

# PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*With the current state of public schools all over the country, there is a clarion call for private and foreign institutions to come to the rescue and support the effort of government. There is also a need for the government to set its priorities right and increase its budgetary allocation to education. This study considers the extent to which public-private partnership (also known as PPP) in education can bring about the attainment of sustainable development. The baseline theory for this study was anchored on systems theory which considers the sum total of a whole as the interaction amongst its inter-related parts. The study diagnosed the extent to which the budgetary allocation to education can bring about effective sustainability development with not greater than 15% allocation from total budget. This is indeed a clear reason why the private institutions should come in and synergize with the public institutions to ensure that schools are competitive.*

**Keywords:** Partnership, education, budget, sustainability, government

## Introduction

The term sustainability is the ability to sustain, maintain, provide for or nourish something for a long period of time without damaging or depleting it. The concept can be understood in various meanings as defined in many contexts as a technical term used in forestry; as an ecological term; as well as a new definitions which refers to the development of humanity and of human societies (Di Giulio, 2006). Development implies change or growth in a people's life style. It could also mean a change or an increase in the structural facilities of a people, community or society (Itari, 1995). But to some scholars, development is the power of the people to solve their problems with their own wisdom, knowledge, experience and resources with a view to eliminating poverty, pestilence and starvation. In fact, there are as

many definitions and assumptions about development as there are scholars on the globe. Even policy measures directed against man and his development are sometimes described as development initiatives (Onunwa, 2007). Sustainable development requires meeting the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to fulfill their own needs and destiny (Brundtland, 1987). The studies relating to sustainable development often adopt three dimensions, covering economic, social and environmental sustainability. In 2015, the United Nations (UN) Member States co-signed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreeing on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the aim of addressing the challenges all human beings face, in terms of such as the provision of clean water and sanitation, quality education and sustainable cities (Andries et al., 2019).

Public-private partnership (PPP) has been the latest mantra of development. It has also become a fashionable slogan in the development strategies, particularly during the last couple of decades in many developing as well as advanced countries. Though the practice of PPP is not altogether a new phenomenon, it has become popular in neo-liberal era, assuming high magnitude in the one hand, entering sectors that have had hitherto been reserved for public monopoly, and on the other hand, taking different forms which were until recently unknown. Even those countries which prohibited any role of the private sector for long have become the receptive idea of PPP and even are championing the cause of private sector and PPP in most developing activities. PPP is being adopted in a number of economies in various infrastructure development sectors such as developments of airports, railways roads and so on. But it is no longer confined to these sectors. Education is the only sector which had been to the exclusive jurisdiction of the state

for long. But PPP is being extended to education, including elementary education which is regarded as a universal human/fundamental right and also other human development sectors such as health and even to activities relating to poverty reduction. Recent experience has shown that the role of the private sector in sectors such as education and health has been producing mixed effects, more than negative effects on quality, equity and other dimension of education. Instead of direct provision by private sector, PPP is depicted as if it is different from privatization, and as a viable strategy

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on systems theory. System theory is a theoretical perspective that analyzes a phenomenon called a 'whole' the interrelated parts that builds it. The focus is on the interactions and on the relationships between parts in order to understand an entity's organization, functioning and outcomes. This perspective implies a dialogue between holism and reductionism. The concept of systems theory was deduced from the concept "system".

A system can be viewed as an entity, which is a coherent whole (Ng, Maull and Yip, 2009) such that a boundary is perceived around it in order to distinguish internal and external elements and to identify input and output relating to and emerging from the entity. There are several kinds of systems perspectives. There are viable systems (from Viable Systems Approach - VSA), smart systems (from systems thinking), reticular systems (from network theories), conceptual systems (from psychology), and ecosystems (from ecology), living systems (from natural sciences), economic systems (from economics), social systems (from sociology), institutional systems (from law), technological systems (from cybernetics), service systems (from Service Science, Management, Engineering and Design - SSMED), etc.

Systems theory is of the opinion that the components of each system are structured in a hierarchical order, and its components are interdependent with one another in the system to the extent that one component cannot function without the support of other components. Components of a system can be tightly coupled, where the components are closely interdependent, or loosely coupled, where the smaller subsets of tightly connected components are loosely

connected to one another. At the organizational level, the organizations and other organizations in the environment are also interdependent on one another. Underlying this interdependence are the permeable boundaries, both within and among organizations. Invariably, social organizations have to maintain permeable boundaries of a certain degree in order to receive materials or export products to survive.

