

Opening Power to Diversity



Okezie Emuaga

Placed with Noel Coonan TD from April 2013 to December 2013

Biography

Okezie is from Eastern Nigeria and now lives in Finglas with his family. He is currently completing a Master of Science in Supply Chain Management in Dublin Institute of Technology. He is also an MBA graduate from Liverpool John Moores University, an expert in the process management tool of 'Lean Six Sigma' and a qualified Financial Adviser. Okezie is founder of the Royal Friends Club, Ireland which provides social interaction to immigrants and the community. Okezie's community development work began in the asylum camp in 2005 where he received commendations for coordinating volunteering seminars for fellow residents at the Hatch Hall centre. Okezie has volunteered with a number of NGOs including Arthritis Ireland and The Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment.

Diary

'A person's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way?'

.....Proverbs 20:24.

How I wish that someone told me when I first arrived in Ireland in December 2005 that on the 18th April, 2013, I will be welcomed into the monumental family home built in 1745 which is the present day Houses of the Oireachtas.

My previous contact with TDs for various issues made me see them as solution providers to their constituents. Interest in this program made me investigate their role in detail. However, I did not know how it would pan out in reality and what the atmosphere would be like in Leinster House and therefore, was apprehensive while waiting for my pairing. The first big task for me was thinking how I could add value in a meaningful way.

As a process freak, I am hoping to identify the best delivery processes available to the TD for carrying out their work and to gain insights into how their minds work. It will be really fun to see how I can make their jobs more effective and efficient. I pray that I will be seen to have added value to Deputy Noel Coonan's office and will leave positive impressions on all whose paths cross mine during this time.

My placement with Noel Coonan, TD for Tipperary North started during our pairing meeting held on the 18th April when he took Crosscare Policy Officer Joe O'Brien and me for tea at the LH2000 café. Here Deputy Coonan informed me that he will be interested in initiatives that will aid more effective and efficient communication with the constituents. Initial introductions confirmed that we both have a common acquaintance in Nora Owen, Former Minister for Justice and I was humbled to know that he is the President of the Collins 22 Society (which perpetuates the name and ultimate sacrifice of Michael Collins and aspires to his life principles). Prior to the meeting, it was an enthralling feeling being ushered through the Kildare Street entrance into the complex. This time, I was not campaigning for Parents of IBC 05 Scheme or any other group. Rather, I was going in to help the people who deal with the many interests of the demonstrators and constituents at large. Suddenly, I felt important!

Noel took me through a mini tour of the complex. Surprisingly, everyone on the corridor, the 2nd Floor and the offices stopped to shake hands with me and exchanged pleasantries. As Noel's backroom staff were in Tipperary on the day, I spent the day learning more about the 'tolling bells' which appeared to sound unendingly to summon the TDs for voting on decisions of the Dáil. Then Noel briefly went to vote and returned to explain his duties as Vice Chairman of the House Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht. By the time he explained his work in the Collins 22 Society, I knew that this is a TD that has a lot of responsibilities. All these are exclusive of his constituency duties. I left for home with my mind drawn in several ways as I condensed all I had seen and heard. Whatever the case, I knew this will have little or no dull moments!

Having obtained my Identity Card, I launched into the job where I found everyone ready to help me settle in, especially for internet access. Based on my observation during the first day on the volume of correspondence and communication requirements, I suggested the updating of the database of party members and constituents to ensure that e-mail correspondence can be employed for more effective and efficient communication.

I have also met Linda, Deputy Coonan's amiable Parliamentary Assistant, who has brought much order and warmth to the office. She introduced me to the Parliamentary Questions booklet which

contains questions posed by TDs on behalf of their constituents. In this instance, I peruse the booklet for matters of interest to Deputy Coonan.

A friendly tour of the complex took place on the 14th May. This was an enthralling experience as I touched, saw and experienced history and greatness dating back to 1745. I am still awed by the inspiration of the Fitzgerald patriarch who built the current complex as a family residence. I am thankful for the patience of our guide who answered several questions from me, as it was hard to come to terms with the fact that someone had such inspiration as far back as 1745 and that no structural or design changes have been done to the original house, save for replacing damaged aspects with the same materials and designs. Also, hearing the actual workings of a sitting Dáil (Dáil in session) showed the seriousness and orderliness required for this work.

I am slightly over one month through this exciting expedition, and no two days have been exactly the same! It's been interesting to see leadership in action, to see history, to confirm the validity of some theoretical concepts of processes and to see the relevance of my academic knowledge of Supply Chain Management and process management. . Having mooted the idea to Deputy Coonan and obtained approval to propose improvements for processes, I am sure that there will be more interesting updates to come.



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