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PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN PUBLIC SECTOR: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

BY

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Abstract

The emergence of project management is as a result of twentieth-century society demand. The development of new method of management which is necessitated by the exponential expansion of human knowledge and the evolution of worldwide competitive markets for the production and consumption of goods and services. In developing countries like Nigeria, citizens are becoming more aware of the responsibilities of the public sector to deliver quality services to the people. Accordingly, they are demanding that they be better served by a more responsible public service through effective project management. This paper looks at project management practice in public sector with particular reference to Nigeria. It noted that project management has for long been a problem in the public sector of the Nigerian economy. As a result many projects of the government have failed, abandoned or broke down soon after completion. The paper therefore argues that the consequence of the incidence of project failure in Nigeria showed clearly that there is problem with its project management. In this paper, the causes of project failure were examined. It recommends that in order for Nigeria to get into the club of the 20 top most developed economies of the world, the public sector of the economy must learn and practicalise the skills of project management to stem the current level of project collapse or failure in order to replace it with high standards project delivery process that can enhance national quest for sustainable development. It concludes that project execution in the public sector must be done in line with the initially projected goals for greater success to be recorded.

Introduction

The past decades have been marked by a rapid growth in the use of project management as a means by which organisations achieve their objectives. Project management provides an organisation with powerful tools that improve its ability to plan, implement and control its activities as well as the ways in which it utilises its people and resources (Samuel, 1995). Since the 1980s many countries have been trying to reform their public organizations, facing pressures to manage within reduced budgets and improve the quality of services provided internally as well as externally to citizens. In the public sector, it is usual practice to have a large component of project goods and services acquired from outside entities, vendors etc. In addition because of involvement of public funds, issues related to efficacy and transparency are involved and elaborate procurement guidelines need to be followed to properly account for the public funds involved (Zhiyuan, 2002; William & Ronald, 1995).

Project management is believed to be justified as a means of avoiding the ills inherent in the construction and production sectors of the economy and for which reasons most projects fail and or abandoned. The success of any project implementation process in the public sector depends largely on the project manager's concept on staff appointments and control, strict monitoring of time, cost, material, quality and environmental constraints. However, developing countries like Nigeria still suffer project failures traceable to project management factors (Ogege, 2011). The project managers role arises from the need for a technical expert to take charge, control of events on the project implementation process, someone who understands the intricacies of co-coordinating, controlling, organizing and directing the efforts and

activities of the professional team and the physical problems of implementation process with the needs in the decision making process. Project management has emerged because the characteristics of our late twentieth century society demand the development of new methods of management. Of the many forces involved, three are paramount; one, the exponential expansion of human knowledge, two, the growing demand for a broad range of complex sophisticated, customised goods and services; and thirdly, the evolution of worldwide competitive markets for the production and consumption of goods and services. All three forces combine to mandate the use of the term to solve problems that used to be solvable by individuals.

The study is aimed at identifying and analyzing project in Nigeria as a developing economy. It also aimed at identifying and analyzing factors hindering project management success Nigeria. The last segment proffers remedial actions for effective project management in Nigerian public service.

The Meaning and Scope of Project Management

In order to distinguish between the project and project management it is necessary to develop distinct definitions for the two terms. While almost everyone has had experience with projects in one form or another, developing a definition of what exactly a project is often difficult. Therefore any definition of a project must be general enough to include examples of the wide variety of organizational activities which managers consider to be "project functions." However, the definition should be narrow enough to include only those specific activities which researchers and practitioners can meaningfully describe as "project-oriented" (Pinto and Slevin, 2009).

There is a variety of projects to be found in our society. Although some may argue that the construction of the Tower of Babel or the Egyptian pyramids were some of the first "projects", it is probably that cavemen formed construction of Boulder Dam and Edison's intervention of the light bulb were projects by any sensible definition (Samuel, 1995). In the beginning, the word 'Project' was associated primarily with engineering, in particular with developments at the forefront of technology. The next place it cropped up was in Information Technology where Software Programming required sophisticated project methodology. Today, though, a project mentality is essential in our today's world of the new millennium. The organisations that will remain healthy are the ones that have an effective and widely understood approach to managing projects as a way of implementing change (Modesto and Tichapondwa, 2011).

