scrutiny given how they affected the impact of origin and locus on efficiency and effectiveness.

## Availability of Applicable Resources

The resources available at source or destination had significant implications for efficiency and effectiveness. According to various authors, these resources could be “Everything available in our environment which can be used to satisfy our needs, provided, it is technologically accessible, economically feasible and culturally acceptable...” or any “service or other asset used to produce goods and services that meet human needs and wants (Uzoma, n.d, p. 1). Other authors such as Chan (2016, p. 27) make explicit reference to materials, water, energy, minerals, services, staff and knowledge while Szyja (2017, p. 108) outlines the economic definition as given by Czarny (2011, p. 218) that is labour, capital and land where capital can be “work; machinery, equipment, buildings and structures”. Bourdieu in Gillespie and Zittoun goes on to propose the existence of cultural, symbolic and social resources which can be exemplified in things like “experience”, “prestige” and “personal connections” respectively (2010, p. 6).

The different organizations in this study had differential access to varying mixes of resources which they directed towards the resolution of problems accordingly. Likewise, different locations were endowed with particular sets of resources, again to varying degrees. The resources in both funding modalities were highlighted and critiqued by respondents during the interview process and observed during field visits with respondents crediting efficiency and effectiveness to their availability.

The bulk of income generating projects in all 13 educational institutions visited in rural areas were of an agricultural nature. Faith based schools tended to have access to large tracts of land for farming purposes. Public schools were not as well-endowed but still utilized what land they did have for gardening and animal husbandry projects. Social entrepreneurial income generating projects of an agricultural nature were particularly sensitive to material resources such as electricity, a reliable water source and the availability of agricultural land. When partnered with the right human resources, skilled and committed staff, schools were able to produce efficiently, adopting sustainable food production practices such as permaculture and land reclamation. Some schools expanded their projects or added on new ones.

At the risk of labouring the point, it is important to note that not all schools with access to land and water were productive. The simple availability of these resources did not guarantee efficiency and effectiveness in social entrepreneurship. This is evidenced

by the fact that six educational institutions out of the 13 in the study reported starting projects which they failed to sustain sometimes beyond one year despite having access to these material resources. Respondents speaking about these negative cases attributed their unsustainability to external factors such as the COVID 19 pandemic and a lack of funding. Upon further investigation however, these same negative cases were also characterised by multiple failed or suspended projects, each with a different timeline. It goes without saying that the external problems these projects faced really were challenging. However, the research argues that they were not insurmountable as proven by those schools that were able to keep their projects running even through the corona virus lockdowns. Thus, the right mix of material and cultural resources, i.e. experience, knowledge, behaviours and skills, were critical for achieving efficiency and effectiveness. Authors such as Gillespie and Zittoun (2010, p.8) present a similar view from Swidler (1986) who they argue maintains that resources are one thing and individuals demonstrate agency through “how” they use resources, which is something else.

The research findings also showed how culture as a resource can impact the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid funded projects. As has already been indicated, several respondents were of the view that donor aid is loaded with implicit cultural meanings, that is, it is deployed to achieve the goals of the donor. The coding process highlighted how donors are guided by their own goals, and national regulations and how respondents felt that these goals took precedence over their own. In vivo codes such as **“Donors come and get what they want”** as well as the code **“parroting the donor’s desires without adopting it for their sustainability”** alluded to how some beneficiaries responded to donor aid and how this impacted outcomes. There is a saying in the Shona language in Zimbabwe, which goes *“Ane mari ndiye mukuru.”* This loosely translates to mean “The financier has the greater say.” The saying describes what seemed to be the skewed relationship between donors and the recipients of donor aid in the education sector in the country, where those with resources had far greater power over design and execution. As per the Paris declaration on Aid Effectiveness, participation in and ownership by beneficiaries are critical for aid effectiveness. To this, the research would like to add that *genuine* participation and *genuine* ownership have important implications for efficiency and effectiveness.

The business case for the FCDO sponsored CAMFED ZGSE programme noted that the programme “... contributes to the DFID’s commitment to help at least 11 million

children in the poorest countries gain a decent education" and contributes to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality)" (2018, p. 1). In this way, the efficient throughput that CAMFED achieved, sponsoring just under 63,607 girls in 10 years to complete their secondary education was an achievement. The same successes could have been perceived differently from the perspective of beneficiaries. Here we can juxtapose the number of CAMFED ZGSE Bursary alumni who passed their O' levels and did not receive further funding to proceed to A' level or those who would have appreciated second chance funding to re-write their ordinary level exams but did not receive this support, or even those who completed 4 years of Secondary Education with financial and socio-psycho support from CAMFED but who did not pass their examinations, did not proceed with their education and fell into the same path of early marriage and motherhood as those of their peers who did not go to school for as long.

It is also important to note that not all of the 63,607 girls were sponsored through the entire 4-year secondary school cycle. Rather, many were brought into the programme at various points in the secondary education career, some even just before writing their Ordinary Level exams. It is not difficult to imagine that students who did not benefit from a comprehensive bursary experience would not go on to do well and this may explain the poor pass rates of the programme.

Such outcomes raise philosophical questions about whether donors have an obligation to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of their initiatives for beneficiaries? Is it enough that the offer of help was extended? That they tried? What responsibility do beneficiaries have to maximise their own outcomes? Finding the answers to these questions would best be achieved through further interrogation, however, for now it may suffice to refer to the individual mission statements of donor aid funded organisations and hope that they measure their achievements against their *raison d'être*.

The then DFID Annual Reviews of the CAMFED ZGSE programme specified that the UK government only gives government to government aid where particular human rights conditions are met. In the case of Zimbabwe, DFID (now FCDO) channelled its funding through third sector partnerships. It can therefore be argued that this soft foreign policy, while possibly instrumental for encouraging improved human rights conditions in general, compromised efficiency by adding layers of administration to the

process. Evidence from the Independent Impact Study of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) in Zimbabwe (2021) suggested the same. The SIG, funded by the FCDO and the German Development Bank, went to UNICEF, the grant manager, which then disbursed funding to schools and service providers raising transaction costs. Vandeninden & Paul, (2012, p.2) provide support for this idea when they cite Acharya et al. (2006) who, according to them, argues that a large part of aid ineffectiveness can be accredited to the loss in value that results from the multiplicity of transactions that take place before aid eventually reaches the beneficiary. Donors themselves seemed aware of the clumsiness of working parallel to rather than through government. Four of the seven recommendations made in the Independent Impact Study of the School Improvement Grant proposed working more closely with the Ministry and its organs. Two of these include:

- aligning the SIG database with the Ministry's' EMIS database and,
- Involving School Development Committees (2021), p. xii)

It is difficult to see how the SIG fund could achieve all of this without either channelling funds directly through the Ministry or increasing its own costs.

This case for efficiency was inversely reflected by the assertions of a senior Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education official who noted that the development of the previous two National Education Sector Support Plans and the 10-year National Action Plan which preceded it were funded and implemented with the support of donors. Monitoring of the School Improvement Grants programme was heavily supported by the donor community. According to this respondent, the use of Global Partnership for Education funding to train government officials and support the production of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Educations' macro blueprints reaped long term benefits. A second Government official highlighted how the Government in partnership with donors was able to implement an extensive WASH programme, meeting all their deadlines except in the cases where they ran out of money. Such glowing reviews would seem to suggest that working even more closely with the Ministry might lead to even more effectiveness. However, it was also possible for the limited resources at the Government of Zimbabwe level to negatively affect the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid in situations where the ministry might not be able to disburse and manage the funds if given them.

