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PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR JOB CREATION IN AN EMERGING ECONOMY: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE SINCE 1950s

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Abstract

The current unemployment challenges in Nigerian state seem to indicate that only government provides employment for the teeming youths in Nigeria. This is not so, the private organizations have also established schools and are complementing the efforts of government in job creation through the establishment of schools from the primary, secondary to world class universities. From the colonial era, private organizations mainly the Christian Missions, were pillars in the training of Nigerians whom they used to run the colonial economy. Private organizations have assisted the government in the socialization of the Nigerian children through teaching and learning thus preparing them for the life long process. The organizations through building of schools have employed millions of Nigerians both the skilled and the unskilled thereby reducing the employment stress on the government. It is concluded that the government while building and funding schools should extend same to private driven schools, and should encourage them to build technical/vocational schools so that the graduates of these schools become less dependent on government for employment. Whether government or private organizations, schools produce manpower for the nation, the later should see the former as agent of development and provide all it takes for her growth.

INTRODUCTION

For so long now the challenges in the social the sector of Nigerian economy, especially educations have been bogging many Nigerians who wish this nation well. Some of the challenges include education, low funding of schools from primary to tertiary levels; poor infrastructural facilities; unqualified and inadequate number of teachers in

our schools; poor performance of candidates in both the West African Examination Council and National Examination Council and by extension tertiary institution; poor reading culture among students and indeed Nigerian public.

However, with the increase in the member of candidates seeking to be educated and the 'lean' financial purse

of the government at various levels, it has become necessary for private individuals and organizations to complement the efforts of government in training Nigerians for the labour market and by extension the nation's economy. Indeed, there are many questions raised as the role of educational partnership in job creation and by extension, Nigeria's development? Is public/private partnership in education for profit making? Is private participation meant to fill the vacuum which government or public cannot fill? Are private institutions out to raise the Nigerian youths for future development? These questions would be addressed appropriately in the course of this discussion.

On the other hand Nigeria is a developing nation with varying challenges especially in the education sector. The world is changing rapidly and it would appear that the Nigerian government would not be able to shoulder the responsibilities of educating the growing number of youths alone. Against this background the paper advocates that there is need for partnership in education between the government, individuals and private organizations for Nigerian development.

The paper is arranged into four parts. Part one deals with introduction and conceptual clarifications; part two discusses the historical development of educational partnership in Nigeria; part three explains the roles individuals and private organizations play in human development and job creation while part four deals with the expected role of government in education partnership with the private sector, the way forward, and conclusion.

Concept of Partnership

The term partnership conveys many meanings and means different things to different people and climes. To the economists, businessmen, academics, policy makers, they see it differently. Generally the term partnership could simply mean a joint venture or a strategic alliance that is based on common interests between two or more entities. In business partnership there is an arrangement that could solve the problem of capital by pooling resources from more than one partner (Hussain, 2004). Educational partnership is the arrangement where the government is responsible for the establishment/running an educational institution for the sole aim of raising human capacity for the nation's development. In educational partnership the Government also allows private individuals or organizations to establish and run educational institutions with guidelines and approval for such institutions by the government. The development implies creation of job opportunities which would raise the living standard and add value to life for deserving Nigerians according to capabilities. Job creation is an added advantage to the economy. An economy is being run in many ways. Some of the ways are collection of raw materials for industrial production – thus creating avenues for consumption. Consumption is driven by workers within the economy. The more people gainfully employed within an economy would use their earning to chase goods and services. This is yet an added advantage because more goods purchased would lead to expansion of industries or

services thus attracting additional labour in the new outlets.

A partnership may be conceptualized as an association of person who carry on a business for the purpose of making a profit. The partners provide the capital and share the responsibility of the business on an agreed basis. Agreed proportions of capital, labour and management are contributed by each member and the profits of the undertaking are shared according to agreement. In some cases, however, one partner provides all or most of the capital and others contribute labour or technical skill with or without some of the capital (Jones & Jones, 1977; Thomas, 1973).

The concept of job creation is often being used wrongly by many people because of the poor notion that everyone, irrespective of skill, needs to work. This is not so. Job creation is a deliberate policy of government or government in partnership with investors to build strong economic institutions for the production of goods and services and to sustain them for effective utilization within the economy. For the economic institutions to add value, government or organizations need to train the workforce for acquisition of skills required to propel the institutions to function as needed. The training would then place the workforce where they rightly belong. When that occurs it leads the people and nation to wealth creation.

Understanding an Emerging Economy

The term emerging economy was first coined by Antoine Van Agtmael in 1981 to differentiate it from "Third

World" which suggested progress, uplift, and dynamism (Agtmael, 2007).

Emerging economy is explained as a situation in which traditionally agricultural exporter frog leap into major industrial centre with foreign firms investing in productive plants in the country thus facilitating the movement of peasants moving from the countryside into new urban jobs. It means an economy where millions of ordinary people begin to emerge from desperate poverty into at least the beginning of a decent life, and where some people are becoming very rich (Krugman, 2000). The production and expansion of goods and services beyond the domestic market through private or non- governmental actors, eliminating (or at least minimizing) government interference, linking her market beyond regional to the international levels. It means liberalization of production, distribution of goods and services beyond the domestic market thus leading to job/wealth creation (Viotti & Kauppi).