Projects are non-recurring ventures with an anticipated time period within which they come on stream. They are initiated to solve particular problems that are very relevant to the well being of the populace (Anyanwu, 2009). The Organization of Government Commerce (OGC, UK) (2009) defines a project as a unique set of coordinated activities, with definite starting and finishing points, undertaken by an individual or team to meet specific objectives within defined time, cost and performance parameters as specified in the business case. It is a temporary effort to create a unique product or service. Projects usually include constraints and risks regarding cost, schedule or performance outcome (Chapman, 1997).

A project is an initiative to bring about change. This is done in order to achieve specific objectives, within a time scale, in a given context (Baume, Martin and Yorke, 2002). Lewis (1966) sees projects as words, drawings and figures on paper, while King (1966) defines it as a capital investment. The Project Management Institute (PMI), USA (2004) defines a project as a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result.

Benjamin (1985) posits project as an instrument of change in the dynamic context and defines it as a coordinated series of actions resulting from a policy decision to change resource combinations and levels so as to contribute to the realization of a country's development objectives. In simple terms therefore, a project is an investment activity on which resources are expended in expectation of a stream of benefits over an extended period of time in the realization of specific objectives. It is a specific activity with a specific starting point and a specific ending point intended to accomplish a specific objective. Normally, a project will have some geographical location or a rather clearly understood area of geographical concentration as well as a clientele group it intends to reach. As simple as this definition appears to be, we are reminded of the very complex array of activities entailed in putting in place a successful project. To put this mildly, the process involves effective planning and implementation.

Projects can be broken down into various distinct phases like project planning, implementing/executing, monitoring/controlling, and closing; which makes the project delivery sequential, more methodological, easier to track and correct, and easier to apply best practices as well as tools and technologies. It comprises a number of tools for managing the various activities associated with the various phases of the project. A project, then, can be defined as possessing the following characteristics: A defined beginning and end (specified time to completion); A specific, preordained goal or set of goals; A series of complex or interrelated activities; and A limited budget.

According to Meredith and Mantel Jr. (2000), "a project is usually a one-time activity with a well-defined set of desired end results". The nature of this project can be juxtaposed to Balachandra's (2000) view, according to which one must consider the project management "contextual variables", that is, the nature of the innovation – incremental or radical, the nature of the market – existing or new, and the nature of technology – familiar or unfamiliar. In establishing the project purpose, clarity is a crucial pre-requisite for "to deliver a project well we must understand why it is needed and what it is for at the start of the planning process" (Webster 1999:241). Project can be explained as a plan of what is to be done. It is a scientifically evolved work plan devised to achieve a specific objective within a specified period of time.

From the above discussion therefore, the following attributes of a project can be identified:

- a) **Purpose:** A project has a well-defined set of desired end results.
- b) **Life cycle:** Project will have slow beginning, size gets build-up. Peaks, then declines and has to be terminated on some day. Either it is handed to the client or it is phased into the normal, ongoing operations of their organization itself.
- c) **Interdependencies:** A project has relations with other project being undertaken by the organization for various facilities. It also will have relations with various functions of the organization like marketing, accounting, finance, human resources management etc.
- d) **Uniqueness:** Every project being a onetime activity has some elements that are unique. Project managers will have many exceptions or new issues that crop up that they have to manage.
- e) **Conflict:** Projects compete with other projects as well as requirements of various functional departments of the organization for resources and personnel. Also, project managers have to manage the conflict between the demands of the client for more and features and changes, parent organization for profit, some demands made by public where the project is located, and the project employees' demands.

Having defined a project and the major features of a project, we can now examine more closely what project management means. Project Management has been described both as an art and a science related to conceiving, planning, designing, executing and controlling work related to delivering a product or a service throughout all the phases of the project work, which is divided into a project life cycle (Sarantis, 2009). Harvey (1999) defined project as a non-repetitive activity. This according to him needs to be augmented by other characteristics. That is, it is goal oriented – it is being pursued with a particular end or goal in mind; it has a particular set of constraints – usually centred around time and resource; the output of the project is measurable; something has been changed through the project being carried out.

