

Patriotism and Integrity are Critical Success Factors for Nigeria's National Egalitarianism¹

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Introduction

In project management, critical success factors are activities that have to be completed to a high standard in order to achieve the goals of a project. Nigeria will have a general election on 16th February 2019. This is a national project with the definite goal of electing a new federal government and state governments. Every patriotic Nigerian will pray that the deliverable from the project should be a government which has the goal of turning Nigeria into an egalitarian nation. The relevance of egalitarianism is the desirability that all Nigerians are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. At this time, the concept is an illusion because we do not have equality among Nigerians nor do we have equality of opportunities.

In this paper, we shall review some of the conditions in Nigeria in 2018 and then make concluding comments.

A Review of some of the conditions in Nigeria in 2018

1. Unemployment

Nigeria's unemployment numbers increased by nearly 30 percent in 2018 to 16 million, according to a November report by the National Bureau of Statistics. It is also feared that another two million are expected to be unemployed by the end of the year. The writer states that less than forty percent of Nigeria's nearly 200 million people are fully employed [1].

An economist Eze Onyekpere, is quoted as explaining that unemployment cuts across Nigeria's economy. His statement: "It's also a product of the policy choices you make in your trade policy, labour policy, in your industrial, even in your education policy, in your health policy. It's just a demonstration of the faith that people have in your economy and how productive it is and the quality of goods and services you are preparing... producing in the country. So, we have a government, with all the greatest respect, that is virtually clueless about economic policies."

2. The country with the most concentration of the world's poorest people

Our country, Nigeria, has become the country with the highest concentration of the poorest people in the world. A paper for the Brookings Institution thinktank, by three experts associated with the World Poverty Clock launched in 2017, reports that Nigeria overtook India in May 2018 to become the country with the world's highest number of people – 87 million – living in extreme poverty, in comparison with India's 73 million people. Quoting the report:

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“FIRST: EXTREME POVERTY IN TODAY’S WORLD IS LARGELY ABOUT AFRICA

According to our projections, Nigeria has already overtaken India as the country with the largest number of extreme poor in early 2018, ...At the end of May 2018, our trajectories suggest that Nigeria had about 87 million people in extreme poverty, compared with India’s 73 million. What is more, extreme poverty in Nigeria is growing by six people every minute, while poverty in India continues to fall” [2].

3. Nigeria, a country with governments least concerned about inequality in incomes

“Income inequality is one of Nigeria’s most serious but least talked about challenges,” states Matthew Page, formerly the US intelligence community’s leading expert on Africa’s biggest economy. His analysis is backed up by a new global index, produced by Oxfam and Development Finance International, which puts Nigeria outright last, that is number 152_ in a list of 152 countries ranked by their “commitment to reducing inequality”. Nigeria’s social spending (on health, education and social protection) is, according to the report, “shamefully low” and “reflected in very poor social outcomes for its citizens” [3].

4. Minimum wage for the Nigerian worker

A panel of stake holders in Nigeria, including representatives of governors, after exhaustive negotiations agreed on N30,000 per month as the new minimum wage. At the end of the negotiations, the governors argued that they cannot afford to pay the agreed amount. The governors do not appear to be doing enough to reduce inequality “in which the elite class is relentlessly seeking to maintain the status quo by feeding fat on the country to the detriment of the masses. It is only when the issue of minimum wage arises that we hear of how our government cannot afford figures which they afford over and above when it concerns the elite”.

Can the nation not really afford the minimum wage? The realities of payments that accentuate the inequalities include the following:

- Former Presidents are reportedly earning stupendous pensions and several perquisites of their former office, so are former governors who are paid fabulous sums after working for a maximum of 8 years.
- In one state in 2016, the House of Assembly approved a pension benefit for a residential building worth N200million and N100 million for the immediate past governor of the state and his deputy respectively.
- The House also amended the Pension Rights Law of 2007 to enable the former governor to enjoy pension for life at a rate equivalent to 100 percent of his last annual salary.
- This also includes the power to pick any officer not above grade level 12 as Special assistant and a personal secretary not below grade level 10 from the public service of the state.
- It is clear that the so-called “poor economy of a state” which is allegedly not able to afford minimum wage can conveniently afford these large payments.

