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Public Private Partnership and Infrastructural Development in Nigeria: A Historical Overview

Nafisatu Irene Okhade
Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, Oxford Rd, Manchester M13 9PL

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Corresponding Author:
Nafisatu Irene Okhade

Abstract

Government had traditionally assumed the responsibility of providing enabling environments for private individuals to thrive in the classical economic thoughts. These environments manifest critical infrastructure. However, as the society is growing in population and technology, the functions of the government became even more complex that governments were becoming increasingly unable to monopolistically provide this infrastructure, hence the need to liberalize the sources of infrastructure for collective development. Liberalization democratized sources of infrastructural development by including the private sector players in the provisioning of infrastructure through a partnership with the government. Public Private Partnership (PPP) has been practiced successfully in various countries of the world and has been found to be a veritable tool for infrastructural development. This study examined the historical evolution as a source of infrastructural development in Nigeria drawing extensively from documented literature. Findings reveals that PPP became a popular government approach to infrastructure development from the late 1990s- a period which coincided with the transition into the fourth stint of democratic governance. Since then, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Policy of PPP, National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (NIIMP), and Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) have all been developed to advance infrastructural development with cogent emphases on PPP as a core implementation approach. The study hence recommended that PPP should be emphasized more as an approach of further infrastructure plans in Nigeria.

Background to the Study

The traditional approach for infrastructure provision in developing countries is government's responsibility. There is a growing body of literature which shows that many governments in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have failed in their responsibility of delivering quality services and infrastructure (Krueger, 1990; Mkandawire, 2001; Atkinson, 2007; Calderón and Servén, 2008; AfDB, 2013). Poor service delivery has long plagued the region which lags in the quality of public services rendered especially in provision of health, education, transportation and other critical infrastructure. Most SSA countries including Nigeria are bedevilled by decaying infrastructure, excessive bureaucracy, institutional inertia manifested in unresponsive governance, corruption, insecurity, social instability and inadequate human capital development (Ogunniyi, 1996; Berthélemy et al., 2004; Wolfensohn, 2008).

Nigeria is not left out as major infrastructures and government services are in deplorable conditions (Ezeogidi, 2014). The declining state of the infrastructure in the country is evident in all sectors of the economy. The 2018 Global Competitiveness Report ranked Nigeria's infrastructure in the 124th position among 140 countries (World Economic Forum, 2018). The poor state of infrastructure has caused so much suffering and this has led to delayed socioeconomic advancement and the inability of the country to compete with the developed countries as regards providing innovative and sustainable infrastructure (Briceno-Garmendia and Estache, 2004; Straub, 2008).

Determined to change this reality, most governments in developing countries have adopted various reform measures popularly tagged as 'best practices', majority of which are ideas copied from the developed world (Odia and Okoye, 2012). The idea is to improve service delivery and to deliver infrastructure that have eluded the region. The acceptance and implementation of these best practises are mostly seen from the efforts of governments to execute reforms by introducing "copycat" policies that have been tried and tested in the developed world (UNECA, 2015). These reforms, however, have fallen short.

In Nigeria, the government developed different plans to tackle the challenges caused by infrastructure shortages. These plans have largely promoted Public Private Partnership (PPP) policy as implementation strategies. PPP are believed to have been adopted from the developed countries through a process of Policy Transfer (PT), however their implementation in Nigeria have not yielded the desired outcomes. Notwithstanding, there have been several success stories on the delivery of public infrastructure adopting PPP in Chile, Australia, South Africa, United States of America, Japan, United Kingdom and Ireland (Tati, 2005; Mbachu and Nkado, 2007; Cheung et al., 2012). This approach has been used to develop transportation, energy, housing, education, healthcare and prisons infrastructure. The successes recorded by these countries have made PPP a viable strategy for infrastructure provision to complement the effort of public sector. In addition, for over two decades, the cooperation between the public and private sector in delivering infrastructure has improved social and environmental sustainability thus leading to lasting outcomes (Hodge, 2004; Joyner, 2007).

