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Public Private Partnership Model and Service Delivery in Anambra State Fire Service

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Abstract: *This study is an investigation on public-private partnership model and service delivery in Anambra State Fire Service. The specific objectives of the study were to examine the relationship between management concession and effectiveness in fire disaster management by the Anambra State Fire Service and to ascertain the relationship between private involvement and improved capacity of firefighters in the Anambra State Fire Service. Relevant literature was reviewed in the study and the review covered both conceptual and empirical literature. The study was anchored on the New Public Management (NPM) theory. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. A structured questionnaire instrument was also used for collection of primary data for the study. Findings from the study revealed that management concession has a significant positive relationship with effectiveness in fire disaster management by the Anambra State Fire Service and that private involvement has a significant positive relationship with improved capacity of firefighters in the Anambra State Fire Service. Based on the findings from the study, we recommended that government, as a major stakeholder, should provide enabling environment by enacting appropriate regulatory frameworks and establishing institutions where necessary which will encourage a better participation of the private sector in the provision of improved public goods and services.*

Keywords: *fire disaster, public-private partnership, fire service, disaster management, model,*

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the ability of government to meet diverse needs of her citizens has continued to wane. This is against the backdrop of the fact that public expectations from the citizens to their government have continued to rise. To meet the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens, the government have continued to expand the scope of its public sector in order to cater for emergent societal problems as they arise. In addition, governments over the years have employed various strategies to improve service delivery. One of such is the adoption of Public–Private Partnership (PPP).

Public–Private Partnership is the involvement of the private sector in aspects of the provision of new infrastructural projects, goods, services or management of existing public assets that have traditionally been provided or managed by the government (Ikpefan, 2012). In other words, it involves a contract between a public sector authority and a private party in which the private party provides a public service or project and assumes substantial financial, technical and operational risk in the project. According to Abubakar (2013), the logic for establishing PPP is for public and private sector to have unique characteristics that provide them with specific aspects of service delivery. The successful partnership arrangements draw the strengths of the public and private sector to establish complementary relationships

In some types of PPP, the costs of using the assets or services are borne exclusively by the users of the assets and not by the taxpayers (Barlow, Roehrich and Wright, 2013). In other types, notably the private finance initiative, capital investment is made by private sector on the basis of a contract with the government to provide agreed services and the cost of providing the service is borne wholly or in part by the government. Sometimes, government's contributions to a PPP project may also be in kind, notably the transfer of existing assets. In projects that are aimed at creating public goods like in the infrastructure sector, the government may provide a capital subsidy in the form of a one-time grant so as to make it more attractive to the private investors.

In some other cases, the government may support the project by providing revenue subsidies including tax breaks or by removing guaranteed annual revenues for a fixed time period. Among its economic motivations are that PPP serves as a financial mechanism for governments to deliver on many aspects of its mandates and social services in ways that promotes higher efficiency and effectiveness (APMG, 2016). The shift towards Public-Private Partnership was necessitated by the increasing dilapidation of public infrastructure, need to diversify the economy, fiscal constraints, need to eliminate bureaucratic inefficiencies in government projects and services, search for a viable alternative in the face of rising public debt and rising demand for public projects and services occasioned also by increasing population and strong economic growth. In many parts of the world, these partnerships have led to the successful execution of many projects and services and have efficiently managed the provision of numerous social services, thereby prompting the economic transformation of some remote villages and communities into big cities.

The Nigerian government's continuous show of ineptitude especially in areas where their counterparts in the private sector are succeeding underscores the need for intersectoral collaborations to achieve the desired results in the public sector. For public sector organizations, the provision of public goods and services is the hallmark and focal point of government existence for which its success or failure is measured. In the views of Akhakpe (2014), public service delivery involves providing public goods and other life support amenities by government to ensure, as much as possible, the utmost welfare and well-being of the people. In fact, the popular maxim that says that the security and welfare of the people is the primary purpose of government has a service undertone.

