

# PUBLIC PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES IN TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN NIGERIA

UMAR, E.Y.; ADEMI, R. AND IDRIS, A.M.

Industrial and Technology Education Department, Federal University of Technology, Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria. E-mail: [umar@futa.edu.ng](mailto:umar@futa.edu.ng) / [ademir@futa.edu.ng](mailto:ademir@futa.edu.ng) / [ideris@futa.edu.ng](mailto:ideris@futa.edu.ng) / Tel: 01-2612311/19, 07034019697

## ABSTRACT

This paper argues that sole financing of technical education by government has failed to provide needed facilities in technical colleges or effective learning to take place. A brief overview of technical education in Nigeria was discussed. Public private partnership. The experience from other countries was reviewed. Strategies to attain the collaboration of public and private sector in Nigeria were discussed. Benefits of public private partnerships were outlined and it was therefore recommended that there should be an increase contribution by organized private sector (OPS) to the Education Tax Fund (ETF) in order to support the provision of facilities in technical colleges. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) should be made to play a vibrant role as partners in moving technical education forward.

## INTRODUCTION

Technical colleges are regarded as the principal vocational institutions in Nigeria. They give full vocational training intended to prepare students for entry into various occupation (Okoro, 1983). The products of these institutions are employed as operative, artisans and craftsmen in industries and allied organisations.

Abdullahi (2003) maintained that training facilities for vocational programmes encompass the basic hand tools, equipment and structural facilities, which include classes, and workshops, library among others. Every training school in Nigeria faces the problem of providing and maintaining suitable workshop and appropriate facilities for technical and vocational training programme. For a nation to grow there must be a sound technological know-how, this of course has to be achieved if the learners are equipped with needed facilities/tools to work and to practice. Studies conducted by Ibe (1994) and Aina (2005) revealed lack of needed facilities in technical colleges. Ibe (1994) emphasised that the students of such institutions are greatly handicapped because of lack of workshop equipment without which skill acquisition would be very slow if not impossible. Attesting to this fact FGN (2004) in its National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) document

emphasized that there are acute shortages of infrastructure and facilities at all levels of education, that the system emphasizes theoretical knowledge at the expenses of technical, vocational and entrepreneurial education. Government has been the sole financier of technical education right from colonial era, but today it is extremely difficult for the government alone to bear the burden, that is why authors like Uthman (2000), Ohize (2003) and Umar (2005) saw the need for alternative sources for funding technical education in order to provide the needed facilities. Osuji (2004) maintained that other sources of funding education as mentioned in the objectives of education reforms is to develop appropriate partnership with organized private sector and mobilize local communities in the funding of education.

Public private partnership (PPP) allows the public sector to access private finance to build the needed infrastructures while enabling them to transfer risks better managed by the private sector. According to Adirije (2006) the terms of a partnership is delicate balancing act where both sides manage their respective risks. For government, the delivery of essential infrastructure projects is often both sensitive and political where tax payers and labour emotions must be considered. For private companies, the uncertainty that arises from billion dollar long term initiatives means doing

everything possible against complications and a huge cash outlay.

Since the objective of 'PPP' is high mobilisation of private investment for infrastructure development, socio-economic growth, poverty elimination, provision of needed services and accomplishing adequate standard of living within the country, 'PPP' may be the better alternative for provision of needed facilities in technical colleges in Nigeria.

## OVERVIEW OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

According to Obase (2004) the first serious attention given to formal technology education in the country is the Phelps-Stoke Commission on Education in Africa (1920). The report of the commission highlighted the need for a survey of needs for industrial training, skilled and unskilled manpower for construction, maintenance and operation of commercial and industrial projects like railways, roads, telegraphs, telephones, motor services and boats. In its recommendation, it called for closely defined objectives of the acquisition of agricultural and industrial skills.

According to Robert and Daniel (1997) consequent upon the Phelps Stokes report, the 1925 memorandum on education policy in British Tropical Africa was developed. The memorandum encouraged vocational and technical training. It is important to note that prior to this development there had been some form of indigenous vocational and technical training. The Development and Welfare Act of the colonial masters in 1940 led to the establishment of Handicrafts, and trade centres for training craftsmen, and technical institutes to train technicians.