Of all three causes underpinning the core category of this research, this one seems to best show a distinction between donor aid and social entrepreneurship. This distinction is signified by the scale of the availability of resources in the education sector in Zimbabwe. The bigger countrywide initiatives encountered in the study were funded by donor aid while social entrepreneurship was more typically used to fund individual projects. Donor aids' direct contribution to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was clearly visible as noted above. Following on from interviews with respondents who cited national donor aid funded projects, the research also reviewed the Education Development Fund 2009 (EDF), The Education Transition Fund 2012-2015 (ETF) and the Global Partnership for Education fund beginning 2014, all managed by UNICEF. Interviews highlighted the vast amount of work that these large donor funds had done. The ETF for example brought Learner Textbook ratios in core subjects down from an average of 10:1 to 1:1 while the EDF funded *inter alia* the training of 100,000 teachers, 300 key Ministry officials, 8000 school heads, a nationwide curriculum review and the printing of braille textbooks for visually impaired learners. These examples again show how exogenous and endogenous factors can act on each other to influence efficiency and effectiveness. The initiatives cited above are the responsibility of the Ministry and should ideally be funded and executed entirely by the Ministry. The fact that the MoPSE was severely incapacitated within itself set the stage for exogenous resources to take on these fundamental responsibilities allowing the financial investments to realise significant impact. It can be argued that without these funds the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education might not have been able to achieve these critical planning activities.

The adequacy of start-up and running costs resources in social entrepreneurship proved to be a function of the ecosystem within which the initiative was found. Poorer schools or schools with a poor culture of fees payment seemed to struggle with raising these finances, ergo, their efficiency and effectiveness was influenced by endogenous factors. Likewise, the inadequacy or adequacy of donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe by turns was an outcome of these funds coming from an external source. The progression of the life cycle of the multi-donor financed Education Development Fund (EDF) which began in 2010 demonstrates this. In simpler terms, there was enough money to do everything that needed doing to achieve the intended results. The second round of funding for the EDF was far less successful. Multiple donors pulled out during a period when international donor aid for education was on the decline in general. This affected

the programme's sustainability and forced its managers to scale back on the support they were able to give.

An important example of where this pattern was observed is the FCDO sponsored CAMFED Zimbabwe Girls Education Programme (ZGSE) which in 2012 started strong by providing bursaries to disadvantaged secondary school girls but seemed to record more dropouts both proportionally and in absolute numbers over time. The FCDO and CAMFED by their own admission risked failing to realise the economic benefits of their investments meant to accrue to society by not helping beneficiaries who may not have passed initial examinations to rewrite these exams and attain academic qualifications. This pattern was also evident in the national School Improvement Grants (SIG) programme and had negative implications for efficiency and effectiveness.

*“We found, for instance, that whilst the SIG has undoubtedly done much to help support the most vulnerable children, just as real change was beginning in the support given to orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs), their payments were excluded and support to the most fragile, rural schools was cut significantly”* (Smith et al. 2018, p. xiii).

The differences in the size of funds available for programmes and projects affected the internal efficiency and effectiveness of organisations. One respondent reported that the larger and better funded donor aid organisations were better able to execute activities even up to the national level. The respondent also indicated that organisations that could afford to put systems in place, citing procurement systems specifically, enjoyed more efficiency. They argued that poorly resourced NGOS often had to contend with heavier workloads given that they had fewer staff, nor did they always have access to sophisticated tools and technologies with which to work their processes more efficiently. According to CAMFED records, the ZGSE differed in this regard with administrative costs averaging around only 9 per cent of their budget. Despite this, the programme realised high outputs of bursary alumni by leveraging off the community structures they created to do a lot of the work in the field. It is however also possible that smaller not as well funded organizations were in fact more efficient given that they had less money and typically kept afloat from one project to the next. This required that every project be executed to the highest possible standard to attract future donors.

This last point is almost purely conjecture, based on the researchers' own experience evaluating small NGOs in the education sector in Zimbabwe. However, it was brought to mind by a submission from a respondent working for a local NGO who

referenced one of their last projects as an example of efficiency. The NGO in question reportedly reached its intended beneficiaries and completed 5 out of 8 of its targets in one and half years. The same NGO kept a very small staff complement, had only one vehicle and rented space in public offices ergo, their administrative costs were kept quite low. This contrasts with the bigger donors who typically ran larger scale projects and programmes and seemed to have higher administrative costs in the form of rental of large offices, large fleets of vehicles and staff complements.

Other examples are the CAMFED ZGSE community campaigns promoting education and the mentoring services provided to bursary beneficiaries. In aggregate, the programme may have executed several campaigns per year spread over multiple districts. However, as recalled by teacher mentor respondents in this study, this translated to one campaign per year per district, again raising questions around whether this was sufficient. The CAMFED ZGSE programme tried to buttress these bigger once-off events with community led campaigns from bursary alumni and other community members. However, their reports show that the degree of engagement differed according to region. Furthermore, when it came to specific topics such as Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), two years into the training, the CAMFED ZGSE reports indicate that delivery of SRH lessons was considered more effective when done by nurses rather than peers.

*“While CAMFED community structures were visible in all districts visited, the support from PSGs and LGs was inconsistent. Some districts had no SRH sessions taking place, no study groups reported and very little philanthropy support for other vulnerable learners.”* (ZGSE Annual Review 2019, Paragraph 114).

Likewise, mentorship was initially only given to girls in partner schools who were on the bursary. It was suggested by teacher respondents that educational campaigns would need to be carried out more often if they were to have the desired impact. Similarly, if only girls on the bursary programme received mentorship, positive attitudes towards taking education seriously would quickly be diluted by peer pressure from learners who were not on these bursaries and did not receive mentorship. Similarly, negative community attitudes towards education were cited as having the same deleterious effect on the bursary holders. Expanding both campaigns and teacher mentorship services would probably also require greater resourcing from the donor showing how this limitation might also be limiting effectiveness and efficiency. It is also possible that the increased expenditure would help to create a better learning environment, fewer dropouts and better learning outcomes which would justify the expense. Hanushek (1995, p. 237) presents a

similar argument, proposing that minimal increases in expenditure on effective initiatives can reap significant returns by speeding learners through the school system.

Similar concerns about resources were brought to light by the SROI analysis, effectively confirming the adequacy of resources as an important factor for efficiency and effectiveness. This idea was captured in codes such as **Starting projects without investing adequately**. Channelling inadequate resources to schools and fragmenting these resources further to the point where what they sponsored hardly made a dent in the schools' problems and led to ineffectiveness and even wastage. Interestingly, certain locations responded better to certain resources based on how well resourced they themselves were. The research has already demonstrated how donor aid really shone where beneficiaries were incapacitated during periods of crisis such as cyclone Idai and the COVID 19 pandemic. External funding served to support recipients who in those moments could not support themselves. A similar logic can be applied to extremely disadvantaged communities or beneficiaries. Any amount of assistance made a noticeable impact. For instance, the simple act of providing new football kit uniforms through the School Improvement Grant to learners in a low-income community reportedly improved the team's performance by boosting their confidence.

Related submissions from CAMFED beneficiaries and Ministry officials highlighted how accessing sanitary wear was very difficult for disadvantaged girls and donations of the same would consequently have a big impact on learner welfare.

*“Maybe it was easy because when you look at the schools that benefitted, there were e.g. no toilets, no classrooms.”* (Respondent – Director Research, Planning and Policy, Paragraph 9).

During the open coding phase, this submission was converted into an in vivo code reflecting one of the contextual conditions making donor aid impactful. Limited local funding for education is another one of the conditions associated with donor aid. These two conditions, **low baseline** and **limited local funding**, act as both causal and contextual conditions creating the context where donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe can shine. Ultimately, it is difficult to make definitive conclusions about whether more resources lead to more efficiency or effectiveness given that the opportunities to compare like and like were limited. Moreover, lack of access to detailed financial records made such a comparison doubly hard. However, a few confident generalisations can be made. The effectiveness of large donor aid funded projects was aided by the genuine involvement of government. Furthermore, effectiveness was more likely where sufficient

resources are channelled towards addressing that specific challenge in a sustained manner. However, the availability of resources alone is not enough to create efficiency and effectiveness. Their relevance, scale and application all contribute towards achieving impact in the various contexts in which they are deployed.

### **Intervening Conditions**

Intervening conditions are described by Strauss and Corbin as "those that mitigate or otherwise alter the impact of causal conditions on phenomena..." (1998, p.131). Intervening conditions in this study were observed at the micro, meso, macro and supra levels. Several rather significant events which ultimately created intervening conditions at the supra level took place during the period of the study. The most prominent of these was undoubtably the COVID 19 pandemic. Indeed, social entrepreneurial activities and donor aid funding in Zimbabwe were not spared. Several respondents noted that the lock downs necessitated by the pandemic also meant that staff who were responsible for the management of income generating projects in schools could not tend to them as frequently, thereby compromising their sustainability. One school even cited this as a cause for the collapse of their broiler project entirely.

