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THE NECESSITY AND DYNAMICS OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE PROVISION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Nigeria has one of the largest higher education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa with over 360 higher institutions in the country. Thus higher education enrolment has grown in the country over the past few years with over 1.7 million students at all levels of higher education in the country. This growth reflects the number of students in both public and private higher institutions in the country. It is important to note that private institutions have played an important role in higher education enrolment in Nigeria over the past few years. However despite these impressive statistics, the number of prospecting students to the Nigeria higher education system and indeed in Sub-Saharan African countries still pales into insignificance when compared with other regions in the world. Access into HE in Nigeria still averaged about 10%, while it is just about 6% in Sub-Saharan Africa. As most regions and countries in the world adopt the public private partnership to expand access to education, it is recommended that Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan Africa countries adopt the option of PPP in view of the numerous benefits associated with it to ensure a universal higher education access to the ever growing youth population.

Key words: Access; enrolment; higher institutions; public-private-partnership; university demand.

Introduction

Different schools of thoughts about the concept and definition of Public Private Partnership in education exists in the literature. In general, public private partnership (PPP) refers to a form of cooperation between public authority i.e. the government, and the world of business which aim to ensure the funding, construction, renovation, management or maintenance of public infrastructure in education. In other words, PPP is a form of mechanism or approach used by government for quality services(s) delivery to its people by using the expertise of the private sector. It is a

contractual agreement through which a private party performs part of the service delivery function of the government while bearing along with it the associated risks. The private party however receive part of the remunerations or fees from the government according to the agreed pre-determined performance sharing process.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) (2009) defined Public-Private-Partnership as a voluntary alliance where both parties agree to work together to achieve a common goal or to fulfil a specific need that involves shared-responsibilities, means, competencies and risks. Thus, Public-Private-Partnership in Education seeks to underscore the role of the

private sector in partnering with the government in order to provide greater and higher education opportunity to all deserving citizens. In Nigeria, the use of PPP in education is not pronounced. Although private higher education particularly at the university level is on the increase, there is still a pure demarcation in management and funding between public and private education at all levels in the country. The challenge is that government is consistently unable to sustain the supply of higher education opportunity to all young people demanding for higher education (Verger 2012). In Nigeria as in most Sub-Saharan African countries, the problem of providing access to the growing number of people who demand for higher education is challenging. For many years, a larger percentage of candidates who seek to be admitted to higher institutions are usually unable to get admission due to limited space. For instance, in the 2009/2010 admission year, only 12.5 percent of the over 1 million candidates who applied for university education could get admission to the available universities in the country (Isuku and Emunemu 2012).

One of the most recent and key debate in education, generally, and higher education in particular, is the growth in the defence of public-private-partnership in the provision and management of higher education service delivery. The argument of public-private partnership (PPP) in Higher Education is necessitated by the increasing demand for higher education enrolment by most Sub-Saharan African countries. Higher education provides the needed skill for social mobilisation as well as having the critical role of increasing knowledge through effective support for private-public partnership in higher education (Isuku, 2007).

The main rationale for developing PPP in HE is to maximise the potential for equitable access to higher education and to improve both the internal and external efficiency especially among developing countries amidst many other associated benefits (Isuku, 2007; Isuku and Emunemu

2010). Moreover, the participation of the private sector in higher education provides support that can help governments overcome the financial, administrative and technical constraints that often confront government. According to Vijayalakshmi (2013), the various factors that influence this development include: the need to improve quality, lower cost of students training by governments, acquisition of new skills demands from the labour market, and declining public expenditures among others. In realization of these important roles played by higher education in the social economic progress of countries, Sub-Sahara has made efforts to expand their tertiary education systems in recent years. Subsequently, the number of Higher Institutions (particularly Universities) and students' enrolment has increased in the region over the years. For instance, for about 4 decades, the gross enrolment ratio in SSA higher institutions grew from 196 thousand in 1970 to a little above 4.5 million in 2010 averaging 8.6% annual growth rate (UNESCO Institute for statistics, 2010). In Nigeria specifically, University education expanded from just 2 Universities in 1960 to 141 in 2014 while enrolment increased from 1,395 in 1960 to over 1.7 million students during the same period (Isuku, 2016).

