

Missing Link: Partnership of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and Industries in Addis Ababa

Demessew Alemu Woldetsadik¹ and Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi²

¹*Ministry of Agriculture*

E-mail: dalemu12@yahoo.com,

²*University of South Africa, South Africa*

E-mail: Lumadmw@unisa.ac.za

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ABSTRACT Public-Private Partnership (PPP) has become an important tool for the implementation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs in some countries of the world. However, it is not appreciated by TVET partners in Addis Ababa. In this research an attempt was made to investigate the partnership of TVET colleges and industries/enterprises. Unstructured interview questions were prepared and presented to the TVET colleges (Entoto and Selam), apprenticeship training coordinators and industry supervisors (Marathon Motor Engineering Enterprise (MMEE), Anbesa City Bus Transport Service Enterprise (ACBTSE) and Hibret Manufacturing and Machine Building Industry (HMMBI). Participants of the research were asked whether they had established clear agreement and understanding of the TVET program and were performing according to the agreement they had reached. It was concluded that no true PPP exist among TVET colleges and industries. Consequently, industries/enterprises hesitate to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) to implement apprenticeship training and lack clarity on the objectives of TVET (apprenticeship training) programs. It was suggested that when establishing PPP in TVET programs in Addis Ababa necessary conditions should include a clear understanding of PPP and its purpose, equitable outcomes expected from each partner and the need for implementation according to the agreement reached.

INTRODUCTION

The need to produce skilled manpower demands the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders of TVET. This can be implemented through the establishment of strong partnerships between public and private institutions. Thus, partnerships between TVET colleges and industries should clearly specify which service should be provided and by whom. It should also reflect the partners' shared responsibilities and explain each partner's rights and obligations in detail. As it may be known, the current TVET delivery system requires the exertion of efforts by all partners, from international as well as global perspective. Accordingly, the government as the main partner of TVET may be vested with the responsibilities of law and policy-making, controlling quality management of the TVET system and providing support to TVET colleges. The private sector, on the other hand, is expected to provide in-company TVET training programs, apply best experiences for quality training programmes and improve the supply of the TVET system through the use of resources, etc. (MoE 2008). However, the nature of apprenticeship training requires the establishment of

PPP and assumes the presence of fair and equal responsibilities among partners. Both partners are expected to reach at consensus regarding the implementation of apprenticeship training program. This is reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the two parties. Based on this premise, a study was conducted to explore the views of apprenticeship training coordinators in TVET colleges and industries/enterprises supervisors on the implementation of PPP.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study participants' understanding of PPP was used as a source of data. In line with this, a purposeful sampling process was employed. This enabled the researchers to intentionally select the participants that they think can produce information on the topic under research (Leedy and Ormrod 2010). Moreover, the researchers selected information-rich cases for in-depth research without the need to generalise on similar cases (McMillan and Schumacher 2010).

The process of examining PPP in the selected TVET colleges (Entoto and Selam) and in-

dustries (MMEE, ACBTSE and HMMBI) was employed through the application of the qualitative research method. This method was chosen due to the fact that it enabled the researchers to conduct an in-depth investigation of the relationship between the partners of TVET colleges and industries/enterprises. Accordingly, heads of the apprenticeship training coordinators in the two TVET colleges and the supervisors in the three selected industries/enterprises were interviewed. The participants were asked about general principles governing the PPP, how each of them understood it, how they established agreement and how they implemented the agreement based on the consensus reached.

The unstructured interview questions were prepared and presented to all the selected participants. They were, thus, asked whether they clearly understood the apprenticeship training program, how they reached consensus on the implementation of apprenticeship training and how they implemented the apprenticeship training program.

All the data obtained from each source were transcribed in the English language. All interview texts were collected and underwent a segmenting and coding process (Johnson and Christensen 2004). The analysis was made by reducing and displaying the data using a table and finally by interpreting it.

During the coding process the researchers read the interview text of each participant line by line and raised questions related to the research purpose. The analysis was made based on the main questions of PPP. In doing so, each case was examined in terms of the research purpose.

FINDINGS

Based on the data gathered, the following major findings were discovered:

The selected TVET colleges and industries/enterprises did not reach a clear understanding of the apprenticeship training programme prior to its implementation. Both the selected partners were not implementing apprenticeship training according to the legal and policy frameworks. This is due to the fact that industries/enterprises were not assigning apprentices to the right workplace where they could acquire skills, did not acquaint apprentices with work rules, did

not consider apprentices regular employees and did not correctly evaluate their performance. TVET colleges, in their part, did not regularly assign coordinators to monitor the apprenticeship training program at the industries/enterprises and did not consider feedback as criteria for apprentices' certification.

