

## **SOCIO-SPATIAL INEQUALITY OF PRIVATISATION APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY OF ELECTRICITY IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** The pursuit of the public welfare should be of paramount concern to any good government to alleviate poverty in tandem with the Millennium Development Goals. As developing nations in the world aspire to meet the vision 20:2020, it is imperative that whatever economic approach, model or strategy adopted must not be at the expense of the welfare of the citizens. In western industrialised world, privatisation is used to improve the lives of citizens where market competition in the provisions of goods and services thrive for the benefit of an egalitarian and equitable society. However, the outcomes of privatisation in most developing countries are not as intended, as the social costs far supersede its benefits, owing to some reasons the paper is out to discuss. As a conceptual paper with discussions based predominantly on secondary data sources cum literature, this paper seeks to explain the socio-inequality and poverty laden outcomes of privatisation policy of service delivery of electricity in Nigeria. Privatisation policy has been claimed to adversely impinged the welfare of the populace, making the poor, poorer. Based on identified theoretical gap of non-harmonising policies with actual situation on ground, this paper argues that the issues of social inequality are occasioned by privatisation policy, and identifies the shortcomings of this approach to service delivery of electricity. The paper recommends taking areal reality and spatial dimension into consideration for decision making, policy resolution and implementation in Nigeria.

*Keywords:* Socio-inequality, Privatisation, Electricity Service-delivery, Nigeria

### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of socio-spatial inequality is borne out from the understanding of social geography involving the knowledge of the impact of spatial dimension on social well-being and social groups as well as the implication of spatial outcomes of development policy and planning. The social-oriented geographers is primarily concerned with the distribution pattern of these resources and seek to understand who gets what, where, how and when in the process of the material and non-material resources distribution within the society. "Who" refers to all categories of individuals and groups within the society, while 'what' concerns the resources obtainable for delivery among individuals and groups in society irrespective of their birth place or location, sex difference, ethnic or religion background. 'Where' answers the geographical fundamentals of space and time in terms of the chance or opportunity which individuals and socio-cultural groups in particular places or areas have to share and when to share in all aspects of society's resources and their negative externalities. The question of "how" probes into the process or system by which the elements of development is equitably, fairly and justly shared between people and places segregated by religion, status, sex, ethnic or linguistic connections (Adedayo, 2012).

In spatial inequalities, location strongly influences chances of service delivery of resources. One's place of birth and abode have lasting impacts on their lifelong opportunities. While there is much heterogeneity across countries, spatial disparities generally cut across all countries (United Nation, 2013). Indication from recent empirical research, for instance, shows that, "the poorest geographical regions of middle-income countries are, on average, are poor as low-income countries" (Alkire, Roche and Seth (2011) as cited in United Nations (2013)). Essence of living and growth depends on the extent a person's ability to find necessities such as food, water, clothing, and shelter. However, finding basic life necessities requires accessibility to some other facilities among which are electricity, and the service delivery of these basic facilities including electricity which is fundamental to quality of life. These basic facilities are not equally spread over space, (Aderamo and Aina, 2011; GCCC, 2007 as cited in Teriman and Yigitcanlar, 2011)). The issue of unequal distribution among the people has been empirically supported by Eyles (1996) and Oyerinde (2006), as cited in Aderamo and Aina, 2011). Public utilities such as electricity supply and its effective service delivery is essential and

fundamental to the overall welfare of people (Okoye and Onwuka, 2014; Investopedia, 2015 and Kahn, 1979). Distribution of basic utilities which adhere to spatial planning principles would directly or indirectly demystify the issues of socio-spatial inequality most especially in an emerging and growing economy nation like Nigeria (Aderamo and Aina, 2011; Sullivan and Sheffrin, 2003; Olayiwola, Adeleye and Adeleke, 2005).

