

PARTNERSHIP AMONG ORGANIZATIONS IN THE TRAINING OF WORKERS IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR.

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ABSTRACT

This paper titled “partnership among organizations in the training of workers in Nigerian public sector”, undertakes the examination of collaboration between organizations in the training of human resources. While focusing on the benefits and challenges, it investigated the types of partnership and examples of such partnership in the Nigerian public sector. The paper also opined that integration among organizations in the training of workers is a panacea to efficient productivity in the labour market. It finally recommended among other things the depoliticization of the public sector; reduction of government’s control and protection of public agencies.

Introduction

The co-existence of any group of people anywhere in the world requires some form of governance administration, division of labour and partnership with related organizations in order to maintain the existence of the group. The concept of public good also indicates that there are some services that are utilized by all members which are efficient and effective when provided for centrally. The establishment of public enterprise and corporations outside the regular administrative framework of government in Nigeria was a by product of the traditional British concept of the civil service as a body of ill equipped and ill-filled, both in outlook and orientation, for the managerial functions of commercial organizations. At the heart of theoretical and empirical work on partnership is the notion that organizations often depend on such to deal with non-routine aspects of work. Partnership is a robust predictor of group and organizational performance (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000) and has become more important in light of work movement toward greater employee involvement and human resource flexibility within organizations.

Recently, there has been a shift from inward-looking strategies to the outward-looking strategies of extended enterprise relationships (John, 2002). Organizational relationships/partnerships are networks of resource interdependencies. It includes suppliers,

buyers, government agencies and other external organizations that are critical to the success of the organization. Organizations seek out relationship with external organizations that provide critical resources, such as raw materials, labour, access to markets, specialized skills and knowledge, and will structure their internal operations to insure access to these critical resources. The primary objective of any organization is to achieve the goals for which it was established. Nevertheless, the achievement of the goals depends largely on the maximum utilization of the human and material resources of the organization. The full utilization of the human resources of any establishment depends mainly on the kind of inter-organizational relations and industrial relations prevalent in the Organization. Hundreds of partnerships have been formed worldwide during the past two decades. Some of them lasted only a short period; others have been operating a long time. Some concentrate on narrow local targets while others ambitiously try to co-ordinate broad policy areas. There are partnerships primarily oriented towards business circles and others focused on labour market or social issues. Many studies have been carried out on the subject, which demonstrate that partnership is a valuable instrument or organizational model to overcome weaknesses of the policy and governance framework. Nonetheless, partnerships face several obstacles: they are difficult to set up and maintain, they require political will and resources, and results not likely to come overnight.

This paper discusses the issue of partnership among organizations in training workers in Nigerian public sector, highlighting its benefits and risks while providing recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Partnership is an arrangement where parties, known as partners, agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests. The partners in a partnership may be individuals, businesses, interest-based organizations, schools, governments or combinations. Partnership is a collaborative relationship between entities to work toward shared objectives through a mutually agreed division of labour. According to the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta (2015), organizational partnerships are defined as cooperative, collaborative relationships that exist between two or more independent nonprofits to increase administrative efficiency and/or programmatic impact through shared resources.

Much of the academic debate on partnership as bemoaned the lack of shared definition of the term (Powell and Glendinning, 2002; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). This is partly because it is the sort of term that has been deployed by many of its users to mean simply what they want it to mean. As Powell and Glendinning (2002:2) put it “use of the term has been promiscuous, with positive moral overtones”. It often seems to mean a general aspiration, voiced usually by national politicians, to see less conflictual, potentially synergistic relationship between the state/public sector, and both the private and third sectors. Partnership suggests at least two agencies with common interests working together in a relationship characterized by some degree of trust, equality, and reciprocity. The Audit Commission defined partnership as joint working involving otherwise independent bodies cooperating to achieve a common goal, involving sharing relevant information, risks and rewards (Audit Commission, 1998). Thus partnership is commonly defined in opposition to contractual-or indeed market based –relationships, where the latter have generally been conceived as ‘principal-agent’ relationship, generally assumed to mean adversarial relationship and low trust (Powell, 2007). Partnership involves some form of joint-ness not necessarily a relationship of equality, but certainly not one of dominance, (Bolvaired & Edwards, 2010). There are three types of partnership arrangements: General partnership (profits, liability and management duties are divided equally); Limited Partnership

(partnership with limited liability) and Joint Ventures (joint partnership for a limited period of time). Partnership has far reaching implications for the enterprise culture of an organization. Partnership, as constructed to the more circumscribed concept of teamwork, cuts across organizations, divisions, departments and working groups. It also involves more than just cooperation; it requires the ability and willingness to creatively share ideas and knowledge and to create new knowledge with others.