In view of the above, several governments increasingly seek the participation of the private sector for collaborations and partnerships to develop public infrastructure. The investment of the private sector is seen as a critical instrument to support the government with alternative sources of funding towards infrastructural development for improved service delivery for the citizens. This study examines the historical evolution of PPP as a strategy for infrastructural development in Nigeria.

Public Private Partnership (PPP)

In terms of definition, PPP is notoriously difficult to define (Hodge and Greve, 2005) and the literature on PPP is "mired by a terminological ambiguity that has resulted in a large diversity of working definitions" (Roman, 2015:1). Some authors argue that the term "PPP" requires clarification and redefinition. For example, Jomo et al. (2016:1) state that "there is a need for a common definition of PPPs and internationally accepted guidelines". Supporting this idea, –Hodge and Greve (2007:545) further stress that "there is a need to re-examine the different meanings and definitions given to PPPs to find out whether the concept is worth keeping and using for empirical studies". It has also been acknowledged that the definitions of PPP are very important in literature because they vary in a wide application (Batran et al., 2005). The reason for this is because of the definitions ascribed to the term by various institutions and scholars as well as its diverse applicability in various countries (Khanom, 2010). On the other hand, –––UNDP (2005) stresses that the definition of PPP should be all-encompassing to incorporate the informal dialogues between the government and local community-based organizations, as these are believed to be essential ingredients for successful PPPs. Additionally, different aspects of PPP include maintenance, management, operations, risk sharing, costs and returns (Reijniers, 1994).

From the above definitions, the distinctiveness about PPP approach as compared to other procurement strategies is the provision of a service by both the public sector and private sector entity that would be beneficial and add value to all entities – the public and private sector as well as the public. However, –Bloomfield (2006), acknowledges that PPPs are more likely to meet public objectives when there is robust competition, transparent transactions and performance requirements are measurable and specified in advance. The main reason for entering into a PPP agreement is to provide the incentive for supporting economic growth and the economy as well as advancing infrastructural development and public services provision aimed at satisfying public needs (Rakić and Rađenović, 2011). Despite the definitions of PPP presented above, Starr (1990) explains that rather than exploring ways of redefining the limit between the public and private sector, both parties, working together towards the implementation of partnership create boundary blurring.

PPP is often confused with other forms of collaborations between the public and private sector (Hodge and Greve, 2007; Klijn, 2010; Wang, 2015). To address these confusions, some authors have noted other unique characteristics that are associated with PPP. These include long term agreements ranging from 20 to 30 years (Bloomfield, 2006; Cheng et al., 2016), partnership involving two or more actors (), shared responsibilities, project aims and level of quality specified by the public sector, contract arrangements based on performance outcomes, appropriate risk sharing, uncertainties and complexities (Bettignies and Ross, 2008; Maurrasse, 2013).

PPP have become a global phenomenon; however, more advanced countries have adopted this procurement strategy so as to gain significant experience and to increase their stock of infrastructure for economic advancement (Turina et al., 2007). PPP has wide applicability and can be viewed from various perspectives and as described by Linder (1999), PPP is a grammar of multiple meanings. The next section therefore discusses the concept of infrastructure.

Public Private Partnership and Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure has been considered as a public good in many countries because it was traditionally provided and funded by the government through taxes paid by taxpayers (Hirschhausen; et al., 2004). No doubt, infrastructure plays an important role in the development of any nation. The need for public infrastructure around the world is enormous and the demand far outstrips supply (Zhang and Chen, 2013). It has been acknowledged that countries all over the world invest significant share of their national output towards infrastructural development especially transport infrastructure which have substantial impact on the development of economies (OECD, 2002). Developing countries invest more on public infrastructure as compared to developed nations. Developing countries spend about 40 - 60% on infrastructure while developed countries spend only about 11% (Merna and Njiru, 2002).