As an agency of the government, the Anambra State Fire Service is involved in fire disaster management. In the discharge of this all-important function, there have been incidences of poor response to emergencies owing to lack of equipment, poor training of firefighters, poor attitude to work, among other issues. With this, fire outbreaks in the state are usually disastrous leading to avoidable damages, loss of lives and properties. How can the public-private partnership model improve service delivery in the Anambra state fire service? This is the issue for investigation in this study and provides the motivation to investigate public-private partnership model and service delivery in Anambra state fire service.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Public-Private Partnership

The partnership between government and a broad range of non-state actors which started dominating public discourse in the late 1970s and early 1980s have been defined by different writers and bodies. As a recent socio-political and economic ideology, the term has become a household word among economic and political leaders. Hodge and Greve (2005), quoting Van Ham and Koppenjan (2001), defined PPP as a cooperation between public and private actors in which they jointly develop products and services and share risks, costs and resources which are connected with the products and services. Thinking about infrastructure for example, a recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD report (2008) defined PPP as an agreement between government and one or more private partners in which the private partner delivers a service in such a manner that the service delivery objectives are aligned with the profit objectives of the private partners and the effectiveness of the alignment depends on a sufficient transfer of risk to the private partner. Whilst this definition has some advantages, some critics says that it does not include the non-profit sector where voluntary organizations cooperate with the government in providing public services for free, and therefore, the definition ought to be extended.

In some PPP types, the cost of using the assets or services is borne exclusively by the users of the assets or services and not by the taxpayers. In other types, notably the private finance initiative (PFI), capital investments are made by private sector on the basis of a contract with the government to provide agreed services and the cost of providing the services is borne wholly or in part by the government. A times, government's contribution to a PPP project may also be in kind, notably the transfer of existing assets. In projects that are aimed at creating public goods like in the infrastructure sector, the government may provide a capital subsidy in the form of a one –time grant so as to make it more attractive to the private investors. In some other cases, the government may support the project by providing revenue subsidies including tax breaks or by removing guaranteed annual revenue for a fixed time period.

The beginning of partnership between public and private sectors can be traced as far back as the Roman Empire two thousand years ago in Europe. A network of postal stations was developed to accompany the vast expansion of the highway system under the Roman legions. The postal stations, which were actually small communities centered around large stables, warehouses, workshops, hotels and military barracks, were constructed and managed by private partners for a five-year period, sometimes including maintenance of associated highway, under a contract and awarded by municipalities under competitive bidding. The Romans also notably conceded the construction and operation of ports and inland harbors. However, this procedure disappeared with the Middle Ages for the construction of new fortified towns and the occupation of new lands in the south western region of France during the 12th and 13th centuries. Occupancy contracts for fortified towns concede the whole villagers to their occupants under collective *emphytentic* contracts which compelled the occupants to improve their village. Moreover, the practice of concessions on activities under monopoly in the community (mill, press, baker, bridge etc.) as well as their associated tolls, generally on bridges and highways, in which the concessionaire paid a proportion of his income to the community to finance new works, was well-established under medieval customs.

Presently, a number of OECD countries now have well-established PPP programs. The United Kingdom's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) that began in 1992 during the conservative government of Prime Minister John Major is currently responsible for about 14 percent of public investment, with projects in most key infrastructure areas. Other significant countries with significant PPP programs include Australia and in particular the state of Victoria, and Ireland, while the USA has considerable experience with leasing, a form of PPP. Many continental Western European countries now have a number of PPP projects, although their share in total public investment is quite small; these countries include France, Italy and Spain, who have had a long-standing tradition of concessions for motor way development, and others such a Finland, Germany, Greece, Netherland and Portugal. Reflecting a need for infrastructure investment on a large scale, but weak fiscal positions, a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland have embarked on PPPs. There are also fledgling PPP programs in Canada and Japan. PPPs in most of these countries are dominated by road projects. In addition, PPP-type arrangements are being used to develop a trans-European road network.

In Latin America, Chile, Columbia and Mexico have used PPPs to promote private sector participation in public investment projects. Chile has a well-established PPP program that has been used for the development of roads, airports, prisons and irrigation. In Columbia, PPPs have been used since the early 1990s, but early projects were not well designed. A relaunched PPP program in 2003 emphasizes road projects. In Mexico, PPP were first used in the 1980s to finance roads, but were not so successful. Since the mid-1990s, Mexico has used PPP with greater success for a growing number of public investment projects in the energy sector, and there are plans to extend the use of PPP to the provision of other services. Some other countries, and most notably Brazil, have plan on significant use of PPPs. As in Europe, regional approach to infrastructure development in Latin America that would involve PPP-type arrangement is now under consideration. The use of PPP in Asia is continuing to develop with well-established programmes in South Korea, an extensive investment program in China, a rapidly expanding program in India and other programs, although with varying degrees of implementation and success in Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore. In Africa, South Africa is a clear regional leader and has embarked upon developing PPP in a number of sectors. Few other African countries have very much experience with PPPs or other form of private sector involvement other than in the power and water sectors as it is in Cote d'lvoire and Senegal.

