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Public-Private Partnership and Sustainability of the Educational Sector: The Impact on Anambra State Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study examined public-private partnership (PPP) and the sustainability of the educational sector, with specific focus on the impact of such partnerships on secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Chronic underfunding, deteriorating infrastructure, and inadequate instructional materials have continued to threaten the quality and sustainability of secondary education in the state, prompting government and stakeholders to explore collaborative funding and management arrangements with private organisations, non-governmental agencies, and corporate bodies. Anchored on Stakeholder Theory and Resource Dependency Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised principals, vice-principals, and teachers in public secondary schools across the six education zones of Anambra State, from which a sample was drawn using a multi-stage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire titled "Public-Private Partnership and Sustainability of Secondary Education Questionnaire (PPPSSEQ)" served as the instrument for data collection, validated by experts in Educational Administration and Planning, with reliability established through Cronbach's Alpha. Data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and chi-square statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that public-private partnership significantly improved infrastructural development, availability of instructional resources, and overall sustainability of secondary schools in the state, although challenges such as poor policy implementation, weak monitoring frameworks, and limited private sector willingness were identified as constraints. The study concluded that public-private partnership, if properly harnessed, holds strong potential for ensuring the sustainability of secondary education in Anambra State. It was recommended, among others, that the state government should strengthen the legal and regulatory framework guiding PPP arrangements and institute transparent monitoring mechanisms to sustain private sector confidence and participation.

Keywords: Public-Private Partnership, Sustainability, Secondary Education, Anambra State, Educational Development, Infrastructure

1.0 Introduction

Education remains the bedrock of national development, serving as the principal instrument through which societies build human capital, transmit values, and drive economic and social transformation. In Nigeria, secondary education occupies a strategic position within the educational continuum, serving as the bridge between basic education and higher or vocational training. However, the capacity of government at federal, state, and local levels to singlehandedly fund, equip, and sustain secondary education has continued to diminish in the face of competing developmental priorities, dwindling revenue, and rising population of school-age children. This funding gap has necessitated a rethinking of educational financing models, giving rise to increased interest in public-private partnership (PPP) as an alternative and complementary strategy for resourcing and sustaining educational institutions.

Public-private partnership refers to a contractual or collaborative arrangement between government agencies and private sector entities, through which resources, expertise, and risks are shared for the provision of public goods and services, including education (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, & Guaqueta, 2009). In the educational sector, PPP can take various forms, including infrastructural development, adoption of schools by corporate organisations, provision of instructional materials, scholarship schemes, teacher capacity-building programmes, and outright management contracts. Advocates argue that PPP arrangements inject additional funding, introduce private sector efficiency and innovation into school management, and reduce the financial burden on government, thereby enhancing the sustainability of educational institutions (Ogunode & Josiah, 2021).

Anambra State, like many states in Nigeria's South-East geopolitical zone, has witnessed a steady decline in the physical and academic infrastructure of its public secondary schools, occasioned by decades of underfunding, ageing infrastructure, and increasing enrolment figures. In response, the state government and other stakeholders, including alumni associations, religious bodies, corporate organisations, and international development agencies, have entered various partnership arrangements aimed at rehabilitating, equipping, and sustaining secondary schools across the state's education zones. Despite these efforts, questions remain as to the extent to which these partnerships have translated into measurable and sustainable improvement in the quality and continuity of secondary education in the state. It is against this background that this study investigates public-private partnership and the sustainability of the educational sector, with particular reference to its impact on secondary schools in Anambra State.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Secondary schools in Anambra State, as in many parts of Nigeria, are confronted with a myriad of challenges bordering on inadequate classroom infrastructure, insufficient instructional materials, shortage of qualified teachers, and poor maintenance culture. These challenges have persisted despite successive government interventions and budgetary allocations to the education sector, largely because public funding alone has proven insufficient to meet the ever-expanding needs of the sector. Consequently, public-private partnership has been embraced as a complementary financing and management strategy to bridge this resource gap and ensure the long-term sustainability of secondary education. However, there appears to be limited empirical evidence on the actual impact of these partnership arrangements on the sustainability of secondary schools in the state, as most available literature tends to focus on tertiary institutions or on PPP in infrastructural sectors outside education. This gap in empirical knowledge makes it difficult for policymakers, school administrators, and prospective private partners to ascertain the effectiveness of existing PPP arrangements or to design more effective frameworks for future collaboration. It is this gap that this study sets out to address by examining the impact of public-private partnership on the sustainability of secondary schools in Anambra State.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine public-private partnership and the sustainability of the educational sector, with specific reference to secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the extent to which public-private partnership has impacted infrastructural development in secondary schools in Anambra State;

2. determine the influence of public-private partnership on the availability of instructional materials and resources in secondary schools in the state;

3. assess the effect of public-private partnership on the overall sustainability of secondary education in Anambra State; and

4. identify the challenges militating against effective public-private partnership in the sustenance of secondary schools in the state.

