

About the Author



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PPP in Education: Botswana International University of Science and Technology

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Abstract

This article, by IP3 Alumnus and *Certified PPP Specialist*, Badumetse Diana Hobona, examines the role of public-private partnerships in the establishment of the Science and Technology University in Botswana. Presidential Directive Cab 33(B) of 2004 established a second national university in Botswana that would have a science and technology bias. The Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) was established through an act of Parliament; the BIUST Act No. 2 of 2006 passed by parliament in December 2005. The Government also decided that BIUST must be developed through a public private partnership (PPP).

The Need for BIUST

The decision to establish the BIUST, which is Botswana's second university, was undertaken after extensive consultations within Botswana by a Task Force established by the Minister of Education. The main purpose of the Task Force was to:

- Determine the need for a second university;
- If the need was confirmed; to determine the university's area of focus in terms of programme offerings, and;
- Recommend the location for the second university.

The consultation process involved open meetings with the public and as well as written submissions and comments. The Task Force confirmed the need for a second university in Botswana. It observed that the transition rate from senior secondary to tertiary level education stood at 12% compared to 20% to 30 % in other middle-income countries. The limited number of tertiary level-places within the country resulted in many students attending external institutions at a high cost to the nation. External placement is an unsustainable model considering the increase in the number of senior secondary graduates qualifying and wishing to proceed to tertiary level as well as the proportion of the working population wishing to upgrade their qualifications.

The BIUST is scheduled to enrol its first 2,500 students in 2009, growing to a full capacity of 10,000 students by 2016. BIUST is central to the realisation of Botswana's Vision 2016 through which she aspires to be a *prosperous, productive and innovative nation!*

Aims and Objectives of Establishing BIUST

The Botswana International University of Science and Technology is intended to redirect the country's human resources development towards science and technology and produce a skilled and competent workforce that will facilitate technology transfer and absorption, increase productivity in all sectors of the economy, and facilitate economic diversification, growth and development. To achieve these objectives, BIUST will have a strong research component to attract and retain faculty and researchers of good standing. It will have a Business Incubator and Business Park where research ideas can be hatched and developed into profitable production entities.

Another key objective of the BIUST project is that it will be developed through public-private partnership (PPP). This is in line with Botswana's overarching national policy on privatisation, which aims to increase the role of the private sector in the economy.

BIUST to be Developed Through Public-Private Partnership

The Government of Botswana has decided to develop BIUST through public-private partnership opportunities. This is consistent with the objectives of Botswana's Privatisation Policy, which, among other things, includes enhancing efficiency in the delivery of public infrastructure and services by accessing private sector innovation, managerial and technical skills and expertise. Private sector participation has in the past taken the form of short-term contracts for design and/or construction, but has not promoted life cycle costing of projects and efficiency. This has resulted in poor quality infrastructure and high maintenance costs.

The envisaged education PPP will be a longer-term relationship with the private sector involved in the financing, design, construction and operation and maintenance of the facility. The private sector and the community will be invited to participate in the development and delivery of BIUST curriculum to ensure its relevance to the needs of the country. BIUST is intended to be a catalyst for private sector growth and economic diversification.

Method of Procurement

The Ministry of Education is continuously marketing the project to potential partners and there is a significant amount of interest both locally and globally. Botswana's public procurement and asset disposal regulations require open public tender to ensure transparency and value for money. The procurement of private PPP partners will follow existing tender procedures. The Ministry is in the process of appointing a Transaction Advisor during the first quarter of 2007, to undertake a Feasibility Study and develop a Master Plan to be used in marketing the project to potential partners. The Feasibility study will determine the extent of private sector interest and how much of the US\$1.5 billion investment they are ready, willing and able to shoulder. The Government of Botswana is committed to financing those aspects of the project that may not attract private finance.

Role of BIUST Project Team in the Field of PPP and Education in Botswana

The BIUST project is Botswana's first PPP in Education. It is estimated to cost a total of US\$1.5 billion when it is fully developed with capacity for 10,000 students. The Ministry of Education has established a Project Implementation Team to oversee the development of the Botswana International University of Science and Technology. The Project Team is responsible for:

- Facilitating the enactment of legislations necessary for the establishment of the BIUST;
- Planning for the implementation of the project;
- Facilitating the appointment of the Founding Vice Chancellor;
- Securing resources needed for the development of the BIUST (i.e. land funding, labour);
- Reviewing the work of the Transaction Advisor; and
- Negotiating partnerships with potential partners.

The Project Implementation Team coordinates the physical development of the BIUST and works closely with the academic team led by the Founding Vice Chancellor to ensure that the physical designs are informed by the University's intended curriculum and programme offerings. The Team will, therefore coordinate all key players to ensure that the final product is a *World Class Centre of Excellence*.

The Project Implementation Team is led by a Project Coordinator who is responsible for strategic planning for the development of BIUST, strategic marketing of the project, (developing a strategic implementation plan for the project and identifying strategic partners and initiating collaborative arrangements that facilitate the development of BIUST).

Highlights and Successes of the Project Team

To date, the Project Implementation Team has facilitated the legislation establishing the University, and secured a piece of land measuring 1,700 hectares for the development of BIUST. The land was identified by the community and offered to Government on a 50-year lease. The Project Implementation Team has facilitated the appointment of an Interim Council whose key deliverable is the appointment of a Founding Vice Chancellor and oversight of the University assets.

Challenges that the Organisation Still Faces

One of the major challenges that the Project Implementation Team faces is a shortage of qualified staff. PPP is new in Botswana and the skills in this area are limited. This is being addressed through accelerated training in project management and monitoring, finance and management, corporate business ethics and a number of aspects of public-private partnership management and modelling. The training is intended to equip the Project Implementation Team staff with skills that will enable them to deliver the BIUST project on schedule. Workshops and briefing sessions are organised regularly for groups that are tasked with overseeing various aspects of the project to clarify roles and increase understanding of new concepts. It is important that the local private sector also understands and participates in the new form of partnership. Consultation workshops and media briefings are held regularly to explain the PPP concept in general and the role of private sector partners in the form of PPP envisaged.

For more information about the project or any questions, please contact the author at BHobona@gov.bw.

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