However, the poor condition of electricity supply and its adverse effect on industrial sector as observed by Kanayo (2014), retrenchment of workers and loss of job occasioned by privatisation as observed by Chotten (2000, as cited in Aminu and Peterside, 2014), all culminated to major causes of prevailing socio-spatial inequality in terms of poverty in Nigeria, (Edukugbo, 2014; Obasi and Ayansina, 2013; Leech, 2011), and creation of social gap, resulting from a spatial concentration of socially relegated groups occurs, as submitted by Kühn (2015). Hence, the need for spatial planning as opined by Wächter (2013), Klein, Klug and Todes (2012) and spatial data availability, as advocated by and Okuku, Bregt and Grus (2014) to avert skewed distribution of prosperity and to ensure sustainable development,

## **LITERATURE REVIEW-CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL ISSUES**

### **Concept of Privatisation Policy to Public Utility Service Delivery**

Privatisation is the process of transferring ownership of a business, enterprise, agency, public service or public property from the public sector to the private sector (In the Public Interest, 2015; Investopedia, 2015; Sepehr, 2013; England, 2011; Poole, 2008). Margaret Thatcher's regime in the early 1980's in UK happened to be the pioneer adopting privatisation of the state owned enterprise following the origination of the ideological movement of the neo-classical and neo-liberal economists 'wealth of nations' by Adam (1936). Subsequent to this, was the spread of the economic policy to both advanced countries like; Canada, USA, France, Italy, Spain, Western Europe and developing Asia and some African countries. These countries privatised some areas of their public service delivery based on different economic reasons and needs of each nation (Hussain, 2014; Sepehr, 2013; Flynn and Asquer, 2013; McKenzie and Mookherjee, 2003; Salimi et al., 2012; Gilroy, 2010; Kosar, 2006; Rondinelli and Iacono, 1996).

### **Concept of Socio-Spatial Inequality**

Social inequality is a reflection of the distributive pattern of available resources within the whole society. When certain resources, and basic public services such as: water and electricity among others, become exclusively preserved for certain group of people in the society, it leads to socio-inequality, (EAPN, 2015). Historically, advent of colonial administration in Nigerian heralds social inequality during the one hundred year colonial period in the country. The dichotomous spatial arrangement and the residential plans were to the colonial master's advantage as against the indigene (Aderamo and Aina, 2011; Nnoli, 1978; Ayeni and Mabogunje 1982). This was further strengthened by subsequent political leaders after the nation's independence.

### **Marginalisation and Social Exclusion: Conceptualised Indices of Socio-Spatial Inequality**

The term marginalisation prominence in sociological research, (Kuhn, 2015), depicts socio-spatial inequality, social exclusion, non-access to power and participation, as explained by (Bernt and Colini, 2013; Danson and De Souza, 2012; Leimgruber and Nel, 2007 as cited in Kuhn, 2015). It also explains the disparity in between urban and rural electricity supply in Nigeria (Oguzor, 2011).

Social exclusion, conceptualised by Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom (PSE, 2012), is explained as lack or denial of Quality of life (Teriman and Yigitcanlar, 2011), access to public and private goods and services, social resources, material or economic resources, rights, and participation in the usual basic social relationships and activities available to the majority of people (IILS, 1998, as cited in Matheison, 2008; Levitas, 2006; Walker, 1997; Mack and Lansley, 1985).

### **Imperative of Spatial Dimension of Electricity Service Delivery: The Research Theoretical Gap**

The importance of electric facilities and service delivery in shaping the social and economic progress cannot be underestimated. Ale et al. (2011) opine that availability of these resources serve as the forerunner of economic development, Egbetokun, (2009), Oguzor, (2011), Oisasoje and Ojeifo, (2012) supported the view as capable of revamping the economy and transforming the nation if diversified.