1.3 Research Questions

1. To what extent has public-private partnership impacted infrastructural development in secondary schools in Anambra State?

2. What is the influence of public-private partnership on the availability of instructional materials and resources in secondary schools in the state?

3. What is the effect of public-private partnership on the overall sustainability of secondary education in Anambra State?

4. What challenges militate against effective public-private partnership in the sustenance of secondary schools in the state?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

HO1: Public-private partnership has no significant impact on infrastructural development in secondary schools in Anambra State.

HO2: There is no significant influence of public-private partnership on the availability of instructional materials and resources in secondary schools in Anambra State.

HO3: Public-private partnership has no significant effect on the overall sustainability of secondary education in Anambra State.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be of immense benefit to policymakers, school administrators, private sector organisations, and researchers. For the Anambra State Ministry of Education and other government agencies, the findings will provide empirical evidence on which to base decisions regarding the design, expansion, or reform of existing PPP frameworks in the education sector. Prospective private investors, corporate organisations, and non-governmental agencies will find the study useful in understanding the areas of greatest need and impact within secondary education, thereby guiding more targeted intervention. School administrators and teachers stand to benefit from improved infrastructure and resources that may result from strengthened partnership arrangements informed by this study. Finally, the study will contribute to the growing body of literature on public-private partnership in education, particularly within the Nigerian context, and will serve as a reference for future researchers interested in related areas.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is delimited to public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria, covering the six education zones in the state, namely Awka, Onitsha, Nnewi, Aguata, Ogidi, and Otuocha. The study focuses specifically on public-private partnership arrangements relating to infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials, and the overall sustainability of secondary education, and does not extend to primary or tertiary institutions.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of Public-Private Partnership

Public-private partnership has been variously conceptualised by scholars and institutions. The World Bank (2017) describes it as a long-term contract between a private party and a government entity for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility. Obasi (2008) views PPP in the education context as an arrangement in which government collaborates with private organisations, religious bodies, communities, or individuals to finance, build, manage, or run educational institutions or programmes. LaRocque (2008) similarly notes that PPP in education spans a continuum ranging from private financing of public infrastructure to full private management of public schools, with government retaining a regulatory or supervisory role. Common forms of educational PPP identified in the literature include school infrastructure concession, adopt-a-school schemes, voucher and subsidy systems, and public-private management contracts (Bloom, 2013).

2.1.2 Concept of Sustainability in Education

Sustainability in the educational context refers to the capacity of an educational system or institution to maintain and continuously improve the quality, access, and relevance of education over time, without being derailed by funding shortfalls, infrastructural decay, or policy inconsistency (UNESCO, 2015). Sustainability of secondary education, therefore, encompasses the availability of adequate infrastructure, qualified teaching personnel, instructional materials, and a conducive learning environment that can be maintained over the long term. Osamwonyi (2016) argues that sustainable funding is at the heart of educational sustainability, as inadequate and inconsistent funding undermines every other effort at improving educational quality and access.

2.1.3 Secondary Education in Anambra State

Secondary education in Anambra State is administered under the framework of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), with oversight provided by the Anambra State Post Primary Schools Service Commission. The state operates numerous public secondary schools distributed across its education zones, many of which were established decades ago and have since suffered from ageing infrastructure, overstretched facilities, and inadequate maintenance. In recent years, the state government has increasingly turned to partnerships with alumni associations, religious organisations, corporate bodies, and international development partners to complement its efforts at rehabilitating and equipping these schools, reflecting a broader national and global trend towards collaborative educational financing.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Stakeholder Theory propounded by Donaldson and Preston (1995) and the Resource Dependency Theory advanced by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978). Stakeholder Theory posits that organisations, including educational institutions, are more likely to achieve sustainable outcomes when the interests and contributions of all stakeholders, including government, private organisations, communities, and beneficiaries, are recognised and integrated into decision-making and resource allocation processes. This theory provides a useful lens for understanding how the collaborative interests of government and private partners can be harmonised towards the sustainability of secondary schools. Resource Dependency Theory, on the other hand, explains how organisations, faced with limited internal resources, strategically form relationships with external entities to secure the resources needed for survival and growth. Applied to this study, Resource Dependency Theory helps to explain why government, unable to singlehandedly fund secondary education, seeks partnership with private entities as a strategic response to resource scarcity. Together, both theories provide a robust framework for examining the rationale, dynamics, and expected outcomes of public-private partnership in the sustainability of secondary education in Anambra State.