The FCDO funded CAMFED Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education programme reportedly fell behind on several of its goals during this period. Lock down guidelines keeping children from going to school created novel conditions which in turn required new ways of communicating and monitoring bursary holders. The proximity that had been taken for granted was challenged, forcing the programme to pivot towards providing remote support through tools such as WhatsApp.

*“The programme outcome and impact areas that are on and off track are set out in table 1 above. Many are off track due to the targets being set in a different context - before COVID 19 and school closures, and the current economic crisis.”* (ZGSE Annual Review 2022, Paragraph 91).

The 2019 tropical cyclone Idai had a similar effect, creating a need for additional resources for damaged schools and affected learners. The responsible grant manager of these unexpected funds, UNICEF, reportedly struggled to manage them after which a decision was made to move the funds to a different grant manager, Save the Children. Other programmes such as the ZGSE also reported needing additional resources to support their bursary students and their bursary schools. The droughts that affected

Zimbabwe in 2015-16 and 2019 also pushed donor aid funded organisations to create additional feeding programmes, thereby expanding their Key Performance Areas.

Requests to donors for new funding for these school feeding activities were made adding new dimensions to questions of efficiency and effectiveness. The CAMFED programme for example reported being able to successfully assist 250 schools in Zimbabwe with their school feeding mandate through a grant of £138,800 from the Girls Education Challenge fund in 2016. This translated to £555.2 per school and £1.30 or USD 1.73 at 2016 exchange rates (Exchange-Rates.org, n.d.) per learner given that the average school size in Zimbabwe is 428.2 pupils (Education sector Analysis, 2015, p. 80). A similar government school feeding programme provided meals to 2,489,909 pupils at a cost of USD 2,763,190 in total or USD 1 per child (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2020). These figures suggest a great deal of efficiency on the part of CAMFED, keeping in mind that the support of Parent Support Groups in these school feeding activities likely contributed to this efficiency. At the same time, an event such as a drought was expected to expose the fragility of communal systems and lead to poor learning outcomes, presumably in those places where additional support for things like school feeding and school fees payments could not be mobilised.

One of the more common intervening conditions featuring at the macro-level were changes within government or donors. To illustrate, Zimbabwe has over the last 24 years experienced multiple periods of hyper-inflation (Masiyandima et al., n.d.). During such periods of inflation and their associated socio-economic problems, the availability of resources for education were severely limited. This is particularly interesting in the Zimbabwean context where inflation has been experienced for both local and foreign currency. The School Development Chairperson of one school who had also been a student at the same school noted how donor aid in the 1980's and 1990's had far more purchasing power than it did at the time of carrying out this study. The CAMFED ZGSE programme reported not being able to fund as much as they could previously, also because of inflation. Changes in exchange rates had a similar effect where for example the British Pound weakening against the United States Dollar raised the costs of running the programme. Likewise, the currency fluctuations allowed the ZGSE programme to spend less than budgeted and thereby realise efficiencies.

*“Output Indicator 3.5 had no budget provision for grants to schools for the renovation of low-cost boarding facilities at the beginning of the reporting period but later in the year, exchange rate gains were realised between the United States*

*dollars and the Zimbabwe dollar, and this safeguarding measure was prioritised.”* (ZGSE Annual Review 2020, Paragraph 184).

Changes in donor policy often led to changes in the availability of donor aid (expansion or contraction). What effects these changes have had on efficiency and effectiveness have already been outlined in detail. Perhaps what is left to note is that each new condition created a new reality which in turn created a new set of conditions, creating a domino effect. Similarly, government policies also created new conditions and new outcomes. This study notes examples such as the introduction of the Competence Based Curriculum coded as **Introducing the new national curriculum** and the policy directive on Commercial Ventures in Schools which created new imperatives for new textbooks, teacher training and new ways of thinking within the education sector in Zimbabwe.

Another very interesting example of this was the 2010 Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education proposal to allow pregnant schoolgirls to remain in school (David Coltart (Official Website), n.d.). Prior to this, pregnancy would have resulted in automatic expulsion. The progressive policy which led to the eventual amendment of the Education Act also allowed for the reentry of young mothers back into classrooms after giving birth (Muzingili et al., 2024). Unfortunately, the enactment of the new policy was not supported by changes to the conditions that would allow these young girls to stay in school. One respondent highlighted how in the absence of childcare services and funding for resources like baby formula, young mothers without assistance would eventually be forced back out of the education system by the demands of taking care of their children.

Macro intervening conditions were reported at community and school level. The uptake of commercial ventures in schools for example resulted in some schools altering their systems and structures to accommodate these ideas. Such changes included creating financial systems for new income generating projects, hiring or assigning dedicated staff and converting school land for project use. This change illustrated once again how upstream intervening conditions, i.e. government policy on commercial ventures in schools created downstream intervening conditions in schools. Donor organisations such as Plan International and CAMFED also influenced the development of school level intervening conditions by creating new requirements for schools and communities. The introduction of each new donor aid funded programme in this study was accompanied by new behaviors and relationships between stakeholders.

Intervening conditions at the individual level in this research featured most as students dropping out of school. Several respondents noted that learners receiving support still chose to leave school even while on full sponsorship. The reasons ranged from marriage and in the case of the earn and learn programme, to finding the working conditions too difficult. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the departure of staff members, perhaps due to official transfer, also created new conditions in that school. The loss or gain of efficient and effective individuals either disadvantaged or served as an advantage respectively whatever the case would be.

## **Strategies**

Strategies in the context of grounded theory refer to the practices that study subjects engaged in, in response to 'situations, issues or problems' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 133). Strauss and Corbin also refer to this as 'strategic or routine tactics' (1998, p. 133). The bulk of the strategies employed in this study involved some kind of revision of the original plan. This often came about after observing that the initiative was not achieving the expected results or because the scope of the problem being addressed changed in some way. The CAMFED ZGSE programme for example, broadened its scope to include support not just to secondary girls but also, post-secondary girls, vulnerable boys, disabled learners and to provide Sexual and Reproductive Health training to their beneficiaries. Each of these components was added for its own reason. For example, post-secondary education was included after CAMFED stakeholders realised that many learners who passed their Ordinary Levels under the ZGSE programme and had no means of financing their education further were likely to fall into the cycle of early marriage and motherhood. Providing bursaries to boys began after community members pointed out that vulnerable boys were also likely to drop out of school in favour of economic opportunities such as artisanal mining. By 2017, the FCDO financed Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education programme looked quite different from what was initially envisioned and even got to the point where a revision of the entire programme's Theory of Change was implemented.

Similarly, the Education Development Fund evolved into the Education Transition Fund after 2012 by moving away from providing educational staples such as textbooks to providing technical training to teachers and second chance education to out of school youth (Smith et al., 2018). The Global Partnership for Education at inception

funded mainly technical areas such as the Early Reading Initiatives (ERI), Catch-up Education Performance Lag Assessment Programme (PLAP) and the development of Zimbabwe's 2016 to 2020 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, n.d., p.19). However, in 2019 and 2020 onwards, GPE funding was also used to respond to Cyclone Idai and the COVID 19 pandemic respectively. In both cases, the focus shifted from system support to disaster relief by rebuilding schools and providing basic goods to learners.

Routine actions that donor aid funded organisations especially engaged in were explained in detail within the category, managing information. As noted, donor aid organisation regularly conducted evaluations and wrote and shared reports on their activities, mostly on their websites. In response to perhaps not being willing and/or able to divulge financial information to this researcher, these organisations employed tactics such as stone walling, i.e. simply not responding to follow up requests or tying accessing data to climbing up a long iterative chain of command. Other routine actions encountered in the study included seeking additional funding to stay afloat and to be able to pay "salaries" through proposal writing. This was reported amongst smaller donor aid funded organizations and comes as no surprise given the short-term nature of much of the funding analysed during this study. Funding limitations also led to donor aid organisations, big and small, cutting back on programmes just as new funding often led to expansion of programming. Political challenges also influenced the scope of donor aid with some donors limiting how and what they funded in Zimbabwean education over questions of how the country was being run.

