

JOSEPH'S STRATEGIC PLANNING SKILLS: A SUBSTITUTION OF
FAMILY FIRM AND OPPORTUNISM IN THE EVOLUTION OF
GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

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Abstract. Joseph's strategic skills saved the Egyptian people from the plight of famine. The model he proposed is an analytical one. Pharaoh and his cabinet members considered his advice to be very productive, so they named him as the leader of the economic team. Over time, Joseph was caught up between paying allegiance to his family and the welfare of Egyptians, who chose him for this position. This paper examines the strategic policy process of Joseph's leadership. Its results are used as a guide in analysing the problem of policy failure in Nigeria. Nigerian economy continues to dwindle due to the lack of effective strategic planning, improper analysing and implementation of economic plans.

Keywords: the reign of Joseph, impartiality in Old Testament, policymaking and implementation, leadership, strategic planning, Potiphar

1. INTRODUCTION

The story of Joseph is one of the most dramatic and complex biblical narratives. These characteristics undoubtedly contributed for it to become the focus of many tales and exegetical activities in the post-biblical and rabbinic literature of the late antiquity (Levinson 1997, 270). Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, was the first Jewish ruler of Egypt. He lived with ten half-brothers, one full brother and one half-sister (Dominik 2017, 3). As the favourite of both Yahweh and his father Jacob, he was inclined, since his childhood, to family governance and policymaking.

In the land of Egypt, the prophecy of an impending economic collapse that only a formidable economic policy could revive was

circulated. Pharaoh invited Joseph to provide a plan to ameliorate this foreordained collapse. Joseph was, at that moment, caught up between family allegiance and societal welfare. His predisposition and tactics are the main points which this paper aims to unveil.

Joseph’s strategy is relevant to the current situation of Nigeria. There are financial crisis and crashes in its economy. The state is in recession. This dwindling economy has been prophesied before it hinted so hard the country. In 2016, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala warned the Nigeria government about an impending economic recession. According to her, the government should have buckle up and prepare for such a crisis (Agande 2012, 1). Unfortunately, her theory was overlooked. Unlike Pharaoh of Egypt, who took the warning of Joseph very seriously, the Nigerian government took Iweala very usuriously. This paper examines the implications of this negligence on the Nigerian government, its citizens and the international community.

2. JOSEPH’S LEADERSHIP

Joseph, due to his leadership foresight, garnered hatred from his nuclear and extended family members. His foresight of reigning over them became a bulwarked to his peaceful family living. His brothers planned his assassination. However, due to God’s mercy, he was sold to Egypt.

There, he found solace in the house of Potiphar. Thompson (2016, 210) explains that the patriarch Joseph found himself enslaved in an Egyptian household, which included Potiphar’s wife, for whom her husband did nothing, except from the food she ate (39.6). The woman tried to rape Joseph. He escaped, but that sent him directly into the Egyptian prison. Levinson (1997, 273) attests that “Joseph is an exemplum of self-control, who even in his thoughts do not yield to temptation”. Potiphar’s wife falsified the accusation against Joseph in front of her husband. She asserted and reasserted time and again that she was screaming when Joseph ap-

proached her. It was her legal defence against a counterclaim that she willingly acceded to (or even seduced) the young man (Jacobson 1976, 177). Because of the report of Potiphar's wife, Joseph was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was taken out of prison to interpret the dream of Pharaoh. Joseph was able to explain it. According to Lakoff (1993, 91):

In his dream, Pharaoh is standing on the river bank, when seven fat cows come out of the river, followed by seven lean cows that eat the seven fat ones and still remain lean. Then Pharaoh dreams again. This time he sees seven "full and good" ears of corn growing, and then seven withered ears growing after them. The withered ears devour the good ears. Joseph interprets the two dreams as a single dream. The seven fat cows and full ears are good years and the seven lean cows and withered ears are famine years that follow the good years. The famine years "devour" what the good years produce.

This gift of phenomena interpretation endeared Pharaoh to create an office for Joseph, which never existed before in the history of the Egyptian nation. Joseph was rewarded by being set over Egypt. He received, as gifts, Pharaoh's signet ring, linen clothing, a gold chain, second chariot status, and the marriage to Asenath (Genesis 41:40-45) (Niditch & Dotan 1977, 186).

