

Dedicated and Competent Human Resources are essential for the success of the project Nigeria

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In writing about an organic entity such as a company or a country, there is the inescapable difficulty of presenting facts that truly describe it especially as its conditions are still evolving and not static. The country is considered as a project in this context because there is a constitutionally constrained time frame of four years which defines the life of every government. The success of the current project will be determined by the performance of the Buhari-led government within this period. Nevertheless, a description of the performance alone does not give an adequate business justification for writing this paper because the work should aim at additionally, presenting a strategic submission of the desired conditions that will culminate in the success of the project, Nigeria.

In line with the foregoing reasoning, the presentation in this paper is made in a three-step approach as follows. Firstly, a description is made of factors that make for success in the management of an organisation's or a country's human resources. Secondly, some relevant news clips of the current events and actions in the country from quoted published sources are presented. Thirdly and more crucially, the disparity between the desired and the actual could be highlighted. The purpose of this analysis is to enable our decision makers, if ever they come across this paper, to do their best endeavours in our national interest, to close the error gap between our current and the correct actions. It should also be underlined that the objective of this paper is to make a constructive contribution to the task of building our nation. The thoroughness of this strategic analysis is limited by the information available in the public domain.

This subject is discussed in the following four sections:

1. Necessity for competent and dedicated human resources
2. Factors that facilitate the building of dedicated team
3. The role of the project manager
4. Concluding remarks

The three-step strategic approach is considered in each section.

1. Necessity for competent and dedicated human resources

For success in the achievement of strategic goals, whether in the public or private sector of the economy, effective human resource planning should undertake to develop and to enhance the availability of dedicated and competent human resources. This is necessary because the challenge of good governance or success in project management involves development of requisite people and institutions. People through their knowledge, know-how and skills are at the heart of the performance of the nation because they provide services, promote innovations and carry out reforms. Therefore, the ability of a government to provide services effectively and efficiently depends upon

a competent and committed cadre of civil servants. Good government requires good people [1].

Current Situation: in this period, there are a few issues in the nation's human resources. Only youths' unemployment, and the insecurity in the country are discussed in this paper.

There is a large youth and graduate unemployment as shown in the following two examples:

Graduates' unemployment: Over 200 unemployed graduates from Owaza, the oil producing community of Ukwa West Local council, Abia State, have threatened to stop further exploration of crude oil in the area if the six oil companies operating in the area refused to implement resolutions they claimed to have reached in a memorandum of understanding, MOU, with the oil communities. Giving October 1, 2015 as their deadline, the unemployed graduates under the aegis of Owaza Graduates Association, said that a seven-point resolution was reached after a meeting with the Department of State Security Service, DSS, and other stakeholders in the community on the 19th of September 2015. According to Obioma Asonye and Ishmael Nwuju, President and Secretary of the association, respectively, the essence of the resolution was for indigenes of the community to be given employment opportunities in the various oil companies operating in the area [5].

Youths' unemployment: The Group Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, First Bank of Nigeria Limited, Mr. Bisi Onasanya, and other stakeholders have stressed the need for re-training and revamping of the education sector to curb the problem of youths' unemployment.

The stakeholders stated this on Tuesday, September 29th, in Lagos at the First Bank African CEO Business Roundtable, which focused on 'Youth, skills training and unemployment in a changing economy'. Onasanya said in his address that a central challenge that must be met "if our current democratic experiment is to succeed is the one where private sector participants contribute to the elaboration of solutions to problems across sectors."

He said, "Whichever way we look at it, youth unemployment is a major domestic worry. The numbers that matter as at end the second quarter of 2015, are: A labour force of 74 million of a working age population of 103.5 million; 19.6 million of the 74 million were either unemployed or underemployed as of June 2015; 48.7 per cent of our compatriots in the labour force aged between 15 and 24 were either unemployed or underemployed in the same period." [6]

Comment: At the end of June 2015, 48.7% of youths in Nigeria between the ages of 15 and 24 were either unemployed or under-employed. From the first example, these include graduates.

Insecurity in the country: Almost every day in the country, there may be cases of kidnapping in various parts of the nation. This may not be covered in the media. Two recent examples are touched on in this paper.

