

# Chloe Walker

## How Do PPPs Measure Up? Conceptualizing and Measuring Achievement in a Ugandan PPP

Within the last two decades, public-private partnerships (PPPs) in education have spread rapidly across the world, particularly in Latin America, South-East Asia and Sub Saharan Africa. Public-private partnerships have been viewed as a viable solution to the challenges of providing accessible education to the world's poorest children. However, they have also attracted significant criticism, particularly about their (in)effectiveness and potential role in reinforcing inequalities.

This study sought to move the discourse on public-private partnerships beyond its current state of highly polemic debates, towards an understanding of the ways in which key players within the partnerships conceptualize, measure, and assess their own efficacy. It investigated the ways of measuring educational success and ideas of what constitutes success within PPPs. Using the Advancement Schools' Advancement<sup>1</sup> (ASA) organization in Uganda as a case study, the project was particularly interested in the points of convergence and divergence between the major stakeholders involved with ASA, as well as the potential tensions between the goals of the organization and those of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES).

Principally, the study found that both ASA and the MoES conceptualized achievement beyond examination performance- in favour of notions such as quality, access, equity, individual improvement, and student destinations after graduation. This finding offers a hopeful counter-narrative against reductionist ideas of educational achievement which have permeated school efficacy discourses. Further, the study found that there was a clear divide in the approaches to measurement between the 'public' (MoES) and 'private' (ASA) elements of the partnership. That is, the ASA's emerging movement of data-driven educational management stood in stark contrast with the MoES' self-professed incapacity for adequately measuring the achievements of PPP schools, and assessing the performance of the wider PPP framework.

Though specific to this Ugandan PPP, the findings allow for an interrogation of the extent to which similar experiences exist across the globe, and, particularly across Africa and the developing world- in response to the various 'crises' in education.

<sup>1</sup> A pseudonym was used at the request of the participating organization