The need to consider spatial dimensions in the equitable service delivery of electricity cannot be under-estimated. Klein et al. (2012) posit appropriate electric facilities distribution, Wächter, (2013) opine indispensability of spatial planning to avert skewed distribution of prosperity and ensure sustainable development, Okuku et al. (2014) submit that the availability of spatial data would serve as guide to the government decision makers or the private corporate body's decision making in planning for public service delivery of electricity. While Nichols, (2010), observes the forgo of proper due diligence procedure to the selection of ill equipped contractors, Afify, (2001) notes insufficient information about people's socioeconomic background coupled with inadequate spatial data as setback of privatisation of service delivery to address the issue of spatial inequality, as observed by (Nichols, 2010; World Bank, 2004; Nightingale and Pindus, 1997. Supporting the theoretical gap, American Society of Civil Engineer (ACSE, 2013), advocates for a well nurtured infrastructure with collaborative effort of all the stakeholders, as an enhancer for a healthy, strong, financially successful, and wealthy nation, similarly, the work of Jahan and McCleery (2005) and Olaseni and Alade (2012) respectively were also in consonance with the theoretical gap to address the above explained problem statement of the paper.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

Past literatures reviewed, averred that power reform has failed to address the issues of rural electrification and urban poor, as observed by Karekezi and Kimani (2002). Socio-spatial inequality in Nigeria could be attributed to the foregoing, as it leads to deprivation of the less privileged from access to electricity supply. Privatisation of electricity service delivery, as opined by Pavanelli, (2015) has biting effect on the less privilege. Its poor performance has led to the impoverishment of the nation's economy as observed by Okekale (2015), Aminu and Peterside (2014) and Mahmoud (2005). It also hampered engagement of small scale enterprises to boost their standard of living, according to (Etieyibo, 2011; Adeyemi, 2007 as cited in Okafor, 2008).

### **Privatisation of electricity and its social-inequalities outcomes in Nigeria**

Electricity service delivery in Nigeria is in a deplorable condition, as submitted by (Joseph, 2014). This has virtually affected all facets of live since economic development and the growth of any nation is solely dependent on its effectiveness as observed by (Joseph, 2014; Oghogho et al., 2014; Amoo and Fangbale 2013; Newsom, 2012; and Oyedepo, 2012). While a good number of industries and establishments have packed up due to poor electricity supply, (Adeyemi, 2007), the majority of other functioning industries are running their activities using generator on daily bases, (Edukugbo, 2014; Obasi and Ayansina, 2013; Leech, 2011). The negative implication of this kind of economy is hydra-headed; ranging from high production cost, downsizing and rightsizing of labour, outright lay off of workers, increase in unemployment rate, pauperisation and poverty development leading eventually to social inequality (Briceno-Garmendia, and Shkaratan, 2011). It has been observed that the outcome of privatisation further impoverish the poor and widen socio-spatial inequality in the nation (Aminu and Peterside, 2014; Tetteh, 2013). Deprivation and social exclusion, (Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, 2015) of some social groups from access to some public and private services such as, light, among other indicators of poverty mentioned by Townsend (1979), has been observed as one of the outcomes of privatisation causing socio-spatial inequality in Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusion**

The social implication of the privatisation approach to electricity service delivery in Nigerian context has formed the background for its major criticism as it has no social face, not having inclination for people's welfare. The reason for this is the skewed distribution of electric facilities over the space, long time disinvestment in electric facilities. Moreover, the arrangement of these facilities was not in consonance with the neighbourhood setting and also does not follow population expansion and developmental trend. These led to deterioration of these facilities and overstretching of available ones thereby causing total breakdown of the facilities.

### **Recommendations**

Few recommendations put forward are:

- Development policies and decision making on the privatisation of electricity service delivery should not be independent of social welfare and equity.
- Comprehensive strategy that will integrate implementation of electric facilities distribution alongside with different social groups should be embarked upon.
- It is therefore required that, a level playing ground for everyone from the poorest to the wealthiest individual within the society be given equal right and opportunities when it comes to service delivery of public utility such as electricity supply.
- Carrying out the procedure of privatisation of public utilities service deliveries like electricity with due diligence as against the disjointed, muddling through, trial-by-error kind of planning and policy implementation the kind of power reform process be embraced. In doing so, every fabrics of the society would be given equal consideration.
- Socio-spatial inequality would be easily addressed, where human centred policy, realistic tendency, and social welfare undertone, forms the fundamental focus of the policy makers and are guided in the course of implementing its privatisation approach, such as public utility like electricity supply.

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