Munns and Bjeirmi, (1996) defined project management as the process of controlling the achievement of the project objectives. Utilising the existing organisational structures and resources, it seeks to manage the project by applying a collection of tools and techniques, without adversely disturbing the routine operation of the company. Kerzner (2009) defines project management as, "the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of company resources for a relatively short-term objective that has been established to complete specific goals and objectives. Furthermore, project management utilizes the systems approach to management by having functional personnel (the vertical hierarchy) assigned to a specific project (the horizontal hierarchy)". Project management can be argued to be the perfect management tool for organizations seeking to pursue rational-goals, and there is evidence to support the capability of project management to increase the ability of organizations to identify goals, build projects designed to accomplish those goals, optimize the use of resources, and create business value. It has been put to increasing use by public- and private-sector organizations in order to focus the attention of the organization on short-term, achievable deliverables and objectives, make optimal use of scarce resources, reduce project risk in high-value, strategic projects, clearly assign responsibility for task performance, and

identify the tradeoffs created by alternative decision paths. According to Chapman (1997) the processes that are required to be applied and integrated during the project execution include initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. Project Management is an innovative management practice that tends to achieve stated or specified objectives within specific time and budget limits through optimum use of resources (Stuckenbruck & Zomorrodian, 1987).

Project management includes planning, organising, directing and controlling activities in addition to motivating what is usually the most expensive resource on the project – the people. Planning involves deciding what has to be done, when and by whom. The resources then need to be organised through activities such as procurement and recruitment. Directing their activities towards a coherent objective is a major management role. The activities also need controlling to ensure that they fit within the limits (e.g. financial) set for them.

The definition of project management suggests a shorter term and more specific context for success. The outcomes of project management success are many. They would include the obvious indicators of completion to budget, satisfying the project schedule, adequate quality standards, and meeting the project goal. Project management is purely a subset of the project as a whole, then it is suggested that the broader decisions in selecting a suitable project in the first place are more likely to influence the overall success of the project than can be achieved merely through the techniques of project management. The techniques may help to ensure a successful implementation of the project, but if the project is fundamentally flawed from the start it would be unlikely that techniques alone could salvage it. The techniques may help to identify the unfeasible nature of the project, and indicate that it should be abandoned or changed. It helps organization in investing their limited resources in the best way possible in order to achieve recurring success and meeting the expectations of stakeholders. Government and organizations usually embark on different projects with the aim of creating new service or improving the functional efficiency of the existing ones. All these projects require appropriate skills and techniques that go beyond technical expertise only, but encompass good and sound skills to manage limited budgets, and monitor shrinking schedules and unpredicted outcomes, while at the same time dealing with people and organizational issues (Abbasi & Al-Mharmah, 2000).

Project management involves coordinating various aspects of a project in order to bring forth a positive result. This coordination can include elements such as personnel, materials, procedures and facilities.

Theoretical Background

There are several theoretical plate forms suitable to analytically and scientifically discuss the issues raised in this paper. However, the paper utilised the theory of project management to interrogate the issues relevant to this study.

In literatures, it has been generally seen that there is no explicit theory of project management. We argue that it is possible to precisely point out the underlying theoretical foundation of project management. This foundation can be divided into a theory of project and a theory of management. The theory of project is provided by the transformation view on operations. In the transformation view, a project is conceptualized as a transformation of inputs to outputs. There are a number of principles, by means of which a project is managed. These principles suggest, for example, decomposing the total transformation hierarchically into smaller transformations, tasks, and minimizing the cost of each task independently (Koskela and Howell, 2002).

A theory of project management should be prescriptive: it should reveal how action contributes to the goals set to it. On the most general level, there are three possible actions: design of the systems employed in designing and making; control of those systems in order to realize the production intended; improvement of those systems. Project management, and indeed all production, has three kinds of goal. Firstly, the goal of getting intended products produced in general. Secondly, there are internal goals, such as cost minimization and level of utilization. Thirdly, there are external goals related to the needs of the customer, like quality, dependability and flexibility (Koskela, 2002).