Organization

An organization is a social entity with collective goals that is linked to an external environment. According to Business Dictionary (2015) organization is a social unit of people that is structured and managed to meet a need to pursue collective goals. All organizations have a management structure that determines relationships between the different activities and the members, and subdivides and assigns roles, responsibilities, and authority to carry out different tasks. Organizations are open systems; they affect and are affected by their environment. An organization is a system of consciously coordinated activities or efforts of two or more persons. Organization according to Umar (2012) is a process which integrates different types of activities to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Organization is an effective and necessary instrument for the attainment of predetermined goals.

Public Sector

Public sector is the part of the economy concerned with providing basic government services. The composition of the public sector varies by country, but in most countries the public sector includes such services as the police, military and other government agencies at the national and local level. Public sector enterprise may be defined as any commercial or industrial undertaking owned and managed by the government with a view to maximize social welfare and uphold the public interest. According to Hanson (2012) "Public enterprise means the state ownership and operation of industrial, agricultural, financial and commercial undertakings. Public sector enterprises are autonomous or semi-autonomous corporations and companies established, owned and controlled by the state and engaged in industrial and commercial undertakings, Malaya (2012). In general terms, the public sector consists of governments and all publicly controlled or publicly financed agencies, enterprises, and other entities that deliver public programmes, goods, or services. According to Nwoye (2011), a public enterprise is viewed as an artificial person, who is authorized by law to carry on particular activities and functions. It essentially has the features of several individuals who act as one. It is described as corporate body created by the legislature with defined powers and functions and independently having a clear-cut jurisdiction over a specified area of a particular type of commercial activity.

Partnership among Organizations in the Training of Workers

Since the 1930s and particularly after World War II, numerous state owned enterprises, were created in both developed and developing countries to address market deficits and capital short falls, promote economic development, reduce mass unemployment and ensure national control over the overall direction of the economy, especially in developing countries. By providing capital and technology to strategic areas where the private sector either shield away from or lacked the capacity to invest, most governments resorted to public enterprises to increase capital formation and contribute to national development, this trend continued till the early eighties (Adesanmi; 2011). The history of Nigerian public sector is traceable to the colonial epoch through independence era, military interregnum and towards the restoration of democracy in Nigeria. At Independence in 1960, the roll of the civil service shifted from the colonial mode of maintaining law and order to

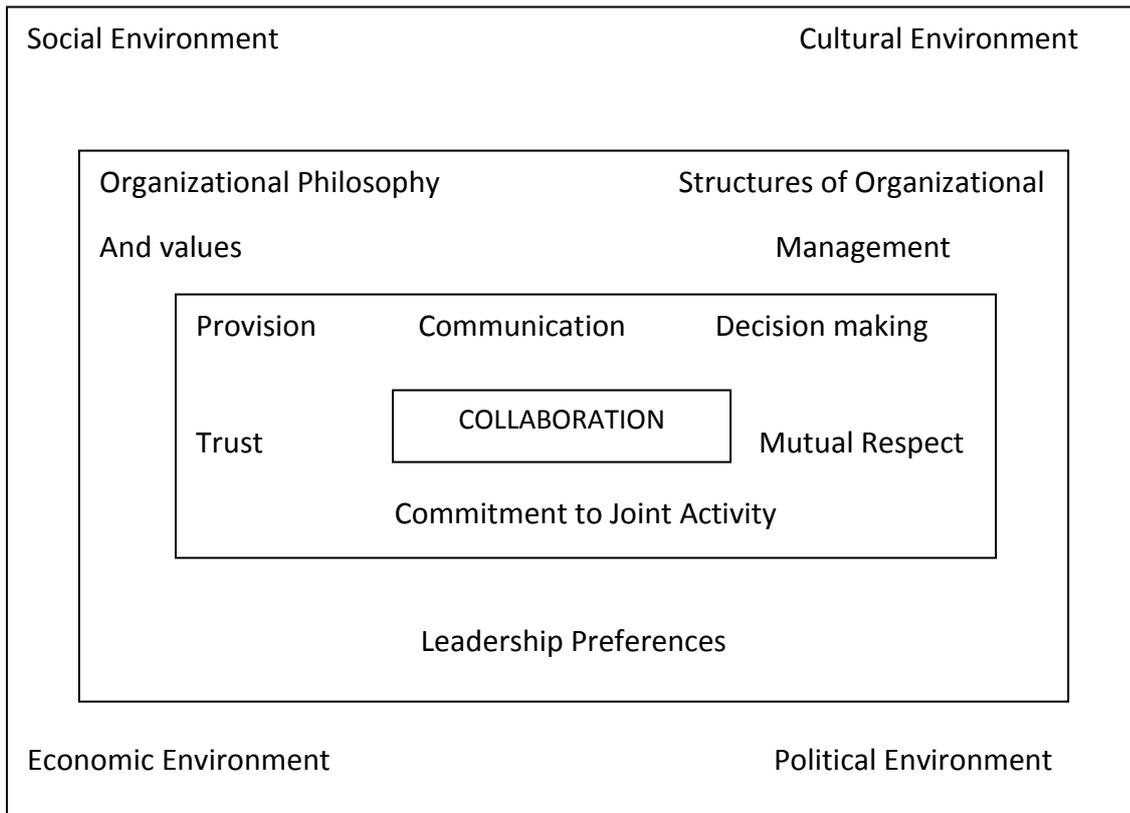
that of facilitating the realization of the nation's development aspirations. Essentially, the civil service became more visible and active both in the formulation and execution of development policies and programmes. Gradually, the public service earned public confidence and was largely perceived as the protector of public interest. In the late 1980s the public sector showed signs of progressive decay arising, first from the structural unprecedented growth lapses of the oil boom driven era of the 1970s when expansion of the service took place without adequate capacity to match the resultant increased responsibilities; and second, from a combination of human resources management defects that began to creep into the system. Since the return of democratic rule in 1999, there have been complaints over poor service delivery of the public service in Nigeria.