The kidnapping and release of Chief Olu Falae: It was a very worrying development when Chief Olu Falae, the 77 year old elder statesman and a former Secretary to the Nigerian Federal Government was kidnapped in his farm by allegedly “some Fulani cattle rearers” on Sunday, September, 20th. No incidence of kidnapping is proper but this was completely unimaginable because of the age and stature of the victim. Gunmen, numbering about 20 allegedly stormed his farm at Ilado Village in Akure North local government area of Ondo State and demanded a ransom of N100 million, about \$500,000 for his release. Following the hue and cry in the country over the age and the calibre of the statesman; various agencies, including the police, were put into action to locate and release him. He was released by his kidnappers on Thursday, September 24th, after reportedly paying a ransom of N5 million (about \$25,000) [7]

The kidnapping of Oba Obademi: This royalty is a traditional ruler of Apaa-Bunu community in Kabba-Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Oba Adebisi Obademi, was, on Wednesday, September 30th, abducted by gunmen and whisked away to an unknown destination. Tribune Online gathered that the monarch was abducted at about 7.30 a.m. on his way to Odo-ape, a community close to his domain. It was further learnt that the gunmen, numbering about five and suspected to be Fulani herdsmen, laid an ambush for the traditional ruler and forcefully took him away on a motorcycle[8]. It is not yet known whether he has been released.

Comment: The insecurity in the country has been marked by kidnappings, killings, etc. It is an unhealthy situation that is yet to be adequately addressed by the Buhari administration. If they have done anything since the inception of their administration, it does not have any effect on the problem. Granted that their focus has been on eliminating the Boko Haram malaise but the nation is not as secure as it should be because of the continuing nefarious activities of organised gangs of kidnappers

2. Factors that facilitate the building of dedicated team

Teamwork is critical for project success. Developing project teams is critical for project success, and high team performance can be achieved through a number of actions which include the following:

- Developing trust among team members,
- Managing conflicts in a constructive manner,
- Encouraging collaborative problem solving and decision making,
- Promoting working together and interdependently in mutual trust...
- Having the best plan and the highest performers in a team is not enough. Ineffective communication and lack of team collaboration will cause even the best plan to fail.

Highlights of the Current situation

Current cases that affect the development of trust, conflict management and other conditions which enhance successful team work will be briefly explored in this sub-section. Poor conflict management and apparent confusion in the leadership of the

ruling party, All Progressives Congress (APC), feature in some national issues that reveal inconsistencies among the leaders of the ruling party. These include the current tribunal case against Dr Saraki, the President of the Senate and seeming inconsistencies in the anticorruption campaign.

The tribunal case of Dr Saraki, the President of the Senate: The order, discipline and maturity in the handling of internal party disputes expected of a national party that has just come to power can hardly be seen in the actions played out in the events on this case. The Senate President has been forced to appear in the dock over a failure to declare his assets correctly and some other actions he took when he was a state governor. According to the prosecution, they will “prove their case against him, in four assets declaration forms he filled in 2003, 2007 and on his exit from office as the governor of Kwara State in 2011”. Some excerpts containing statements by senators of the party in the two opposing sides are reproduced to illustrate this.

One of the APC Senators told a national newspaper, Vanguard, on strict conditions of anonymity that the “Cold War” between the Senate President and some leaders of the APC was all about 2019 Presidential election. (It is the tribunal case against Saraki that is described as the culmination of the “cold war”). He claimed that some of the Senators suspected to have played any role in the emergence of Saraki as the Senate President were strictly being monitored by those who felt embarrassed and defeated in the election for the senate president, adding that they have decided to set trap for them during senate functions. [9]

The speaker continues: ““You know that Saraki made sure that the APC did not have a Muslim/Muslim ticket (for the President/Vice President) and the party leaders that did not benefit from that have been angry with him (Saraki). The other party leader felt disappointed that he was not supported during the APC presidential primaries after their alleged initial agreement before they dumped the People’s Democratic Party. [9]

The other side of the case is as presented by another senator. He says: "Nigerians should not see the on-going trial of the senate president as a witch-hunt, rather, they should try and find out whether it was true that he included a multi – million dollar property he bought in 2006 as part of his assets as of 2003. We should stop playing politics with everything in this country. The mantra of the President Muhammadu Buhari administration is anti – corruption and it will not be proper to have a morally deficient person presiding over the affairs of the legislature being a critical arm of government”[10].

Questions over objectives, moral basis and vendetta

The Catholic Bishop of Kafanchan, Bishop Joseph Bagobiri, has called on President Muhammadu Buhari to ensure justice, equity and fairness in governance. He also called on the President to ensure full implementation of the report of the 2014 National Conference. Speaking at the church service to mark the nation's 55th independence anniversary on Sunday, September 27th in Abuja, Bagobiri noted that if government makes justice, fairness and equity its watchword, it would get the support of all Nigerians. Bagobiri urged the administration to avoid using government apparatus like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt

Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) as instrument of vendetta. According to him, "If government is really fighting corruption, Nigerians would know and will support it." Bagobiri, the Catholic bishop of Kafanchan in a sermon titled "Making Nigeria work as a family: Panacea for a healthy national integration", called on the leaders of Islamic faith to rise up and caution their members. The cleric stated that Christians hold the key to peace of Nigeria, adding that if they had retaliated for the killings they have suffered, the refugee crisis in Syria would be a joke [11].

