

**TERTIARY EDUCATION FOR JOB CREATION AND NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT: A CASE FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY OF TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

There is an increasing awareness by host communities in Nigeria of the need for corporate social responsibility by corporate entities operating in their domain. They are equally aware of their rights and are demanding that companies and organizations in their land live up to their social responsibilities to them. There is a gale of agitations in Nigeria over the social responsiveness of organizations especially in the Niger Delta. These agitations are not limited to oil and gas companies and profit making business organizations alone, but to other sectors which include tertiary educational institutions. This paper sets out to investigate the involvement of tertiary educational institutions in corporate social responsibilities in Nigeria. It identified areas where intervention is needed in majority of host communities. Conclusion was drawn on the indispensability of corporate social responsibility in modern day communities and recommendations proffered by the authors to the effect that operators of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria should integrate corporate social responsibility strategies into their organisational strategy amongst others

Introduction

The Nigerian education is based on the belief that education is the vehicle for effective human and national development. Ward (1883) observed that "education is essential motive force for progress". Educational institutions according to him

are centres for human betterment for the progress of society.

UNESCO (2000) affirmed the global resurgence in the recognition of the indispensable role education and educational institutions play in economic

and social development of a nation's economy.

Educational institutions, especially the tertiary ones ought to bear some levels of social responsibilities to the society that sustain their existence and operations. Corporate Social Responsibility is the concern of corporate organizations/institutions for the welfare of the society that sustains their operations. Olohi (2008), observed that corporate social responsibility is more than just an economic role in society; stressing that the society expects corporate bodies to play direct roles in meeting host community needs in education, social welfare, job creation schemes and contribution to oversea aids, etc.

Nigeria as country is blessed with a number of tertiary institutions owned by federal, states and private individual's and/or organizations, but one is yet to have documented contributions of these institutions by way of direct contributions to the welfare of their immediate host communities. The feeling is that since the laws creating these institutions regards them as body corporate; they should be involved in corporate social responsibility or be socially responsible.

Statement of Problem

The laws creating virtually all tertiary institutions in Nigeria recognizes them as agent of development (Delta State Government, 2002). Tertiary institutions in Nigeria have the primary objectives clearly spelt out in the legal instrument creating them. Besides their primary objectives, however, there are other

subsidiary objectives which are expected to directly impact on their immediate society or host communities.

Unfortunately, most of these institutions do not consider their operational impact on their host community, neither are they involved in activities that will directly benefit their immediate host communities as way of cushioning the negative impacts of their presence in such communities.

Objectives of the Study

This paper attempts to emphasize the need for tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria to embrace the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility as part of their management strategies.

Specifically, the paper aims at persuading tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria to strive at meeting their host communities' expectations in terms of:

- Education
- Job creation
- Social welfare/development
- Infrastructural development
- Economic development.

Conceptual Framework

The idea of corporate social responsibility has been around for a long time, beginning with the work of writers such as Bowen (1953) cited by many as the 'father of corporate social responsibility and carrying on through the work of Davis (1960, 1973), Johnson (1971), Jones (1980, 1983) and more recently, Carroll (1991, 1999).

The idea really exploded in the period following the East Summit of 1992, since which event corporate social responsibility has become a veritable industry in its own right with its own ‘practitioners journals conferences’

Serious reflection on the impact of corporate social responsibility seems loosely divided into two camps; on the one hand, from those closely connected to its praxis, there is the idea that whilst corporate social responsibility might not be perfect, it has at least in some areas, led to significant transformations in how individual corporate institutions conduct their affairs.

WBCSD (2000), in reviewing the evolution of corporate social responsibility, agreed that it has been successfully mainstreamed and that “partnerships and alliances that are firmly rooted in social responsibility grounds are flourishing”. Among them are a range of collaborations which promote such initiatives as good employee relations, community empowerment, educational awareness and supply chain/customer engagement.

On the other hand, corporate social responsibility is perceived by critics as little more than a public relations exercise designed to give the appearance of social responsibility and changing commercial practice whilst in reality doing nothing to change corporate priorities or operating practices.

Aids (2004), a major critic, described it “as a completely inadequate response to the sometimes devastating impacts that organizations can have in an ever-more

globalised world ... it is actually used to mask the impact”.

What role corporate social responsibility might play in transforming the operating practice of corporations, will plainly depend on what middle-grounds can be sought between those two apparently opposing view points, and the dynamics, that drives the debate any further. The most critical voices in the critical management literature do explore potential ways in which corporate social responsibility or related concepts might be developed more effectively.

Whereas it is nice to talk about corporate institutions being socially responsible, one issue that must be addressed is how or what are the indications that an organization is making social responsiveness an integral part of management decision making?

Crowther (2000) opined that effective social audit would enable us to know the level of an organization’s social responsiveness since it measures the effects of positive social programme and subtract the negative effects of operations to derive net social benefits.

Therefore, a socially responsible corporate body is one that would identify with all or any of the under listed activities amongst others:

- Community –related activities such as participating in local fund-raising campaigns, donating executive-time to various non-profit organizations and participating in urban planning and development.
- Job creation and employee related activities such as equal opportunities

schemes, flextime, improved benefits, job enlargement and enrichment, job safety and employee development programmes.