The responsibility for the provision of public infrastructure has traditionally been solely vested with the public sector through budgetary allocations. Apart from limited budgets, the public sector sometimes lacks the required innovation, capacity, technology and expertise for the delivery of the much needed infrastructure (Worldbank, 1998). Governments have been criticised for not doing enough to provide basic needs for its citizens. According to the World Bank (WB), there is currently a global investment gap of $1 trillion required yearly for infrastructure development (Gravito et al., 2017). Consequently, governments around the world are exploring innovative, efficient and effective approaches for infrastructure delivery. PPP has emerged as one of the strategies of infrastructure development in recent times and has increasingly become popular around the world.

It has been argued that PPP has been globalised and acquired a status that is considered iconic (Hodge and Greve, 2010; Robertson et al., 2012). PPP is perceived as a new approach for delivery of cost intensive and complex infrastructure such as railways and bridges (Savas, 2000). It has also been acknowledged that PPP has been given a higher preference when new institutional arrangements are being described for governments as the UK Tony Blair-led administration was famous for promoting PPP (Hodge and Greve, 2007). Furthermore, PPPs are a cornerstone for Britain's modernisation programme and this is demonstrated in the colossal financial commitments made by Tony Blair's administration which amounted to £35.5 billion for the execution of more than 500 PFI projects (Edwards et al., 2004). The first concession agreement that mandated the private sector to finance an infrastructure under the Project Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangement can be traced to the UK as far back as 1992 (Lambert and Lapsley, 2006).

Apart from PPP adoption in developed economies, PPP has also evolved and spread to developing nations such as Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa and India. Governments in these countries have increasingly adopted PPP to gain access to private sector funding for the provision of public infrastructure (PPPIRC, 2016). This has subsequently attempted to reduce the gap caused by infrastructural deficit, thereby promoting infrastructure development. PPP is often utilised when the government needs to develop an infrastructure or public service and lacks sufficient funds within its budget for such execution, hence the government seeks alternative sources of finance from the private sector. In addition to finance, the public sector collaborate with the private sector for innovation (Jamali, 2004), management skills (Son, 2012) cost efficiency (Osborne, 2002) and appropriate risk sharing (Herpen, 2002).

Private sector involvement in public infrastructure and service delivery is on the increase and has become a global phenomenon. PPP investments in infrastructure in 121 low- and middle-income countries alone accounted for $1.5 trillion on 5000 infrastructure projects from 1991 – 2015 (Worldbank, 2016). Asia also saw a sharp increase in PPP investments within the same period as PPP investments grew $7 billion to $91 billion. According to Shen et al. (2006), PPP has gained more prominence in developed countries due to its enhanced efficiency when applied on infrastructure. A total of 134 countries have also adopted PPPs and this accounts for about 15-20% of total investments in infrastructure, notably in the transportation, water, power and telecommunication sectors (Worldbank, 2016).

PPP has continued to be promoted by several organisations and multilateral banks and agencies through different platforms. The first global infrastructure forum was held in April 2016 at the WB Group headquarters. The core theme of the forum was on bridging infrastructural gaps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through PPPs. The application of PPP has been recommended for large scale infrastructure development (Shen et al., 2006). In the delivery of such infrastructure, PPP involves the allocation of tasks such as design, construction, finance, approvals, operations and maintenance to the public and private sector to provide the desired services under a concession agreement. PPP arrangements for infrastructure delivery are often long term and plagued with complexities with multiple stakeholders.

Similar to any other procurement approach, advocates and oppositions have expressed their views about PPP. The proponents have argued that PPP is a remedy to problems of governance (Börzel and Risse, 2002) and proper implementation would help to overcome the scarce infrastructure that hinders economic growth especially in developing countries (Worldbank, 2012). Critics of PPP have argued that PPP begets loss of transparency because the private sector hides lots of information in the guise of commercial confidentiality. It has also been argued that PPP arrangements lack flexibility noting that renegotiation is inevitable due to the lengthy nature of PPP procurement and often associated with additional costs. It should be noted that although PPP is one of the approaches for reducing the gaps caused by infrastructural deficits, it is not a one size fits all type of procurement approach.

Despite the popularity of PPP for infrastructure development, the outcomes in its implementation have been mixed, because some have been implemented properly and both the public and private sector have been keeping to their terms of agreement. Other PPPs have failed midway into the negotiations or concession duration.