In 1960, another commissioned report, the Ashby report recommended the production of needed high level manpower and the upgrading, by further education of employed Nigerian workers. This led to a boost in technology education by way of the Federal Government's priority for establishment and

facility provisions for technical and trade schools in her subsequent national developmental plans. Ministries, polytechnics, universities and industries mounted programmes to meet the identified technological needs, during the third national development plan period of 1973 - 1980. And in the fourth national plan period (1981 - 1983), the new national policy on education emerged. The policy provided for early exposure to technology at junior secondary level, and preparation for upward movement to tertiary level (FCBE, 2004).

The eighties and nineties have witnessed increase in numbers of polytechnics and universities of technology. But just how well has this initiative help in advancing our technological course in spite of these measures has been a question that lacks satisfactory answers. The government in whose hands the bulk of the Nigerian economy has been and who has been responsible for policy formulation and implementation has been incapacitated in prospering our technological course. This constraint is largely traceable to inadequate funding and politicisation.

## PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: THE EXPERIENCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Public private partnership in nations of the world usually takes different dimension based on the peculiar needs of the people. Osunt (2006) averred that in South Africa, companies working in partnership with government to undertake targeted sectoral job creation and capacity building programme while an FICCI working among schools to bring together business to invest in improving the quality of school outputs is obtainable in Brazil. On the other hand, an equipment manufacturer or marketer providing resources for advocacy and funding to raise the profile of girl's education is practiced in USA. In some other countries like Canada PPPs can be obtained in the form of donation of equipment to schools, vocational link between the school and work place, facilities to train students and offer employee skills enhancement for specific local

industries at the pre-exit stage of basic education programmes. All of these are successful as Medessou (2003) also extols the virtues of privatizing vocational technical education, pointing to the United States and Canada for examples of success in this direction.

According to Olesen (1997) partnerships and strategic alliances between interested parties in Denmark became the key strategy to improve the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, equity and sustainability of training policies, systems and programmes. Training is increasingly conceived and promoted as cooperative effort in which the various relevant institutions in the public and private sectors must participate and share responsibilities. Moreover, the partners concerned are being called upon to contribute to the overall training effort and to articulate their respective strengths and comparative advantages.

#### STRATEGIES TO ATTAIN THE COLLABORATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR IN NIGERIA

Aderije (2006) emphasized that in order to achieve a sustainable PPP for ensuring the most effective, productive, compassionate, result oriented and efficient use of resources, it is imperative that the members or subscribers to the partnership must adopt a single frame work of action that provides the basis for coordinating the work of all partners; put in place and maximally utilize a single national monitoring and evaluation (M & E) mechanism to ascertain and maintain accepted standards. Document from NEEDS (FGN, 2004) shows that in the more than 40 years since independence, Nigeria has never grown 7 percent or more for more than three consecutive years, because of perceptions of risks and the high cost of doing business, private agents keep the bulk of their assets abroad and more than 2 million Nigerians (mostly highly educated) have emigrated to Europe and United States. Most foreign direct investment into the country goes into the oil and extractive sectors. Only since 1999 has foreign direct investment in the non-oil sectors began to rise significantly.

In order to achieve public and private collaboration in the provision of needed facilities in technical colleges in Nigeria various strategies that will make private sectors proactive in creating productive jobs and improving the quality of life need to be exploit. The strategies that could be adopted include the followings:

- Government's policy should be to develop infrastructure that is conducive to private sector-driven economic growth;
- Private sector should be encourage to initiate and participate in the provision of infrastructures, using such methods as build operate-and-transfer (BOT), build-own-operate and transfer (BOOT), rehabilitate-operate-and transfer (ROT). This strategy is very important as private sector owns the infrastructure for a particular period, giving it room to actively monitor activities taken place.
- Government at all levels should maintain structured interactions with private sector operators to ensure a true partnership in the development process.
- Government should continue to improve security, the rule of law and the timely enforcement of contracts. This is very important as with the assurance of security, private partners will be rest assured that money invested can be recovered.
- Government should continue to reduce policy related costs and risks such as corruption and administrative barriers to businesses. When risks that will endanger private business are removed, offenders and violators are brought to book; private partners will be assured of getting high turnover from the investment.
- Linkages between educational institutions and private sector should be strengthened to ensure the appropriate interface with the world of work. This is necessary to avoid

wastages, when what is learnt in the school commensurate with what is obtained at work, private operators will be encouraged to collaborate as product from the school system will serve as input to their companies or firms.