- Some governors are quick to complain that all the states are not equally endowed and as such ought not to run the same salary structure.
- However, “the argument is self-serving because it lacks leadership by example as no governor canvasses same argument for all governors not to earn the same salaries. The more annoying argument is the one which talks about retrenching staff if the minimum wage increases”.
- The Egalitarian Mission Africa, a human rights group, argues that Governors who pay numerous attendees such as Special Advisers, Senior Special Assistants, Special Assistants and Personal Assistants not less than N200, 000 per month for doing absolutely nothing should be able to pay the meagre minimum wage to workers.
- Again, there are many payment sub-heads that can justifiably be diverted to the payment of minimum wage. For example, Rabiu Kwankwaso, who as governor of Kano state, observed that “security vote was nothing more than a device for stealing.” Such a scheme can be reorganized with sincerity to give workers better wage bill for the benefit of national development. [3]

5. Minimum Wage for the South African Worker

As Nigeria struggles with N30,000, South Africa increases minimum wage to N126,480 per month. The news is coming at a time when Nigerian workers are not sure that their struggle for a N30, 000 minimum wage would yield result. President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa said the wage, which would come into effect January 1, 2019, would benefit about six million workers that currently earn R3,700 (N97,495) [4]

6. Salaries and allowances of Legislators

• Nigerian Legislators

Senator Shehu Sani, from Kaduna and a member of All Progressives Congress (APC) said that the salary of Senators is 750,000 naira per month plus allowances of 13.5 million naira per month, for a total package of 14.25 million naira per month. At the current black market rate of 360 naira to the U.S. dollar, that total is slightly less than \$40,000 per month, and slightly less than \$480,000 per year. It is estimated that most Nigerians live on less than \$2.00 per day [4]. It has been stated often by the media that Nigerian parliamentarians are the most highly paid in the world.

• United States: U.S. senators and congressmen and women

Each is said to earn a salary of \$174,000 per year. They also receive health insurance, life insurance, and are enrolled in social security. For these senators must pay premiums out of their salary.

- South Africa: The highest legislators are paid R1,358,399 per year which is about \$93,683.00 per year [5].

Concluding Comments

Thus far, the problems that accentuate the inequality and the conditions depicting the same have been briefly discussed. The objective is to present them to the politicians who wish to take over the reins of government. In my view, we need to get our priorities as a people right. There can be no worse indictment to our governments than making the following statements to them:

- Our country is the highest concentration of the poorest people in the world.
- Ours is a country in which our governments are not concerned with the welfare of our people such that there is a staggering inequality in salaries of the workers. This is shown by the fact that our workers are probably the least paid in Africa and, by extrapolation, in the world.
- Our legislators are the highest paid in the world and yet our workers are the least paid. Where is our patriotism when we can live with this drastic and pronounced inequality in good conscience? Or is our conscience so seared that we do not care if our countrymen go about searching the bins to look for something on which to live?
- The present government has been in power since 2015, yet Nigeria has become a country for the poorest people in the world and the least paid workers. These facts suggest that any government in power should focus on introducing measures that should alleviate and improve the lot of its citizens because the present government has not been able to do this.
- It is also the case that a lot of money is being wasted in payments and allowances to governors, legislators, special assistants who are not adding value to the nation.
- Finally, we need from the elections a president, governors, and legislators who will have the courage, patriotism, and integrity to introduce root-and-branch reorganisations and rationalisation of our executive and legislative teams to reduce the country's high cost of governance and its associated sources of waste of fund. This is money required to develop the nations' infrastructure and create employment opportunities that will help enhance the national income. The proof of success is how much a government has been able to enhance the lot and welfare of all Nigerians, and not just a few nor those in the ruling party nor their relatives. Thankfully, there are objective measures conducted by independent United Nation agencies which provide statistics on how much the nationals are being catered for in spite of all the self-serving promotions and publicities by the government.

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About the Author



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Dr. O. Chima Okereke, Ph.D., MBA, PMP is the Managing Director and CEO of Total Technology Consultants, Ltd., a project management consulting company working in West Africa and the UK. He is a visiting professor, an industrial educator, a multidisciplinary project management professional, with over 25 years' experience in oil and gas, steel and power generation industries. For example, On December 26th 2013, he completed an assignment as a visiting professor in project management; teaching a class of students on Master's degree in project management in the Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok, Russia. In August and September 2013, he conducted an innovative, and personally developed training programme for seventy six well engineers of Shell Nigeria to enhance the efficiency of their operations using project and operations management processes.

Before embarking on a career in consulting, he worked for thirteen years in industry rising to the position of a chief engineer with specialisation in industrial controls and instrumentation, electronics, electrical engineering and automation. During those 13 years, he worked on every aspect of projects of new industrial plants including design, construction and installation, commissioning, and engineering operation and maintenance in process industries. Chima sponsored and founded the potential chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, acting as president from 2004 to 2010.

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