

CHAPTER FOUR

HARNESSING THE HUMAN RESOURCES OF ILORIN EMIRATE

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Preamble

I am grateful to the organizers for this opportunity to make a little contribution to this all-important Summit at which issues that relate to the future of Ilorin Emirate will be discussed. I consider this merely as a discussion paper in which I would point up a few issues and set the stage for others to make their contributions. Happily, three other eminent citizens of the Emirate will be presenting papers. Mine will necessarily be brief. I see this merely as an in-house brainstorming session.

Background

We may well start this brief paper with a little clarification of the key terms. To harness is to control and use something for a purpose. It is in this context that we talk of harnessing a horse. Harnessing, in our context today, refers to how we can put together, mobilize and use our human resources to move our Emirate forward. A resource can be referred to as an Endowment which could be natural or acquired. It is in this regard that we talk of the resources of a nation or of a community. A resource is an available supply that can be drawn upon when needed. It is something that can be used for support or help, e.g. financial or human resource. Sometimes, the word is used to mean the ability to deal effectively with a difficult or troublesome situation.

Used in its plural form, the word resources refer to the total means available to a country or community for its economic and political development, including such elements as mineral wealth, manpower and armaments. The concern of this paper is with the human resources with

which Ilorin Emirate is richly endowed. As I said earlier, I am aware that experts in this area are here to talk to us on other aspects of the topic, such as the economy of the Emirate, fund generation and available business opportunities.

Once upon a time, I had the privilege of serving as Guest Speaker at the Annual IEDPU National Conference where I wondered aloud why it was me the Planning Committee picked on to deliver the lecture, considering the rich array of highly-talented and highly-placed Ilorin professionals available, some of whom were present at the said Annual Conference. I choose today to start on that note.

At that well-attended National Conference. I identified a long list of army officers, naval officers, air force officers and top officers in the paramilitary services who hail from Ilorin. I also identified several Ilorin Emirate icons and daughters who had made their marks in the judiciary and risen to the peak of their careers. I identified several of our sons and daughters who were making waves in the educational sector - teachers, lecturers, professors, etc, both at the local and national levels. I identified Islamic scholars from various parts of Ilorin. Overall, my review showed that, in every area of endeavour, we have Ilorin sons and daughters who are featuring prominently and I asked I.E.D.P.U "Why me?"

Today's Summit, I assume, centres on how to harness these very rich human resources of Ilorin to move the Emirate forward, Ilorin must be one of the few communities in Nigeria that are richly endowed with human resources in every aspect of human endeavour. How do we harness what we have to get what we want?

But let us not assume that when we talk about human resources, we are only referring to those who have acquired western-type education and can speak English, Ilorin is the centre of Islamic education. Ilorin has men and women who are skilled and competent in several other areas as clearly shown in the publication we put together to mark the Eleventh Anniversary of the Installation of the Eleventh Emir of Ilorin. How do we harness all the human resources in the Emirate to move the Emirate forward? And as you would see in the said publication, we had our experts in various trades and craft such as weaving, blacksmithing etc, and these also form part of our human resources.

Our concern in this paper is that we must now harness all our human resources in the Emirate in order to move the Emirate forward. To be able to do this, we must start on the understanding that Ilorin is one and Ilorin is more important than individuals or groups that make up the Emirate. Therefore, political considerations must not be the only issues in contention when we considered how to maximize the human resources of Ilorin. No matter what party you belong, no matter your ideological learning, Ilorin is one and we must tap the available human resources in order to move the Emirate forward.

I am taking the position because I believe that Ilorin is a united entity and, whatever the political dispensation, Ilorin will outlive all of us. Politicians come and go; Political arrangements come and go; but Ilorin Emirate remains forever. Therefore, politics apart, Ilorin Emirate should try and maximize its human resources, no matter the political parties such individuals belong to. And I can only hope that the old artificial dichotomies have been permanently laid to rest. What does it matter which part of Ilorin I come from if I have something to offer to move Ilorin Emirate forward? If we are one, let us be one and recognize the talents we have.