It also describes an economy which progressively moves from a weak industrial or subsistence level to a more advanced level of economic development with a dynamic and sustainable industrial sector having close links with advanced market economies in finance and investment system (Akpan, 2011).

Historical Development of Public/Private Partnership in Education

Historically, Western education gradually replaced the traditional education from the middle of the 19th century when missionary activities began. In Africa and long before the

advent of Christian missionaries and the Colonial Era schools were established in cities and states around the Nile in Egypt, down to Timbuctu. There were in existence Koranic schools in many parts of Northern Nigeria. Indeed, formal education as it is known today, came to Nigeria with the advent of Christian Missionaries (Fafunwa, 1977; Ukeje, 1978).

However, between 1841 and 1890 about six missions had arrived in Lagos from where they extended their activities to other parts of Nigeria. The missions were the Wesleyan Methodist Society which established a station at Badagry; the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland that founded a mission in Calabar. Others were the American Southern Baptist Mission; the Roman Catholic Mission; the Qua Iboe Mission and the Primitive Methodist. By 1952, these Missions had established altogether 1, 654 elementary schools, 10 secondary schools and 14 teacher training institutions all over Nigeria (Ukeje 1978). This is a confirmation that before government participation in establishment and running of school in the late 1950s, private organizations were at the forefront of establishment and running of educational institutions in Nigeria.

Indeed and at first the colonial administration did not participate in education until 1877 when it provided grants of about £200 to each of the Missionary Societies carrying out educational activities in the Colony of Lagos; and that was the beginning of the practice of grants-in-aid to voluntary agencies. In other words, the colonial administration was behind the growth and development of missionary

educational institutions through granting of aid and security for their functioning.

The colonial administration participation in the education of the colonies came in 1882 when the administration enacted the first Educational Ordinance that affected the colony of Lagos. By this time Lagos was jointly administered along with other British West African Dependencies of Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast now Ghana. The ordinance stipulated that, one third of the salary of the inspector of schools for all the British Dependencies on the coast of West Africa should be borne by the colony of Lagos. This was yet another area of support by the colonial administration to the private organizations who established schools in Nigeria and indeed West Africa (Ukeje, 1978).

In addition, 1909 marked the beginning of full colonial involvement in education. In that year, the first important government secondary school, King's College, Lagos was founded. By this time, the total number of government schools had reached forty. It should be noted here that most of these schools also received financial support from the local chiefs. This marked the beginning of joint partnership between the colonial administration, voluntary or private organizations (the missionaries) and the indigenous people (Ukeje, 1978).

Between 1954 and 1957 different regions in Nigeria initiated and became firmly rooted in educational affairs of their regions e.g. Obafemi Awolowo, the then premier of Western Region, initiated the free and compulsory primary education for the Westerners.

Indeed, January 1955 marked the beginning of an educational revolution not only in the West but also in Nigeria as a whole (Fafunwa, 1977).

Furthermore, in 1960 Nigeria attained 'flag' independence and began to take over her affairs fully from the hands of colonial lords. Education was not left out, hence, she began to build tertiary institutions to complement the primary and secondary institutions built by the colonial lords. In 1972, the federal government took over all schools and handed over to the respective states to administer. At this time, some voluntary organizations (missions) were still running special mission schools, and individuals began to build schools. By 1980 private secondary schools and technical colleges began to emerge. These schools were built for profit making. In what is now Akwa Ibom State, schools such as Modern Secondary commercial School, Aka Road Uyo; Efficient Secondary commercial School, Udo Obio Street, Uyo. Technical College, Oyubia, Oron, Secondary Commercial School Ntan Ekere in Ibiono Ibom to mention but a few were established. These private schools then were regarded as unapproved schools – which means they did not receive any recognition from the government and as such could not benefit from any government aid (Nsima, 2014). Presently, there are over five private polytechnics to assist in manpower development in technical areas. However, ten years ago, private individuals and organizations mainly indigenous, began to build tertiary institutions of world class standards to complement the efforts of government

in manpower development for the country.

Today there are over forty private Universities in Nigeria offering various courses in Science, Arts, Medicine and allied disciplines – all to assist in building human capital for the nation (Umanah, 2014). It is contended that these private organizations are not just complementing the efforts of government for the training of manpower for the nation, but they are also out solely for profit maximization. That has translated into high school fees charged in these institutions. The school fees are outrageous and outside the reach of average Nigerians. School fees in tertiary institutions range from ₦350,000.00 to ₦500,000.00 per session depending on the school. It may be asked, how many average Nigerians can afford that with a minimum wage of ₦18,000.00 per months? The bourgeoisie classes are actually those benefiting from these emerging schools.