However, despite these seeming expansions and increases in the number of higher institutions and enrolments in most of Sub-Saharan African countries, enrolment rates remain low when compared with most other regions in the world. Research reports show that enrolment in higher education in sub-Saharan Africa only averaged 6% compared to global average of 26% (State of education in Africa Report 2015) According to Bruneforth (2010), despite the seeming growth in higher education enrolment of additional 3.7 million between 1970 to 2010 in Sub-Sahara, a period of 40 years, it took China two years or five years in Latin American and the Caribbean to achieve the same enrolment in their higher institutions. In 2009, there were 200 public Universities and 468 private higher education institutions

on the Africa continent. Comparatively, there were 1700 public Universities and nearly 2500 private Universities in the U.S. alone during the same period. Thus Sub-Sahara Africa higher education enrolment pales into insignificance when compared with countries outside the region. In Nigeria, for instance the inability and failure of public universities to solely provide the needed access to all persons who seek university education, led to the promulgation of decree 9 in 1993 which paved way for private involvement in higher education (Isuku, 2014). The essence is to provide higher education opportunity to the army of youth who are unable to gain admission to the already congested public higher education system particularly the university systems in the country.

Although, the sub-Saharan African countries have been experiencing an expansion in higher education sector, the rapid growth in the population has equally made the expansion effort insignificant. Thus the aim of this paper was to examine the role Public-Private-partnership could play in expanding access to higher education. This is to encourage the governments of Nigeria and other sub-Saharan Africa countries to toll the path of PPP as a strategic tool for providing long-term solutions to the problem of access to higher education in the country and the sub-region.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of securing access to higher education in Nigeria and in most Sub-Sahara African countries is severe. In spite of the efforts by various governments at expanding the tertiary education system in other to increase enrolments to the growing number of youth population, efforts seem not to yield the expected results. Available Statistics on higher education access show that the region is among the lowest in the world when compared with other regions. While there is a growing importance of Higher Education as an instrument for economic development, the daunting problem is how government alone can provide access to all the growing number

of prospecting students who seek to be admitted to higher education. The implication of inadequate access to higher Education is that a larger proportion of eligible youth would be left-out. Consequently, the region's dream of catching up with the fast advancing global knowledge economy through the production and stock of human capital from higher institutions may be unattainable. In view of this, this paper endeavours to critically explore the role PPP could play in providing the needed access to higher education in Nigeria in particular and in Sub-Saharan African in general. The essence is to provide a stronger argument in support for PPP through the analysis of available data and exploring ways by which both the public and private sectors can collaborate to complement each other's strength in providing higher education services and thus, helping SSA countries to meet higher education access demand.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study include:

- i to examine and analyse the number of available Higher education institutions in Nigeria by ownership
- ii to assess and analyse the level of demand for higher education by Nigerians in some foreign countries.
- iii to assess the trend in enrolment of universities applicants in Nigeria for the period under review
- iv to compare access to higher education between SSA countries and some other regions in the world
- v to highlight and analyse the roles of PPP in the provision of HE in Nigeria and other SSA countries.
- vi examine the areas of operational mechanisms adopted by the partnership in the provision of HE to the growing youth population in the region; and
- vii to discuss ways of enhancing a long-term delivery and management of PPP in view of the accruable benefit to the society at large.

Methodology

Using the available data, this study employed the Critical Discussion Analysis (CDA) method to discuss and analyse the roles and impact of PPP in the provision of higher education to the growing population who demand for higher education in the sub-region with emphasis on Nigeria. The study rely mainly on secondary data obtained from various data banks and were analysed descriptively with tabulations.

Current Access Status to Higher Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, recent statistical figures showed that there are 152 universities in the country. The federally managed universities are 40, the state financed 44 while the privately owned universities are 68 (National Universities Commission, 2017). These figures represent only the universities that are

duly registered and accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC). In the same vein, the total number of polytechnics and monotechnics in the country stood at 134. The figure represents polytechnics and monotechnics owned by the Federal, States and private organizations in the country. Colleges of Education also stood at 84. However, despite these seeming expansions in tertiary education supply in the country, the problem of providing higher education access in most sub-Saharan African countries remains daunting challenge. It is generally believed that the rate of access transition from secondary education to higher level of education is now being used as a major index for measuring the level of educational development worldwide (Isuku, 2011).

Table 1: Number of higher education institutions in Nigeria in response to the growing expansion in the country in recent years.

