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Evaluation on the Significance of Procurement Specifications on Value for Money. Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development, Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

The study used an explanatory research design based on quantitative research method. Cluster sampling was used to select the research participants probability techniques. The obtained quantitative structured and numerical data was analysed using simple and comparative descriptive statistics in form of respondents' cumulative frequencies and the central tendency mean. Comparative descriptive statistical findings and research hypothesis were tested using Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression to determine the impact of procurement specifications on the value for money principle. The results showed that the positive linear OLS regression models with a Pearson Correlation coefficient (0.898; 0.936; 0.964; 0.898; 0.947) present strong positive fit models with explained variabilities (R2= 0.97; 0.87; 0.92; 0.89) and probability of errors which are relatively smaller (p<0.12; 0.11; 0.07; 0.09), which means technical, quality standard as well as price and payment term specifications positively impact on the value for money principle respectively. The study concluded that, effective procurement specifications is a panacea to idea value for money principle. Upcoming studies should focus on technical specifications on the enhance of transparent operations of the ministry which is also experiencing deteriorating operations.

Keywords:

Procurement, Specifications, Quality, Value for Money, Zimbabwe

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Introduction

This study analyses impact of public procurement specification on value for money in the insights from Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development (MLAWFRD) which seem to be struggling with guaranteeing seamless public procurement specification that bedevil the value for money function (Public Accounts Committee [PAC], 2021). A funnel approach was prioritised to provide empirical literature from the global, regional, national and Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development (MLAWFRD) public procurement challenges that are deteriorating the value for money components. This provides insights into the study and its relevance.

Global Agricultural Enterprise Public Procurement Specifications on Value for Money

Public procurement facilitate the multi-trillion to billion dollar payment of goods, works and services using government or international donor partners' funds for the benefit of all citizens on macrolevel (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2021). Public procurement is also referred to as government contracts or public contracts by the World Trade and Organization (WTO, 2020) and the United States of America (USA) respectively (Arrowsmith *et al*., 2021). Public procurement claims an estimated share of about 50-70% of the national budget (after personal remunerations) therefore it is imperative to ensure efficient public procurement system to enhance value for money in government expenditure (World Bank, 2021). Efficiency in public procurement specification has a wide implication on the cost of goods or services that eventually enhance the attainability of value for money through taxing unnecessary costs (Walker & Hampson, 2019). Public procurement specification emphasizes on the apt description of work, goods and service requirements in a solicitation process which promote the agricultural entities satisfaction and prevent cost of re-procurement and delay (Thuo, 2019). Specification component should be supported by procurement schedule and delivery plan to minimise costs associated with delays in agricultural production (Kabelele & Kitomo, 2022).

Failure of agricultural public entities to specify needed procurements proportionally contribute to an absolute failure in realizing the value for money on agriculture projects. World Bank (2021) postulates that value for money in agricultural projects in attained through procurement planning, specifying the contract quality, costs and technical requirements, use of suitable evaluation criteria and design of the procurement arrangements. Public procurement specification regulates business competition systems and also avert errors in submitting bids (Ogubala & Kiarie, 2019). This research paper also emphasized on the sustainable development goals ;1, 2, 6,11 and 12 which focus on; no poverty, zero hunger, clean water sanitation, sustainable cities and communities and last but not least responsible cnsumption and production.

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Literature Review

Procurement Specification is defined as the conformance and performance based consumption of goods, works and services at the best possible total cost of ownership (TCO), in the suitable quantity and quality, at the right time, in the right place for the direct benefit or use of governments, corporations, or individuals, generally via a contract (GNPA, 2022).Public Procurement: is defined as the consumption of goods, works and services at the best possible total cost of ownership (TCO), in the suitable quantity and quality, at the right time, in the right place for the direct benefit or use of governments, corporations, or individuals, generally via a contract (GNPA, 2022). Specification: as a statement of product or service attributes and requirements needed to be satisfied by the procurement of external resources (Lysons & Farrington, 2020). Value for Money is measured as the agricultural authorities explicit commitment to ensure the best possible results are obtained from the money spent (ADB, 2021). Public Sector: Define governments and all publicly controlled or publicly funded agricultural agencies, enterprises and entities that deliver public programs, goods, services or works to the communities (WTO, 2020).