In relation to this study, the public and private sectors must inter-relate in the issues of education to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria. There are numerous areas where the private sector can come in for effective learning. The private sector has done well in both manufacturing and services, unlike the public sector where deficits are the order of the day and hence they require subvention to survive.

### **Countries with High Rate of PPP Studies**

The most influential countries for sustainability-oriented PPP studies were found to be the United States, the United Kingdom and China. The researchers, institutions and funding agencies in these three countries contributed the most to sustainability-oriented PPP studies. The United States contributed the greatest number of researchers and publications, in the most influential journals. The United Kingdom has been a leading global player in reforming and innovating PPP provision, since it proposed and implemented a Private finance initiative (PFI) model in 1992 and the improved PF2 in 2012 (Feng, Xiong, Wang, Wu, & Xue, 2017). The UK government has claimed to implement PPP to achieve macro objectives of sustainable development (Wang, Gong, Liu, & Thomson, 2020).

The total number and the proportion of sustainability-oriented PPP studies contributed by the UK rank the second in the world. Another notable rapidly emerging key contributor in research and implementation of PPP is China. The number of sustainability-oriented PPP studies in China began to emerge in 2014 and replaced the United States in becoming the top contributing country in 2018. This was somewhat related to the promoting policy of the central government in China regarding the application of PPP in the provision of infrastructure and public services since 2014 (Wang et al., 2018). It was clearly stated in the, National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of the Chinese government, that it intended to

actively facilitate the application of PPP, in supporting sustainable development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016). The significant funding from NSFC was another potential reason for the rapid growth in sustainability-oriented PPP studies in China. In fact, around 64% of Science Citation Index (SCI)-indexed publications of the Chinese scholars were funded by NSFC (NSFC, 2018).

**Public and Private Sector Contribution**

Looking critically at the paradigm of public private partnership (PPP) in education system one can divide sources of educational input from the environment into Public and Private Sources. Public Sources refer to Governments. Public source of educational inputs entail the federal, state and local government. Education as an expensive social responsibility is expected to be provided by these three arms of government for the Nigerians. This can be regarded as one of the reasons why the United Nations recommended a

minimum of 26% of the national budget to educational development. Nonetheless, the history of Nigeria allocation to education in the past has never reach 15% of the national budget (Ogbuka, 2000). This could be held responsible as one of the reasons for inadequacies in Nigerian education system. The government or public inputs include Government Policy, establishment of Educational Standard, and National Economy.

Private sources are non-governmental individual, group of individual and international organizations as well as the foreign nations outside the Nigerian boundaries. On the other hand, Private sources could be Parents teachers Association (PTA), Old students Association (OSA), Community Based Philanthropists (CBP), Community Based Professional Workers Association(CBPWA)e Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Organizations (IOs), Community Based Organizations(CBOs) , etc (Nwosu, 2006).

**Budgetary Allocation to Education in Nigeria**

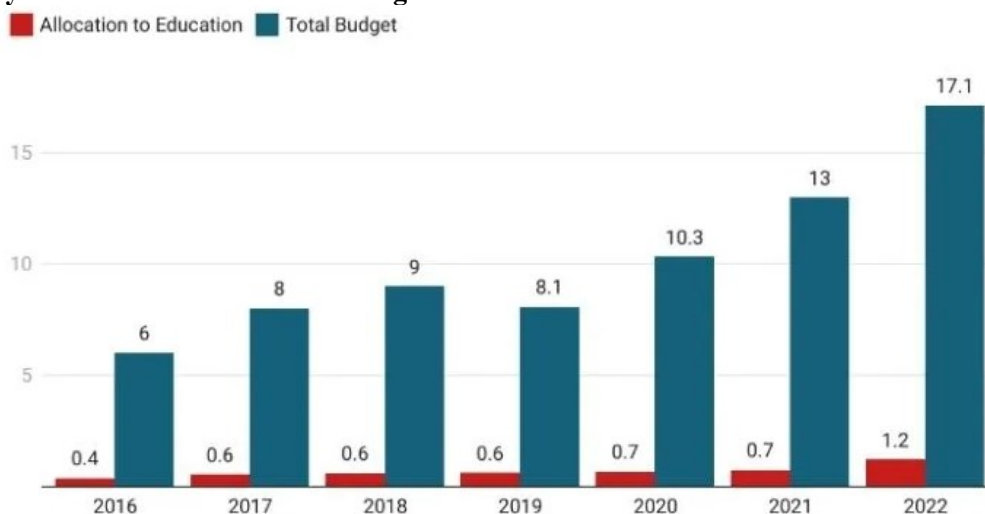


Fig. 1 Source: Imouokhome, (2022).