Challenges of Public Private Partnerships in Nigeria

PPPs have been vastly promoted as the leading approach for shaping large and complex infrastructure in developing countries. There is huge demand for development and maintenance of infrastructure especially in Nigeria. The latest statistics from the African Development Bank estimates that investments of between $130 - $170 billion annually are required to meet the infrastructural needs in Africa (AfDB, 2018). Undeniably, governments are unable to meet this infrastructural demand through the traditional procurement strategy. Theoretically, PPP is viewed as the solution to the inability of the government to provide infrastructure and services to the citizens. This strategy, as perceived by many, combines the strengths of the public and private sector. Many authors present the positive sides of PPP, many of which have been discussed in previous sections of this study. However, the downsides remain relatively unexplored. The next section will highlight some of the negativities offered by PPP adoption.

PPPs have often been hailed as a strategy that promotes accountability and attracts investments that enhance efficiency and ensure the proper utilization of resources. Additionally, it is often perceived as an approach targeted at reducing corruption by removing some of the state-owned assets from entirely state controlled into private and market-driven choices. Despite these accolades, will PPPs thrive in a region that is plagued with corruption? It is well known that SSA is characterised by acute corruption and the corruption rating of the region is declining (Transparency International, 2016). This demonstrates that attempts made to improve the corruption status in the region are unnoticeable.

Although PPPs can offer the opportunity for more transparency, they can also be an avenue for corruption and rent-seeking during all stages of its lifecycle. PPPs can present opportunities for corruption which occurs through inappropriate utilization of public power or resources for private benefits (Bildfell, 2018). PPP arrangements are mainly susceptible to corruption because of the complexities involved in its implementation (Iossa and Martimort, 2014). Apart from corruption, PPPs are plagued with complexities and require the right expertise to scale through its lifecycle. A number of countries in SSA, Nigeria inclusive, lack the required expertise with the PPP model and its challenges. This lack of experience poses an impediment to successfully implement PPPs. In addition to the above, private firms make huge profits while the government impose an increase in tax revenues to benefit from efficiency gains at the expense of the consumers. Another disadvantage is that in a PPP arrangement, the costs of project development and tendering are higher as compared to the traditional government procurement processes. Furthermore, the private sector borrowing is usually more expensive because of higher interest rates as compared to government borrowing. It is widely acknowledged that governments in most countries borrow money cheaper from financial institutions. The higher interest rates of the private sector to finance infrastructure therefore makes the overall PPP project more expensive and the end users of the asset bear these high costs in most instances. PPPs are also characterised by huge uncertainties.

Considering that PPP agreements are usually long term; spanning for at least ten years, it is hard to forecast all the associated eventualities at the initial stage especially during development stage. Consequently, these uncertainties may arise at a later stage of implementation and may lead to contract renegotiation. PPP is a long-term relationship and this implies a long-term commitment between all parties involved. However, political commitment may not be guaranteed because political tenure is far shorter than the duration of the concession period for the PPP. Such political interferences which often lead to inconsistencies in government policies have been identified as one of the challenges of PPP (Sachs et al., 2007; Ameyaw and Chan, 2013). Lack of commitment, unclear project objectives and poor communication between the public and private sector partners, prolonged negotiations between the private and public sectors leading to extended project duration as well as organisational and personal differences are also challenges of implementing effective PPPs (Hofmeister and Borchert, 2004; Kakabadse et al., 2007; Ismail and Harris, 2014). PPP can also be a medium by which the governments responsibilities of providing public infrastructure for its citizens is transferred to the private sector (Haque, 2004) and over time, the government may fail in its responsibilities of monitoring the services being provided by the private sector during the concession duration.

Conditions for Successful of PPP in Nigeria

The perception about what constitute a successful project has attracted much debate in the field of project management. Some of these features developed over the years have now changed. For example,Gaddis (1959) and Avots (1969) explained that project success revolved around budget, schedule and performance. In recent times, stakeholders' satisfaction has been added to these factors (Bedell, 1983).