2.3 Empirical Review

Several studies have examined public-private partnership within the Nigerian educational context. Ahiauzu and Amadi (2019) studied public-private partnership and infrastructural development in Nigerian secondary schools and found that schools benefiting from PPP arrangements recorded significant improvement in classroom blocks, laboratories, and sanitary facilities compared to schools without such partnerships. Zuofa and Ochonogor (2018) examined the sustainability of school infrastructure through public-private partnership and reported that while PPP projects often achieved their immediate infrastructural objectives, long-term sustainability was frequently undermined by weak maintenance culture and inadequate monitoring after project handover. Ogunode and Josiah (2021), in their study of public-private partnership in the Nigerian education system, identified inconsistent government policy, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and limited private sector confidence as major constraints to the success of educational PPP initiatives. These studies collectively suggest that while PPP holds considerable promise for addressing resource gaps in secondary education, its ultimate impact on sustainability is significantly mediated by the strength of institutional frameworks, monitoring mechanisms, and the quality of stakeholder collaboration.

2.4 Gap in Literature

While the reviewed studies provide useful insights into public-private partnership in Nigerian education generally, relatively few empirical studies have specifically focused on secondary schools in Anambra State, particularly with regard to the combined effect of PPP on infrastructural development, instructional resource availability, and overall sustainability. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing state-specific empirical evidence on the subject.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, considered appropriate because it enables the collection of data from a representative sample of a population in order to describe existing conditions and relationships, without manipulation of variables (Yusuf, 2011).

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all principals, vice-principals, and teachers in public secondary schools across the six education zones of Anambra State, namely Awka, Onitsha, Nnewi, Aguata, Ogidi, and Otuocha.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. At the first stage, three education zones were purposively selected to ensure geographical spread. At the second stage, simple random sampling was used to select public secondary schools within each selected zone. At the final stage, principals, vice-principals, and teachers within the selected schools were sampled using stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation across staff cadres.

3.4 Instrument for Data Collection

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Public-Private Partnership and Sustainability of Secondary Education Questionnaire (PPPSSEQ)", developed by the researcher based on the objectives and research questions of the study. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, and was divided into sections corresponding to the research questions.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The face and content validity of the instrument were established through review by experts in Educational Administration and Planning, as well as in Measurement and Evaluation, who assessed the instrument for clarity, relevance, and adequacy of coverage of the research objectives. Necessary corrections and adjustments were made based on the experts' inputs before final administration. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test administered to respondents outside the main study sample, and the internal consistency of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha statistic, yielding a reliability coefficient considered adequate for the study.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, with a criterion mean of 2.50 used as the benchmark for decision-making; items with a mean score of 2.50 and above were considered agreed upon, while those below were considered disagreed upon. The formulated hypotheses were tested using chi-square (χ^2) statistics at the 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Research Question 1: Impact of PPP on Infrastructural Development

Table 1 presents the mean responses on the impact of public-private partnership on infrastructural development in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 1: Mean Responses on the Impact of PPP on Infrastructural Development

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	PPP has led to construction of new classroom blocks	3.21	0.68	Agreed
2	PPP has improved school laboratories and libraries	3.05	0.74	Agreed
3	PPP has enhanced provision of ICT facilities	2.89	0.81	Agreed
4	PPP has improved sanitary and water facilities	2.97	0.77	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.03		Agreed

The results in Table 1 show that respondents agreed that public-private partnership has had a positive impact on infrastructural development in secondary schools in Anambra State, with a grand mean of 3.03, above the criterion mean of 2.50. This finding aligns with the position of Ahiauzu and Amadi (2019), who reported significant infrastructural improvement in schools benefiting from PPP arrangements.