Social entrepreneurial endeavours displayed a tendency towards contraction, expansion and cessation of initiatives. Those initiatives in the schools visited that did well tended to grow, beginning with maybe one Income Generating Project and adding more as they went along. Schools typically began with commercial vegetable gardens and eventually expanded to include projects like pig rearing, poultry and in two examples even rabbit rearing, fish farming, apiculture, goat keeping, fruit farming and even the production of animal feed. In contrast, those projects that struggled were either shut down by school authorities entirely or shelved for a time. In general, however, the strategies adopted by schools were simple context specific responses to the issues, situations and problems that they encountered such as appealing to parents and community stakeholders for support for their projects. Donor aid involvement in such projects tended to expand

the possibilities available to school based social entrepreneurial activities through providing seed capital, providing infrastructure, training to address knowledge gaps, developing markets and in the case of the for-profit social enterprise which supplied ICTs and Edu-content to low-income schools, shortening the supply chain.

## Consequences

The consequences of the core category, ‘origin or locus determine efficiency and effectiveness of initiatives in the education sector’, were fourfold. Firstly, the efficiency and effectiveness of the various initiatives researched in this study recorded highly variable results. This was caused in turn by the multiplicity of strategies adopted by the various groups and individuals in the numerous contexts under study in this piece of research. Variability occurred within and across initiatives. Within initiatives because many of them, the CAMFED ZGSE example being a good case in point, were made up of many components applied in different places, creating a situation where efficiency and effectiveness could be measured in a diversity of ways. One example is the piloted learning interventions in 24 out of the 29 districts that the CAMFED ZGSE programme operated in. The 2019 ZGSE Annual Review reported that the learners in these districts recorded statistically significant improvements in their learning outcomes when compared to the learning outcomes of their peers in districts where these learning interventions were not implemented (ZGSE Annual Review 2019, Paragraph 166). Splitting the intervention between districts in effect split the outcomes of the entire programme even further along these specific demographic lines. Although a seemingly obvious point, education initiatives still tend to follow a one size fits all approach. This is striking because it reminds policy and decision makers of the value of seeking context specific responses to education issues.

This same diversity of outcomes obtained for social entrepreneurial activities as well. This lateral diversity is exemplified by the case of the high school earlier mentioned in this section which reported profitable tuckshop and gardening ventures but was forced to stop their beadwork and poultry projects. A more thorough cost-benefit analysis of each individual project would be required before it might be possible to come to conclusions about whether the sum of all the projects produced efficient and effective results. In the absence of such an analysis, it would be useful at this point to recognise

that each project, influenced by exogenous and endogenous factors, produced a particular set of results at different points in time.

The different contexts in which initiatives were implemented also created variation as each locus influenced what was feasible, what resources were available, who was affected and could affect these initiatives (individual characteristics) and so on. Even within the broad discussion of efficiency and effectiveness, differences attributable to context were noticeable. This was the case within a World Vision programme in Matabeleland South, a low-income province in Zimbabwe. The programme established Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) in several districts within the province. The purpose of these SACCOs were to help their members pay their children's school fees. According to a respondent, districts where this was successful were also districts where "most" participants had some disposable income generated by migrant family members sending remittances home. The respondent also singled out households with a stable income and a viable business idea as those that benefited most from these SACCOs as they were able to pay the contributions, receive and pay back loans and realise profits from their businesses.

One might even be able to argue that there were as many different outcomes as there were contexts. A quick look at the data presentation section gives an indication of just how diverse the educational contexts in Zimbabwe were at the time of data collection. Hanushek (1996) makes similar conclusions. His journal article about the assortment of outcomes to be expected when considering investments to education in the United States of America argues that "A different organizational structure with different incentives would produce very different results." (p. 23) Although this reference relates specifically to educational resources and performance in schools, the central message of diversity remains the same and although written about the USA almost 30 years ago, these findings still find relevance for this study today.

This first consequence segues perfectly into the second, which is 'the difficulty of accounting for impact'. The learning intervention piloted in 24 districts within the CAMFED ZGSE was just one of several pilots within the framework of the entire programme. How would efficiency and effectiveness be identified in such cases? Would reporting by district accurately reflect the impact of the pilot? If the pilot was expanded nationwide, would the initial cost be factored into later cost-benefit analyses? Other large-scale programmes such as the School Improvement Grants managed by UNICEF

generated similar challenges. The programme was designed to allow individual schools to split even small grants up to four ways complicating the business of tracing the impact of individual line items. Furthermore, can assessments meaningfully relate impact experienced on one component in one district to the entire programme? The research did attempt to respond to some of these questions in the Social Return on Investment section. The Multi-Criteria Decision Making tool used in the SROI analyses did allow for such evaluations, however it provided only estimations leaving room for error. Furthermore, it quickly became clear that to be able to give in-depth responses, further studies of a magnitude beyond the scope of this doctoral thesis would be required.

All the initiatives in the study were subject to a multiplicity of both exogenous and endogenous factors albeit to varying degrees. Isolating impact under such conditions proved contentious. To illustrate, the category 'Individual Characteristics' initially seemed to account for much of the effectiveness of the initiatives supporting individual beneficiaries as well as the Income Generating Projects in schools. However, the category explained efficiency less so. Giving sanitary wear and uniforms to schoolgirls for example, raised the cost of the programme but did little for retention and pass rates in the long term.

In the final analysis, the research concluded that where origin and locus are responsible for determining efficiency and effectiveness, accounting for impact is an incredibly difficult exercise. Complicating this even further were the financial and administrative data gaps the research encountered as well as the complex design of many donor aid funded initiatives in the education sector. Perhaps as a consequence of these difficulties, donors tended to report about the impact they achieved in broad terms with a focus on numerical outputs.

Accounting for impact seemed clearer where social entrepreneurship was concerned, most likely because projects were typically smaller and because the use of profits was easier to trace to specific activities e.g. gardening profits in one faith-based school which funded the construction of a boarding facility or school poultry projects paying ancillary staff salaries. That said, downstream benefits to learners were also very difficult to quantify although perhaps general statements about improvements in the operations of both schools could be made.

The third consequence of the core category was the tendency towards a wastage of resources. Even if unintended, this wastage was bound to occur given the wholesale

application of investments made into education without an adequate understanding of the underlying determinants of efficiency and effectiveness. The case of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Youth Education Pack (YEP) programme implemented in partnership with various organizations in hard-to-reach areas in Zimbabwe demonstrates this wastage. The Youth Education Pack delivered one year literacy, numeracy, life skills and entrepreneurship training courses to refugees and other young people in contexts of fragility (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2015).

The programme was initially piloted with the NRC managing the process remotely. Unfortunately, the post pilot evaluation found that this NRC pilot partner<sup>14</sup> had reportedly misappropriated all of the funding remitted to them for the YEP. Although the full costs were not made available for analysis, it can be expected that it was a significant amount. The ignorance on the part of the NRC about their pilot partners weak corporate governance culture served as a bitter lesson, one which albeit informed subsequent working relationships with their new partners. The NRC chose to station staff who were responsible for finances, administration and management as well as training of college staff at Chipinge College of Horticulture, an arrangement which seems to have been more efficient, seeing as the project was completed on time and as planned. At the same time, stationing additional staff at the college raised NRCs own costs, as theoretically speaking, most the work NRC staff did i.e. purchasing equipment, paying staff and lecturers salaries, should have been done by college staff. It seems, one way or the other, the cost of this initiative would have been more expensive than necessary giving the contextual factors at play.

This same case also demonstrated the wastages that occurred in those locations where the NRCs Youth Education Pack programme was not sustained. The programme which was implemented in 6 locations in Zimbabwe in 2012 and 2013 was carried forward by only 1 out of the 6 partner organisations despite all the investments made into training staff, buying equipment, developing curricula etc. More examples include initiatives such as the context inappropriate purchase of bicycles for schoolgirls in rural Zimbabwe, half-built classrooms funded by the SIG or EDF which particular schools did not complete, the resources spent on creating and training Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) in low-income communities and which eventually collapsed and schools building agricultural facilities which were used for only one cycle, among others.