The bottom line of all I have been struggling to say is this; let us see ourselves as one and let us work to move the Emirate forward. We all have something to offer and I believe that our human resources must be maximally tapped for the maximum advantage of the Emirate, no matter the political party you belong or where you come from or the political party in power.

Problems and Prospects

In a society where the voice of the people is the voice of God and the voice of government, it is easy to maximally utilize the human resources to move the society forward. But this is not so in a society where mediocre, ex-convicts and criminals are celebrated. It is also not possible in a society where only party members are patronized, whether they have the required skills and competencies or not. This is one of the problems societies may confront when they want to harness their human resources to move their communities forward.

There is also the problem of quickly identifying who fits into what. For example, only four days ago, a friend sent me a text asking for the name and Curriculum Vitae of any Ilorin indigene for immediate employment as a quantity surveyor. I could not immediately source a suitable candidate. This underscores the need to have a comprehensive record of all out sons and daughters in various professions and careers

As a teacher, I do know that our education system today is not adequate in preparing people for the challenges of the twenty-first century. Now is the time to look into what we teach, how we teach and how we assess. Otherwise, we shall continue to produce people who cannot find their ways in the conceptual landscape of today's knowledge-driven economy. Human capital development is a way to fulfil the potential of a people by enlarging their capabilities and this necessarily implies empowerment of people and enabling them to participate in their own development. It is a way to enhance people's skills, knowledge, productivity and inventiveness. Human capital development is a people-centred strategy. Unfortunately, these are not captured in our institutions of learning. The object of teaching a child is to enable him get along in life without the teacher.

This is a crucial issue because the twenty-first century is looking for people with skills, and competencies, people who can demonstrate competences whatever the quality of degree they hold. Our educational system must be tailored toward meeting such needs. Today, our school products are hardly able to demonstrate any skills, other than the ability to memorize teachers' handouts and pass examinations. Most times, the practical aspects of the programmes we offer are neglected. My concern here is that our graduates are not adequately equipped to fit into the technological world.

At this stage and based on my background, we might ask the question "Education for what?" or indeed, "what is Education?" I have always held the view that education is the series of experiences placed at the disposal of the recipients to make them develop into rounded personalities who will be useful to themselves and their respective communities. Unfortunately, that is not the type of education we have today. Reflect for a moment on the traditional system of education which

was part of Society and suited its recipients into the society and compare that with what we have today.

In traditional education, the young person grew up in society and was groomed to fit into his roles as an adult member of the society. Through apprenticeship and other socialization processes, the young person was taught a trade and the traditions of his people. He could therefore not have grown up into a jobless adult. There was tanning, there was poetry, there was weaving, there was blacksmithing, there was farming, etc.

What's for the future?

For the future, I am making the following recommendations:

1. This is a knowledge-driven economy. Let us move with the times and train our youth to be able to compete favourably in the new economy. In order to do this, we must embrace contemporary trends such as Information and Communication Technology.
2. Bodies such as the IEDPU should constantly, even if on annual basis, update the list of Ilorin indigenes in specific areas of specialization and publish the list for general use. Let us diversify our areas of specialization and encourage our children to diversify their career choices.
3. Let us not limit our choices to Islamic studies alone. At the same time let us not sacrifice religious studies on the altar of modern technology. My fear is that, in future, we shall not have enough trained teachers for Islamic Studies in our schools.
4. Let us revive local craft and set up small scale industries to modernize those little crafts and business for which Ilorin is well known. In this regard, I wish to admonish our political office holders and other representatives to come together and prepare a comprehensive plan for reviving our local industries such as weaving. As the Chinese proverb states, "if you give me a fish, you have fed me for one day; if you teach me how to fish, you have given me the means to feed myself for life".
5. Let us unite. Ilorin is one. I am sure we can move forward if we act as one. We have all the resources we need as people. Indeed, in the twenty-first century, if you want to move fast, move alone; if you want to move far you must move with others.

6. There is need for mentoring and close guidance for those coming behind and the older and more nature members of each profession must guide those coming behind.

Conclusion

I have a dream that, in future, my grandchildren will not be judged by where they come from, but by the quality of their character.