All these led to the call for integration among organizations in the public sector to share resources in the following areas:

- Training and retraining of workers
- Career progression in the public sector through the attendance of prescribed training courses.
- Extensive use of on- the-job training by ministries to capture, reflect and address their specific requirements.

Technological, demographical, economical and other systematic changes require adequate changes from societies and from separate organizations. Determinant groups of influence for collaboration consist of macro-factors deriving from the outside, mezo-factors formed by the interacting organizations and micro factors that depend on connections and interrelations.

Fig 1 Determinants of the Collaboration



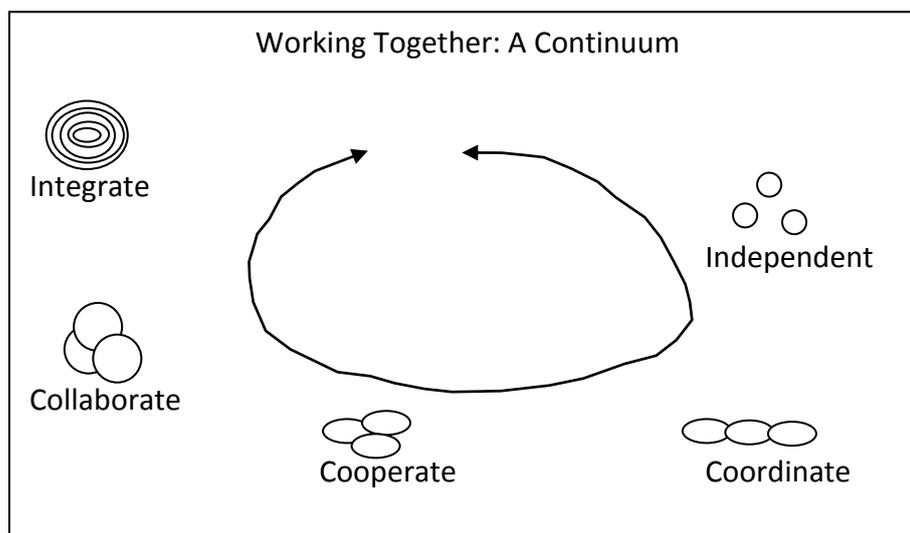
Source: Author(2015).

Partnership is perceived as a form of intensive interaction among organizations' targeted at implementation of political, economic, social programmes and at solution of problems. Partners commit to share resources, expertise and risk. Partnership is established on the basis of involvement and is characterized by open communication among all the parties involved (Seitanidi, 2010). Examples of such partnership include:

- The partnership between Alvan Volunteer Service (A voluntary organization in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri) and Imo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ISOPADEC) in the training of teachers in the state on the 21st century Constructivist teaching methods.
- The collaboration between AIFCE and Secondary Education Management Board (SEMB) under the Ministry of Education in the retraining of secondary school teachers.
- Based on the two examples ISOPADEC and SEMB supplied the financial resources for the training while Alvan as a training institution for teachers provided the resource persons.
- Partnership between tertiary institutions and the Federal Ministry of Education in the training of staff through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND).
- Partnership between Universities (Departments of Public Administration and Local Government Studies) in the training of Local Government Employees.

According to Chris (2004) inter-organizational partnership follows a gradual step: Independent(working together independently; coordination; cooperation; collaboration and integration).

