

# **PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTORS' COLLABORATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUNCTIONAL UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

*The study examined public-private sectors' collaboration for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and hypotheses were posed to guide the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design with a population of 205 Academic Staff comprising of 110 male and 95 female lecturers in the Departments of Education in the 3 public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Sequel to the manageable size of the population, it was used for the study as sample size. A research instrument titled "Public-Private Sectors' Collaboration for Sustainable Functional University Education Questionnaire (PPSCSFUEQ)" structured by the researchers and validated by experts with reliability co-efficient of 0.79 determined with Cronbach's Alpha was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The study revealed among others that the public-private sectors can collaborate in various ways in human resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria It was recommended among others that the government should strive for a healthy matrimony with the private sector in order to ensure effective human resource management which is a key issue for sustainable functional education.*

**Keywords:** Public-Private Sectors' Collaboration, Sustainable, Functional, University Education

**Introduction**

Globally, education has been regarded as a potent tool for engineering the progress of development both on the individual basis and the society at large. As a development agent, it is valued by all nations of the world because it has brought total liberation to man. It is a source of man's transformation from ignorance and misery to knowledge and happiness. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. It has made man useful to himself, his generation and beyond. Education is identified as an effective tool that is capable of breaking the cycle of poverty and lays a strong foundation for socio-economic development of a nation. It develops the human capital of a nation for economic efficiency and social consistency. The development of the relevant human capital, especially the high level cadre is basically the statutory responsibility of higher education. The focus of this study is university education which is an aspect of higher education.

University education is an advanced education among the systems of education which leads to career stratification. It is the education that develops the knowledge, skills, and productive capacities of the labour force, and acts as a catalyst in encouraging modern attitudes and aspirations. It is a universally accepted major instrument for the promotion of socio-economic, political and cultural development, being the driver and source of knowledge and skills for high level manpower production (Emenalo, 2016). Its acquisition can lead to technological innovation, productivity and growth within the economy. It plays significant role in the transformation of individuals and the development of a nation's human capital. Through university education, the essential skilled manpower for both the formal and informal sectors of the economy are produced for socio-economic development. To achieve this goal year in year out, sustainable functional university education is imperative.

Sustainable functional university education has to do with maintaining and improving university education that is of practical relevance to the individual and the society at large. This offers the possibility of education that is functional and durable ieit works well enough in practice and to be able to keep doing it. It is the education that helps the society meet their developmental needs (Nwakpa, et al., 2017).Sustainable functional education ensures that productive human capital are developed on a sustainable basis for socio-economic and political development of a nation. This is to say that the result of sustainable functional university education is the production of graduates with useful knowledge and skills which make them fit into the society and to function effectively towards the transformation of the society. It

is apparent that a significant option for the development of sustainable functional university education in Nigeria is for the various governments to engage in public-private sectors' collaboration otherwise, partnership.

Public-private partnership broadly refer to work relations between the government and the private sector in the design and delivery of service which were previously a sole government responsibility (Mgaiwa&Poncian, 2016). This system occurs when the government strive for an interplay with the members of the private sector to work together to achieve common goals and is often used as a means for solving a variety of problems and complex issues. Public-private sectors' collaboration takes place in different areas as well as in education. Terver (2018) viewed PPP in education as the pooling and management of resources, as well as the mobilization of private industry, and civil society partners' competencies so as to improve the quality of education. In other words, public-private sectors' collaboration avails the private sector the opportunity to collaborate in providing and managing school resources to ensure good quality education and invariably guarantee its sustainability. Collaboration of such sort can be a significant catalyst to positive advancement in human, physical and financial resources' management in education.

Public-private sectors' collaboration in education has been seen as a viable mechanism for qualitative and sustainable functional education across the globe. It is projected as an innovative idea to tap private resources and expertise, and to encourage the active participation of the private sector in education. Many governments, international organizations and other key education stakeholders consider that, by partnering with the private sector, countries can expand and sustain their education systems in a more efficient, flexible and effective way (Robertson, et al., 2012). The private sectors can express readiness and commitments towards making contributions that will enable the government achieve public aspirations. It is against this backdrop that the study sought to examine public-private sectors' collaboration for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sustainable functional education is an indispensable and requisite instrument for socio-economic and manpower development, and the overall well-being of a nation. Sustainable functional education is a crucial and demanding task and responsibility that requires the collective and co-operative efforts and inputs to achieve. Public-private sectors' collaboration has emerged as a veritable means of ensuring sustainable functional education in both developed and developing countries. Regrettably, public-private sectors' collaboration is yet to be given adequate attention by the Nigerian government

to tap into the numerous benefits that accrues from this mechanism. The erosion of political will on this mechanism leaves the burden of managing the universities on the shoulders of the governments which does not augur well for the universities. Relying on the governments alone has not been favourable as manifested in the unpleasant situations in the universities such as strike actions, brain drain, inadequate and dilapidated facilities, and most worrisome poor funding which crystalizes in the production of half-baked graduates in the universities. Therefore, there is the need to explore public-private sectors' collaboration for sustainable functional university education.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed at examining public-private sectors' collaboration for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were addressed:

1. find out the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in human resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. determine the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in physical resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. investigate the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in financial resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. In what ways can public-private sectors collaborate in human resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. In what ways can public-private sectors collaborate in physical resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. In what ways can public-private sectors collaborate in financial resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can

- collaborate in human resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in physical resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria
  3. There is no significant difference between the mean values of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in financial resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

Sustainable functional education depends upon an enabling environment particularly inputs and support in the form of human, material and financial resources. The human resource management is a key issue for sustainable functional education. According to Ezugoh and Mbonu (2021), human resource management in education essentially is concerned with three major issues namely: assessing the need for staff, satisfying the need for staff, and maintaining and improving the staff services. Public-private sectors' collaboration can be of immense help in human resource management in education. The study of Osazuwa (2016) on private sector involvement in public secondary school delivery in Rivers State revealed among others that the private sector is involved in human resource development in public secondary school delivery. A study on public-private sectors' collaboration in human resource and curriculum development in the administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State by Anieheobi and Nwafor (2021) showed among others that to a high extent public-private sectors collaborate in human resource management in the administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. In his study on public private partnership and management of higher education in Lagos State, Nigeria, Adelowo (2017) found among others that the private sector partnership in human resource development in public higher education in Lagos State is low. In yet another study on public private partnership for quality assurance in higher education in Imo State, Egwu (2016) found among others that there is low level of public-private partnership for quality assurance in human resource performance in higher education in Imo State.

Physical resource management is another factor that is of paramount importance for sustainable functional education. Physical resource management entails the provision of facilities in terms of quality and quantity, utilization, maintenance and security. Public-private sectors' collaboration can greatly impact on physical resource management in education. In a study on

private sector involvement in funding higher education in South-South Nigerian universities, Edenkwo and Edenkwo (2016) found that the private sector is involved in the provision of facilities in higher education in South-South Nigerian universities. Abdulbaki (2021) submitted that partnering with the private sector will undoubtedly upsurge tremendous opportunities in appropriate provision of adequate (special) learning materials, equipment, facilities as well as infrastructural development so that effective teaching and learning can take place. Asiyai (2015) stated that since private business, organizations, multinational firms and industries hire and pay for the skills of certified graduates, their collaboration in financing, provision, security and management of physical facilities will increase the efficiency and management of activities in the university education system. Jandhyala (2016) advocated for public-private collaboration in management of school physical facilities because of the inefficiency of the government.

Financial resource management remains a formidable factor for sustainable functional education. Financial resource management covers such areas as the provision of funds, their allocation, monitoring their use in the interest of accountability and producing financial reports for the relevant stakeholders (Usman, 2016). Public-private sectors' collaboration can significantly contribute in financial resource management in education. The study of Utain and Lumnaha (2017) on public-private partnership in higher education provision: implications for access to and quality of education in Gambia revealed that private sector's counterpart funding will increase accountability and quality of higher education delivery in Gambia. Worgu et al. (2016) in their study on funding higher education in Nigeria through universities and industries collaboration: spotlight on universities in Rivers State found that universities and industries collaborate in commercialization of research and entrepreneurial activities to fund universities in Rivers State. Wali (2016) in his study on public-private collaboration: a tool for alternative funding of public secondary schools in Rivers State found that levies, donations, loans and scholarships are ways through which the private sector collaborates with the public sector to generate alternative funding for public secondary school delivery in Rivers State. Morozova et al. (2016) submitted that the mechanism of public-private partnership in the system of financial management works to optimize financial flows on various levels of professional education funded with both budgetary and off-budgetary resources and to improve public control for the efficient and appropriate use of education establishments' accumulated budget.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive survey design with a population of 205 Academic Staff comprising of 110 male lecturers and 95 female lecturers in the Departments of Education in the 3 public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The 3 public universities are University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT), Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). Sequel to the manageable size of the population, it was used for the study as sample size. A research instrument titled “Public-Private Sectors’ Collaboration for Sustainable Functional University Education Questionnaire (PPSCSFUEQ)” structured by the researchers and validated by experts with reliability co-efficient of 0.79 determined with Cronbach’s Alpha was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The modified Likert Scale of strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed was used in rating the instrument. An item with a calculated mean value equal or greater than 2.50 was accepted while an item with the calculated mean value less than or equal to 2.49 was rejected.