Both partners in the study were not familiar with the need for partnership in the implementation of apprenticeship. It was observed that industries were hesitant to admit apprentices, did not allow apprentices to use the tool at the industries/enterprises, did not arrange special apprenticeship programmes and consultation for the apprentices, did not assign the right kind of supervisor to assist the apprentices, etc. TVET providers, on the other hand, could not arrange special discussion programs with industries to orient them on the meaning and principles of the apprenticeship training program, its contribution and how it can be implemented.

The selected industries/enterprises were hesitant to sign MoU with the TVET colleges before they started the training of apprentices. The selected industries were not willing to sign MoU before they start implementing the apprenticeship training program. Instead, they were inclined to accept very limited number of apprentices without providing the right kind of orientation on the institutions or basic information on the apprenticeship training process in the industry/enterprise.

It would be hard to claim that both partners in the study were implementing the apprenticeship training programme according to the principles of PPP. Both partners create relationship of short duration that ceases immediately after the apprenticeship training programme is completed. As no mechanism existed to enhance the process for a long duration, the responsibilities of each partner are not known, no clear understanding exists regarding the program, etc. Thus, the program is not implemented according to the principles of PPP. However, the need to train apprentices through the apprenticeship training program has continued.

DISCUSSION

The selected partners had no clear understanding of the apprenticeship training programme. Partnership is a collaborative activity among business, non-profit organisations and

government bodies in which risks, resources and skills are shared that can benefit each partner. This kind of cooperation is by nature a formal structure which can range from formal legally binding contracts to general agreements (McQuaid 2000). It can be perceived as a mutual cooperation that involves organisations for the delivery of goods or services (Akhter 2010). The situation is not different in TVET as there are partners who are required to implement the training programme.

As it was observed in the study, the selected partners have no clear understanding of the “why” of the TVET programme. It will be hard to produce skilled person having the right kind of job skill. Clear consensus about the programme can result in the production of a competent workforce. A market-driven TVET training programme can be achieved through a clear understanding of the programme and sustained cooperation with the industries or the employers (MacDonald et al. 2010).

The delivery of training in the selected TVET providers was confined within their respective campuses. This poses a risk as all of them could not fulfil the practical dimension of the training of a given job. This has an implication on the participation of the private sector and necessitates the establishment of PPP with private partners (Brans 2011).

The need for partnership in the implementation of apprenticeship training was not critically understood by the partners. The issue of PPP is well stated in both educational policy and legal documents in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the need to train apprentices through the apprenticeship training programme was articulated in the educational policy document as: “...training will be provided in agriculture, crafts, basic book keeping, in the form of apprenticeship for those with appropriate age” (TGE 1994: 16).

In addition, a national TVET strategy prepared by the Ministry of Education (MoE 2008) was adapted with the view of creating competent and self-reliant citizens who can participate in the economic and social development of the country. It emphasised the importance of PPP and outlined the need for establishing a partnership between government and non-government sectors.

The strategy further explained the unique role each partner can play in the implementation of the TVET programme. It places an obligation on

industries to implement in-company training. In parallel with this, it discusses the current weaknesses of the private sector in the implementation of the TVET programme. The need to apply PPP has also received special attention in the ESDP IV (Educational Sector Development Programme) document. It is described as a tool for implementing apprenticeship training with industries (MoE 2010).

Further, equally important is the view reflected in the TVET proclamation regarding the implementation of apprenticeship training programs through the collaborative effort of employers and other stakeholders of TVET. The law stipulated the responsibilities of industries and the means of implementing apprenticeship training (FDRE 2003). Both industries and TVET colleges, at all levels, are expected to act according to the law. The law expects partners to regulate the implementation of apprenticeship training.

The presence of legal and policy frameworks in the country has the potential of guiding the effectiveness of the contractual PPP agreements between the private and public sectors. It can further ensure the accountability of partners and effective application of the management of PPP in the sector (AACCSA 2011).

An agreement between the TVET partners should be a requirement for implementing apprenticeship training programme. After reaching a clear consensus about the objectives of the programme, both the partners are expected to sign the agreement that enables them to work together. In fact, the agreement signed by the partners can be non-statutory in nature (SPF 2008). Both the partners are expected to act according to the agreement they reached. It is supposed to be reflected in a document known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

A less formal agreement in the TVET partnership can fail to bind both partners. This kind of PPP may be described as an organisational network rather than a real partnership and may be more appropriate for relationship building between partners. This takes various forms and often involves simple meetings of partners who can formally or informally report the result to their own organisation (McQuaid 2000).