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<sup>14</sup> Not the UCCZ Technical and Vocational College.

The fourth and final consequence associated with the core category was ‘Crisis situations highlight areas of efficiency and effectiveness’. Crisis situations in general tend to bring strengths and weaknesses to the fore. In the case of donor aid and social entrepreneurship, the data analysis showed that these strengths and weaknesses were linked to exogenous and endogenous factors. The two most recent crises in the study, Cyclone Idai and the COVID 19 pandemic exposed how the inefficiencies and areas of ineffectiveness and likewise were situated within the concerned systems. In the wake of the destruction brought about by Cyclone Idai, 139 schools were damaged, and 90,800 learners negatively impacted (Global Partnership for Education, n.d.-b). In research conducted by Musarandega and Masocha (2023) a sample of 12 schools recorded a 13 per cent decline in enrolment after the cyclone. Such a sharp decline in enrolments highlighted the lack of disaster risk reduction preparedness or management in this region with Nhapi (2021, p. 86) presenting assertions from Chatiza (2019) arguing that Cyclone Idai exposed the weaknesses in Zimbabwe’s capacity to respond to crises. Gandidzanwa and Togo (2021) note that although Cyclones regularly cause destruction, loci that are not prone to Cyclones are more severely affected than others precisely because they are not prepared to deal with them. Their research on Cyclone Idai found “no evidence of disaster management or risk reduction plans” in this region (Gandidzanwa & Togo, 2021, p. 103).

These sentiments seemed to hold true even for donor aid funded organisations. Civil Society Organisations reportedly lobbied to have the Cyclone Idai recovery fund moved from UNICEF to Save the Children, a Non-Governmental Organisation, after UNICEF experienced bureaucratic difficulties in managing it. It seemed nobody was ready to respond to such an unexpected occurrence in this region.

In a different but relevant example, the exogeneity of donor aid also showed its effectiveness during the Cyclone. Much of the aid that helped to rebuild was external. Secondary data makes mention of a USD 72 million fund given to Zimbabwe by the World Bank board of directors for recovery efforts at a time when Zimbabwe was grappling with a general humanitarian crisis caused by drought and inflation (Nhapi, 2021, p. 86). Numerous other international donors such as “World Vision, Terre des Hommes (TDH), Plan International, Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative, Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organisation, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)” and “the European Union, the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction” and local donors such as Miracle missions among others supported reconstruction efforts in various

ways when locals could not help themselves (Gandidzanwa & Togo, 2021, p. 107; Musarandega & Masocha, 2023, p. 6).

In a similar way, the external funding availed to the CAMFED ZGSE programme allowed it to cushion its bursary holders somewhat from the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic. While otherwise seemingly performing below their peers during periods of ‘normalcy’<sup>15</sup> (ZGSE Annual Review 2018, Paragraph 67), in 2020 CAMFED ZGSE bursary girls reported a 4.6 per cent drop out rate against a national average of 20.8 per cent (ZGSE Annual Review 2021, Paragraph 85). Completion rates also performed well at 81 per cent for CAMFED ZGSE bursary holders compared to 63.3 per cent nationwide. These examples highlighted how the origin or locus of an initiative during a crisis accounted for much of the efficiency or effectiveness or lack thereof that was experienced.

#### 4.3.4 Emergent Theory

These findings outlined above were triangulated with the results of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) analyses leading to the following conclusions.

Although the study began with a dualistic approach, comparing social entrepreneurship to donor aid, the findings failed to find qualities inherent to social entrepreneurship that make it more efficient and/or effective than donor aid in the education sector in Zimbabwe or otherwise. Rather, the research showed that there is a significant causal relationship between the efficiency and effectiveness of initiatives in both social entrepreneurship and donor aid and their locus or origin.

The research also highlighted the tendency to consider initiatives as a single entity i.e., a single project, a single programme, a single donation etc. However, initiatives are often made up of many different components, all of which had the potential to experience differences in efficiency and effectiveness—even within the same initiative. As such, the causal effect of these origins or loci could apply to any of the components of a single initiative leading to significant variation. Components in this study included processes, activities, policies, resources, people, decisions, motivation, and catalysation among others. This proclivity to focus on the whole sometimes at the expense of its parts has up

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<sup>15</sup> Normalcy is highlighted in quotes because Zimbabwe has experienced several crises back-to-back in the last three decades.

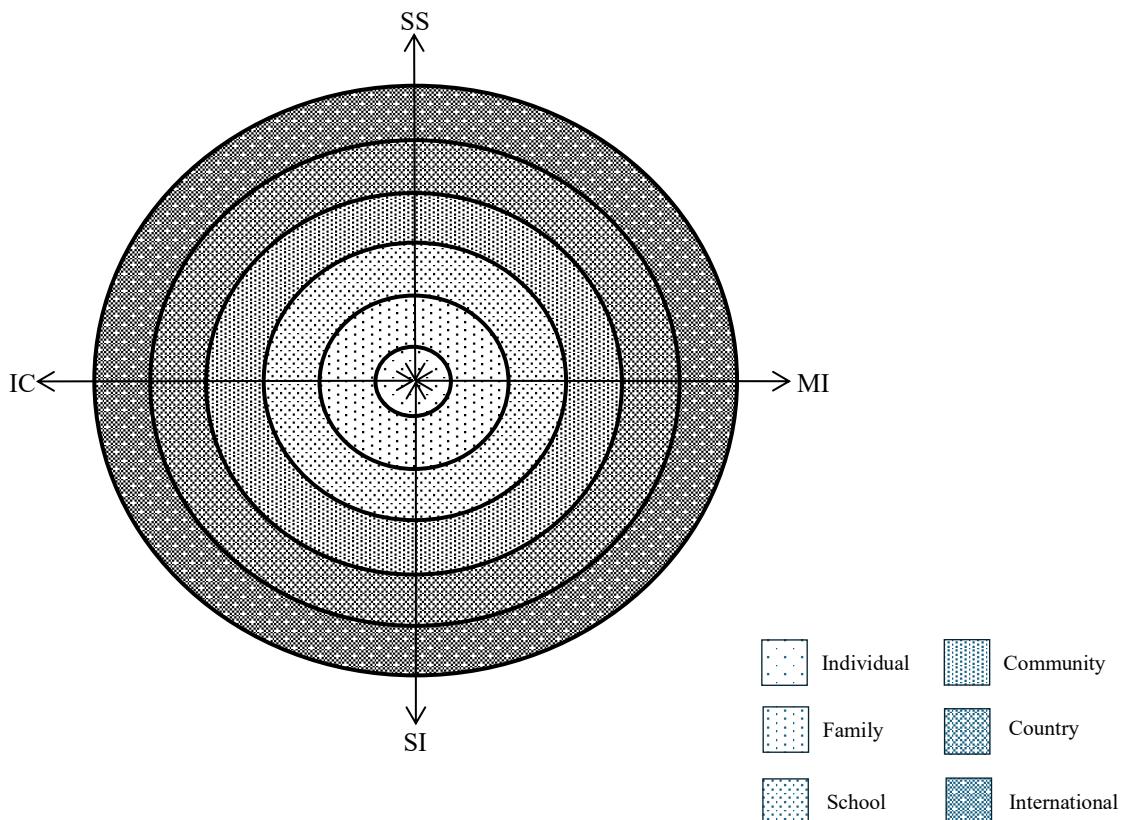
to this point obscured a keener understanding of where the opportunities to fine tune initiatives so as to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness lie.

Typically, both donor aid and social entrepreneurship protagonists have tended to focus on channelling money or support towards ‘fixing’ challenges without first developing an appreciation of how the exogeneity or endogeneity of that initiative might influence its outcome. However, the study investigated examples of a wide range of initiatives and found that sometimes even similar initiatives funded using the same funding modality experienced different outcomes simply because of the difference in origin or locus even though it might be expected that they would display efficiency and effectiveness in the same way. These patterns of non-linear relationships were discovered throughout the data.