To cap it up, Aderieje (2006) reported that arrangement such as above will enhance the coming together of several stake holder such as federal, state and local government; profit oriented businesses and not-for-profit organizations; community development associations; united nation (UN) and other transnational agencies; civil society groups and faith based organizations; to work towards sustainable development and poverty reduction within the communities and country as a whole.

### **BENEFITS OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP**

Several commentators hold a strong view that public and private sectors are complementary and that effective 'PPP' is only possible through mutually designed, analysed, and accepted instruments of cooperation and collaboration. Adirieje (2006) maintained that such instruments are effective in all sectors of human endeavours, including health, profit and non-profit, education, housing, micro-finance, community-based development projects. For Nigeria in particular, achieving the 'PPP' paradigm would mean deliberate and sincere effort to understand the nature of prevailing efforts in this regard within the country, identify the key challenges and opportunities, and seek to know how they contribute to stronger national and family level health, economic and social systems.

Specifically arguing the case for the privatization of vocational and technical education and training, the World Bank (1991) in its policy paper states that 'if' allowed to compete freely, profit making schools and centers and non governmental voluntary agencies can meet an important share of skills needs without public financing. Medessou (2003) enumerates some of the strong points of

privatization as:-

1. It has ability to eliminate losses in government owned business;
2. The elimination of tendencies towards corrupt practices;
3. Lower prices for higher quality goods and services;
4. Reduction in the level of poverty among the masses;
5. Generation of higher tax revenues for government;
6. Higher rates of employment; and
7. The workers being forced to compete for jobs in a more competitive market place and therefore requiring better training to bring out the best in them.

Ossom (2006) writing on the expected outcome of the UBE public private partnership maintained that the envisioned PPPs are expected to:-

- Develop communication channels leading to a proper understanding and integration of industry needs in the curriculum.
- Provide industry with a voice to potential employees
- Provide a skill base from which local industries can tap from, at the exit point of the educational programme.
- Provide opportunity for the fulfillment of corporate social responsibility.
- Ensure the acquisition of the relevant skills knowledge and experiences that are relevant not only to the growth of the private sector.

The above listed expectations of PPPs at UBE level could be adopted for vocational technical

education in order to provide the needed facilities in technical colleges since the global practices in public private partnership called for instituting partnerships that enable schools to generate additional income. In Nigeria and other developing countries, sustainable access to health care, education and other socio-economic services and products can be accomplished through 'PPP' where the government delivers the minimum standard of services, product and/or care, the private sector bring skills and core competencies, while donors and business bring funding and other resources. Adirieje (2006) emphasised that such collaborations will be productive in promoting poverty alleviation through micro-finance, enhancing health through partnership as been the case with polio eradication and other child immunization efforts.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion this paper is of the view that public private partnership (PPP) model should be adopted to provide much needed facilities in technical colleges, since several attempt by government has failed to yield needed result – may be as a result of government sole financing, economic recession, or societal attitude towards government owned enterprises. The success of PPPs in countries like USA, Canada and Brazil and in some specific sectors like health in Nigeria is a pointer to the fact that if other partners are involved, competition set-in and the result is win-win-win. The acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society, hinges on the provision of needed facilities for learning.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been proffered in order to provide the needed facilities in Technical Colleges:

1. There should be an increase contribution by the organized private sector (OPS) to Education Tax Fund in order to support provision of facilities in Technical Colleges;

2. Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's), Community Based Organizations (CBO's) and Parent Teachers Association (PTA) should be made to play a vibrant national role as partners in moving Technical education forward;
3. Benefiting industries from the product of Technical Colleges should be made to contribute certain percentage of their profit to the provision of facilities to technical colleges;
4. Relevant facilities should be donated by partner industries to Technical Colleges.

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