Private Schools and Nigeria's Development

Nigeria is an emerging economy with low industrial base yet with a very high population level. According to World Bank projection, Nigeria has a growth rate of 6.5 percent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but unfortunately the growth rate does not translate to development. There is high unemployment rate which is viewed as a security risk to the country. Although it has not really been proven, it is however, often said by popular consensus that the militants in the Niger Delta, and Boko Haram in North East Nigeria are products of youths

frustration as a result of unemployment and declining standard of living.

From the above perspective, private schools play key roles in the economic and social development of Nigeria. From primary, secondary through tertiary levels, these schools offer to many Nigerians the necessary breathe for existence. They teach the children how to read and write; how to socialize and to be-development-oriented. The school prepares them for life long process such as integration. Besides, private schools have trained and also have employed millions of Nigerians both as academic and non-academic staff. By extension, they have provided food and other basic necessities of life which make life worth-living. Employment in economic pariance has a linkage effect on the economy and by extension, human development. The craze for the establishment of private schools is a result of the failure of the public schools to live up to expectations owing to lack of political will – poor funding, poor remuneration to lecturers among others.

Although, some critics argue that private institutions are exploitative in their business dealings with the public, others also argue that since they must survive they need to apply all methods of business indices that make for the survival of business outfits. Many Nigerians also argue that private schools are business centres hence business ethics must be applied if they must stay afloat in the competitive world.

However, in 1900 and up to 1950s, the personnels that the mission schools turned out formed the bulk of the core civil servants used to run the colonial and post colonial administration

in Nigeria. There is a link that private organizations are doing well in producing manpower used by government in agriculture, arts and science, businesses all over the country.

The Expected Role of Government in Public/Private Participation in Education

Public and private participation in educational development builds human capacity to fit into the changing world through training. In other words, both complement each other to develop manpower for Nigeria's development. The training of individuals or manpower development is capital intensive. Besides, the manpower so developed is utilized within the economy thus relieving the government of the burden of going employment to such a large employable number of youths which are absorbed by private organizations. Again, it assists the government to contend with social problems which arise from unemployment and poverty. In this connection therefore, there is the need for the application of the social contract theory between individuals and the state.

The government must provide security in all perspectives for schools to function and contribute to the economy. Though the business of security is technical in a way, what it implies here is physical security. It means that, there must be no threat to lives so that teaching and learning can take place effectively. In the colonial days, especially during the early days of the advent of Western education, the colonial government used to give grant-in-aid to the missions for the running of their schools. The understanding was

that the people so trained then were utilized by all parties for the development of the nation. In this connection, therefore, government should support these organizations either through grant-in-aid or the provision of infrastructure especially at the tertiary levels. Closely following that is the fact that the purpose of private schools is to complement government effort in raising manpower for the country. However the schools should not be for certain class of Nigerians, namely the rich. School fees in these schools should be regulated by government to allow both children from rich and poor homes to have access to them. The sudden challenge in Nigerian education is the production of unemployable graduates who look on to government for jobs. There is need to shift from the missionary education to vocational/technical education to prepare the youths to be relevant in Nigeria in future. The government, therefore, need to encourage individuals or organizations willing to establish technical/vocational schools, universities of science and technology, polytechnics and monotchnics through financial aid or building and equipping these schools. The schools need to be monitored to maintain the requisite standard of all levels of the educational strata.

The Federal Government of Nigeria through States, Ministries of Education, other educational agencies have been empowered and are regulating the opening and running of schools whether privately owned or publicly owned. For instance the National Universities Commission (NUC) is responsible for the supervision and approval of the establishment of

universities in Nigeria, while the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) anchors in technical schools and Polytechnics, colleges of Technology and allied schools.

The Way Forward

There are so many challenges in our educational system. Indeed the basic intervention needed in the public/private system to move education forward is the political will on the part of the government. The funding of education is always seen as a challenge, yes, but if the government has the political will, funding would be simple. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) put that 26 percent of a nation's budget be allocated to education. It further added that any country which wishes to become part of the 21st century should devote 30 – 40 percent of her total annual budget to education (Punch, September 22, 2013). Nigeria has been allocating between 9 and 11 percent over the years and this cannot place Nigeria on the ladder of educational growth. But other countries less endowed than Nigeria allocate between 32 and 40 percent to this sector. If government is sincere, it would share this 26 percent – part will go to the private organizations. Manpower training for the nation is symbiotic hence, the utilization remains national. Generally, there is Educational Trust Fund; the fund should also be extended to the development of private schools as a symbol of partnership.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to look at the concept of partnership in

education in the contemporary society and the benefits derived. Most importantly, it traces the historical development of public/private partnership in which the union started with the coming of missionaries to Nigeria in the middle of the 19th century. That government participation in education is positive when she does what would sustain it. Wealth and job creation is the product of strong and productive institutions created by government through good policies and assisted by strong entrepreneurs or investors. Job creation is the product of skills to change things for the development of man. That government should have political will to fund education by considering the UNESCO recommendation of 26 percent of annual budget for education. Manpower development is for the benefit of the nation, hence public/private partnership should be seen as symbiotic. The regulation and supervision of the private schools should be the function of government through her agencies. Both private and public (government) are agents of Nigeria's development.

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