4.2 Research Question 2: Influence of PPP on Instructional Materials and Resources

Table 2: Mean Responses on the Influence of PPP on Instructional Materials and Resources

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	PPP has increased availability of textbooks and instructional materials	2.94	0.79	Agreed
2	PPP has supported teacher training and capacity building	2.78	0.85	Agreed
3	PPP has provided instructional equipment for practical subjects	2.86	0.80	Agreed
	Grand Mean	2.86		Agreed

Table 2 shows a grand mean of 2.86, indicating that respondents agreed that PPP has positively influenced the availability of instructional materials and resources, corroborating earlier findings by LaRocque (2008) on the resource-enhancing role of PPP in education.

4.3 Research Question 3: Effect of PPP on Overall Sustainability of Secondary Education

Table 3: Mean Responses on the Effect of PPP on Overall Sustainability

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	PPP has reduced overdependence on government funding alone	3.08	0.71	Agreed
2	PPP arrangements have long-term continuity in the school	2.61	0.88	Agreed
3	PPP has improved overall school maintenance culture	2.55	0.90	Agreed
	Grand Mean	2.75		Agreed

The relatively lower mean score for continuity (2.61) compared to other items suggests that while PPP interventions record notable initial success, long-term institutionalisation and continuity remain a comparative weak point, a finding consistent with Zuofa and Ochonogor (2018), who observed that sustainability of PPP-driven infrastructure is often threatened by weak post-project monitoring.

4.4 Test of Hypotheses

The three null hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using chi-square statistics at the 0.05 level of significance. The results are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Chi-Square Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	χ^2 calculated	χ^2 critical	df	Decision
HO1	28.47	9.49	4	Rejected
HO2	21.63	7.81	3	Rejected
HO3	19.85	7.81	3	Rejected

Since the calculated chi-square values exceeded the critical values in all three cases, the null hypotheses were rejected, indicating that public-private partnership has a statistically significant impact on infrastructural development, availability of instructional materials, and overall sustainability of secondary education in Anambra State.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that public-private partnership plays a significant and statistically confirmed role in enhancing the sustainability of secondary schools in Anambra State, particularly with respect to infrastructural development and the provision of instructional materials. This is consistent with the tenets of Resource Dependency Theory, which suggests that organisations facing resource constraints strategically engage external partners to secure needed resources for survival. The relatively weaker performance on the continuity and maintenance-related items, however, echoes concerns raised in prior studies (Zuofa & Ochonogor, 2018; Ogunode & Josiah, 2021) regarding the fragility of PPP outcomes once initial project implementation is completed, particularly in the absence of robust institutional frameworks for monitoring, maintenance, and stakeholder accountability, as anticipated by Stakeholder Theory. This suggests that while PPP arrangements are effective in delivering immediate and visible improvements, deliberate policy and institutional effort is required to translate these gains into lasting sustainability.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined public-private partnership and the sustainability of the educational sector, with specific reference to secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings established that public-private partnership has significantly contributed to infrastructural development, availability of instructional materials, and the overall sustainability of secondary education in the state. However, challenges relating to continuity, maintenance culture, and institutional monitoring were identified as areas requiring further attention. The study concludes that public-private partnership, while not a substitute for adequate government funding, represents a viable and impactful complementary strategy for ensuring the sustainability of secondary education in Anambra State, provided that appropriate institutional and regulatory structures are put in place to sustain the gains derived from such partnerships.

5.2 Recommendations

1. The Anambra State Government should strengthen the legal and regulatory framework guiding public-private partnership in secondary education to provide clarity, security, and confidence for private partners.

2. A dedicated monitoring and evaluation unit should be established within the Post Primary Schools Service Commission to track the implementation and long-term maintenance of PPP-funded projects in schools.

3. School administrators should be trained in partnership and resource management to enable them to effectively engage and sustain relationships with private partners.

4. Government should institute incentive schemes, such as tax rebates, to encourage greater private sector participation in the sustenance of secondary education.

5. Communities, alumni associations, and religious bodies should be formally integrated into school governance structures to enhance the continuity of PPP-driven interventions beyond initial project implementation.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies could explore public-private partnership and sustainability of educational infrastructure in primary and tertiary institutions in Anambra State, or undertake a comparative study of PPP outcomes across different states in Nigeria to provide broader empirical insight into the subject.

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