Public procurement specification is defined as the conformance and performance based consumption of goods, works and services at the best possible total cost of ownership (TCO), in the suitable quantity and quality, at the right time, in the right place for the direct benefit or use of governments, corporations, or individuals, generally via a contract (GNPA, 2022). The agricultural public sector purchase specification, hire and obtain clearly specified goods, construction works and services through recommended contractual means within applicable laws and regulations. Through public procurement specification, the government and agricultural public sector institutions purchase vital agriculture inputs essential for investments in physical infrastructure and strengthening of institutional human capacities which lead to national development (Barnett *et al*., 2020). Value, timeliness and suitability of the specific procured agricultural inputs largely determine the vigour of public investment and its rate of success. Efficient public procurement specification system is essential for achieving the value for money (World Bank, 2021). More understanding of the term public procurement specification comes through individually conceptualising public procurement and specification as presented below.

The agriculture public sector define governments and all publicly controlled or publicly funded agricultural agencies, enterprises and entities that deliver public programs, goods, services or works to the communities (WTO, 2020). At all the four presented levels, the public sector is characterised by three types of organisations which are core government, agencies and public contractors.e goods, services or works basing on the quantifiable benefits in terms of value, quality, cost and incentive (Walker & Hampson, 2019). The theorists believes that the value of goods and services is expressed in the costs and quality. This theory assist public agricultural enterprises to properly develop conformance based specifications which account for the technical requirements of the design, method of production,

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construction, services and delivery in order to better translate into value for money (World Bank, 2021). The Value For Money Quantity Theory on performance-based specifications ensure that the outcomes, results or outputs required in for business or functional performance requirements are specifically achieved (World Bank, 2021).

To the best of the researcher's knowledge no quantitative study has been done on public procurement specification effect on the value for money in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development (MLAWFRD) basing on the insights from Grain Marketing Board, the Department of Irrigation and PRAZ. The study serves to bring innovative strains of knowledge on the usefulness of public procurement specification to turnaround the fortunes of one of the key ministries in Zimbabwe an agro-based economy. Literature review essentially validated the credibility of the selected study topic and the chosen variables through substantiating with real evidence.

H_1: The technical specifications have a positive impact on attainment of value for money.

H_2: Clear quality standard specifications positively impact value for money.

H_3: Proper packaging and labelling of secifications positively impact value for money.

Methods and Data

In this case, comparative the effect of technical, quality standard, package labelling as well as price and payment terms specification on the value for money principle) descriptive statistics was suitably used under explanatory research design. The comparative descriptive results in form of respondents' cumulative frequency and central tendency mean together with the study hypothesis (H_{1-3}) were tested using Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression to determine the impact of public procurement specification on value for money in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development (MLAWFRD). This section focuses on total population from the principal directors, directors, administrative officers and graduate interns from the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development (MLAWFRD), board of directors ana management from GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ in order to understand the impact of public procurement specification on value for money in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development (MLAWFRD). The target population define the eligible executive and non-executive professionals who can take part in the study data collection (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Sampling techniques have been used to select research participants from the total population (143). The study used probabilistic sampling techniques that are inclined to the quantitative research. The study actually prioritised a cluster sampling technique in order to determine objectively the respondents from the total population. The cluster sampling technique was necessary to make use of in this research in order to select an adequate sample for effective and efficient data collection from the MLAWFRD head

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office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff members. Cluster sampling was used to select the study sample of this study in order to ensure equitable selection of members using a similar percentage. The management population was divided into board of directors, management and subordinate groups which are in this case clusters where a proportion of 73% as determined by the Slovene's formula calculation, was selected from each.