For PPPs, the criteria for success go beyond those identified above. The definition of successful PPP is broad and can vary from performance outcomes to cost benefit analyses (Hodge and Greve, 2007). Successful PPP is one in which the differing objectives between government, the users and private investor are achieved (Meng et al., 2011). It can be argued that defining success based on output-based metrics which is a comparison based on projected and achieved performance measures is inadequate (Hodge and Greve, 2008; Skelcher and Sullivan, 2008; Jeffares et al., 2009). A more encompassing definition of success with distinguishing characteristics such as long term, performance outputs and partnerships are recommended. Accordingly, a successful PPP project is one which is characterised by a number of factors such as achievement of the specified objectives or outcomes (Zhang, 2005; Hodge and Greve, 2007), proper risk allocation and adequate mechanism for dispute resolution (Abednego and Ogunlana, 2006), delivered within the projected costs estimations, time schedules and project outcomes (Van Marrewijk et al., 2008) and clear roles and responsibilities among parties (Carol and Sang, 2008).

Some other factors which can lead to a successful implementation of PPP are favourable investment climate, economic viability, sound financial package, reliable concessionaire possessing strong technical and financial capabilities and appropriate risk allocation through reliable contractual arrangements (Zhang, 2005). The above distinguishing features can also be regarded as critical success factors which can be defined as the limited number of areas, the consequence of which, if they are satisfactory, will ensure successful competitive performance for the organization (Rockart, 1982). Due to their significance, special attention should therefore be paid to these areas during the planning and implementation of PPP.

PPPs are fraught with complexities and difficulties. They are considered successful if financial close and the project objectives are achieved throughout the lifecycle of the infrastructure. Furthermore, due to multiplicity of PPP stakeholders, it is important for all the parties involved to understand what the partnership entails. To achieve success in PPP implementation, there are some required key ingredients. Several studies have addressed these success factors across different countries and infrastructure project.

It has been demonstrated that PPP is popular in countries where governments suffer from substantial debt burdens and where market size and aggregate demand are large (Hammami et al., 2006). Additionally, macroeconomic stability, institutional settings with less corruption and effective rule of law are key ingredients for PPPs. Some of the factors that hinder success in PPPs in infrastructure include broad political risk, the prerogative of representatives of government to alter investment rules or regulations (Reside, 2009). Some other factors include, fiscal capacity of government and incentive issues during planning, design and contracting phases (Reside and Mendoza, 2010), market conditions, institutional qualities and country risksKasri and Wibowo (2015)

Critical success factors for PPPs in infrastructure development include stable macroeconomic environment, shared responsibility between the public and private sectors, transparent and efficient procurement process, stable political and social climate and judicious control by the government (Chan et al., 2010). Additionally, other critical success factors include political commitment from elected leaders, competent public sector organisation, existence of a dedicated PPP unit, adequate fiscal capacity of a national and subnational authority, public acceptance and support of involvement of the private sector, a well-designed PPP contract, existence of enabling policy and legal frameworks and profitability/viability of projects to attract investors and lenders (Ameyaw et al., 2017).

In a similar vein, factors identified by –Motaa and Moreiraa (2015), are not far from those outlined above. The factors that attract private sector investments in infrastructure PPP projects include macroeconomic environment, legal and regulatory system, political environment and previous PPP experience. Chan et al. (2010), noted that judicious control by the government, stable social, political and macroeconomic environment are all important ingredients for successful PPPs. According to Marco et al. (2013), PPP best practices for the public sector entails creating an enabling environments that allows PPP to flourish. This includes securing the right project management skills on the government side and adopting policies that support the growth of a robust private sector participation to ensure that both the public and private sectors have the right skills to make the PPPs successful. Six steps that lead to successful PPPs were identified to include the creation of a comprehensive and prioritized infrastructure investment plan, identification of projects that are well suited for a PPP, development of a solid business plan and technical specification, design a sound regulatory scheme and PPP contract, selection of the right private sector partners and tracking the performance of all projects.