## **Results**

**Research Question One:**In what ways can public-private sectors collaborate in human resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations on the Ways Public-Private Sectors can collaborate in Human Resource Management for Sustainable Functional University Education in Rivers State, Nigeria.**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Ways PPSS can collaborate in</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>HRM</b>				
1.	Contracting private recruitment firms by the government to handle the entire recruitment process of staff can ensure transparency and efficiency in the exercise.	2.52	1.06	Agreed
2.	Incorporating the private sector supervisory activities can ensure job performance of staff in the universities.	2.82	0.91	Agreed

3.	The collaborative efforts between the private sector and the government can transcend to the provision of adequate funds for staff salaries.	3.09	0.47	Agreed
4.	Through the collaboration between public and private sectors effective staff development can be ensured.	3.08	0.50	Agreed
5.	Effective motivation of the staff can be achieved through public-private sectors' collaboration.	3.05	0.59	Agreed

Table 1 reveals that all the items have mean ratings above the criterion mean of 2.50. The data showed that all the items are the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in human resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria. The deduction is that public-private sectors' collaboration in human resource management can ensure sustainable functional university education.

**Research Question Two:** In what ways can public-private sectors collaborate in physical resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on the Ways Public-Private Sectors can collaborate in Physical Resource Management for Sustainable Functional University Education in Rivers State, Nigeria.**

S/N	Ways PPSS can collaborate in PRM	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
	The collaborative efforts between the private sector and the government can transcend to the provision of quality and quantity physical resources in the universities.	3.10	0.42	Agreed
6.	The collaborative efforts between the private sector and the government can transcend to the provision of quality and quantity physical resources in the universities.			Agreed
7.	The synergistic relationship between the private	3.04	0.57	Agreed

	sector and the government can transcend into the renovation of existing school buildings.			
8.	A nexus between the government and private sector can lead to construction of new school buildings and other school plants	3.04	0.57	Agreed
9.	Through public-private sectors collaboration the safety of the physical facilities can be guaranteed.	3.03	0.59	Agreed
10.	The interplay between the private sector and the government can transcend to adequate maintenance of school facilities.	3.06	0.53	Agreed

Table 2 shows that all the items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The data indicated that the identified items are ways public-private sectors can collaborate in physical resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria. From the above, it is deduced that public-private sectors' collaboration in physical resource management can ensure sustainable functional university education.

**Research Question Three:** In what ways can public-private sectors collaborate in financial resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 3: Mean Values and Standard Deviations on the Ways Public-Private Sectors can collaborate in Financial Resource Management for Sustainable Functional University Education in Rivers State, Nigeria.**

S/N	Ways PPSS can collaborate in PRM	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
11.	Through public-private sectors' collaboration adequate funding of the university education can be ensured.	3.12	0.4	Agreed
12.	The private sector through the consent of the public sector can provide loan to the universities to run their programmes.	3.08	0.52	Agreed
13.	The private sector can also provide funding through special system of taxation in line with the public sector's good policy provisions on tax.	3.05	0.55	Agreed
14.	The public and private sectors can collaborate to provide counterpart funds	2.92	0.55	Agreed

	for financing specific university programmes and projects.			
15.	The private sector can collaborate with the public sector to enhance the process of research commercialization as a means of generating funds.	3.09	0.45	0.45

Table 3 indicates that all the items have mean values above the criterion mean of 2.50. The data revealed that items are the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in financial resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria. The deduction is that public-private sectors' collaboration in financial resource management can guarantee sustainable functional university education.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in human resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 4:** z-test Analysis of Difference between the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Lecturers with respect to the Ways Public-Private Sectors can collaborate in Human Resource Management for Sustainable Functional University Education in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Z-cal	Z-crit	Decision
Male Lecturers	110	2.97	0.65	203	1.02	1.96	Accepted
Female Lecturers	95	2.85	0.76				

Table 4 indicates that the calculated z-value of 1.02 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 203 degrees of freedom and 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated z-value of 1.02 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96, the study upheld the null hypothesis.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in physical resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 5:** z-test Analysis of Difference between the Mean Scores of Male and Female Lecturers with respect to the Ways Public-Private Sectors can

collaborate in Physical Resource Management for Sustainable Functional University Education in Rivers State, Nigeria.