3. JOSEPH'S STRATEGIC PLANNING SKILLS IN THE LIGHT OF FAMINE

His appointment to run the newly created office took immediate effect. The advice he gave to Pharaoh to avert famine was to be carried out by himself. The king and his officials liked Joseph's plan to store the grain during the good years. So, the king said to them: "No one could possibly handle this better than Joseph since the Spirit of God is with him (Jerri 2018, 1).

(...) and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Then that food

shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine (Genesis 41: 33-36).

Due to the fact that his strategy was thought-provocative, incorporating corporate flexibility and personal responsibility, it was immediately adopted by the cabinet. Genesis 41:37-40 reveals the endorsement:

The King and his officials approved this plan, and he said to them: “We will never find a better man than Joseph, a man who has God’s spirit in him”. The King said to Joseph, “God has shown you all this, so it is obvious that you have greater wisdom and insight than anyone else. I will put you in charge of my country and all my people will obey your orders. Your authority will be second only to mine”.

The famine began. This proved the accuracy of Joseph’s prophecy. The years of famine were not felt in the land of Egypt. This proved the success of the strategic plan of Joseph. He was able to save the kingdom from starvation and financial bankruptcy.

His brothers came to Egypt because of famine, which created a chance for family opportunism and family firm. He could immediately shift his entire care and support to his brethren. Instead, he resorted to critical enquiry, so as to avoid nepotism and tribalism. Fritsgh (1955, 28) reveals that:

Joseph not only humiliates his brethren and fills their hearts with fear, but he brings them to the point of confessing their sin which they had committed against him over twenty years before. This is, of course, an important point in the story, theologically, for no true reconciliation can be made between Joseph and his brethren until they realize their own guilt and confess it before him whom they have wronged. These two steps in the moral awakening of the brethren are clearly brought out in the story.

Joseph, however, was able to devise policies to make sure that his brethren will not remain without food. Longacre writes that “the brothers get the food that they came to buy and return (minus Sim-

eon) to Canaan. Already the providential goal of preservation of the family from starvation is being met” (Longacre 2003, 47). Also, it is worthy to be mentioned that the initial intent of Joseph’s brothers to harm him metamorphosed into the providential intent to save the family.

4. THE PROCESS OF PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

Public policymaking is relatively stable, a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern (Anderson 2003, 2). Public policy is made by the government officials, organs and bodies. It is a goal-oriented and directed action or activity. Sutton, in his turn, explains policymaking as “a problem-solving process which is rational, balanced, objective and analytical. In the model, decisions are made in a series of sequential phases, starting with the identification of a problem or issue, and ending with a set of activities to solve or deal with it” (Sutton 1999, 9).

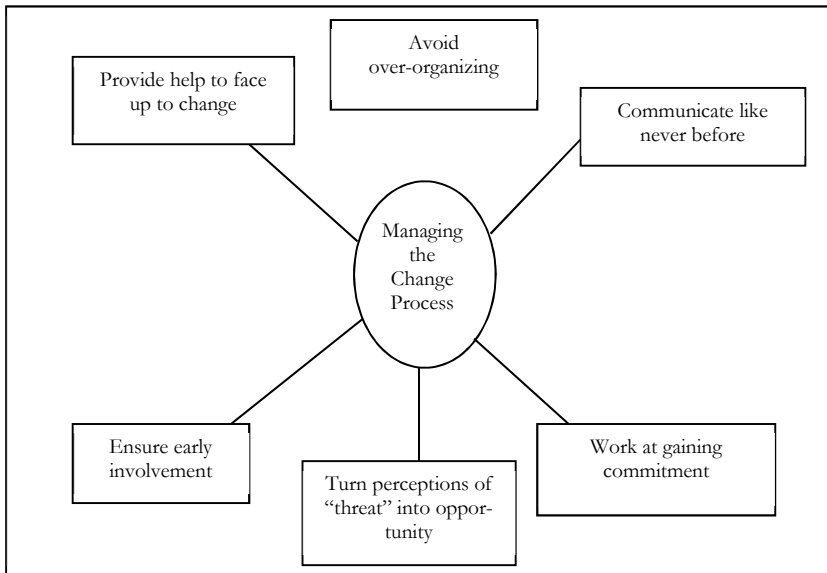
Policymakers look at a small number of alternatives for dealing with a problem and tend to choose options that differ only marginally from the existing policy (Sutton 1999, 10). According to Sutton, this process involves the following steps (Sutton 1999, 9):