Zero Tolerance to Corruption

The tribunal trial of Dr Saraki remains a source of argument among Nigerians. Is he being visited with a vendetta for becoming the Senate President against the wishes of his party? Is he not guilty of corruption as alleged by the prosecution in the past years? But why is he alone being prosecuted? What mechanism has been set up by the government for trying suspects to justify his being picked up for trial now?

Nigerians will support Buhari's probe of all looters in line with his election campaign promises of zero tolerance for corruption in Nigeria. However, it will help his war against corruption if there is a systematic approach to fighting corruption.

Singling out Dr Saraki for probing to the apparent connivance of every other politician of his period who has not be declared innocent of corruption begs the question: Why he and no other? Moreover, there are many other politicians, with questionable records who are being considered for ministerial appointments or picked for the party's governorship candidate. PDP in the Rivers State is accusing former governor Amaechi of misusing the state's fund. Former Governor Fashola has also been accused of the use of an exorbitant amount in the preparation of a website. One cannot vouch for the correctness or otherwise of these allegations. Sylva Timpre, former governor of Bayelsa State, has a pending case with EFCC. All these are being considered for appointment and election respectively as nominees of the APC in spite of the publicised zero tolerance to corruption.

3. The role of the project manager

Project management success depends largely upon vision of the leader. In effect, the project manager is the fulcrum upon which the various components of a given project are balanced, so an individual in this position must be able to see the big picture, recognize priorities and hone their ability to communicate effectively.

Effective project management hinges on a leader's ability to do the following:

- Identify a specific goal which translates their vision into the real world
- Map out a plan for accomplishing that goal
- Stay abreast of the team's progress toward the goal
- Develop a rapport with key stakeholders: The first step to project management success begins with developing positive relationships and open communication with everyone who is contributing to the project. Project

managers work with many highly skilled and talented professionals, and these individuals expect to be recognized for their expertise—both by the project leader and their fellow team members.

- A good project manager will engage their entire team throughout each phase of the project, creating an environment that encourages cooperation and the sharing of ideas to arrive at the best possible solutions. Successful projects rely on teamwork and mutual respect among collaborators, and this is best achieved when the project manager is regarded as a positive and supportive figure who fosters communicative and open working relationships.

From the earlier paragraphs, it can be seen that developing strong leadership and adequate human resources is crucial for project success and for any country to undertake successful economic development programmes. Developing effective project team is one of the responsibilities of the project manager. A project manager should have the skills to motivate, lead and inspire team members to achieve high team performance and meet project's objectives. The same is true for leaders of government, having in place a democratic system is not sufficient. Governance needs to be based on clear and widely accepted rules such as the following:

- There should be committed leaders and qualified people who will undertake appropriate reforms in the economic and social spheres;
- Leaders should be able to mobilize resources and manage expenditure;
- Leaders should be able to operate in the most cost-effective way possible by making use of new information technologies. We have already suggested this in our earlier article in which we suggested a transition to a knowledge economy using the South Korean model. The paper was: "Vision for Change in Nigeria based on Lessons from South Korea, August 2015"
- It should be underlined that the legitimacy of a democratic regime is based in a great part on the capacity of the State to deliver services that are relevant and of high quality to all sectors of the population of the nation. Unemployment of youths, a static economy without the cash flow to enable businesses, whether small, medium-sized or large to operate to its optimal capacity, etc., are conditions that query the moral legitimacy of a government.
- Managers and leaders have the responsibility of creating conditions and practices that enable and encourage all employees to produce their best. This should be a challenge for all organizations and governments. Advising, supporting, communicating and facilitating these conditions and practices are parts of the responsibility of all Human Resources practitioners.
- With the help of a company's human resources department and a nation's ministries of planning and labour, efforts should be made to ensure that the right people are in the right place doing the right thing. Bringing out the best in all employees presumes the existence of certain organizational conditions such as: safety, motivation, shared vision, support, development, and scope for expression of identity 'Managing diversity' serves as an appropriate label for this type of practice.