In summary, this thesis posits that regardless of the funding modality in use, certain statements hold true. Firstly, the research findings indicate that the locus or origin of an initiative will have a significant influence on that initiatives’ efficiency and effectiveness. It is further proposed that it is common to find initiatives that exhibit instances of efficiency and inefficiency, effectiveness and ineffectiveness or any mix of the same occurring simultaneously. As such, it cannot be said that one funding modality is more efficient or effective than the other. Rather, the data showed that initiatives in social entrepreneurship displayed greater degrees of efficiency and effectiveness than donor aid at certain points in the research. In a similar manner, donor aid in certain cases, presented as more efficient or effective than social entrepreneurship. Thus, the interplay between the SROI results and the coding and findings from grounded theory methods showed that decision makers at every level work counter to these principles. Instead, they might practice mental accounting, or beneficiaries might respond differently to funds because of their proximity. Even in situations where knowledge about the ideal combination of resources is available, the availability of the applicable resources or lack thereof will influence whether good policy can be implemented at all. These ideas in the form of the emergent theory are illustrated with the help of figure 21. Each circle represents different levels from individual to international. Initiatives can be located at any point or even multiple loci on this area. The arrows indicating the major categories-labeled SS, MI, SI and IC respectively- are both exogenous and endogenous. This illustrates that each point along each arrow can be different. For example, sustaining initiatives at the international level might look quite dissimilar to the community level.

As such, a good initiative should be designed for the locus (or loci) at which it operates. This can be achieved by first understanding the major categories as well as the core category. When designing solutions, knowing what to address and to what degree is therefore very important. The results of the Social Return on Investment analysis give guidance on how such decisions can be made basing off the expected impact of particular classifications of education intervention.

Figure 21: Diagrammatic representation of emergent theory



#### 4.3.5 Connections with Existing Theories

The charitable triad theory proposed by Chapman et al. (2022) offers some background insights into the core category 'origin and locus determine efficiency and effectiveness of an initiative in the education sector'. In their paper relating individual givers (donors), beneficiaries and fundraisers (donor aid organisations) to each other with a view to understanding what drives charitable giving, they propose that givers make decisions about whether to donate based on their perception of the concerned beneficiaries (p. 1830) and on whether the donors and beneficiaries share a temporary or social proximity (Ein-Gar & Levontin, 2013 cited on p. 1836). They also reference Halabi

et al., (2008) and Nadler & Chernyak-Hai (2014) who reportedly argue that giving to “dissimilar beneficiaries” can also occur for “strategic reasons” such as asserting dominance over others or to shape their own reputations (p.1839). They summarize these arguments by suggesting that “who gives (donor) depends on who will receive” (p.1838). Thus, mental accounting based on perceptions of and proximity to beneficiaries among other things shapes the philanthropic behaviour of donors. These calculations and their behaviours subsequently affect the availability of resources for initiatives.

While the charitable triad theory relates less to the fundraiser which in the context of this study is the donor aid funded organisation, the propositions made by Chapman et al. give credence to the power of mental accounting and proximity to beneficiaries in shaping decisions which impact resource availability. Furthermore, they argue that given the voluntary nature of giving, a large part of the focus on resource mobilization concerns itself with motivating donors who themselves can be motivated by a broad spectrum of factors. This study finds it reasonable to hypothesize that these decisions in turn influence efficiency and effectiveness.

The findings of the study also confirmed the tenets of complexity theory which states that, “Complex systems often exhibit non-linear dynamic behaviour. They show a high degree of diversity and agents in the system are connected via multiple flows over networks of nodes and connectors.” (Bauer & Herder, 2009, p. 613). Complexity Science from which this theory is drawn is a relatively obscure discipline most widely found in the natural and physical sciences. Its origins can be traced as far back as the dawn of philosophical thought to theorists such as Ptolemy, Copernicus and Kepler (Anderson, n.d).

Over centuries, scientists and philosophers continued to build on scientific thought. Eventually, perhaps as a manifestation of the Zeitgeist of the 1960’s, independent groups of scientists in the United States of America and in Europe began to study ways in which to understand and explain turmoil and variation (Gleick, 1987).

Proponents of complexity science argue that other methodologies outside of complexity thinking treat the world as a linear system and its problems as a simple series of cause-and-effect relationships. As a result, these methodologies propose simple linear and deterministic solutions for solving problems and use linear and deterministic evaluation methods. However, Ramalingam et al. (2008) in their working paper titled ‘Exploring the science of complexity: Ideas and implications for development and

humanitarian efforts' refer to personal communication with Alim Khan (2007) where Alim outlines how patterns in a system are never replicated as a consequence of even an "insignificant agent" acting on these systems and influencing them in some way (2008, p. 4). Consequently, Ramalingam et al. (2008) argue that the deterministic approach to thinking about the future, where this future is calculated based on previous trends may now require revisiting. In the same way, this research finds that simplistic one size fits all solutions do not address the challenges in the education sector in Zimbabwe. The sheer number of variables studied here and those not included within the framework of this study but relevant for efficiency and effectiveness in education nonetheless, corroborate this line of thinking. The reference to the concomitant problems that arise out of any initiative made earlier in this research also shows the complexity of the work at hand.

A third theory relating to some of the arguments presented here is Critical Mass Theory which proposes that the degree of impact, be it in number of affected beneficiaries, intensity of change in behaviour etc., must reach a certain point before widespread change is possible (Oliver et al., 1985). The Lime Group offers this definition. "Critical Mass is the existence of sufficient momentum to achieve change. That is, enough people supporting a new behaviour or way of thinking such that the momentum becomes self-sustaining and fuels further growth" (2009, p. 2). This research argues that in multiple cases encountered in this research, resources fell short of the threshold required to catalyse real change. Examples include the SIG which in 2021 was funding schools to the value of as little as USD 1,850 per year. Although these lumpsums did help schools purchase necessities such as Teaching and Learning materials and equipment, these were always severely limited. One of these schools also started an income generating project using part of their SIG and all the proceeds from this project reportedly went towards paying the salaries of ancillary staff rather than directly to inputs that would benefit learners. The school in this study did not report improvements in learning outcomes but did see some improvements in attendance 2020 to 2021 which can realistically be attributed to relaxed lockdown conditions. No further grants were forthcoming the following year. Similar examples were found in the data indicating the pervasiveness of this pattern or this failure to reach a tipping point. Donors at least are aware of the importance of reaching such tipping points. Both the Summative Evaluation of UNICEF Support for Education in Zimbabwe (Smith et al., 2018) and the 2021 CAMFED ZGSE

Annual Review Reports highlight the pitfalls of not having created a critical mass of change.

In retrospect, such a pronouncement seems quite obvious. Why would we even need to conduct research to arrive at it? Indeed Hanushek (1995, p. 228) had that far back already pointed out that knowledge of “the relationship between resources and student performance” could guide the design of educational policy for “high levels of educational achievement.” However, the Mixed Method Grounded Theory and resultant Emergent Theory have helped to explain that often times, decisions about how money is spent are not based on a relationship between “an optimal set of resources” (Hanushek, 1995, p. 228) and learning outcomes but rather on other considerations determined by the origin or the locus of the funds. Here reference can be made to Brompton primary school administration choosing to use the proceeds of its Income Generating Project to pay the salaries of ancillary staff in the face of a plethora of other urgent needs. Similarly, the use of the School Improvement Grant at Brompton primary school was prescribed for them by the donor in conjunction with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

These cursory summaries of existing theories confirm the validity of the emergent theory. At the same time, their collective wisdom provides a foundation from which education stakeholders can design solutions going forward.

#### **4.4 Recommendations**

Thus, this theory proposes that any initiative designed to address education related problems in Zimbabwe may benefit more from thoroughly interrogating the origin or locus of said initiative and whether it fosters or hinders efficiency and effectiveness. This is not to say that there is no understanding whatsoever of the relationship between the origin or locus of an initiative and its efficiency and effectiveness in the education development sector. The development lexicon often references aspects such as ownership and participation. The understanding as encountered during this research however seemed *prima facie* to be quite narrow, neither did it always translate into impactful action on the ground. The research found that attempts to foster ownership and participation tended to be implemented with cookie cutter and token participation activities, retrospectively, and often inadequately. This is even though, each initiative in the study was quite unique and likely required a unique multifaceted approach. Donor aid organisations themselves seemed to be aware of the importance of contextualising interventions.