- (i) Identifying all possible actions to deal with the issue
- (ii) Weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of each of these alternatives
- (iii) Choosing the option which offers the best solution
- (iv) Implementing the policy
- (v) Evaluating the outcome

Another strategic planning process was given by Adebowale (2007, 54), namely: (1) gathering, analysing and forecasting data to develop: (1.1) a human resource supply forecast (and to create human resource information systems); (1.2.) a human resource demand forecast (and to add it to the human resource information system); (2) establishing human resource objectives and policies and gaining

top management's approval and support; (3) designing and implementing plans and action programmes in areas such as recruitment, training and promotion, which will enable the organisation to achieve its human resource objectives; and (4) controlling the evaluating personnel plans and programmes to facilitate progress towards human resource objectives.

Implementing these steps is an ongoing process of a non-linear type must be carefully managed (Grindle & Thomas 1991). It requires consensus building, the participation of key stakeholders, conflict resolution, compromise, contingency planning, resource mobilisation and adaptation (Sutton 1999, 23). Plant (cited in Sutton 1999, 24) sets out six key activities for a successful implementation:



It results from the diagram above that managing the change process is the centre platform for public policymaking. In the process of managing the change, the right individuals, groups or agents who lead the change team are of paramount importance.

5. FAILURE OF POLICYMAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

Scholars have taken different positions regarding Nigeria's economic policy problems. Effiong (2013, 26) posits that implementation is the problem, while Dahida and Maidoki (2013, 56) insist on the policy formulation. I claim that both policy formulation and implementation are the problems of Nigeria's near economic collapse. In defence of his thesis, Effiong (2013, 26) says that Nigeria had always witnessed well-articulated economic and social reforms intended to launch the nation on the path of meaningful development. The catalogue of such programmes abounds, i.e. the Seven Point Agenda "Vision 2010 – 2020", and many others. Nigeria never lacked in setting up plans and putting processes in place. Dahida and Maidoki (2013, 59) reveal that policy formulation is the first stage of the policy planning process. That is because according to the constitution, the federal government is expected to provide the overall direction and leadership in the planning process, from the formulation stage to implementation and evaluation. Hatten & Hatten (1988) created a nexus between the policy formulation and implementation, stating that policy formulation as a strategy is a means to achieve the organisation's objectives. But the selection of the route is not enough. Implementation is required to actually achieve objectives; strategies must be formulated then implemented if they are to have results, and it is on results that organisations are managed and measured.

The first factor that has affected the policy process in Nigeria is the lack of coordination or the inadequate communication between presidential policymaking agencies. One agency or person tends to feel that it/he can provide the economic blueprint for the entire country. In sketching this problem, Dahida and Maidoki (2013, 62) add that the developmental intentions are not spelt out clearly through the right organizational channels established for the transmission of policy to those involved in policy formulation, therefore the policy will not be put into effect. In Nigeria, for instance, Kemi Adeosun, who is the minister of finance, wants low-interest rate,

while Emefiele, who is the central bank governor, insists that the present interest rate must be maintained. This does not encourage a strategic planning process.

The second factor consists of bad policies and policy processes. These bad policies are undertaken by incapable and incompetent individuals. For example, when President Buhari was elected in 2015, he vowed not to devalue the Naira. Jude (2017, 1) laments that, for investors, it was the clearest indication that the number one citizen of Africa's largest economy was interfering with monetary processes and the central bank operations. The President was incompetent regarding the financial appropriation. The effects were the slumping of the Naira, the near collapse of foreign exchange market, and the hyperinflation that bedevilled the economy.

The third factor is the lack of attraction strategies. When the environment is made attractive both local and international firms and organisations will be enticed to invest in Nigeria's business environment. Nigeria needs to recognize the broader economic benefits from competition (Nigel 2016, 1). The world becomes a globalised village; hence, there are broader options available to firms and industries. For Nigeria to be seen as a viable environment, competitive measures and structures must be put in place to meet up with the challenges.

6. THE IMPLICATIONS OF INEFFECTIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING IN NIGERIA

The lack of policy formulation and implementation affected Nigerians in so many ways. There is a high poverty level, unemployment, the high cost of goods and services, low minimum wage and political apathy.

The poverty level in Nigeria is alarming. This is due to the fact that too much emphasis was placed on petroleum with the total neglect of other sources of monetary flow. The economic recession led to the abject poverty level of most Nigerian families. The gov-

ernment could no longer pay salaries as and when due. Aigbokhan (2000, 5) explains that poverty may have been overestimated due to the lack of information on the huge informal sector of the economy. For Nwagwu (2014, 19), the majority of the population is enmeshed in the net of abject poverty due to faulty economic policies and unsustainable poverty alleviation programmes of successive governments.