Owners	University	Polytechnics	Monotechnics	Coll. of Ed.	Total
Federal	46	25	23	21	115
State	44	40	2	48	130
Private	67	30	2	14	107
Total	147	95	25	83	362

Source: www.nuc.edu.ng/pages/universities.asp, www.ncce.online.edu, www.nbte.gov.ng/inst.o/html Retrieved 10/02/2017

The growth in tertiary education in Nigeria is a reflection of the growing demand for higher education in the country. However, despite this expansion, the many prospecting Nigerian youths find it difficult to access the few available spaces to higher education in the country. For instance, the pressure on

higher education placement by willing candidates is demonstrated by the high spill-over of candidates who have to seek alternative routes abroad in search for higher education. Table 2 shows the number of Nigerians who are enrolled into some of the higher institutions abroad.

Table 2: Nigerian students in different higher institutions abroad

Year	UK	USA	Germany	Ghana	Canada	Total
2007	11,136	6,074	432	1,349	415	22,712
2008	11,783	6,229	Malaysia	1,349	South Africa	24,953
			497		849	
2009	14,380	6,153	Malaysia	1,349	South Africa	31,405
			1,407		1,084	
2010	16,486	6,510	Malaysia	1,649	1,302	38,857
			5,443			

Source: Ademola, E.O., Ogundipe, A.T. & Babatunde W.T. (2014). *Computing, Information Systems, Development Informatics & Allied Research Journal* Vol. 5, 3; 55-64 – www.usdjournal.net. Retrieved 10/5/2017.

Table 2 depicts the available statistics of Nigerian students who travelled abroad to pursue higher degrees. The mass exodus of students is usually due to the inability of such students to access higher education due to limited space. It is clear from the available data that enrolment demand to higher education (particularly university education in the country far outpace the available space. For instance, the work of Isuku & Emunemu (2012), Isuku (forthcoming) of the 1,670,838 applicants that applied to the three main higher education in Nigeria – viz (Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education), only about 31% were able to secure admission into higher institutions with universities having 70% of the total.

The situation as shown in table 2 shows the level of the seriousness of the problem of access to higher education in the country. Isuku and Enumenu, (2012) lamented that only 5.2 percent of applicants who sought for university admission in the 2002/2003 admission year were able to gain admission to universities in the country. The highest admission opportunity was during the 2012/2013 year where about 33.3 percent of the total applicants could gain admission to higher institutions of learning in the country (Isuku, forthcoming). According to research, the nominal increase was a direct response to the increases in the number of universities made mainly possible through private participation.

Table 3: Enrolment status in Nigerian Universities (2010-2014)

Year	Applicants	Admitted	% Admitted
2009/2010	1,184,381	148,000	12.5
2010/2011	1,375,652	360,000	26.2
2011/2012	1,493,604	400,000	26.8
2012/2013	1,503,889	500,000	33.8
2013/2014	1,670,833	520,000	31.1

Source: Isuku, 2016

Table 3 shows the higher education enrolment pressure in Nigerian university system. It is important to note that, the gradual increase in the enrolment was due mainly to the increase in the number of private universities in the system. For

instance, between the years 2010 to 2012, private universities increased from 41 to 50 (Isuku, 2014)

In Sub-Saharan African enrolment into Higher Education is equally poor Available Statistics show that the region is one of the lowest in the world when compared with

other regions in the world. Table 4 show the enrolment status into higher institution

among selected region in the world.

Table 4: Gross Enrolment rates Sub-Saharan African and Selected regions in (1970 and 2014).

Region	1970 (%)	2014(%)
SSA	1	9
China	0	35
USA	-	87
North America	47	84
West Bank Gaza	-	44
South Asia	4	29
HICs	25	74
LICs	2	7
Middle East & North Africa	6	36

Source: World Bank Organisation/SE.TER.ENR Retrieved 10/3/17s

Table 4 show the dismal situation of higher education enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is very glaring that the region presents the lowest enrolment rate to higher education when compared with other regions since 1970 and 2014. The region, which falls into the category of the Low-Income Countries (LICs) increased its higher education enrolment from 2% in 1970 to just 7% in about four and half decades. The High-Income Countries (HICs) on the other hand, increased its higher education enrolment from 25% to 74% during the same period

The Divergent Role of Private Sector Involvement in Higher Education Provision

The private sector has been playing a major role in the provision of access to higher education in recent years. In Nigeria, private universities have exhibited an impressive growth over the past one and a half decade and have become one of the fastest growing higher education systems in the country (Isuku, 2014). According to Isuku (2014), the upward trend in student enrolment into higher education (particularly universities) was boosted by the involvement of private higher institutions. For instance, according to available statistics, enrolment into private universities alone increased from 35,128 in the 2007/2008 academic year to 59,022 in the 2008/2009 academic year (Isuku, 2014).