The figure above reveals how much the private partners are needed in the educational sector. This is because the federal government is yet to take education seriously and from the ratio of its budget on education, it is very clear that their priorities are not tilted towards education. Hence the reason for the prolonged ASUU strikes.

**Reasons for Implementation of PPP Initiatives in Nigeria**

Determining effective strategies for implementation in the educational system in achieving sustainable development goals is one of

the numerous challenges for developing countries like Nigeria. However, many of the people who addressed the issue enlisted a lot of strategies like effective and efficient funding, provision of teaching materials, use of effective evaluative method such as continuous assessment, efficient management, and administration, and giving motivation to students and teachers. All these are necessary but not sufficient strategies. Rather the best way is to put the most implementers in the front line. This is because whatever you want education to achieve you put in those who can implement them successfully

Considering Nigeria, where the economy is characterized by low in-come, high in-come inequality, high rate of inflation and unemployment (stagflation) poor salary and wages to the workers, short average of life-span, low economic growth rate and survivalist economic situation, the teachers who are the greatest implementers of educational system complain bitterly of hash economic condition. This in effect is projected in the way they teach (their teaching styles) which invariably affects our laudable system of education (Saba, 2013).

For educational system to achieve its objective of putting Nigeria to be self-sufficient, sustained, scientific and industrialized nation, Public Private Partnership intervention should be considered most. The success of vocational and technical education programme for skills development to generate self-reliant, educational is the key to human capital development while technical vocational education and training is the master key to achieve self reliant mission. However, the provision of education in Nigeria cannot be carried out by the government alone hence the need for public private partnership (PPP) (FRN 2004).

### **Conclusion**

The benefits of public-private partnership irrespective of the terms of contract financing, remains the most profitable option to all stakeholders. Identified obstacles to effective public- private partnership operations such as poor regulatory and legal frameworks, bureaucracy and redtapism, inadequate judicial processes, implementation challenges, rivalry amongst partners, corrupt and fraudulent practices, delays in securing adequate government approvals, poor government commitment etc are known to have negative impact on the smooth operations of public-private partnership. However, the benefits of the public-private partnership out-weigh the cost elements

Several scholars have done lots of research on public-Private partnership in the provision of education service delivery. In several countries of the world such as Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, etc, there has been a shift from public to private University. Even in Africa, there has been a creeping incursion of private education providers from primary to tertiary level. In Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania private universities have been on the increase. Private tertiary institutions are playing significant roles in

terms of social responsibility and accountability. Not only are they promoting public-private synergy, they also challenge public institutions to rise to the challenge of providing quality education.

Likewise here in Nigeria, private universities appear to be well motivated to deliver, in the funding and management of universities. They do not experience strikes because the welfare of staff are taken to priority. It was the failure of public institutions in telecommunications, electricity, water and petroleum that led to the privatization and commercialization of the services. The general experience is that services provided by non-public entity are delivered more efficiently and effectively. The same quest Jed the Federal Government to approve the establishment of private Universities by individuals, corporate bodies and religious organizations. The dynamics of the market place resulted mainly from technological changes in ICT, which has dramatically improved education service delivery. Public-private partnership would ensure a more realistic and flexible responses to the demands of the market.

However, this should not be a reason for neglecting the public institutions like abandoned babies. There is need for the government to attract foreign partners and private partners who have succeeded in creating a niche for themselves. Other developed countries have their public institutions running effectively with adequate funding. However, a combination of public and private reasoning and resources towards education is a sure path to sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Appointment and election of school management officers should be done with due consideration to competence, exposure and a vast understanding of business management.
- ii. The Financing of education in Nigeria is political, highly complex and very controversial. Hence, it requires an enabling legal regime for effective control and sustained systemic stability. On the long run, the sustainability of public-private partnership in a nation's education will bring about robust synergy, improved funding and prudent management of resources for institutional governance.

- iii. The government through its ministry of education should organize an education summit. This will bring all stakeholders of education together to brainstorm and find possible solutions; such recommendations should be passed into law through the legislature. This has been tested by the Ministry of Education, Bayelsa state and it has produced positive effects in the educational sector.
- iv. There is need for Servicom at all levels of education. Not only in federal universities. Reports by Servicom in each of these government owned educational institution should be considered and the recommendations implemented.
- v. Public school management should as a matter of urgency market their schools beyond the shores of this country. this would not only generate the much needed income but contribute in extending research for sustainable development

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