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THE PLACE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN NEPAD OBJECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the strategic contribution of human resources towards achieving NEPAD objectives. Attempt has been made at reviewing the focus of NEPAD, and the importance of highly skilled professionals in driving through the goals and objectives contained in the African leaders' approach to solving the continent's problems. The paper also considers the current trend of brain drain to other continents and future prospect of retaining highly skilled manpower to help in meeting NEPAD objectives. It was concluded that the human talents that abounds in the continent must be harnessed to overcome the myriad of problems which confronts Africa than going cap in hand to developed countries.

INTRODUCTION

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as it is known today, came into being 23 October 2001. NEPAD is the latest developmental initiative by African leaders. As a continental programme, it came as a replacement for the previous plans and declarations by African leaders. These past efforts have not succeeded in helping to ensure equitable and sustainable development which focuses on poverty eradication, equitable distribution of resources, food security, environmental sustainability, and gender mainstreaming in Africa. The continent continues to suffer marginalisation in the global economy despite its enormous human and natural resource endowments.

Over the years, Africa has been regarded as a continent characterised by war, poverty, diseases, and all the indices of underdevelopment. The trend has continued to exacerbate with a seeming loss of hope. This has placed the continent and its people in an inferior position among the committee of nations. The more developed countries of the world describe all the countries of Africa as Third world. Though derogatory as the classification might seem, it nevertheless shows the position of Africa as the least of all the world's continents. Independently, leaders of African countries have found themselves in the labyrinth of developmental folktales.

According to Halima Noor, NEPAD is a product of the continuing search by African leaders and their people to create structures which

can lead to the social and economic transformation of the continent. Their desire for this, results from the tragic consequences of the perennial economic and political crisis on the continent. The success or otherwise of the new direction, require a highly skilled significant proportion of the people. This assertion justifies Hammaerstad's position.

The Human Factor in NEPAD Objective

Broadly explained, NEPAD objective can be seen from the 'fact sheet' of the ECUMENICAL TEAM held in Johannesburg 2002. "This New Partnership for Africa's Development is a pledge by African leaders based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable development and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic."

Consequently, the objectives of NEPAD are to:

- Achieve and sustain an average GDP of above seven percent per annum for the next 15 years;
- Ensure that Africa achieve the agreed international development goals of reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half before 2015; to enrol all children of school age in Primary School by 2015;
- To make progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparities in school enrolment by 2005;
- To reduce infant and child mortality ratios by two-thirds before 2015;
- To reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters before 2015;
- And to implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005 in order to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015.

For the aims and objectives to be achieved, the human factor was seldom emphasised in the document. Rather, the process proposed by African Leaders includes Market Access Initiative (MAI) and the Capital Flows initiative (CFI).

The Market Access Initiative

NEPAD sets out the specific objectives and strategic actions behind MAI. Key objective and strategic actions envisage under this

initiative include: diversification of production, mining, manufacturing, tourism, services, private sector development, increase in Africa's exports, removal of barrier to trade.

As a continental programme aimed at addressing the current challenges of poverty, disease, and underdevelopment facing Africa, NEPAD is adopting a strategic initiative and vision for Africa in that regard. Its primary objective is poverty reduction and disease control especially Malaria, Tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS that have been ravaging the continent. Little is yet to be seen in the strategic initiative, give much attention to the human factor.

The capital flow initiative (CFI) basically hinged on capital flow into the region. Trade and investment provide the core in this regard. Trading with the rest of the world (especially developed countries) has not been in favour of Africa. The favourable terms of trade weighs heavily on Africa. In comparative terms, realisation of NEPAD objectives requires a significant redirection of the trade policies of African countries.

Laudable as the objectives might seem, NEPAD give so much attention to seeking help and support from international organisations and developed countries. It is so glaring that very little emphasis is placed on harnessing the vast potentials and specialised skills of the African people. This seeming neglect is obvious from the various documents of NEPAD programme.

Current Trend and Future Prospects

Professionals as it were, are individuals with specialised skills whose applications are regulated. These individuals are required in every aspect of human development. The quality of professionals have been found to separate one organisation from others, and one society from another which could also be applied to continents. The transformation of resources in any nation for the ultimate goal of satisfying developmental needs require highly qualified professionals. This is where professionals become inevitable and inescapable in the quest for sustainable development. And the achievement of NEPAD's objective of sustainable growth and development of Africa greatly require the specialised skills of human efforts. This must be present in all aspects of human development such as Information Technology, Management, Medicine, Sciences, Sports, and the Arts. Ironically, these professionals abound in almost every country in Africa.

African countries in the 21st century are not really in dearth of professionals. The continent can boast of professionals in every

known discipline. In Nigeria for instance, there is hardly any discipline that reasonable number of professionals would not be found. In Medicine and para-medicals alone, there are over 50,000 Nigerians practicing outside Africa (mainly in Europe and America). The flight of professionals from Africa is equally applicable to other African countries. A typical example is the Franco-phone countries of Africa where very many of their citizens are in France as professionals in all departments of their national life.