In Nigeria, ensuring access to higher education was predominantly public. Prior to the year 1999, the task of provision of higher education opportunity was mainly borne by the government. Both the funding and management of higher education was government responsibility. However, owing to the visible difficulty of government to solely shoulder the burden of providing access to the teeming youth population in the face of other pressing socio-economic needs, the private sector involvement became a matter of necessity. In fact, the National assembly of Nigeria has acknowledged the importance of private public partnership in challenging the government to facilitate the provision of welfare services to the citizens in almost every of government activities.

Nigeria has not been so challenged with the pressure to provide higher education as it is currently. Thus, the involvement and participation of the private sector in the provision of access to higher education in the country cannot be overemphasized. The role of private public partnership in the provision of access can be better appreciated in the following ways:

Creation of competitive education between the parties. Public-Private-Partnership creates avenue to compete for eligible students into the school system. Both the public institutions will have to compete for students which will in turn also create

competition to improve on the quality of students from both ends. When there is competition, quality of service and produce are enhanced.

Ensuring efficiency in the use of resources.

The private sectors are well known managers of resources when compared with the public sector. Most public education underplays the need for efficient utilization of available resources due to inadequate monitoring. The involvement of the private sector in the provision of higher education will help to minimize wastages in public higher education.

Private public partnership enhances contractual flexibility.

According to Patrinos, Bawera-Osorio and Guaqueta (2009), the public sector has less autonomy in the employment of teaching personnel and organizing school than the private sector. Thus the private sector can make better demand and supply in the hiring of lecturers which according to Patrinos et al, is one of the major drive of the private public partnership framework.

Ensuring greater accountability.

Public-Private-Partnership can be beneficial in that it help to ensure accountability. In the face of limited resources, the involvement of the private sector will provide the needed control and responsibility in terms of how resources are acquired and managed. One of the arguments against the public sector is the lack of accountability due to the prolonged bureaucratic bottleneck. A combination of both parties in the provision of education at any level will provide checks and balances for the system. According to the World Bank (2002), services can be provided to vast majority of people more successfully when citizens, service providers, and governments are accountable to each other.

Private public partnership in the expansion of access to Education: One of the most important roles of public-private

partnership in education is in the provision of access opportunity to eligible candidates. As discussed earlier, most developing countries (concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa) still faces the challenge of how to provide increased enrolment to higher education for its teeming youth population owing to the inability of the public sector to absorb a greater percentage of the candidates. The partnership with the private sector is sine-qua non in the achievement of universal enrolment at all-the levels of education. Neema, (2012).

Cost-sharing function: Another major role of public-private partnership in education demand and supply platform is in the area of cost-sharing. Evidently, one of the greatest challenges facing public education today worldwide is in the aspect of funding. Even the most economically advanced countries of the world today now seek other means to improve control over the rising cost of education in their countries (Johnstone, 2004). With the involvement of the private sector, the cost burden of educational provision by the public education provider can now be shared by both parties. The financial burden on the government while providing higher education to its citizen will be reduced, thus government will be able to shift attention to some other equally important social services to its citizens. The argument here is that the financial constraints on public budgets and human resource in education and other related social service sectors, mean that government needs to find a more cost-effective ways on drawing on the private sectors for the delivery of service and getting the best performance out of publicly paid provider (Draxler, 2008). This rationale as given by Draxler is however based on the divergent definition of public private partnership.

Other important roles Public-Private partnership could play in educational service provision include enhancing quality in the system. Effective monitoring to ensure value for money is important hallmark of the

private sector. Public-Private partnership in education will ensure quality control and hence quality education output and outcome (see Education International, 2009).

