

## **The Necessity for Project Management as an Instrument for Continuing Economic Development by the new Nigerian Federal Government**

**By O. Chima Okereke, PhD**

The Buhari administration was sworn in on Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup> with so much good will that it is difficult to find any group, both inside and outside the country that is not wishing the government every success. The expectations are quite high and the problems to solve are reportedly various and many with differing importance. The priority on the problems changes as people and groups express their views. Corruption, poor national electricity power supply, the Boko Haram insurgency and widespread insecurity in the form of kidnapping, large youth unemployment, removal of subsidy on fuel and the poor fuel situation in the country for a large oil producing nation, unacceptable salaries of the legislators, etc. The list of problems that people suggest is long.

It is clearly the case that all these problems cannot be solved at once. In spite of this, Nigerians are extremely optimistic that the new president has come to change the status quo as he promised during the elections. He has come to deliver change. What exactly does this mean in the light of the problems listed in the foregoing paragraph?

President Buhari is very much aware of the unusual, overwhelming and extremely optimistic welcome that he has received. While he has tried to dampen down the sky-high optimism by explaining that he is not a magician, the expectations are such that it may be difficult to control. The administration will have an enormous task of managing the seemingly overblown hopes. It is also the case that various persons and groups have their ideas of what they consider the most important problem to be addressed by the new government. It could be the case that after two years of the administration without the problems being resolved, the administration could be seen as not delivering.

To illustrate, in an interview with the Nigerian Tribune published in March 24, 2015, Owelle Rochas Okorochoa, one of the APC governors was complaining of the current poor power supply in the country. Whilst it is the case that the power supply is certainly poor, without being overly pessimistic, it is not feasible that within five years, the new government will have so developed the power supply in the country that there will be steady and uninterrupted power supply in every city, town and village for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. It is necessary to have our feet on the ground and be realistic on what is achievable within a given time span and with limited resources.

This is where the application of the discipline of project management processes should come to the fore. Which problems should be solved first, in effect, what problems should be given priority, solved and delivered within a reasonable time of a few years? Do we have the resources to solve them? How can we find the necessary human and material resources, and the fund? What are the timelines for delivering solutions? How can these expectations be managed, in other words, how can the administration maintain the goodwill as the difficult and time constrained tasks of producing results are embarked upon? It is certainly important to try to maintain the good will because such a

clement environment should help as much as possible to elicit good cooperation and a commitment to success from everyone.

Project management is defined as the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities in order to achieve the desired goals and meet project requirements. In effect, it could be defined as an instrument for translating strategic decisions made in national executive meetings or company boardrooms into real-life products which are solutions to national problems or meet the needs of customers. In the subsequent paragraphs, the application of project management as an instrument that could be used to deliver continual economic development by the government will be briefly investigated.

The topics to be covered include the following:

1. The use of project management to prioritise our problems
2. An analysis of one of the problems in order to determine the requirements of resources and processes for achieving them
3. Concluding remarks in which many plans are not achieved because of the absence of the discipline and processes of PM to ensure that what is planned is achievable and executed.

## **1. The use of project management to prioritise our problems**

As already stated, there are so many listed problems that it is not feasible to plan to solve them at the same time. The administration needs to decide on its vision for the nation and its objectives. Projects that could solve the problems are then suggested. These are defined and analysed using the technique of project portfolio management to help prioritise the projects and to enable the selection of projects which will deliver products that will best meet the objectives of the government within the time span. For example, the president has not relented in emphasising that there are problems that just have to be addressed and resolved because they should not be tolerated in the country. Some of them include insecurity, unemployment among the youths, the poor national electricity power supply, corruption, etc. Which of these should be given the priority over the others? The vision of the government, its objectives and how each of these problems impact on the achievement of the objectives will help to determine the projects that should be given the priority over others. .

## **2. An analysis of one of the problems in order to determine the requirements of resources and the processes for its solution**

Assuming that PPM analysis gives the result that the highest priority is the development of the national power supply, within this section, a brief overview of some of the procedures for determining the requirements of resources will be undertaken. They include the following:

- Name of project and timeline, giving start and finish dates
- Objective and justification with metrics
- Project planning

- Project implementation
- Execution
- Monitoring and controlling
- Closing including lessons learned

## 2.1 Name of program

Development of the National Power Supply; this should be a program and not just a project because it cannot be implemented in just one project.

## 2.2 Objective

- To increase the installed and active capacity of the national electricity power supply from the present 4,400 Megawatts to a minimum of 130,000 Megawatts.

## 2.22 Justification

- This is the minimum installed capacity that should be aimed at for the country to have a comparable capacity like South Africa.
- This is certainly below the standard of the developed countries as can be seen in the table below. From the table, Russia with a population of 142.5 million, which is lower than that of Nigeria with a population of 170 million, has an installed generating capacity of 235GW that is 235,000MW.
- Using this as a yardstick, the installed generating electricity capacity of Nigeria should be about 280,000 Megawatts

Countries	Population	Installed capacities (GW)
China	1,343.3million	1190
USA	313.85million	1064
Japan	127.4million	289
India	1205.1million	241
Russia	142.5million	235
Germany	81.3 million	170
UK	63.1 million	96

*Examples of installed electricity generating capacities in some developed countries and their populations.*

## Problems of Power Transmission and Distribution Capacities and Infrastructure

The focus so far in this article has been on increasing the installed generating capacity, it is just one of the problems. The country has the problem of inadequate transmission and distribution capacities and infrastructure. The Managing Director of Eko Electricity Distribution Company, in the Lagos State, Ramesh Narayanan, gave an assessment of the power situation. He spoke as one of the top power professionals whose views were published by the PUNCH newspaper, entitled "Nigeria's power sector reform is falling apart" PUNCH, Monday, September 22, 2014. He observed that the national power transmission lines are inadequate, and provide insufficient transmission capacity. He

stated: “Even today at 4000 Megawatts, the transmission lines are not able to absorb the capacity”, this means that they need to be overhauled and expanded. In this situation, a lot of work needs to be done to develop the necessary capacity that will provide Nigerians with adequate capacity for power transmission. He added that this has to be done not only by the federal government but also by the private sectors making their contribution.