Basic Attributes of Public-Private Partnership

As witnessed in the last few decades, there are no single, internationally-accepted features of a PPP. But the simplest way to define a PPP is to specify the set of core attributes that are common across international definitions. Some of the attributes are:

1. It is a long- or medium-term agreement between a government entity and a private company, under which the private company provides or contributes to the provision of a public service.
2. It has a significant level of responsibility and risk that is transferred from the public sector to the private sector.
3. Contractual arrangements are built around performance-based outcomes rather than work specification.
4. The financing of public infrastructure development off-the-book of government, which might include tapping into new sources of project revenues to secure project financing.
5. The private company receives a revenue stream which may be from government budget allocations, from user-charges or a combination of the two that is dependent on the availability and quality of the contracted service.
6. Government's role is one of facilitator and enabler by assuming social, environmental and political risks, and remains accountable for service quality, price certainty and cost-effectiveness (i.e. value for money) of the partnership.
7. PPP does not involve sale of public service or facility to the private sector since the associated assets revert to government ownership at the end of the PPP.

Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the actual conveyance of products and services to the customer or clients (Lovelock & Wright, 2009). It is therefore concerned with the where, when, and how a service or product is delivered to the customer and whether this is fair or unfair in nature. The service concept defines the "how" and the "what" of service design, and helps mediate between customer needs and an organisation's strategic intent (Goldstein, Johnston, Duffy & Rao, 2002). According to Chen, Tsou & Huang (2009), innovation in service delivery orientation refers to an organisation's openness to new ideas and propensity to change through adopting new technologies, resources, skills and administrative systems. Service delivery innovation is also described as an overall process of developing new service offerings in the organisation (Johnston & Clark, 2011). Innovation drivers are similar in product and service contexts, at most differing in relative importance between the two environments.According to ISS (2015), there are four main elements for effective and efficient service delivery which include service culture, quality of service, employee engagement and customer experience.

Service Culture: Service culture is considered to be a value creation mode for the company as well as the customer. Although the significance of service culture is known, there is a lack of understanding of current conceptual models referring to diverse service perspectives. This demonstrates the need to construct and cultivate service value and move from product based to service dominant logic. Service culture is a basic mode for creating value for service organizations as well as their customers. At present there is a lack of proof to draw the attention of the supplier to the need for service practice and culture.

Service Quality: According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (2015), companies can get their competitive advantage by using the technology for the purpose of enhancing service quality and gathering market demand. For decades, many researchers have developed a service perspective. Chang (2008) describes that the concept of service quality should be generally approached from the customer's point of view because they may have different values, different ground of assessment, and different circumstances.

Employee Engagement: Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes (2002) were the first to look at employee engagement at the business unit level and used an enormous data-base to link higher levels of employee engagement to increased business unit outcomes. In their conceptualization, employee engagement was defined as an "individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). This definition added the expectation of an individual's satisfaction level, significantly altering the way engagement had been viewed. In addition, prior to Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes (2002), employee engagement was seen as a broad-based variable organization assumed, they had or did not have—a concept that executive leaders assumed that they controlled.

Customer Experience: The notion of Customer Experience was first brought into focus by Holbrook and Hirschman in mid-1980s. according to Gentile, Spiller &Noci (2007), the notion of customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels. Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch points'' (Gentileet, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was used in this study is New Public Management (NPM) theory. This model that emerged to replace the traditional model of public management during the 1980s in response to the inadequacies of the traditional model help us understand the imperatives of managerial improvement and restructuring and adoption of market-based best practices by the public sector. It facilitates the understanding of the reforms which are arrived at improving the quality of public services, saving public expenditure, increasing the efficiency of governmental operations and making policy implementation more effective, (Flynn 1993; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000).

New Public management (NPM) according to its main proponents, David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (1991) in their book *Reinventing Government* is an approach and new principles to running public service organizations that is used by the government and public service institutions and agencies, at both national and sub-national levels. It is the reincarnation of the new model of public sector management in response to the challenges of globalization, international competitiveness and technological changes. Academics posits that NPM is a term used to describe various approaches that were developed as an effort to making the public service more business-like and to improving its efficiency by using private sector management models. The NPM theory was founded on public theory that looks at the government from the standpoint of markets and productivity, and managerialism which focuses on management approaches to achieve productivity gains. As with the private sector which focuses on customer services, NPM reforms focused on the centrality of the citizens who were the recipients of the services or customers to the public sector.