Unemployment has increased due to the mass sack of workers by banks, corporations, and private establishments in response to the lack of financial stamina to continue to pay their salaries. Jola (2016, 1), for instance, reports that Ecobank sacked 1040 workers, while Zenith Bank sacks over 1,200 employees (Premium 2018, 1), which, according to them, was cut down on its top-heavy management structure. Furthermore, the government announced that it has created jobs for the unemployed people but, unfortunately, only “privileged members of society who filled the available places with their own protégés, thereby denying the intended beneficiaries, access to the funds” (Actionaid 2015, 27).

The prices of goods and services have skyrocketed with its attendant low minimum wage of 18,000 Naira for workers. Kumolu and Ake (2016, 1) lament that the prices for almost all commodities have skyrocketed, leading to financial pressure on most families. Coming at a time when the salaries of both public and private sector workers were no longer paid as at when due, this fact made the experience more excruciating to the extent that almost everyone is lamenting.

7. IMPORTING JOSEPH’S GOVERNANCE MECHANISM IN NIGERIA’S POLICYMAKING PROCESS

Joseph had a simple economic proposal for revamping the Egyptian economy. His proposal had an analysis, the personnel who will be involved in the process, the tax programme, the security and future supply patterns. The Nigerian economy is made of so many bureau-

cratic processes which, in the end, are characterised by doublets and several doctored aspects that never work out.

Joseph proposed an organisational change. He said: “Let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise and set him over the land of Egypt”. He made it clear that Pharaoh cannot at the same time be a ruler and an economic adviser. In Nigeria, the president is, among others, the ruler, finance minister and adviser of the director of the foreign exchange market. He can decide not to agree with anyone else’s ideas. Thus, Lorange and Vancil (1976) advise that managers at every level of a hierarchy must ultimately agree on a well-structured, integrated plan of action for the coming years. Their agreement should be reached by a series of steps, starting with the portrait of corporate objectives and bringing them into action along with the preparation of a one- or two-year profit plan. Although the design of this process – i.e. deciding who does what and when - can be complex, it is vital to be undertaken as such, because it represents the ultimate success of the strenuous exertion of planning.

Joseph was able to allow his technique to flow from the situation. In Nigeria, a situation is forced to fit the technique. This is why the economy continues to collapse. A template that has failed over time is still applied in the policymaking process, and it continues to give the same result.

Joseph had an unequivocally projected evaluation. He presented the situation just the way it is, without hiding the truth. He made it clear to Pharaoh that the famine would be tough and that there is an imperious need for urgent measures spearheaded by a wise administrator. In Nigeria, sycophants try to hide the truth of economic collapse and project false economic indices.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The roadmap below, drawn in the light of Joseph’s strategic planning, could be of value to Nigeria’s policymaking process. It implies the following steps:

- a. Competent hands and those who are fit should be called upon to bring in their suggestions. The era of engaging in party politics should stop. When someone who possesses what is need to revive the economy is in another party, his or her ideas should be sorted after, rather than this politics of bigotry.
- b. The president should not engage in authoritarianism. This will scare policymakers from saying the truth. Most of these policymakers are afraid of saying the truth and getting fired. Hence, the government must be able to assure policymakers that they will not be witch-hunted for clearly stating their opinions about the economic situation.
- c. Strategic planning should be made void of nepotism, party politics, family opportunism and regional interest. The issue of a government putting all of its economic blueprints to the benefit of family relationships is not good for the economy. The issue of putting family members into sensitive positions of policy decision when it is crystal clear that they are not capable in that field throw a curse on the nation.

9. CONCLUSION

Joseph's strategic planning skills were able to save the Egyptian people from famine and financial bankruptcy. The fact that Joseph did not favour the family firm and opportunism was to the benefit of all. The Nigeria economy is indeed in a bad shape. Even though the government is not coming out to truly confess this aspect, the effect of the ailing economy is felt by the citizens. The Nigerian leaders should, as a matter of urgent attention, appoint capable technocrats. This is because they are selected on the basis of their level of expertise. Nigeria could bounce again to take its number one place in Africa if the economic blueprint of Joseph would be translated into its economic system.

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