In the same publication, the Managing Director of Egbin Power Plc, also in the Lagos State, Mike Uzoigwe stated that “the most worrisome issue of power development in the country is the nation's inability to transmit generated power.” He explained that some of the new National Independent Power Plants (NIPP) projects have been completed but no evacuation capabilities to get power to the grid. Continuing, he stated that “there are lots of bottlenecks that inhibit efficient evacuation of power”. They include “overloaded distribution feeders; inadequate power transformer capabilities; undersized conductors; single circuit transmission lines, radial network type instead of the closed grid systems and the likes”.

## **Results of Analysis**

### **Facing the realities of real-life development of electricity industry infrastructures:**

The Managing Director, Eko Electricity Distribution Company, Ramesh Narayanan, has suggested that the country needs to make “a yearly investment of \$4 billion within the next 10 years in the energy sector” in order to “move the sector from the current situation into a globally competitive electricity power system.

**Resources and Time are needed for developing electricity infrastructure:** Besides, if the objective of the government is to have a steady power supply in the country, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, within the next five years, we shall have to develop an electricity generating installed capacity of 235,000 Megawatts and the corresponding transmission and distribution infrastructures. Currently the country has a capacity of about 4000 Megawatts. It means that it has to build a system that is about 60 times the current capacity.

**2.2 Project planning for the electricity program:** It should cover processes involved in planning for the following:

- Scope, this is the work performed to deliver the specified electricity capacity megawatts with the specified features and functions.
- Resource: By resources, we mean human, material and equipment necessary for producing the capacity.
- Duration in months and years needed.
- Cost of the resources needed for the successful start and completion of the projects.

- Cost: the process for summing up or aggregating the estimated costs to establish the cost of the projects.
- Quality: identification of the quality standards relevant to the projects and how to implement them.
- Human Resource: that is identifying roles, responsibilities and reporting relationships between the labour resources and creating staff management plan.
- Communication planning involves determining the information and communication needs of the project stakeholders.
- Risk Planning: This is the process for highlighting potential risks in the projects and actions that should be taken to mitigate threats and enhance opportunities
- Procurement Planning: This is planning how items will be procured for the projects.

**2.4 Executing Process Group:** This entails the following:

- acquiring and training the work teams, which include the various specialists
- acquiring the equipment and materials
- manage project teams as they perform the work
- manage communication
- manage stakeholders

**2.5 Monitoring and Controlling Process Group** which comprises the following:

- monitor and control project work
- control schedule
- control costs
- control risks
- control quality,
- control procurement
- control stakeholder

**2.6 Closing Process Group** consists of

- close procurements
- close project

**Observation:** The above analysis may appear pedantic and could be seen to belong to the lecture and seminar rooms. However, the project management process groups have been deliberately presented though not yet developed for very good reasons. One of these is that in our country, Nigeria, we are often guilty of producing development plans without taking pains to manage and follow up on their implementation. As a

result, for many years, we have produced plans which have not been adequately executed. Therefore, all the efforts invested in various national development plans have yielded little result because the plans were never comprehensively executed.

### **3. Concluding Remarks**

From this brief analysis, it has been shown that it is not realistic to inform the country that within five years, our national electricity supply will be so developed that there will be electricity every minute of the day in every big city, town and village in the country. It will certainly not happen because it is not feasible.

The time for electioneering campaign is now over, it may be advisable that the new administration should become decidedly pragmatic by studying the various problems and coming out with realistic information on what is achievable within the next five years. They should also specify metrics for determining success in their target objectives. In the absence of such information, it might become a matter of few years before many Nigerians could become disappointed and disillusioned as the government would not have delivered what they hoped for. Some of the expectations are unrealistic and unachievable within the time span.

It is equally important that we all realise that we are a developing country. We need time and resources to develop our infrastructure. We should be humble enough in the light of the foregoing information to examine the activities of our past governments and give some credits where they deserve them.

Lastly, there should be some continuity in the development of our infrastructure. For example, it has been established that it should take some 20 or more years to build a stable electricity power system in the country. There should be a long-term program for achieving this. The current administration could set up the program and clearly explain that it has a long-term objective of developing our power supply to global competitive standard by achieving a specified number of Megawatts after a number of specified years.

The same problem of long-term development could feature in the solution of other national problems. We should not shy away from admitting that time will be required for the achievement of the level of development required for the country in solving some if not most of the problems. It is as each of them is analysed that the time span and the resources required for their long term solution can be determined. In spite of the sky high optimism, we need to temper our expectations with realism.

## About the Author



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Dr. Okereke has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Lagos, and a PhD and Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degree from the University of Bradford in the UK. He also has a PMP® certification from the Project Management Institute (PMI®) which he passed at first attempt. He has been a registered engineer with COREN in Nigeria since 1983. For many years, Total Technology has been a partner for Oracle Primavera Global Business Unit, a representative in Nigeria of Oracle University for training in Primavera project management courses, and a Gold Level member of Oracle Partner Network (OPN). In the UK, the company is also a member of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. He is a registered consultant with several UN agencies. More information can be found at <http://www.totaltechnologyconsultants.org/>.

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