In popularizing the values of NPM, Osborne and Gaebler (1991) identified ten principles that represent an operational definition of NPM. The principles as follows:

1. That government has a responsibility to steer the delivery of public services in addressing public issues.
2. That government ought to be community-owned and that the role of government is to empower citizens and communities to exercise self-governance.
3. That competition should be encouraged by the government because competition is seen as inherently good such that, through it, the best ideas and most efficient delivery of services can emerge.
4. That government should be driven by their set missions and purposes.
5. That government should be judged on the result they generate.
6. That government should view the citizens and consumers of public goods as customers who have the right to choose between competing and differentiated approaches that could be taken to deliver any particular public good or service.
7. That agencies and organizations will earn their allocation of resources by demonstrating the value in terms of public good that will be generated by the investment that elected officials would make in a particular agency or organization.

8. That emphasis must be placed on the desirability of orienting public agencies towards preventing problems rather than curing it.
9. That maximizing the participation of the broadest possible number of people and institutions in the decision-making process is essential.
10. That leveraging market forces and utilizing market-based strategies in the delivery of public goods is beneficial.

Osborne and Gaebler (1991) further proposed to reorganize the government by creating entrepreneurial incentives for the purpose of giving priority to the consumers, reducing bureaucracy and empowering. In theory, these proposed changes will result in a consumer-empowered, competitive and market-oriented government that will reduce regulations, create revenue through fees and charges and concentrate on the decentralization of authority, the privatization of management and quality improvement in public services. In other words, the idea for using NPM for government reform was that if the government-guided private sector principles were used rather than rigid hierarchical bureaucracy, it would work more effectively. NPM, its advocates argue, promotes a shift from bureaucratic administration to business-like professional management. They cited NPM as the solution for management ills in various organization context and policy making.

Application of the Theory

In the study, the federal and state government and all their agencies were conceptualized as the public sector that performs distinct but coordinated functions. Traditionally, the public sector is entrusted with the responsibility of protecting lives and property of her citizens and equally providing the basic amenities of life to them at a cheaper or no cost. The citizens are the recipients of government services or customers to the public sector. The private sector is the non-governmental actors and organizations operating in an economy. They include all the privately-owned businesses with profit-making motives and are also known for their robust management unlike the public sector; clear performance standard, output control, result-oriented, competition, customer satisfaction, decentralization and cost reduction.

To make her services to the people more effective and efficient, the government adopts market-based practices for her public enterprises and institutions by replacing highly centralized hierarchical organization structures with a decentralized management, disaggregate big establishments into smaller components and downsize the workforce. These are referred to managerial restructuring. After this has been done, the government contracts out the public entity or service through a legal framework to the private partner and the managers with such new responsibility will now have pay-for-performance as their incentive-based motivation. Clear performance targets are set and assessed using performance evaluations. Knowing what their targets are, managers will use their discretion and freedom in pursuing the set goals of meeting customer satisfaction and value for money for the organization. When the organization’s earnings and reputation grow, then it means that the managers and employees are performing well, but when the reverse becomes the case, then the employers will be left with no other better option than reappraising their strategies, replacing the manager if found wanting and rescuing the organization from collapse. In summary, the principles applied in this study are the government’s responsibility of addressing public issues through the engagement of the private sector, encouragement of competition amongst private businesses and utilizing market-based practices in the delivery of public goods and services.

FIRE DISASTER MANAGEMENT: A HOLISTIC APPROACH INVOLVING MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

The disaster management framework in Nigeria often leaves much to be desired in terms of its proactiveness and responsiveness to emergency and disaster situations. Despite pretenses to the contrary, disaster management in Nigeria is still at its infancy. Globally, there are five critical stages in the disaster management cycle. First is emphasis on prevention. This is mostly possible for man-made disasters like fire, explosions, acts of terror, etc. Natural disasters however, cannot be prevented but mitigated. Mitigation is the next stage in the disaster management cycle. Here, the emphasis is on how to make the impact of the disaster situation as minimal as possible.