This underlying theoretical foundation of project management has been evaluated through four sources of evidence: (1) the plausibility and consistency of the theory in itself; (2) empirical validity; (3) competing theories; and (4) alternative methods based on competing theories (Koskela and Howell, 2002b). The

evidences from these four sources turn out to be strikingly consonant, indicating that the underlying theoretical foundation of project management is deficient. Based on the understanding provided by competing theories and on the empirical evidence, the hidden assumptions of the underlying theory of project management can be revealed. Unfortunately, many of these assumptions are valid only in exceptional situations. These wrong assumptions lead directly to several kinds of problems in practical project management.

In the following, we take the crystallization of Turner (1993) a starting point for a reconstruction of the theory of project. According to Turner, scope management is the *raison d'être* of project management. He defines the purpose of scope management as follows: (1) an adequate or sufficient amount of work is done; (2) unnecessary work is not done; (3) the work that is done delivers the stated business purpose. The scope is defined through the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS). What does Turner say, from a theoretical point of view? Firstly, he (implicitly) claims that project management is about managing work: this is the conceptualization. Secondly, he claims that work can be managed by decomposing the total work effort into smaller chunks of work, which are called activities and tasks. Thirdly, he claims that this conceptualization and the principle of decomposition serve three essential purposes of project management. Even if not mentioned by Turner, there is an important, but implicit assumption associated with decomposition, namely that tasks are related if at all by sequential dependence. This is also supported by the description of Morris of the classic - and still current - project management approach as follows (Morris 1994):

...first, what needs to be done; second, who is going to do what; third, when actions are to be performed; fourth, how much is required to be spent in total, how much has been spent so far, and how much has still to be spent. ...

When we compare this crystallization of project management to the theories of operations management in general, it is easy to recognize that it rests on the transformation theory (or view) of production, which has dominated production thinking throughout the 20th century.

What then would be the wider and more powerful theoretical foundation for project management? Based on analysis of the weaknesses of the present foundation and consideration of competing theories and methods, we propose – as a starting point - to include the theories indicated in Table 1 into the new foundation.

Ingredients of a new theoretical foundation of project management

Subject of theory		Relevant theories
Project		Transformation Flow Value generation
Management	Planning	Management-as-planning Management-as-organising
	Execution	Classical communication theory Language/action perspective
	Control	Thermostat model Scientific experimentation model

Source: Koskela and Howell, 2002:4

Regarding the theory of project, the (partial) models of operations as flow and value generation add the consideration of time, variability and customer to the conceptualization provided by the transformation model (Koskela, 2000). It is clear that what has been presented does not yet provide a unified and

complete theoretical foundation for project management. However, this foundation shows manifestly that a better theoretical foundation can be created for project management.

We argue that the theory of projects as transformation is not the best available; rather it has to be augmented; this becomes rather clear when we remind that competing theories of production (projects are just special instances of production) have existed even before the emergence of project management. The present evidence is strong enough for the claim that a paradigmatic transformation of the discipline of project management is needed. The transformation required implies that a more intimate relation between theory and practice must be created in project management. Theory and practice have to be developed concurrently, similarly to other science-based fields, where theory is explicated, tested and refined in a continuous dialog between the scientific and practitioner communities.