It is true that the TVET partners are expected to act according to the agreement reached. Failure to perform may result in the unsuccessful implementation of TVET, especially the appren-

ticeship training programme. The MoU signed by the partners will become a tool for enforcing the required behaviour. Partners who fail to sign MoU may receive inappropriate response or partial acceptance of the offer. Hesitation in signing documents may not only be a typical problem of partners of TVET (SPF 2008).

The need to apply PPP principles through the active participation of stakeholders should be well understood by partners. *The selected industries/enterprises* were supposed to provide actual apprenticeship training through PPP. However, a temporary relationship was used rather than applying PPP principle and was not performing based on MoU.

Partnership, in the TVET context, presupposes the presence of a relationship among TVET colleges, industries and other government offices for the sole purpose of providing practical training (Musobo and Gaga 2012). This kind of relationship comes into effect as the TVET delivery system requires the use of more equipment, highly qualified trainers and well-developed infrastructure. The nature of TVET training demands the production of more skilful people who can do the actual jobs in the industries. It also compels the formation of partnership to share the burdens and guarantee to use the infrastructure in the industries. Due to these reasons, governments invite private institutions to take part in this kind of partnership. Eventually, agreements will remind them to work together on the common issues raised.

The very nature of PPP needs a quid pro quo approach among partners. Accordingly, in the TVET context, industries are expected to make their infrastructure available for the training of apprentices. They, in turn, can use the labour of apprentices while conducting the apprenticeship training or may absorb apprentices after the conclusion of the training programme. Both partners are expected to monitor the whole programme according to the agreement they reached.

Moreover, the partners should be concerned about the implementation of the object of agreement. This involves, who does what, including who provides resources and who controls them. The partners may agree to coordinate and alter priorities of the existing services at their disposals, or they may agree to operate through one unit alone. Its success and failure depends on

various factors, such as ownership, power and commitment (McQuaid 2000). PPP further guides the partners on how, what, when and where to perform their obligations. The failure to respond according to the agreement may result in sanctions for non-performance (Brans 2011).

CONCLUSION

It is true that TVET delivery is expensive and required the allocation of huge financial, human and material resources. This seems a burden and governments request the private sector to lend a hand. As a result, joint cooperation needs to be established between the public and private sectors. This approach enhances the foundation for the successful implementation of apprenticeship training programme. However, PPP in TVET delivery is a recent experience in the Ethiopian context. It was not popular before the new educational policy came into being. The new chapter has paved the way for the implementation of the TVET training programme with industries/enterprises. Despite this fact, there exists a weak partnership among TVET providers and industries/enterprises in Addis Ababa, regarding the delivery of apprenticeship training. Some industries/enterprises in Addis Ababa are not willing to cooperate with TVET colleges to work on apprenticeship training. The investigation of the presence of PPP and its implementation in the selected Addis Ababa TVET colleges and industries/enterprises has resulted in the following conclusion:

- 1) Unorganised arrangement of PPP exists among the selected industries and TVET colleges in Addis Ababa.
- 2) Supervisors in the selected industries/enterprises think that the assignment of apprentices is a government interest than a programme to produce skilled people for the country's economy.
- 3) The temporary relationship that should exist in the institutions does not meet the PPP criteria.
- 4) TVET colleges reported that the industries were hesitant to sign MoU.
- 5) The kind of temporary relationship formed with the selected partners was secured by the efforts of apprenticeship training coordinators in each college rather than through formal PPP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The need to create PPP is necessary for the implementation of the TVET programme. Both legal and policy frameworks that can facilitate PPP exist in Ethiopia. However, the research findings have shown that PPP is not correctly implemented by the TVET partners. The reasons can be attributed to lack of clear understanding on the TVET programme and failure to reach consensus on its implementation.

The effective implementation of the apprenticeship training programme requires the establishment of strong PPP among all sectors. However, the current research has shown the absence of PPP among its partners. Unless this problem is solved, the future of the apprenticeship training programme will be in jeopardy. Ultimately, the quality of skilled graduates in all trades will cause an effect on the country's economy.

To enhance the successful implementation of apprenticeship training through PPP among TVET partners, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1) The main partners of TVET should have a clear understanding of the TVET programme in general and apprenticeship training in particular. Thus, the Addis Ababa TVET Agency should play a role in facilitating this condition.
- 2) The quid pro quo or win-win situation of PPP should be reflected in the agreement made by both partners of TVET.
- 3) Both PPP partners of the apprenticeship training should sign MoU before its implementation and should act accordingly.
- 4) The dynamic nature of PPP should be maintained and the necessary adjustments should be made by all partners on time.

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