The third stage is preparedness, where steps are taken to ensure alertness and readiness for the eventual occurrence of an emergency or disaster. The preparedness will lead to response when the disaster strikes. Most fire outbreaks can be extinguished in the early stages of the fire’s development, with the right equipment and correct use of the equipment. Unfortunately, there are as little as a few minutes between a fire starting and very dire consequences, hence rapid and correct responses are critical to fire management (Lovreglio et al., 2020). This situation underscores the importance of emergency preparedness in management of fire disaster. Effective preparedness will result to prompt response, and vice versa.

The last stage in the disaster management cycle is the recovery stage. Disaster recovery has to do with the restoration of the victims of the disaster to – as much as possible – their pre disaster state or conditions. Nigeria is generally lacking in stages one to four and stage five is almost nonexistent. Nevertheless, this bourgeoning disaster management system still has a long way to go and faces innumerable challenges, including poverty, lack of funding for emergency management programs, shabby collaboration among stakeholders in the disaster management system, interagency rivalry, among many others.

Disaster is inevitable in any society irrespective of the level of proactiveness and responsiveness of government and nonstate stakeholders in the response to, and management of emergency situations. Fire disaster is the most life threatening of all forms of emergency situations. Fire outbreak causes fatalities, serious injuries and tremendous damage to lives and properties. Unfortunately, fire outbreak can occur anywhere and anytime without warning resulting to losses (Ansell, 2021; WHO, 2007). According to statistics, more than 300,000 deaths are caused annually by fire-induced burns and more than 95 percent of these deaths occur in Low and Middle-Income Countries (Cvetković, 2021; World Health Organization WHO, 2007).

The United States Federal Emergence Management and Administration (FEMA) in her report established that the consequences of fire outbreaks are highly experienced in public places, leading to the destruction of infrastructures and facilities (FEMA, 2016). There have also been several incidences of fire disaster in Anambra state and across the country. According to Agency Report (2021), quoting the Chief Executive Officer of the Anambra State Fire Service, Anambra State recorded 154 fire outbreaks in 2020, 114 fire incidents and 15 deaths in 2021 and 119 fire outbreak incidents in 2022. In Nigeria, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is the lead agency for the management of emergencies and disaster in general, while the Federal Fire Service is specifically responsible for fire emergency responses and management. These institutions have their variants at the State level and constitute part of the many stakeholders in the disaster management framework.

In responding to fire emergencies, these agencies work with the Nigerian security agencies, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), as well as several other Non-Governmental, Civil Society and Faith Based Organizations (NGOs, CSOs and FBOs). In terms of funding, private individuals can contribute to the work of the fire service through financial partnership and procurement of equipment as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The PPP model for fire disaster management is unconventional and novel.

First, there must be multi stakeholders' collaboration. Every individual, households and firms must – as a matter of necessity and safety –install fire safety equipment in their premises and offices. Public places like markets and schools should have mini fire fighting stations to serve as a stop gap measure that can contain fire emergencies before the arrival of men of the fire service. In addition, fire safety awareness should be taken more seriously especially in view of the fact that fire outbreaks constitute one of the most potent threats to life.

Second is on the issue of intersectoral partnership in terms of response to fire outbreaks. The civil society – many of which constitute the first responders to fire emergencies – should not constitute a clog in the work of the firefighters. There have been incidents where firefighters are stranded for hours trying to gain access to sites where there are fire outbreaks because the first responders would not give them access to do their job. As a fire safety expert, information, I can say for sure that the activities of many nonstate agents in times of fire emergency response and disaster management are competitive, rather than complementary.

WAY FORWARD AND CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing discussion, it becomes evident that in order to enhance service delivery in firefighting operations, the following are necessary;

1. The government, as a major stakeholder, should provide enabling environment by enacting appropriate regulatory frameworks and establishing institutions where necessary which will encourage a better participation of the private sector in the response to fire emergencies and disaster.
2. In view of the above recommendation, fire safety awareness and training for fire emergency response should be intensified in order to reduce the incidents of untrained actors getting involved in fire emergency response and rescue, thus, creating more problems than they intended to solve in the first place.

With the dynamic society we currently live in, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the era of government's single intervention in critical areas of human needs is past gone. Presently, the participation of the private sector in the provision and management of public goods, services and emergencies has not only brought about higher efficiency and effectiveness, but has also helped in enhancing the needed culture of multi stakeholders' collaboration for emergency response and disaster management. Through a harmonious partnership between the government and private sector, the task of achieving a more efficient and effective service delivery will be made much easier and possible.

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