Areas of Operational Mechanisms for PPP in Higher Education

The rationale for public private partnerships in higher education provision as in other levels of education can be categorised into different operational areas that will help to achieve both the specific goals and the objectives of the partnership. According to Patrinos et al (2009), the broad areas of operation for the PPP include:

Management Services: This operational aspect of PPP include financial management, staff management, long-term planning, and, leadership. Public schools as in most other public organisations are usually constraint with the problem of weak and inefficient management, thus the private sector is called in other to help improve the management of schools in the aforementioned operational service areas. This is achieved by the innovative and professional skills of the private sector. However, Patrinos et al argued that this aspect of partnership is difficult to contract because of the problem of defining the direct impact of the private sector involvement since other several factors contribute to the performance of the school system and as such it may inappropriate to attribute changes in performance solely the management services of the private sector alone.

Support Services. This operational mechanism include the non-instructional services such as the provision of infrastructural facilitates (building constructions and maintenance) student transportation, catering services, IT services, sports and library support services etc. This is certainly a very important and broad aspect of PPP in higher education service provision. World Bank reports the cost of providing these services are usually higher in public schools. This may not be unconnected with

inefficiency and in some cases corruption problem that characterise public sector thereby necessitating the involvement of the private sector in the provision of the important service. The strategic involvement of the private sector has led to the rapid expansion of access to higher education in the country.

Educational services: In this case, government contract out to private partners the admission of students to private schools. This is becoming a very important PPP strategy in countries where PPP is already well pronounced as the UK, the Netherland. And India. This model help the government schools to save the expenditure which could be incurred up-front for building projects while at the same expanding higher education access at a lesser total cost per time.

4) **Professional Services:** this involves contracting out professional services such as teachers training, textbook delivery, curriculum design, and quality certification among other related services. These services are straightforward and equally have the advantage of bringing in the professional know-how of the private sector and thus improving public higher education delivery. Although there could be some political challenges in this regard especially among the developing transiting societies like Nigeria in this operational area, the benefits are however positively enormous.

Operation Services. In this aspect, PPP is more effective, in the sense, that public schools are managed by the private sector.. The aim of this form of contract between the parties here is to free schools from the bureaucracy that usually characterise the public sector operation. and to ensure that schools have better autonomy as well as improve the oversight of the school.. This could be achieved by probing into the interest s and knowledge of parents and community.

Provision of Facilities: Here, government contracts out the provision of the needed facilities to private sector partners by encouraging the mobilisation of private sector funds and investment in the various capital projects in schools. This will help to relieve the government the burden of having to finance capital items in advance which cost is usually heavy on the government. Unfortunately however, this important partnership role is usually politicised particularly in corruption pronged developing countries. For instance, political parties in power at the different government levels may be reluctant to allow private involvement in this regard for fear of being seen as a failure which could lead to loss of confidence and future vote.

Enhancing long-term PPP sustenance for improved higher education access in Nigeria

In other to ensure effective public –private partnership in higher education provision in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries, the following points could be adopted:

- Formulate relevant policy for the full implementation of PPP in publicly owned higher education
- Create an awareness channel for proper knowledge of the benefits of PPP in education
- Clearly define the relations in PPP in other to remove distrust between the parties..
- provide a sustainable monitoring measures to ensure compliance with defined and predetermined arrangements
- ensuring parliamentary oversight in other to avoid or prevent any default in the performance of the duties of the parties
- Ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in the partnership to promote inclusiveness and transparency in the final product of PPP

Conclusion

Higher education enrolment rates in Sub-Saharan Africa are among the lowest in the world. As governments keep investing in higher education, efforts could be shifted to increasing access through effective public-private partnership. Private public partnership will help to supplement public spending with private resources thereby reducing pressure on government resources while expanding higher education system for increased access. Public private partnership has grown rapidly particularly in developed countries since the 1990s and is now being embraced among developing countries. The idea of ppp in education provides great opportunities for Sub-Saharan African countries to widen the much needed access to higher education to its teeming youth population who seek to be admitted.

Many of the financial, technical, management, infrastructural challenges among other pressing problems facing public higher education in most Sub-Saharan countries can be overcome by effective public private partnership in school service delivery. The benefits of cost-sharing and cost reduction, improved quality higher education, greater participation and other risk-sharing activities are important reasons to adopt PPP in education. However, it worth nothing that the concept of public private partnership in education is still under emphasised in most Sub-Saharan African countries when compared with other regions other world. This underscores the need for government to formulate effective policy framework that will encourage the growth of private involvement in the provision of higher education to teeming youth population in the sub-region.

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