

## **Effective Project Management and leadership in Political Governance - A Dawn of a “New Project Sponsor and Leader” in the Ghanaian Economy**

**Dr. Donald Cog Senanu Agumenu**

Effective project management and governance are very crucial and imperative, to the successful execution of government policies and strategic development agenda of every economy. It is important to note that, “No country can succeed without creating a strategic project management oriented philosophy that governs its operations holistically”

The high incidence of project failure and poor execution in Africa is not due to lack of resources but, the dearth of people with requisite project handling capacity.

Achieving project and programme efficiency and effectiveness transcends just a task-related deliverables and work-break down structures within departments, agencies and ministries. Although the project leaders and managers must be able to effectively manage goals related to time, scope and cost, or what we refer to as achieving quality, quantity, cost and time (QQTC), they equally have a complex responsibility of managing other complexities within the external and internal stakeholder expectations to achieve success.

It is very evidential that, as the project sponsors identify, conceptualize and develop simple and complex socio-economic interventions in political leadership, it is vital to develop the governance framework, core leadership and managerial skills necessary and crucial to lead, monitor, evaluate, motivate, control and relate to the larger stakeholder community, ranging from the team members, the project scope, to the beneficiaries, the sector and particularly to the good of the project environment and the nation at large. This is a positive indicator of achieving success through every stage of the project with the ‘Governance Structure’. This helps to put the project on a good health and energizes the project stakeholder community for an improved job satisfaction and value for money.

A growing economy with complex projects and programmes and projections, need not only a broad-based leadership structure for good governance but a niche driven approach for successful project delivery. Because of the uniqueness of a project, government as the biggest project initiator, sponsor, and administrator with huge expectations from within and without, has a core responsibility of creating the structural framework that would drive the strategic implementation and success of the projects.

### **What are Projects and Programmes?**

According to the Project Management Institute (PMI), a Project is a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service or result. A project is **temporary** in that, it has a defined beginning and end in time, and therefore defined scope and resources. And **programmes** are groups of projects across various sectors. These sectors include but not limited to corporate, social and political administration. And a **project** is **unique** in that it is not a routine operation, but a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

Notable projects and programmes introduced, executed and formulated by previous and current governments in Ghana to mention but a few, are, Affordable Homes, E-Governance, Water and Sanitation, One Village, One Dam, One District, One Factory, One million US Dollar per district, E-Blocks, GcNET, Rural Electrification, Power and Energy, National Health Insurance, Eradication of Polio, Girl Child Education, Mitigating the HIV/AIDS Menace, Fighting the Spread of Ebola Virus, Institutionalizing Democratic Governance, Youth Enterprise Support (YES), West African Gas Pipe line Project, Ghana Gas, Constitutional and Policy Reforms, E-Switch, Decentralization, and many more — some are policy related and others in infrastructure.

The case of Sustainable Development Goals otherwise known as Global Goals, of which Ghana is committed to, is a strategic building block for global development. And these encompass sets of 17 sustainable development goals to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. The UNDP Administrator Helen Clark noted: **“This agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we all work together, we have a chance of meeting’ aspirations for peace, prosperity and wellbeing and to preserve our planet”**. And this has multiple projects and programmes.

Ghana has a pivotal role to play as a beacon of democracy in Africa to making a conscious effort and investment in championing the goals from within to the global arena which calls for a pragmatic and calculated leap-step approach in policy formation and project delivery across every sector of the economy. And all these must be efficiently and professionally managed to deliver on-schedule with key attention to prudent financial decision making and management, effective contract management, excellent negotiations, ensuring on value for money, adhering to procurement laws to fighting corruption, effective supply chain and logistics management, project sustainability, monitoring and evaluation, risk mitigation, effective planning, global standards and best practices, cost effectiveness, and more importantly within scope and many more.

**Project management**, then, is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements.

Project management *processes* fall into five groups:

- Initiating
- Planning
- Executing
- Monitoring and Controlling
- Closing

### **Project Leadership**

The PMI PMBOK Guide® defines Leadership as: “establishing directing, aligning people, motivating and inspiring people to overcome political, bureaucratic, and resource barriers. “And again as “Developing a vision and strategy, and motivating people to achieve that vision and strategy.” And **Project governance is the management framework within which project decision are made. Project governance is a critical element of any project since it provides a framework for the accountabilities associated with an organization’s capital investment.**

Association for Project Management, APM, a leading authority on the subject in Europe states it in their guide as “effective governance of a project management ensures that an organization’s project portfolio is aligned to business objectives, is delivered efficiently and is sustainable. Simply put, governance of project management, is about doing the right projects, not necessarily doing all the projects right”

**To better understand the impact of leadership**, it may be helpful to consider the following definitions of leadership and relate it the success of the project:

- Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality (Bennis, 2003).
- Leadership is the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project (Cohen and March, 1974).
- Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation (Hersey and Blanchard, 1984).
- Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization (House, 1996).
- Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations (Kouzes and Posner, 2007).