Current Situation

Leaders of government and companies should manage resources and expenditures cost-effectively. President Muhammadu Buhari has focused on anticorruption and the elimination of the Boko Haram malaise since he took office. Recently, he stated that the prosecution of those who misappropriated the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) revenues under past administrations will soon commence. He reportedly made the statement in New York, on Sunday, September 27th while restating his determination to sanitise Nigeria's oil industry and make it totally free of corruption and shady deals. He was talking with President Xi Jinping of China on the side-lines of the 70th General Assembly of the United Nations. He explained that a necessary first step in this direction was the appointment of a new management for the NNPC and its subsequent reorganisation. He also thanked President Xi Jinping for China's ongoing help in curbing crude oil theft from Nigeria. He applauded China's interception of shiploads of crude oil stolen from Nigeria, which were to be sold and proceeds paid into private accounts. Further, he informed President Xi Jinping that under his new leadership, the Nigerian military has been re-trained and re-equipped and was now making steady gains against Boko Haram. [2]

One of the essential functions of a project manager or a leader is managing diversity as necessary for creating conditions that bring out the best in the people. Sir Olaniwun Ajayi, the Isara Remo, Ogun State, a lawyer, and a politician, takes issue with the government on their failure to do this. He says: "... this is very crucial; he (the President) should ensure that Nigeria is taken into true federalism. It is very important if he can do that. But if he doesn't do that, of course, he would have contributed to the disintegration of Nigeria as a country. Unless we give regards to the diversity of this country, unless we address that issue very dispassionately and very, very objectively, Nigeria will get disintegrated as Yugoslavia became disintegrated." He continues: "You call this country a federation. But it is being run as a unitary system where if you answer president, really and truly, you are a monarch. Yes, a monarch because he dictates to all the states. That is not an element or characteristics of federalism. Of course, not. He dictates to the state. He dictates to the governors" [3]

Comments

The president has won much praise for his anticorruption activities with respect to working to eliminate the stealing of public fund in the oil industry. He is just about appointing ministers. Inevitably the impression is that he makes all the decisions. This explains the statements by Sir Ajayi alleging that the President is running a "unitary government".

Speaking on the imminence of the screening of ministerial nominees by the senate, the Senate President, Bukola Saraki, on Tuesday, September 29th, expressed confidence that Nigeria's economy would experience a turn-around with the appointment of ministers. He believes that "the presence of ministers will create the space for greater policy engagement with the executive arm of government. It will also enable us to begin to respond in a more systematic manner to the various economic and social challenges before us, especially through our various committees that will also be constituted soon. On this note, I want to urge you all my colleagues to ensure that what is uppermost in our minds as we begin the constitutional task of screening of ministerial

nominees is the overall interest of our country, informed by the enormity and the urgency of the challenges before us. Once the list is submitted, let us ensure that we treat it with dispatch and thoroughness.

We must not be held down by unnecessary politicking." [4] The list was reportedly received late on Wednesday, September 30th.

4. Concluding Comments

That President Buhari is seen as disciplined and not tainted with corruption as many others are in the country is accepted as correct. Also, it is correct that he is determined to sanitise the country by eliminating corruption, especially in the nation's oil and gas industry. However, as seen in the analysis, cracks, which include the following, are appearing in his efforts in spite of his determination:

- His advertised zero tolerance to corruption is being compromised by activities of his party and their disposition to give appointments to politicians with dubious records which are not yet certified innocent.
- His determined efforts to eliminate the Boko Haram are commendable but insecurity from other sources is rife in the country as kidnappers are still very much active.
- Youth unemployment is quite high as shown by the fact that about 50% of youths in the 15 to 24 age bracket are unemployed.

With the best will in the world, success of the Nigerian project cannot be guaranteed should his current method of apparent "one-man" or unitary government continue. Project success happens when a project manager works with a team to implement a plan that contains defined goals. In the absence of a plan that embraces the achievement of major goals which seriously facilitate national economic development and also without working in collaboration with a project team, a project manager will not succeed irrespective of his discipline, brilliance and dedication.

In conclusion, we would recommend the following:

1. A clear articulation of the administration's vision and defined goals for the nation.
2. Appointing and engaging his trusted team members who would work with him to implement his vision and goals. The team members could be his ministers.
3. The provision of an appropriate project/programme management plan for achieving the goals.
4. Communication and collaboration between him, the project team members and the rest of the workforce in the public and private sectors of the economy is essential.

The ability of a government to provide services effectively and efficiently depends upon a competent and committed cadre of civil servants and team. As the earlier quoted UN publication states: "Good government requires good people", not just a good leader. [1]

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