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>N</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Z-cal</b>	<b>Z-crit</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Male Lecturers	110	3.03	0.56	203	0.60	1.96	Accepted
Female Lecturers	95	3.09	0.48				

Table 5 shows that the calculated z-value of 0.60 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 203 degrees of freedom and 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated z-value of 0.60 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference between the mean values of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in financial resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 6:** z-test Analysis of Difference between the Mean Values of Male and Female Respondents with respect to the Ways Public-Private Sectors can collaborate in Financial Resource Management for Sustainable Functional University Education in Rivers State, Nigeria.

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>N</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Z-cal</b>	<b>Z-crit</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Male Lecturers	110	3.07	0.53	203	0.38	1.96	Accepted
Female Lecturers	95	3.03	0.59				

Table 6 reveals that the calculated z-value of 0.38 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 203 degrees of freedom and 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated z-value of 0.38 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96, the study retained the null hypothesis.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The first finding revealed that contracting private recruitment firms by the government to handle the entire recruitment process of staff can ensure transparency and efficiency in the exercise, incorporating the private sector supervisory activities can ensure job performance of staff in the universities, the collaborative efforts between the private sector and the government can transcend to the provision of adequate funds for staff salaries, through the collaboration between public and private sectors effective staff development can be ensured and effective motivation of the staff can be achieved through public-private sectors collaboration are the ways public-private sectors can

collaborate in human resource management for sustainable functional university education. The corresponding test of hypothesis established no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in human resource management for sustainable functional university education. The result has the support of Osazuwa (2016) and, Anieheobi and Nwafor (2021). The researchers found that public-private sectors collaborate in human resource management in secondary school administration and delivery. The finding contrast with Adelowo (2017) and Egwu (2016). The researchers found low public-private partnership in human resource development in higher education. Their findings may be explained in the fact that a meaningful collaboration between the public sector and private sector has not been given adequate attention on the part of higher education.

The second finding showed the following: the collaborative efforts between the private sector and the government can transcend to the provision of quality and quantity physical resources in the universities, the synergistic relationship between the private sector and the government can transcend into the renovation of existing school buildings, a nexus between the government and private sector can lead to construction of new school buildings and other school plants, through public-private sectors collaboration the safety of the physical facilities can be guaranteed and the interplay between the private sector and the government can transcend to adequate maintenance of school facilities as the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in physical resource management for sustainable functional university education. Its parallel hypothesis showed no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in physical resource management for sustainable functional university education. The finding is supported by the study of Edenkwo and Edenkwo (2016) which found that the private sector is involved in the provision of facilities in higher education in South-South Nigerian universities. The result is in consonance with the submission of Abdulbaki (2021) that partnering with the private sector will undoubtedly upsurge tremendous opportunities in appropriate provision of adequate (special) learning materials, equipment, facilities as well as infrastructural development so that effective teaching and learning can take place. The finding corroborates Asiyai (2015) who stated that since private business, organizations, multinational firms and industries hire and pay for the skills of certified graduates, their collaboration in financing, provision, security and management of physical facilities will increase the efficiency and management of activities in the university education system. Jandhyala, (2016) advocated for public-private collaboration

in management of school physical facilities because of the inefficiency of the government.

The third finding indicated the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in financial resource management for sustainable functional university education to include: through public-private sectors collaboration adequate funding of the university education can be ensured, the private sector through the consent of the public sector can provide loan to the universities to run their programmes, the private sector can also provide funding through special system of taxation in line with the public sector's good policy provisions on tax, the public and private sectors can collaborate to provide counterpart funds for financing specific university programmes and projects, and the private sector can collaborate with the public sector to enhance the process of research commercialization as a means of generating funds. The hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean values of male and female lecturers with respect to the ways public-private sectors can collaborate in financial resource management for sustainable functional university education in Rivers State, Nigeria. The finding agrees with Utain and Lumnaha (2017), Worgu et al. (2016) and Wali (2016) who in their studies found some of the identified items as ways through which the private sector collaborates with the public sector to generate alternative funding in education. The finding lays credence to the submission of Morozova et al. (2016) that the mechanism of public-private partnership in the system of financial management works to optimize financial flows on various levels of professional education funded with both budgetary and off-budgetary resources and to improve public control for the efficient and appropriate use of education establishments' accumulated budget.

## **Conclusion**

Base on the findings of the study, the conclusion drawn is that public-private sectors' collaboration in human resource management, physical resource management and financial resource management can ensure sustainable functional university education through their engagement in different ways.

## **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations were given:

- The government should strive for a healthy matrimony with the private sector in order to ensure effective human resource management which is a key issue for sustainable functional education.

- The public and private sectors should form a cordial relationship as this would guarantee effective physical resource management which is a vital factor for sustainable functional education.
- The private sector should be proactive to forge meaningful partnership with the government to ensure adequate financial resource management which is a formidable factor for sustainable functional education.

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