Project Management in the Public Sector: An Historical Perspective

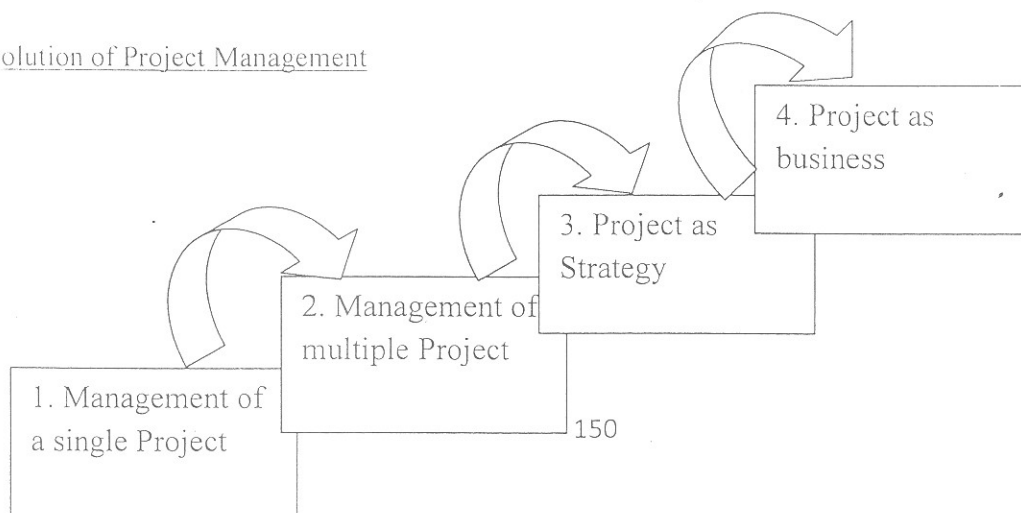
Public sector organisations are structured as pyramids: the policies and decisions are formulated at the top, responsibilities and tasks are also decided at the upper level of the pyramid and assigned to the lower levels through a hierarchical chain of command. Power rests at the top of the hierarchy. Public sector organisations are different than their private sector counterpart because of the complex organisational environment, goals, structure and managerial values (Sotirakou and Zeppou, 2005; Boyne, 2002). These variables create differences in how the basic functions of management are carried out in the public and private sector organisations. Spittler and McCracken (1996) states that ever since humans began building major projects for public good, the search to manage these projects effectively has continued.

The public sector requires that its projects be managed with simplicity and with minimum possible costs. However, public sector organisations tend to be conservative, with slow response time and with bureaucratic culture. These are commonly believed to be undesirable qualities and detrimental to effective project management. They further perceive that project management within the public sector is aimed at ensuring that the organisations resources are being used in ways consistent with its disparate goals and objectives. Therefore to achieve these disparate goals and objectives with minimum cost a suitable practice for the right job should be chosen.

The foundation of the project management can be traced back to as early as civilization itself. But the modern project management has its roots in the Second World War and is developed in construction and defence industry during the industrial revolution. Most recently the demand for project management has increased as number of projects is increased dramatically in a broad range of industries (Cooke-Davies and Arzymanow, 2003).

Although project management grows in term of a profession until 1980 but still it was perceived as the sole domain of engineers, finding a niche specifically in the civil engineering industry (Van Der Merwe, 2002). Cicmil et al, 2006; Arto et al, 2008; Arto and Kujala, 2008) have discussed the evolution of project management from managing a single project to multiple projects and then towards project as strategy and business. The Figure below may illustrate this evolution.

Evolution of Project Management



Source: Atif, A. (2010). Investigating Project Management Practices in Public Sector Organisations of a Less Developed Country

In its early days the project management was solely concerned with the implementation of single project in that era. But, today many organisations have embraced the concept of project management. This is mainly because of its systematic approach of managing the projects (Kartam et al. 2000; Morgan, 1987). It's a way to generate consistent results when undertaking new initiatives and a powerful business tool that can transform an organisation's ability to perform well (Arto et. al, 2008).

Project management in the public sector, although having similarities with the private sector in terms of project management stages, processes, tools and technologies nevertheless; has certain unique challenges. Past research argued that there are hardly any similarities of significance between public and private sector organizations and hence by association the private sector project management practices and skills are totally unsuitable for application in the public sector (Allison, 1992).

In the past several decades many organizations are using project management as a basis to achieve the objectives of the organization. Project management approach is providing organizations with powerful tools that improve the ability to plan, implement, and control activities as the utilization of resources.