Fig. 2: Partnership Circle



Sources: Chris (2004)

Just as “no man is an island,” no company is an entity unto itself. Inter-organizational relations are critical to the success of individual businesses and the business community as a whole. Partnership among organizations is an ever increasing necessity. The complexity of development challenges and the size and scope of programmes make implementation by one organization rarely possible. The maturation of the public sector depends on partnership and networks for the purposes of both service delivery and capacity building. Once initiated, collaboration/partnership creates a structure within which participants can seek consensus about the problem and create mutually agreeable solutions. When partnership is successful, new solutions emerge that no single party could have envisioned. Partnership changes the

way organizations work. With partnership there is less competition and more consensus, less working alone and more inclusion of others; less thinking about activities, services and programmes and more thinking about larger results and strategies (Ray & Winer, 1994). Training will be understood as any learning activity which is directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skill for the purpose of an occupation or task. Training should be a co-operative task between two/more organizations for maximum output.

Training could be conducted at the work site and in the context of performing actual job (on-the job training). It may also occur or be conducted in a location specifically designated for training outside usual work site (off – the job training and finally, it could be a combination of on and off the job training (apprenticeship training). Training is actually supposed to be a continuous process (re-training). (Egbe, Obo and Amini, 2011).

Closely related to the problem of recruitment is therefore, that of training and manpower development. Presumably, those to be recruited would first have to be trained. It was in realization of the importance of pre-entry training that priority was attached to the establishment of primary, secondary, vocational and technical schools and universities (Ministry of Education) to partner with other ministries and establishments that make up the public sector in the training of workers for productivity. The challenge facing the post-experience ones is equally daunting. The 1970s witnessed the establishment of organizations/agencies such as Centre for Management Development (CMD), the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), the later ones include the National Directorate for Employment and many skill acquisition centres under the Ministry of Women Affairs to organize training programmes for senior and intermediate level personnel of government. Retraining is equally very essential in manpower development. The employee who is already in the service is availed the opportunity of the modern technological changes and advancement. Resource persons or facilitators equipped with the relevant knowledge are attracted to expose the staff to modern administrative techniques. This retraining or in-services training, undoubtedly will improve the employee's skills, efficiency and effectiveness for higher productivity.

Benefits of Partnership among Organizations:

- ❖ Organizational partnership increases personnel/volunteer resources.
- ❖ It reduces duplications of services to same participants across organizations.
- ❖ Access to people, drawing a wider pool of technical expertise, experience, skills, labour and networks.
- ❖ Developing unexpected/new ways of addressing old issues and complex challenges through innovation.
- ❖ Human resource development: enhancing professional skills and competencies in the work force.
- ❖ Achieving genuinely earned organizational reputation and greater credibility.
- ❖ Partnerships bring the benefit of “economy of scale” with the sharing of both responsibility and funding requirements.
- ❖ Provides reduced cost-opportunities for participating organization.

The partnership as a whole will benefit from each individual partner organization seeing tangible values added to their organizational goals and priorities. It is therefore in the interest of each partner to be aware of and to contribute to individual partner goals wherever possible.

Challenges of Partnership among Organizations

Some cautions or challenges that an organization may encounter in pursuing strategic alliances or partnership include:

- ❖ Partnership is usually limited in scope to the objectives of the alliance or partnerships.
- ❖ Can become ineffective if one partner does not perform at the expected level or fulfill its obligations to the agreement.
- ❖ Collaboration among organizations can consume more human and financial resources than were anticipated.
- ❖ Can result in a loss of flexibility for the organization to take quick action in another area that may be in the organization's better interests than the area they are pursuing with a given partner.
- ❖ Implementation challenges: The day to day demands of delivering a partnership programme as a collaborative venture, with all the additional management, tracking, reporting and evaluation requirement that entails.
- ❖ Negative reputation impact: When partnership go wrong causing damage to the reputation or track record of individual partners by association.

Conclusion

Organizations enter into a strategic alliance or partnership with other organizations or for profit entities for many reasons. Typically, the objective is to exchange or publish information, offer education and training programmes. Each sector brings a different set of values, priorities, resources and competencies to a partnership. The challenge of any partnership is to bring these diverse contributions together, linked by a common vision in order to achieve sustainable development goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations were made:

- ❖ Potential partners need to consider the opportunity costs and preferably, establish some benchmarks against which they will measure whether the hoped-for outcomes of partnering are really worth the investment they are making.
- ❖ Secondly, it is recommended that constitutional problems manifesting in ambiguities over functions, which could result in duplication, conflict of responsibility and lack of co-ordination must be settled.
- ❖ Over protection and control of public agencies by Government should be reduced by the privatization of some public corporations. Private companies should be involved in the training of workers, especially in the area of funding such training programmes.
- ❖ Appropriate accounting, legal regulatory infrastructure must be provided to monitor the managers of organizations involved in the partnership.
- ❖ Politicization of the Nigeria public sector should be avoided, to ensure efficiency and better performance of the public sector.

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