For instance, there are several African sportsmen and women who participated in the last Olympics (2004 edition) and won several medals for European and American countries. If these young men and women had actually represented their countries of decent, African countries would have ranked among the best rather than the abysmal failure recorded by most of them in nearly all the events they entered for. Just for illustration, Nigeria recorded two bronze medals in the tournament. Yet, a Nigeria won silver medal for Portugal. About half of the athletes that participated for America are blacks. Obviously, a significant proportion of them are not Americans by birth. Infact, every black man in the world is first an African. If all those blacks that won medals for Britain, France, Portugal, Canada, and the United States of America had competed for African countries, the world's impression about the continent would have become more favourable.

Apart from sports, other professionals from Africa are practising outside the continent. For instance, a significant proportion of Medical and para-medicals in the Middle East countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirate, and several others are Africans. Emeagwali (a world renowned Information Technology expert in America) is a Nigerian. He is known to be a major player in the promotion of IT for America. The phenomenal development of Europe, America, and the Asian tigers has been made possible by the strategic contributions of professionals. No nation can solve its developmental problems without the optimal utilisation of professional skills. For example, the infant mortality of European countries hovers around 5 to 8 per thousand as against 120 to 140 per thousand in Africa. The significant difference between the two continents in this regard, can be attributed to availability of quality Medicare founded on well trained professionals and technology. It will not be superfluous to say that African countries equally have high number of well trained professionals in medicine and its related discipline. Their strategic contributions, when properly harnessed, would significantly help in the attainment of NEPAD's objectives.

The attainment of NEPAD's objective through the strategic contributions of professionals require that African leaders accept the responsibility of building the people's self-reliance and helping them maintain their marketability through qualitative and functional education. According to Robbins (2003), the essence of any development programme is built on providing support for the people to continually add to their skills, abilities, and knowledge. NEPAD as a progressive programme cannot deviate from this responsibility in its quest for sustainable development. To enjoy the strategic contributions of professionals in achieving NEPAD objectives, African leaders must independently consider the following:

Clearly communicating NEPAD'S objectives and future strategies. This is necessary because when people know where a programme is headed, they are better able to develop plans to share in that future. People are more willing to contribute to the success of any programme (Ekore, 2001).

Creating growth opportunities

People should have the opportunity to get new, interesting, and professionally challenging experiences. As it stands presently, NEPAD main focus is on foreign trade and investment directed into Africa. This over emphasis on foreigners with utter neglect of its own professionals and people is a major flaw in NEPAD's strategy. When growth opportunities are available in African countries, the professionals would rise up to the developmental challenges.

Repositioning Training Institutions

Training institutions in most African countries are not current with contemporary developmental challenges. To contribute optimally, professionals in each country of the continent must be trained to meet the developmental needs incorporated in the objectives of NEPAD.

For the professionals to play their roles and make strategic contributions towards achieving NEPAD objectives there is the need for them to know their *strengths and limitations*. Professionalism begins by knowing the special skill one has to offer and being honest with self.

Managing reputation.

It is important for professionals to let others know about their achievements. Professionals with their achievements must be visible to the world especially in the era of ICT.

Build and maintain network contacts

In a world of high mobility, professionals need to develop contacts. This is readily possible by joining international professional associations, attending conferences, and network at social gatherings. For example, rather than Kenya hiring consultants (Engineering, Management, or Medical) from Europe and America or Asia, NEPAD's objective could be furthered when African professionals from Nigeria or Ghana are hired.

Keeping Current:

In order to contribute meaningfully toward achieving NEPAD's objectives, professionals need to develop the specific skills that are in high demand. For instance, a chartered Marketer would add more values when he or she is capable of developing packages/programmes for market analysis and sales forecasts.

Balance specialist and generalist competencies

It is important for the professional to stay current within his or her technical specialty. But the professional also need to develop general competencies that give the versatility to react to an ever changing work environment.

Conclusion

The two most pressing issues facing NEPAD are poverty and diseases in Africa. The successful management of these problems would set the continent on the part of sustainable development. However, the success or otherwise in this regard depend greatly on the knowledge and skills acquired by professionals. These experts must be made available and accessible through effective marketing. It is time efforts are made to identify the professionals available in each African country so that their skills can be utilised optimally. Professional bodies such as the Chartered Marketers can take the lead in this stead.

Professionals in Africa must rise up to the challenges and opportunities offered by NEPAD'S objectives to discover the abundant talents scattered all over the continent. Just as successful products

depend largely on good marketing, so are human skills. Unknown talents cannot be utilised to meet developmental challenges. It has reached a stage when African leaders must look inwards to utilise the experiences of their professionals. When made available, the bundle of talents that abound in African professionals will help to further their roles and strategic contributions towards achieving NEPAD objectives. This is because human resource is required to transform all other resources, which makes it central in any developmental strategy.

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