Projects have always been carried out in forms of varying complexity. The study of the subject, however, where the performance and methods are analysed, appears to have begun just prior to the World War II in the chemical industry (Morris and Hough, 1987). It was in the 1950s that further development took place towards establishing a methodology that would be recognisable today as project management. As noted by Nwachukwu; Ibeawuchi and Okoli (2010), project management has been practised for thousands of years, dating back to the Egyptian epoch, but it was in the mid 1950s that the organisations commenced formal project management tools. Project management is believed to be justified as a means of avoiding the ills inherent in the construction and production sectors of the economy and for which reasons most projects fail and or abandoned. While the focus of activities during the 1950s was in the process and construction industries, the heavy engineering and defence sectors (the US in particular) began the development of numerical techniques which today are viewed by many as central to the subject. Or as argued by Samuel (1995), that a lion share of the credit for the development of the techniques and practices of project management belong to the military, which faced a series of major tasks that simply were not achievable by traditional organisations operating in traditional ways. Following this, non military government sectors, private industry, public service agencies, and volunteer organisations have all used project management to increase their effectiveness.

As the techniques of project management were developed, mostly by the military, the use of project organisation began to spread. Private construction firms found that project organisation was helpful on smaller projects, such as the building of a warehouse or an apartment. More recently, the use of project management by international organisations, and especially organisations producing services rather than products, has grown rapidly. Most striking has been the widespread adoption of project management techniques for the development of computer software (Samuel, 1995). In recent years, the use of projects as a form of working has escalated as all organisations have developed new ways of working. This has particularly applied to Civil Service policymaking and delivery.

The origins of project management are traced in two different problems of planning and control in projects in the United States of America. As a discipline, project management developed from different fields of application including construction, engineering, telecommunications, and defence. The 1950s marked the beginning of the modern project management era (Azzopardi, 2009).

Public Sector Project Management in Nigeria: An Overview

The application of Project Management (PM) tools and techniques in public sector is gradually becoming an important issue in developing economies, especially in a country like Nigeria where projects of different size and structures are undertaken (Olateju; Abdul-Azeez and Alamutu, 2011). The application of project management practice in public sector has been identified as an efficient approach which would help in upgrading management capabilities and enable public sector to efficiently complete projects and

attain developmental objectives (Arnaboldi *et al*, 2004). It is also recognized as a key enabler with whom public sector organizations adopting business improvement methodologies such as Lean Management and TQM, improve their efficiency and competitiveness.

The Public sector is under growing pressure to get better results from fewer resources and there is increasing expectation on the back office function from the boardroom. The Government is introducing a number of programmes and processes to make the most of public spending and to deliver efficient and effective services.

Studies have confirmed that application of modern project management methods and techniques has a great effect on public institutions. Arnaboldi *et al* (2004) observed that application of project management strategy in public sector was as a result of pressure on governments to abandon bureaucratic organization in favour of leaner structures. In their study White and Fortune (2002) examined the current project management practice in public sector in UK by collecting data from 236 project managers in some public institutions. The study asked the respondents to judge the effectiveness of the project management methods, tools, and techniques they had used on the project success. The result of the study revealed that 41% of the reported projects were judged to be completely successful (using time, budget and specification), though some drawbacks were reported. Similarly, Abbasi and Al-Mharmah (2000) explored the project management tools and techniques used by the public sector in Jordan by surveying 50 industrial public firms. The study found out that the use of project management tools and techniques among the public sector companies was considerably low, but when practiced efficiently would result in tangible benefit in all aspects of planning, scheduling and monitoring the time, cost and specifications of projects.

In Nigeria, the implementation of modern project management tools, methods and techniques is still not well established in public sector, this results into failure of public institutions and their contractors in performing their duties concerning the budget, specifications and deadlines of the projects awarded. Studies have recognized social and political systems, cultural blocks and lack of financial support as barriers to successful project planning and execution in Nigerian public sector (Idoro & Patunola-Ajayi, 2009).

The Nigerian preference for imported machinery, equipment and even foreign expertise and the unpatriotic habits of many Nigerians who hold the view that what belongs to the government is nobody's property and therefore deserves no special care led to major failure. It was found generally that most project beneficiaries and managers lacked the understanding of project management, that is, the procedure for its initiation, costing and execution. It is for this reason that we found it expedient to give some explanation on the term 'project' and the procedure for its management (Ogege, 2011).