Jefferies et al. (2002), Also identified critical success factors to include compatibility/complementarity skills among key parties, technical innovation in overcoming project complexity, efficient approval process, and selection of the right project, good resource management, community support and political stability. Zhao et al. (2010), further identified other factors to include the necessity for the project, expected debt paying ability of the project and financial capacity of the contractor. In addition to the above, –Zhang (2005), classified these factors into five thematic areas to include economic viability of projects, appropriate risk allocation through reliable contractual arrangements, sound financial package, reliable concessionaire consortium with strong technical expertise and favourable investment environment.

Some impediments to the successful PPP include unstable government, inadequate PPP experience and lack of finance (Ibrahim et al., 2006). It is widely acknowledged that developing countries are characterized by poor system of governance, weak institutions and inappropriate regulations (Pesso, 2010). These factors pose significant risks in PPP and discourage potential investors as well as lead to high cost of implementation. Estache (2006), Allayannis and Weston (2000) and Banerjee et al. (2006) have also found that absence of a functional capital market, weak financial institutions, excess currency volatility and ineffective regulation are barriers which pose a hindrance to private investment in infrastructure adopting PPPs. Several failures stemming from PPP lifecycle is not only as a result of one factor but a combination of several factors such as those already identified above (Li et al., 2005; Zhang, 2005). A single driver does not lead to failure, rather, it is a series of simultaneous and or consequential failure drivers which is regarded as a "failure mechanism (Soomro and Zhang, 2016).

Conclusion

This study addressed the evolution of the adoption of PPP as a form of infrastructure development in Nigeria. There is extensive academic literature that addresses the application of PPP in Nigeria, however, as revealed by the study, there is scant literature on its history and how it has evolved in the country. On the history of the adoption and application of PPP in Nigeria, it is interesting to note that before the country gained her independence in 1960, it was the government's responsibility to finance and develop infrastructure. This approach was deployed by the nationalists that succeeded the colonial government (Dabak, 2014). This meant that the government was largely responsible for infrastructure provision with little or no support from the private sector. In recent times, this practise has changed as the private sector has become more involved. This practise is associated with New Public Management which was an avenue to introduce reforms such as a move towards more private sector involvement in activities which were more of the public sector responsibilities.

Findings revealed that PPP became more evident in Nigeria in the late 1990s which coincided with the transition of the government to democratic rule following elections which marked the beginning of the fourth democratic era in 1999 after thirty-three years of predominantly military rule. The incoming civilian government made huge commitments to reduce the burdens caused by the infrastructure deterioration by making significant infrastructure investments in the country. To achieve this objective, the government developed a comprehensive reform program which came under the umbrella of theNational Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The promotion of private investments was one of the strategies to achieving this plan. As noted by Ibrahim et al. (2006), PPP is still in its early stages of development. It can be argued that the practice of PPP in Nigeria is no longer at infancy stage as its adoption and utilisation in the country can be traced to more than two decades.

As revealed by the research, governments in the country have supported PPP and have further demonstrated commitment of the policy and practice of PPP by establishing PPP institutions, frameworks and policy documents guiding PPP projects have been developed. The research also revealed the prevalence of PPP policy in Nigeria affirming that its adoption has become widespread at the federal and state levels in the country. The government has demonstrated support for PPP in Nigeria, for example in 2009; the Federal Executive Council approved a National Policy of PPP document produced by ICRC. This provides guidance on the procedures in which the government will deploy for private sector investments in PPP infrastructure projects. These interventions were geared towards developing strategies to reduce Nigeria's infrastructure deficit and improve public infrastructure. The development of public infrastructure has been a top priority and reform agenda for all tiers of government in the country.

In 2007, in a bid to demonstrate its commitment towards reducing the infrastructural challenges, the government developed a seven-point agenda which outlined infrastructural advancement as main drivers for Nigeria's economic advancement.

Furthermore, the National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (NIIMP) was developed to bridge infrastructural gaps. This plan is a 30-year road map from 2014 to 2043 which sets the infrastructural development plan in diverse sectors in Nigeria in the short to medium term. The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) for 2017 – 2020 is also a reform strategy which includes investments in infrastructure in Nigeria. To achieve these infrastructural improvement plans, the government specified PPP given its financial constraints.

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