- Political activities such as taking a position on issues such as nuclear safety, gun control, pollution control, human kidnapping control, consumers' protection and working more closely with local, state and federal government officials.
- Support for education, arts and other non-profit making social agencies.
- Consumers' activities, such as product safety, honest advertising, prompt complaint handling, honest pricing policies and extensive consumers' education programme

Drivers for Corporate Social Responsibility of Tertiary Educational Institutions in Nigeria.

The perception of corporate social responsibility in our tertiary educational institutions tend to be one sided. It has merely revolved around the private sector investment in the funding and sponsorship of programmes in our universities and colleges with little or no concern for what these institutions has to offer to the society or their immediate host communities as compensation for the negative impacts of their operations.

Gray, Owen & Maunders (1987), are of the view that corporate social responsibility should promote a vision of organizational accountability to a wide range of stakeholders, beyond shareholders and investors. The key areas of concern

are environmental protection and well being of employees, the host communities and civil society in general, both now and in the future.

The operations of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria are not without negative impact on its environment and their culture. Ovbiagele and Osadi (2010) identified a number of environmental negative impacts of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria which includes:

- Acquisition of large land mass previously owned by their host communities. In most cases, the lands are hardly compensated for by government or the institutions.
- High cost of living in the affected communities occasioned by the increased demand pull created by these tertiary institutions.
- Extension of anti social behaviours to local communities as a fall out of the convergence of persons of divers backgrounds. Cultism is the prevalent of these socially undesirable behaviours.
- The gradual, but sustained erosion of the culture of the host communities as in the massive importation of strange culture and practices by students of these tertiary educational institutions.
- Increase in the rates of crime as a result of the influx of people into the host communities; and
- The continuous threat to the security of host communities as

often experienced in students' unrest.

Since the traditional views about competitiveness, survival and profitability are being swept away, the concept of corporate social responsibility is now underpinned by the idea that corporations such as tertiary educational institutions can no longer act as isolated educational entities operating in detachment from broader society (Ikon, 2004).

Areas of Possible Intervention in Corporate Social Responsibilities by Tertiary Educational Institutions in Nigeria.

Durkheim (1956) is of the view that education is for the progress of society And that education is basically and essentially a social function. Education and tertiary education in particular remains the instrument for construction of stable citizenship and national viability, a training ground for economic and social development as well as a vital route of escape from poverty (UNESCO, 2000).

Through tertiary educational opportunities, the individual and the society is offered opportunity to develop, thus, tertiary education in particular constitute the engine room for modernization (World Bank, 2000). As a way of contributing directly to their immediate host communities, tertiary educational institutions may well think of

registering their presence through involvement in the development and promotion of:

- Arts and culture of the host communities through participation in and contribution to the organization of cultural events
- Providing a substantial part for their employment opportunities to host communities. Though, the laws establishing most public tertiary institutions make provisions for the engagement of some categories of employees from host communities, one is not too sure of the level of compliance with this provision.
- Free extra-mural education schemes for the youths of the immediate host communities. Since most tertiary institutions can boast of large population of qualified human resources in diverse fields, these can be channeled to the coaching of the youths of immediate community in the form of extra-mural coaching sessions.
- Medical colleges in our universities parades a number of dependable undergraduates and postgraduates medical students that can be organized to provide basic medical assistance to people in immediate host communities.
- Maintenance of community drainages/sewage systems by engineering students in addition to provision of free consultancy services to community projects will

go a long way to fast track development of host communities.

- Donation to community funds raising activities for developmental purposes and \ or donation of executive and technical assistance which will promote immediate host communities' development.

Conclusion

The growth in the number of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria suggests a favourable operational base. That the legal instruments creating these institutions recognizes them as body corporate capable of owing and disposing assets lends credence to the need for their social responsiveness.

It is equally recognized that the operations of these tertiary institutions have had some negative impact on their host communities. As responsible institutions that must continue to exist, it is only right that they device a means of cushioning these negative impacts. A well articulated corporate social responsibility scheme will go a long way to ensure good community relations and community goodwill for tertiary educational institution in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Arising from the foregoing, are the following recommendations:

- Operators of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria should develop the ability and willingness to relate its plans and policies to the social environment in mutually

beneficial ways to both the organization and the society.

- Tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria should partner with their host communities in fostering development in education, basic health care and agriculture.
- The management of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria should pay attention to and implement some, if not all, of their subsidiary objectives contained in the laws establishing them since they bother on their social responsibility to their host communities and the society as a whole.
- Tertiary educational institutions should venture into areas that can ensure job creation for certain categories of workers or persons from their local or host communities.
- Tertiary educational institutions should participate in schemes aimed at promoting and preserving the cultural heritage of their host communities.
- Tertiary educational institutions should extend some existing physical facilities on their campuses to their host communities. This may include extension of water and power supplies, community policing and security, and construction of link feeder roads, amongst others.

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