THE ROLE OF INSTITUTION PARTNERSHIP IN THE OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT: *Institutional partnership is gaining prominence globally so that resources can be shared and utilized profitably. The Office Technology and Management program as in the Nigerian Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities requires huge facilities and infrastructure to implement which government is unable to sufficiently provide due to dwindling economy. On the other hand schools management may not prioritize their needs. The partnership factor is quite germane because industry needs for professionals, manpower and research keep changing rapidly. It becomes pertinent for managers of the program to parley with the appropriate stakeholders including: professional bodies, companies, other schools, hence every potential is fully harnessed. It will require a clear cut pattern of relationship to specify the input, out come and areas of future improvement.*

KEYWORDS: Partnership, Collaboration, Potentials.

INTRODUCTION

Office Technology and Management is a practical oriented course which requires training and application of the skills consistently. For it to remain relevant there is need to improve students' academic performance, impart practical knowledge by using suitable equipment to gain office skills. In real terms according to Aina (2005) Vocational Technical Education is capital intensive and needs to be addressed with care if it can have a foreseeable future. Office Technology and Management is an aspect of it as taught in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving general education, the study of related sciences and technology, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Given the scenario, Aderieje (2006) identified that a complementary role between the institution and private sector should be adopted in order to bring about the development of an efficient vocational and technical education. While the institution concentrates on the formal training, the private sector/industry will focus on skills development in the work place. That is the crux of public institution private sector partnership.

The Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy of Education (2013) admits that the entire aspect of vocational and technical education is capital intensive and will require commensurate finding. In that dimension the Education Trust Fund was established by Education Tax Act. No. 7 of 1993 and subsequently amended in 1998. The law empowered the Education Trust Fund (ETF) to intervene at all levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary in public institutions. The Education Trust Fund was renamed Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) in 2011 by the ETF Act No. 1b. The objectives of the Tetfund will later be discussed. In support of the partnership provided by the government, Olatunji (2003) opined that this kind of partnership should spread through different but mutually inclusive groups of stakeholders including non-governmental organizations such as (UNESCO) United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization, (USAID) United States Agency for

International Development Organization and companies of international standards like: Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Texaco limited. When the polytechnic attracts the help of government Tetfund, there are other areas of skills development, hands on equipment, industrial exposure, mentorship, sponsorship, entrepreneurship and curriculum developments where the department needs to link up with organizations, companies who can meet those unique needs which embellish the ethics of the Office Technology Management profession.

For the purpose of this study partnership will be defined according to Agu (2012) as the getting together of more than a person in agreement to operate a business. The Oxford dictionary (2015) defines partnership as a relationship between people, organizations, participation, joint decision making and association. Bailey (2011) explains that since after the Second World War, what has been in place is developmental partnership which encourages assistance been rendered to weaker groups. However, the public private sector partnership (PPP) is a current innovation. It is a government service or private venture business funded and operated through partnership which harnesses expertise and efficiencies that the private sector can bring to the delivery of certain facilities. For instance a bank can sponsor the building of a commercialized Communication centre without interest but within a certain period recover their cost and leave ownership. Benefits are derived in utilizing the PPP link such as: cost analysis of values is done effectively and in turn value is cheaper. Projects are delivered on time and within the budget. This explains the fact that the partnership can supplement to meet growing infrastructural development which not only Tetfund can provide.

Collaborative partnership requires various dimensions as will be required by the peculiarity of each course contained in the curriculum. This explains the roles of each partner whether students, organizations, or institution. The interests maybe

Institutional and organizational partnership involves a bilateral agreement, formal or informal to foster collaboration in education. This relationship is cooperative in view of the fact that each partner has something both to benefit and to contribute. The object of interest is to ensure maximum contributions to growth and progress on every side.

The Wikipedia Dictionary (2015) defines collaboration as working together with others to achieve a common goal and defines cooperation as active help from a person or organization. It includes orderly sharing of space or resources. Cooperating means an association of mutual benefit for purposes of production or purchase.

Some Office Technology courses curriculum recommended learning strategies:

Office Practice	Field trip, excursions
Modern Office Technology	Field trip
Peoples Communication Skill	Talks from resource persons
Records Management	Field trip
Small Business Scale Management	Excursions, talks from resource persons
Professional Ethics	Installing
ICT Applications, Keyboarding	Use of ICT laboratories
Web Page Designs	Use of ICT laboratories
(SIWES) Students Industrial Experience	Hand on training
Job placement	Referral opportunities to schools in partnership

Factors necessitating Partnership:

❖ **Curriculum Base:-** The curriculum requirement specifies levels of collaboration with the industry under the following categories: field trips, four months industrial experience after first year in National Diploma and one year industrial attachment after the course completion. The new curriculum places a challenge on improving laboratory standards.