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007).

Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives (Yukl, 2002).

Leadership involves the ability to influence people to take actions toward completing a goal or project. Projects contain a number of components – the main three being scope, cost, and time. For the project team to effectively meet scope, cost, and time goals, one must appreciate the impact of positive leadership. It is up to the project manager and a leader to manage issues related to scope, cost, and time, as well as to lead the team to successful completion of these goals and the project as a whole.

### **The President as a Project and Programmes Director, Leader and Sponsor**

The President, His Excellency, Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo ,the Commander-in-Chief of the Ghana Arm Forces like any other President in the past and in other countries has complex and robust responsibilities as a Leader, leading projects and programmes with core teams, sectors and sector ministers as managers to achieve an overall goals and objectives by placing Ghana on the global map as a success story in delivering an integrated, successful socio-economic expectations of the citizenry and its external environment (partners and communities). Many project managers and leaders fail and the projects also fail.

### **The question is why do projects fail?**

In most cases, we attribute the reasons to financing, political instability, inaccurate costing, unrealistic expectations, policy paralysis, lack of clear scope and definition, the climate, the

economy and etc. But one of the main causes of Project failure in the world especially Africa, is lack of effective projects and programmes management. And this calls for the leader's ability to harness the available resources, skills with the tools vital to accomplishing the specific goals. At times, through the adoption and deployment of "Situational Leadership" to ensure on success and project sustainability.

Just like any CEO of a Cooperation or Multinational in "search of excellence" as Tom Peters would put it, identifying, structuring, staffing and building capacity for the right project and the project team with the requisite technical, managerial and leadership competency with the right attitude to succeed even in turbulent times is very cardinal to the success of the entire vision of the organization. Ghana as a complex organisation can also be seen as a project in perspective. The sectors are segmented into projects within programmes. Because every single project is seen as the life blood of the entire organization (the economy) and its success depends largely on the leader and his team members.

### **President John Dramani Mahama's Project Tour - A demystification and definition of monitoring and evaluation.**

The Quest for infrastructural development across various sectors of the Ghanaian economy by the John Dramani Mahama-led erstwhile National Democratic Congress (NDC) government magnified in the Green-Book cannot be, overemphasized. This has redirected the leadership approach to channel various energies and resources both capital and human to chart a path to meeting the deadlines and expectations of Ghanaians, the donor agencies and global development partners. This resulted in the Former President forming various teams, committees and boards, visiting project sites, steering various committee meetings, evaluating financial and projects reports and benchmarking the milestones against the deliverable, time, key economic indicators and in effect, launching some that have been completed across the country. The drive for excellence also witnessed the creation of what came to be known as the "three (3) Wise Men", a Project Management Office (PMO) responsible for government projects at the Presidency and many more. This has been equally done by previous leaders ranging from Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, through the military regime to Presidents Jerry John Rawlings, John Kufuor, and John Atta Mills in numerous ways. The only variation is the leadership style and structure of every leader in leading, monitoring and evaluating results. The leaders may vary with different styles but the standards and best practices governing effective project management for achieving sustainable and successful result hardly vary across the globe.

Successful projects are governed by global best practices recommended by the PMI project management body of knowledge, the project management in control environment, international project management commission, the international board of standard of the American Academy of Project Management and ISO Standards.

### **What then is Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and its importance in political leadership and successful project delivery?**

Effective monitoring and evaluation is very pivotal in every political leadership structure in terms policy reforms, analysis, policy initiations and implementations, project delivery and many others. It plots a distinctive operational framework that directs leadership in understanding the blueprint of where we are as a government across every sector, tracking progress, what we

need to do, how we have to do it, interventions needed to mitigate failure and risks in the project and building coalition strategy to succeed, identifying key milestones and deliverables. M&E polices the project and its team to follow and accomplish the project vision. It serves as the lifeline of the project and also serves as a “health-check” of the project. The monitoring and evaluation or Monitoring and Controlling according to the PMI , “is the component of the project management process which indicate key elements a savvy project manager should address when overseeing a project that is in most active state”.

Monitoring and Evaluation or what is termed by the PMI as, monitoring and controlling “addresses the skills needed to review progress and document benchmarks”. This process involves keeping eyes on every aspect of the project and driving every resources to achieving the project goal: Verifying scope; controlling scope; schedules; controlling costs; performing quality control; report performance; monitor and control risks; administer procurement team needs; reviewing and regulating the progress etc. As we digest this topic further, it is imperative to note that, government business is not a business as usual and therefore needs a strategic approach in delivering result. In the case of some leaders and institutions, M&E is embedded in the organizational philosophy and strategy and in others; it is a focal point around which every project revolves. The United Nations system for so many years is navigated through an effective monitoring and evaluation system because of the nature of complex projects and programmes it under takes. The success of Olympics 2012 according to the Association of Project Management, the biggest project management professional body in Europe, is greatly attributed to the institutionalizing and implementation of monitoring and evaluation methodology through every stage of the project. According to the UN, “Monitoring and Evaluation are essential for the successful delivery of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development as well as the Paris Agreement.”