A questionnaire is predictive research tool which is used to validate ideas available in the study area. Validity refers to what the study serves to quantify (Schneider, 2020). Quantitative validity was guaranteed by the use of thoughtful comparative descriptive statistics which were later tested by inferential statistical method Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression for the impact of public procurement specification on value for money. The OLS was also used to test the hypothesis (H_{1-3}) which dictate significant impact of public procurement specification on value for money. Reliability is initially used to analyse the quality of a study design (Yin, 2019). The reliability of a research consists of similarity, dependability and consistency of the study to other similar studies which was assured by a small pilot survey which ensured that the process is practical and manageable. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the four objective sections in this research to determine the internal reliability.

Results

One hundred and five (105) closed ended questionnaires were distributed to MLAWFRD head office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff members equitably basing on the 73% proportion determined by the Slovene's formula calculation. Of the 105 disbursed, 100 closed ended questionnaire respondents effectively responded which led to a 95% response rate which is a great sample size. The brilliant response rate could have been informed by the fact that efficient and effective public procurement specification is a common mantra in the government ministerial and departmental board rooms which is quite topical and familiar to all principal directors and administrative officers. The Cronbach alpha for the effect of technical specifications on value for money ($\alpha = 0.877, > 0.7$) presents a good reliability. The effect of quality standard specifications on value for money shows a reliability value of ($\alpha = 0.812, > 0.7$) which provides a strong reliability. The effect of package labelling specification on value for money accounted for ($\alpha = 0.903, > 0.7$) which provides high internal consistency. The overall result for the 12 closed ended questionnaire items used ($\alpha = 0.879, > 0.7$) presents a very consistent internal consistency for the closed ended questionnaire used.

Effect of Technical Specifications on Value for Money

The first presented item (ETSVFM1) presents that MLAWFRD use elaborate practical requirements that contribute to increased economic benefits. The respondents' cumulative frequency shows that 64% of the MLAWFRD head office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff member respondents shared

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a similar view that MLAWFRD use elaborate practical requirements that contribute to increased economic benefits as shown. The mean value (M=3.58, SD=0.955) shows that MLAWFRD head office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff member respondents corroborated (3.58~4) that MLAWFRD use elaborate practical requirements that contribute to increased economic benefits.

H_1: Technical specifications positively impact value for money

OLS Regression for the Effect of Technical Specifications on Value for Money

The table 10 above demonstrates that the OLS regression results for the first objective are β = .713, α = .119, r = .899. The results show that technical specifications strongly impact on value for money positively. The model significance level is 88% because the probability of error value is 0.12 which is an effective one.

H_2: Quality standard specifications positively impact value for money.

OLS Regression for the Effect of Quality Standard Specifications on the Value for Money.

Source: SPSS Output

The results demonstrated that the OLS regression results for the second objective are β = .833, α = .112, r = .934. The results showed that quality standard specifications strongly and positively impact on the value for money in MLAWFRD. The model significance level is 89% because the probability of error value is 0.11 which is an effective one. Results showed the comparative descriptive statistics of quality standard specifications on value for money in MLAWFRD (EQSSVFM1-3). The first presented and ranked (EQSSVFM1) presents that 56% of the MLAWFRD head office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff member respondents' corroborated that quality cost based selection is used to increase product and service efficiency in MLAWFRD. The mean (M=3.59, SD=0.780) shows that the MLAWFRD head office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff member respondents' were of the view that (3.59~4) that quality cost based selection ((QCBS) is used to increase product and service efficiency in MLAWFRD.

H_3: Package labelling specifications positively impacts value for money.

Results demonstrated that the OLS regression results for the third objective are β = .706, α = .068, r = .961. The results showed that package labelling strongly and positively impact on the achievement of the value for money in MLAWFRD. The model significance level is 93% because the probability of error value is 0.07 which is an effective one. The coefficient of determination R^2 is 0.924 which means there is a significant impact of package labelling on the achievement of the value for money.