❖ **Inadequate Funding:-** Though the financing of education as in tertiary public institution is vested on the three tiers of government, the funds flow is insufficient as fees are equally low. Sourcing for internally generated revenue and assistance becomes inevitable. Increase funding to enable research outputs to meet commercialization standards and facilitate indigenous technology development. The herculean task would lie on the department to augment their quota. Funding as a case for OTM has been over emphasized. According to Njoku (2014) the effect of inadequate funding is not only on the hampering of implementation of course content but also affects quality of students produced, the operational mode of the institution, attitude of teachers and infrastructural developments.

In support, Ndinechi and Ementa (2013) maintained that the state of teaching facilities in our educational system and lack of teaching and learning materials by the government through the Tetfund remains insufficient.

❖ **Negligence:-** Office Technology and Management Department is most times allocated an insignificant proportion of finances in institutional budget.

❖ **Job Placement:-** In other to alleviate the challenges of unemployment and also employing the best hands, industries can ask for referrals. It will also serve as a modality to encourage students to work harder given the decline in students educational performance.

❖ **Research and Staff Development:-**The office and work place changes are quite dynamic. While organizations focus on the core task, OTM schools partnered will can undertake researches to improve their standards and office practice methods.

❖ **Marketing Output**: Create opportunities to provide patronage for research output. Again inputs from the marketplace will advance information on curriculum practice and development, scholarships, grants, donation of equipment, loans will be a good source of motivation to educational development. I is a platform for immediate communication of changes due o dynamic nature of market rends. (Bogoro 2015)

Agencies of partnership for Office Technology and Management.

In other to tap the talents of public private sector partnership, Yanusi (2013) insists that there are different approaches to partnership, either in the forms of collaboration, association, public private sector partnership.

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND)

Tetfund was set up in 2011 as an intervention force it has various functions including as follows

❖ Ostensibly to arrest the high level decay and deterioration in the educational infrastructure due to long period of lack of maintenance of existing facilities and misappropriation of resource allocation and improve the quality and standard of higher national educational institution, Create Research development/Centre's of excellence The body derives funding from imposed 2% tax on the profit of all registered companies. It not only disburses but monitors the education tax to public tertiary institutions which includes the Polytechnics in Nigeria. Its objectives embrace: Library development, Research, Grants, Academic staff training and Development, Publication of journals, manuscript development and Conference attendance. However, the accessibility of these funds hinges on the management policies and priorities of each Polytechnic.

❖ **International Community:-** The international community includes multinationals like: Oil servicing and producing companies, UNESCO, internet communication companies. Other organizations are: World Bank, (NEPAD) New Partnership for African Development who can assist in research and infrastructural development. Students however in the sciences have been given opportunities for scholarships, Bursaries. This has remained exclusive to them because it is only on paper that the emphasis on the need to rejuvenate vocational and technical education sector is made.

❖ **Companies and Host Communities:-** Almost all companies and organizations within and outside the host community constitute prospective employers of the school products. The extent of their partnership will be both collaborative and co-operative because it is their social responsibility to provide supports of all kinds in any area they have the ability. OTM graduates, students in training can use their entrepreneurial skills to help the community develop and be responsive to other community needs.

❖ **Professional Bodies:-** It is expected that for the department of OTM to take off in any Polytechnic, it must be accredited by the (NBTE) National Board for Technical Education having met all the standards and requirements, same applies for the Universities. Professional bodies create an atmosphere of synergy for teacher's capacity building which is actualized through: conferences, workshops, symposiums. Emerging incidents in the profession are discovered and tackled. While staff and students can be members, there can be affiliations at the departmental level which can enable manpower exchange trips to enhance learning. It is pertinent to note that care should be taken to do this with organizations which have complementary roles. Bodies like the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council has as one of its aims retraining teachers for innovative teaching and learning strategies.

❖ **Other Institutions of Learning:-** Networking with other older and experienced schools is already an ongoing practice but can be fully utilized whether from within or outside the country in the following areas: Entrepreneurial, Innovations, Research, Student exchange visits, Virtual exchanges, Teacher exchange. Banks 2013 suggests different stages of developing a successful

partnership with any identified agency of partnership.

❖ **Expanding Fundini**

• Assessment of departmental need. Example: Staff training, Research, Infrastructure.

- Identify the strategy: Example Collaboration, Association, and Public Private Partnership.

- Network with the potential partners and add meetings with stakeholders.

- Sign up agreements.

- Do periodic assessment on accomplishments.

- Grow the partnership by improvement.

CONCLUSION

In other that Vocational and technical Education become accessible and sustainable to revamp its quota in rejuvenating the national economy, then partnership with the private sector must not be reserved at only institutional apex level. As a department they should be educated and given enough freedom to synergize with stakeholders who can assist them make their graduates and also create employment for them. This is the centre play.

RECOMMENDATION

The study therefore recommends as follows:

➢ The level of awareness on the need for department partnership should be heightened.

➢ Schools should as a matter of urgency submit substantial request to the Tetfund at the instance of the department.

➢ Management policies should be flexible to allow the Office technology Department to initiate partnership arrangements with stakeholders.

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