**The augment remains whether Ghana needs a minister designate under the leadership of President Nana Akuffo Addo as one of his core team members responsible for such a robust and herculean task or projects projected in his government?**

### **What is the Project Team?**

The project team in this context is the various supervisors, managers, appointees and political leaders and administrators of various agencies, sectors departments and ministries directly and indirectly involve in driving the day-to-day task towards the economic agenda of the President and His Leadership at times referred to as Directors or sponsors of the Projects. To achieve this, the leadership needs to lay out a strategic plan that considers an effective human resource planning and management to champion the project vision of the President. The basic questions that may arise are: What is the project(s)? What is the vision for the project? Who and where is the beneficiary or community? What level of human and financial resources do we need to succeed in the execution of the project? What level of set skills vital to accomplishing the goal? What number of people do the projects need to succeed and what times do we have to finish the project? Having these in mind, the leader is guided in the selection and engagement process through staffing, training and deployment.

## **Key leadership responsibilities of a project Leader or Manager**

Key **project** management responsibilities include creating clear and attainable **project** objectives, building the **project** requirements, and **managing** the constraints of the **project** management triangle, which are cost, time and scope with quality as an integral component of the project. The process repeats itself concurrently and recurrently.

The project manager is the individual responsible for delivering the project. The individual leads and manages the project team with authority and responsibility from the project board, to run the project on a day-to-day basis. The PMBOK and, Projects IN Controlled Environments<sup>2</sup> are acceptable standard project management methods and is applicable to all project types.

These responsibilities are very specific based on an agreed reporting structure and the nature of the project but not limited to:

- Designing and applying appropriate project management standards.
- managing the production of the required deliverables
- Planning and monitoring the project
- adopting any delegation and use of project assurance roles within agreed reporting structures
- Preparing and maintaining project, stage, and exemption plans as required.
- managing project risks-including the development of contingency plans
- maintaining an awareness of potential interdependencies with other projects and their impact
- adopting and applying appropriate technical and quality strategies and standards
- identifying and obtaining support and advice required for the management, planning and control of the project
- managing project administration
- conducting a project evaluation review to assess how well the project was managed
- preparing any follow-on action recommendations
- monitoring overall progress of the project

## **A Dawn of a “New Project Sponsor and Leader” in the Ghanaian Economy**

**Project sponsorship according to the PMI** is an active senior management role, responsible for identifying the business need, problem or opportunity. The **sponsor** ensures the **project** remains a viable proposition and that benefits are realized, resolving any issues outside the control of the **project** manager.

The New Patriotic Party under the leadership of His Excellency Nana Akuffo Addo becomes a constitutionally mandated new project sponsor and leader of the Ghanaian economy. This constitutional mandate underscores a strategic shift and approach in project and portfolio formulation and direction needed to actualize the promises outlined and proposed by the NPP Manifesto and his leadership.

According to the PMBOK Guide Fifth Edition, The Sponsor “a person or group who provides resource and support for the project, programme or portfolio and is accountable for the enabling success. The sponsor is authorizing the project by given the project charter to the project

manager(s). The sponsor also wants to communicate what he expects out of this project because a project manager must know what goal these resources have been allotted. Project vision, purpose or justification, measurable project objectives and related success criteria.” It is therefore important for the citizenry as the project beneficiaries and major stakeholders to adjust and embrace the change as a natural phenomenon in a democratic political dispensation .Every change that happens in political project leadership just as a change in a corporate structure brings a lot on board. The anxieties, unanticipated mood and mixed feelings are the tunes of the game. One may ask, would the change in leadership bring any good to me? What would be the short, medium and long term effect of the change in my life, industry and the economy at large? It comes at times with spasm. But in most cases, the vision of a project sponsor is to successfully deliver an effective and efficient result. What is necessarily is the strategic formulation and alignment needed to champion the change efficiently and effectively.

## About the Author



**Dr. Donald Cog Senanu Agumenu**

Accra, Ghana



**Dr. Donald Cog Senanu Agumenu** is Secretary General, African Project and Programme Management Association (APPMA), Global Advisor and a Member of Global and Presidential Board and Advisory Council of International Board of Standards for the American Academy of Project Management (AAPM). He is also President of the International Association for People and Performance Development in charge of Africa.

He can be contacted at [donaldcogan@yahoo.com](mailto:donaldcogan@yahoo.com)