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Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the MLAWFRD head office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff member respondents were confident that MLAWFRD use elaborate practical requirements that contribute to increased economic benefits. The comparative descriptive statistical shared a similar view that public agricultural enterprises use elaborate practical requirements that contribute to increased economic benefits in the world. The obtained results from this first item corresponds to the secondary reviewed literature evidence drawn from the research which was done by Asian Development Bank [ADB] (2021) where the use of technical specifications in public procurement ensure that the purchased agricultural equipment or service works properly benefit the intended departments or entities economically. Results showed that 79% of the MLAWFRD head office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff member respondents' were of the view that government agricultural contractors retain high level of control which guarantee improved effectiveness of services and products. The mean (M=3.88, SD=0.65) demonstrates that the MLAWFRD head office, GMB, Department of Irrigation and PRAZ staff member respondents' shared a similar view (3.86~4) that government agricultural contractors retain high level of control which guarantee improved effectiveness of services and products. The respondents' cumulative frequencies (79%) and the mean (3.86~4) coincide that government agricultural contractors retain high level of control which guarantee improved effectiveness of services and products. The precise definition of technical specifications also increased value for money by increasing compliance with organizational requirements, system capacity and efficiency. Performance, reliability, and maintenance-related features have massive impacts on perceived value for money in the quality and lifespan of the equipment (Thompson *et al*., 2020). The R^2 value means that technical specifications are causing an impact of 97% increase in efforts towards the achievement of value for money which holds the study hypothesis (H_1) true.

The comparative descriptive statistical findings correspond to the secondary reviewed evidence drawn from the study by CSC (2020) where customer value-based pricing consist of good-value pricing and value-added pricing which impact on the value for money punctuated by the economic benefits.

The comparative descriptive statistical findings correspond to the evidence drawn from the study done by Kabelele and Kitomo (2022) which maintained that competition based pricing and discounting payment terms have been essential to enhance the effectiveness of products and services for agricultural SOEs in Kenya. Further evidence from the research which was done by World Bank (2021) demonstrated that the use of competition-based pricing and discounting payment terms in the public agricultural sector in Australia resulted in the advancement in the value for money principle. Customer value based, cost based and competition based pricing strategies corresponding to the use of credit, instalments and discounting payment terms are essential to guarantee sustainable value for money in

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MLAWFRD. The results obtained from the comparative descriptive statistics were tested using the OLS regression to determine the effect of pricing and payment terms specification on the value for money.

Conclusion

The study concludes that technical specifications which come in form of practical requirements of works, material, product, supply or service effectively impact on the value for money in MLAWFRD. They are under the bracket of conformance based specifications which are used when a thorough understanding of the requirements already exists, and there is little or no need for bidders to innovate. Technical specifications are the most efficient and effective approach when the offers of complying bidders are homogeneous with little or no differentiation between them other than price. The government agricultural contractors retain higher levels of control over design and delivery and have comprehensive understanding of the requirements. The use of technical specifications in public procurement ensure that the purchased agricultural equipment or service works properly which benefit the intended departments or entities.

This research concludes that quality standard specifications which are distinct and unique works, products and services impact on MLAWFRD effectiveness, efficiency and economical. Quality Cost Based Selection (QCBS), Fixed Cost Selection and Least Cost Selection (LCS) quality standard specifications that are used in public agricultural organisations that makes positive inroads in the operations of the agribusinesses.

The research concludes that package labelling which are writings on the package, tags and designed graphics usefully impact on the three pillars of value for money principle. Package labelling protects agricultural material from damages, give detailed information about a selected brand, quality and give adequate instructions that enhance the value for money principle in the public agricultural sector. It attract consumers of all ages to the product use since positive perceptions are produced. The agricultural firms are given important agricultural messages on the best possible dimensions the products can be used to achieve the value for money pillars. Customization and configuration of results based solutions contribute to progress towards the achievement of NDS 1, Vision 2030 and African Union Agenda 2063.

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