*“As per a previous 2020 Annual Review recommendation, the ZGSE needs to ensure provisions are contextually suitable including that provision of bicycles responds to individual contexts and geographies - by June 2021” (ZGSE Annual Review 2021, Paragraph 32).*

The question is how to get donors to apply these best practices from inception. Despite this awareness, the fact that a respondent in this research-the provincial education director indicated often being unaware of donor aid funded initiatives within their own province despite it being a requirement for donors to avail this information, and schools not being aware of the budgets of the initiatives they were meant to benefit from indicates that ownership perhaps does not run deep enough.

National efforts to be more inclusive such as the existence of the education cluster are a step in the right direction but must be based on genuine participation on a level playing field (White, 1996). A more concrete recommendation would be to open the education cluster to scrutiny. Documentation such as minutes of meetings outlining the decision-making process should be made available to the public. Programmes of the magnitude such as the School Improvement Grants and Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education programme should also be made open to the scientific community for further research and critique. This can help prevent similar programmes in the future regurgitating the same activities without the hope of eliciting more positive impact.

The recommendations for the requirement for Non-Governmental Organisations to declare their activities already exists in the form of a policy directive. Unfortunately, given the sheer number of actors in the sector, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education seems to lack the capacity to monitor the implementation of this recommendation. This requires further action. The researcher has realised that the expectation of efficiency and effectiveness is a lot higher in the global North than it is in Zimbabwe. Because of this gap, global North organisations can get away with producing lacklustre results in contexts where they are unlikely to experience much push back. Therefore, one might be able to argue that holding these organisations accountable in their countries of origin might be more effective than in their host countries where they seem to have a lot more (diplomatic) impunity and where people are a lot more desperate and in need for assistance. This can be done by raising awareness through research, petitions, engagement with government departments rather than embassies or local organisational decision makers and working with global alliances. Activists, parents, teachers and other

stakeholders can take it upon themselves to hold such organisations accountable via these channels.

The lack of support from communities towards school Income Generating Projects suggests a similar dearth of ownership. To counteract this, social entrepreneurship in schools should be supported through concrete actions such as providing market research as well as good business planning. The negative Social Return on Investment profiles of the majority of cases in this study indicate a real need for such. In the current Zimbabwean context, school heads and school development committees do not typically possess such entrepreneurial skills. It is therefore incumbent on the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to provide this support. What form this support might take will require a lot of exploration, but this research can already suggest public-private partnerships between schools and private socially oriented organisations.

As shown by the data, the timeframe for many donor aid funded projects was rather short suggesting that even the time devoted to studying the problems and suggesting solutions is not sufficient. How the CAMFED ZGSE programme narrowly hinged its initial theory of change on alleviating financial barriers of girls to education without accounting for other factors demonstrates the importance of early and adequate investment in programme design. It may be useful to slow down the pace at which initiatives are planned to allow more focus on understanding the contexts in which the challenges occur, what solutions already exist and how the respective origin or locus of the initiative might influence efficiency and effectiveness. It is also important to prolong initiatives until they reach a tipping point where the deciding factor dilutes the impact of any other factors that may be contributing to whatever education challenges the initiative aims to address. Should reaching this tipping point require a greater investment of time, then so be it.

The Tools4dev website scratches the surface of this conversation by noting that smaller programmes have time and resource limitations (Tools4dev, n.d., para. 2). In this regard, the development sector may benefit from working more closely with academia where resources in the form of student and project research are committed towards understanding challenges and their potential solutions in depth. Making use of the large repositories of information at their disposal should be prioritised. Unfortunately, while the Tools4dev website also recommends that programme design involve investigating

examples of what has worked or not worked, how and why, the website also notes that many organisations do not include this step in their programme design and by so doing, they negate true understanding (n.d, para. 19). Where understanding has been attained however, improving efficiency and effectiveness should focus on adjusting exogeneity or endogeneity as necessary, whatever the case may be, alongside addressing the circumstances creating the problem itself.

Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of donor aid might be achievable if funding were used to support initiatives that have already proven to be successful. Instead of for example giving bursaries to learners based on need, bursaries might be distributed on the basis of merit. Such a suggestion raises moral questions about excluding the poorest members of society. However, if we consider the success rate of such bursary schemes, it can be argued that even after receiving support, the large majority of beneficiaries remain excluded as they fail to capitalise on the opportunities given. Some authors support the efficacy of merit-based scholarships over their unconditional variants. Hassan et al. (2022) cite authors such as Krishnaratne and White (2013), Masino & Nino-Zarazua (2016) and Conn (2017) and conclude that financial incentives for learners have a significant effect on learning outcomes (p. 6).

Furthermore, this bursary scheme, typical of several others, backloaded the programme with ancillary activities such as the provision of uniforms and sanitary wear. Interestingly, no justification for benefits of providing sanitary wear and stationery was provided in the CAMFED ZGSE business case, neither was the programme able to show how these ancillary activities contributed to learning outcomes in the long term. A return to streamlining programme activities to only those activities that have a track record of success may just be the ticket. While this too poses moral dilemmas about the necessity for activities focused on improving well-being rather than future outcomes, the monies saved by narrowing down projects can instead be channelled towards providing common goods which level the teaching and learning playing field for more students. These may include wholesale investments in providing infrastructure, textbooks and improving teacher quality and educational leadership. It seems critical that social entrepreneurship funding and donor aid, both of which are very limited, be used to fund initiatives that have a multiplier effect rather than on ideas which at best produce individual “success stories”.

Donor aid flows into the education sector in Zimbabwe typically had to pass through several layers. The donor often appointed a fund manager who might appoint smaller organisations to do the actual work with each layer taking off a chunk of funding for administrative purposes, i.e. salaries, rentals etc. In this way, on paper, more might be spent on an initiative without directly benefiting the beneficiaries. Recommendations from a civil society respondent and a social entrepreneur respectively suggested that funding for education development initiatives and social entrepreneurship go directly to local NGOs or social enterprises and businesses respectively. Such recommendations are worth exploring even while appreciating that implementing such a recommendation limits the capacity of the funder to monitor the use of funds as the case of the NRC showed.

The recommendations have up to this point mostly focused on how to address the challenges of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of education financing in Zimbabwe at the system-wide level. However, study findings have shown how individuals can positively and negatively influence the outcomes of initiatives in the education sector-for themselves and others alike. Strengthening individual responses therefore is essential for efficiency and effectiveness. How can this be done? The education sector has concerned itself with how to motivate not just learners but also their guardians and even their stakeholders. These recommendations will not focus on these ideas which themselves could be a different study. Instead, reference is now made to how individuals, at a personal level, can maximise the benefits of the opportunities presented to them and by so doing improve efficiency and effectiveness. Reference is now also made to how individuals and groups can avoid token participation in the development process but rather, through a process of reflection, lobby for the best possible results.

Authors such as White (1996, p. 6) point out and the study has shown that while donor agencies and governments are quick to lobby for participation in initiatives, such “Sharing through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power.” White cites ideas such as Freire’s conscientisation and their potential for empowerment of oppressed people who do not express or recognise their own interests because of a sense of hopelessness or cynicism (Freire, 2005; White, 1996). White confirms the tendency of recipients during programme design to give the responses that donors expect (1996, p. 13).

Through this process of conscientisation, Freire argues that individuals can reflect on their own realities and see things from a broader perspective (2005, p. 25). It can

embolden them to be honest and say what they really need and maybe even reject assistance that does not serve their best interests. Through conscientisation, bursary holders might begin to believe that their lives can take on a different trajectory from those of the people around them and make the most of their educational opportunities, parents can begin to imagine things differently for their children and support their educational journeys and organisations can reject existing power dynamics and instead become partners with their recipients, rather than benevolent benefactors. Likewise, school administrators can reflect earnestly on what they want to achieve and how to make it possible before embarking on income generating projects. In a sense, through reflection and then empowerment, all of these stakeholders can do for themselves what studies like this one would aim to do for them. Such a recommendation can be critiqued as being rather idealistic, which is true. However, it is no less idealistic than any existing effort to solve existing problems and can through research and application benefit from further development.

## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Limitations

In the end, this study was beset with many of the challenges that similar studies have encountered: data gaps. These delayed the comparison of the two funding modalities significantly. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education which is the repository of the country's Education Management Information System provided limited information and anecdotal evidence and responses from interview participants suggest that they are not always informed of the activities taking place in educational institutions in both the donor aid and social entrepreneurship sectors. Furthermore, the distance and remoteness of many of the respondents made reaching them for further interviews very difficult.

The nature of the research, assessing two funding modalities in education also proved quite challenging. The process of producing research worthy of a Doctorate in Philosophy could be considered a PhD in itself. These difficulties highlighted the immense investment from the responsible policy and decision-makers needed in order to understand education problems and design solutions for them, investments which often times seem lacking.

A third limitation, drawn from the data challenges associated with research of this nature is that many of the findings of the Social Return on Investment section remain empirical estimates and therefore open to revision. They give workable indications of the cost-effectiveness of the five cases explored in section 4.2.5 and provide validation for many of the findings of the mixed methods grounded theory study. However, the study could certainly benefit from more representative findings. Despite this, scholars who adopt a post-positivist epistemological paradigmatic approach accept such estimates as valid contributions in scientific enquiry. Ryan (n.d.) argues that post-positivism propounds the adoption of a reflexive attitude towards findings research which at the very least provides evidence for action despite its limitations. Ryan cautions against focusing on collecting more information and using this as an excuse not to act. Therefore, despite the limits of this research, it can still offer a springboard for action.

### 5.2 Research as a Call to Action

And now some final considerations. It is quite disheartening to realise that many of the criticisms of donor aid levelled as far back as the 1990s still apply in Zimbabwe

today. Donor aid is still not as transparent as it should be, it struggles to account for sustainable impact, remains highly fragmented and volatile and continues to be used to apply one-dimensional solutions to three-dimensional problems. It is even more disheartening to realise that social entrepreneurship is not the silver bullet that will transform the country's education financing challenges but rather requires significant investments in the form of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes and resources. The extensive writings of Hanushek (1986, 1994, 1995, 1996) mirror many of the findings of this research even though much of his work focuses on education financing in the public sector. This suggests that both donor funding and social entrepreneurship would benefit from lessons conducted in the public sector if they are to be made more efficient and effective.

It is hoped that this mixed methods grounded theory study will form the basis of a response which might realise positive change for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe, donor activities in the education sector in Zimbabwe and commercial ventures in schools. It is important that such responses become more widely available in Zimbabwe if we are to give its young people the futures they deserve.

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## Annexes

### Annex 1 Research Interview Protocol

#### Research Interview Protocol

#### **Research Project: “In how far can Social Entrepreneurship be more effective than Traditional Official Development Assistance Grants in the Education Sector in Zimbabwe?”**

##### **The objective of the research is to:**

1. To thoroughly analyse Official Development Assistance grants (ODA) and Social Entrepreneurship (SE) sourced financing to Zimbabwean educational activities.
2. To compare the effectiveness and efficiencies of ODA grants and SE financed educational activities in Zimbabwe.
3. To be able to make recommendations on education financing in the education sector for better effectiveness and efficiency.

##### **The following participants will likely be selected to provide information during interviews:**

- Teachers in Primary and Secondary Education
- District and Provincial Education Officers
- Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Head Office Officers
- Parents
- Non-Governmental Organisations (CSO's, FBO's) Officers
- Multi-Lateral Organisations Officers
- Donor representatives
- Social Entrepreneurs
- Company representatives

##### **1. Biographical Geographical Information: (All participants)**

- 1.1 State your professional position, i.e. Head teachers, teacher (Primary, secondary); Organisation representative (role in Ministry), Ministry Official (role in Ministry)
- 1.2 Location
- 1.3 Experience

##### **2. Questions**

- 2.1 What is your understanding of Efficiency and Effectiveness in education finance?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to these definitions where necessary. “Education finance is a term used to describe the financial and in-kind resources available for education. The concept of education finance also addresses questions about how resources are allocated, used, and accounted for to achieve sustainable, quality education for all children and youth.” <https://www.edu-links.org/learning/what-education-finance> “Definition of effective 1a: producing a decided, decisive, or desired effect an effective policy.” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/effective> “Definition of efficient 1: Productive of desired effects especially:

2.2 What is your understanding of traditional Official Development Assistance grants?

2.3 What is your understanding of Social Entrepreneurship?

2.4 Do you have any experiences of traditional Official Development Assistance grant financed activities? If yes, please share.

2.5 In what ways were these ODA grant financed activities efficient and effective? Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.6 In what ways were these ODA grant financed activities **inefficient and ineffective?** Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.7 Do you have any experiences of Social Entrepreneurial financed education activities in the education sector? If yes, please share.

2.8 In what ways were these SE financed activities efficient and effective? Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.9 In what ways were these SE financed activities **inefficient and ineffective?** Please give concrete examples (Amounts, dates, locations, numbers where possible).

2.10 Any other comments?

## **Annex 2 Link to Example of Survey**

Link to follow up survey:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSctOfJAc5VpD\\_0fp2OS3NNRx6uJAsOt5HAD1Nfz\\_KRcY2\\_P\\_g/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSctOfJAc5VpD_0fp2OS3NNRx6uJAsOt5HAD1Nfz_KRcY2_P_g/viewform)

### Annex 3 Sample of Open Codes

DA pouring into a porous system	Participatin g in partially funding the Education sector	Complexity of the problems	Creating new structures	Communit y Engageme nt	Robust M&E in DA	Underlyin g Motivatio ns
SE effective for small projects	Struggling to keep up with fluctuations in value of money	Pig Project — Paying in an untimely manner	Buying bicycles for students who live far away	Expansion	Communit y Engageme nt	Decided Leadershi p
Lack of successi on planning in both	Uncoordinat ed fragmented initiatives	Nebulous input- Outcome relationshi ps	Disseminati ng lessons learnt	Communit y lobbying to have the college reopened	Some school environments (social norms) not supportive for young mothers	Keeping financial records of projects
Success stories	“It is very difficult to measure something (SE) which is not standardised and which varies from school to school.”	Bursary students are under extreme pressure (in various ways) Being courted by men because they look nice in their new uniforms	Creating new structures	Lack of genuine opportunities for personal betterment (i.e., A-levels and beyond)	Monitoring and Evaluation	Withholdi ng Information
Mothers' Support Groups	Cutting back on tailor-made packages (for learners) in 2019/2020	Reporting lacking the budget and technical capacity to do economic analysis of programmes	Reports that some beneficiaries feel the SIG is inadequate for building	Being informed about already decided projects	Verificatio n of the attendance and wellbeing of beneficiaries	Income Generatin g Project lies in the hands of individual s

Reviewing what can be done to mitigate against the loss of trained Teacher Mentors	Managing tension between limited funding and quality outcomes	DFID does not channel any funds through the Government of Zimbabwe	Continuous Learning and Improvement	Accepting donations without necessarily being aware of the value	Quantifying support generated from KIVA loans has not yet been clear	“Donor Aid also brings the mentality of the donor country”
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## Declaration Statement

### Mustererklärung nach § 12 der Promotionsordnung

Hiermit erkläre ich gemäß § 12 der Promotionsordnung vom 10. Juli 2020:

- a. dass die vorgelegte Arbeit selbstständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der in der Arbeit angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt wurde;
- b. dass die Arbeit bisher weder im In- noch Ausland in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt wurde;
- c. dass ein Promotionsverfahren noch nie zuvor oder gleichzeitig an einer anderen Universität oder einem anderen Fachbereich beantragt wurde.

Ort: Paderborn

Datum: 29.04.2025



Unterschrift

### Declaration in accordance with § 12 of the promotionsordnung

I hereby declare in accordance with § 12 of the Promotionsordnung of July 10th, 2020:

- a. that I, Chemwi Natsayi Mutiwayuaka, produced this dissertation wholly and solely and without the help of others or external means (other than those indicated within the dissertation);
- b. that this dissertation is an original work and has never been issued to or accepted by another examination office (domestic or abroad);
- c. that I, Chemwi Natsayi Mutiwayuaka, have never initiated any other *Promotionsverfahren* (final phase of the PhD process) at any other university or faculty.

Place: Paderborn.

Date: 29.04.2025



Signature