Project execution often involves substantial funds, the loss through failure or abandonment, has a crippling effect on the capabilities of the investors and the financiers because once a decision is taken to execute a project, scarce resources are tied down for a long time. The project may be the only future hope of the client; therefore he may expect nothing but success (Nwachukwu; Ibeawuchi and Okoli, 2010).

Another major project management phase which was realized that is missing in public sector is project evaluation. It is important for the state to realize that the appropriate time and resources should be reserved to look back and try to perform a trustworthy evaluation of all the tasks and all the work that has been made. Such ex-post evaluation should be performed thoroughly by examining all key factors of any project, in terms of quantity as well as quality. For example, for every project undertaken, one should try to answer questions such as: what was the average man-month cost for the administrative work relative to the total project cost? How does this compare to other similar projects? Are there any special factors that affect the progress of a project? What are the key points that need to be in our check list for future reference? Have we identified all the problems? And based on the outcomes of this evaluation, certain measures should be taken in order to improve the operational effectiveness.

Despite the dismal project management scorecard, there are still some success stories. The Murtala Muhammed Airport Two (MMA2) was built through a public-private partnership (PPP) between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Bi-Courtney Limited on a build, operate and transfer (BOT) basis. The \$150 million project included building the airport terminal, a multi-storey car park, an apron, a four-

star hotel and a conference centre. Funds were sourced from local banks led by Zenith Bank Plc, Oceanic Bank International Plc, Guaranty Trust Bank Plc, First Bank, First City Monument Bank Plc and Access Bank Plc. MMA2 became the first BOT project in the area of infrastructure development in Nigeria that was successfully completed by a Nigerian company." Other success stories include the \$800 million Glo-1 submarine cable, the Obajana Cement plant project in Kogi State, and the Mile 12 to CMS Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) corridor reputed to be "the cheapest to develop in the world, costing \$1.6 million per kilometre for the 22 km route (\$35 million)."

Causes of Project Failure in Nigerian Public Sector

Project failure has different meanings for different people. For the purposes of this paper, project failure is classified into two parts: total failure and partial failure. A project is total failure if it cancelled prior to completion or it is never used once finished. Partial failure implies that a project is finished without meeting either one or all of its attributes i.e. scope, time and budget. Time and budget are quantitative variables and thus can be measured easily, while project scope can be measured using product function as a dummy variable (Temur, 2010).

The basic purpose for initiating a project is to accomplish some goals. The reason for organising the task as a project is to focus the responsibility and authority for the attainment of the goals on an individual or small group. Projects all over the world are designed to solve specifically identified problems or achieve desired results. Promoters for instance design some projects for profit motives while some are for the welfare of the people. We are aware that governments are set up to look after the well being of the populace in many areas of life including Health, Education, Feeding, Full employment, security, transportation etc. To ensure that they carry out these duties, they take full control of all assets and revenues accruing to the people as a community (Anyanwu, 2009). Heeks (2007) in extensive research done on projects in the public sector has shown that 35% of public sector ICT projects around the world can be categorized as total failures, 50% as partial failures, and only 15% as successful. Similarly a World Bank study (2005) estimates that the majority of public sector ICT applications in Least Developing Countries are either partial or total failures.

Project failure and abandonment are frequent phenomena in Nigeria economy. Project failure is illustrated by a failure to achieve the four success criteria and is manifested by the lack of application of proven project management techniques. Project abandonment is the abandonment of the contract such as refusal or failure to complete a contract before practical completion. Abandonment and failed projects which are more predominant in the public sector litter every conner of the country including government quarters and university campuses. The phenomenon cuts across many economic sectors including the construction, manufacturing/industrial and service sectors. There have been case when non-functional, unusable or unserviceable projects have been commissioned as "completed". A few typical examples of project failure and abandonment can be cited. A specialist hospital in Mina, Niger State was abandoned for one year until the contact was reactivate an rewarded to the same company, Taylor Woodrow, at a revised price of N20.5m as against the initial contract sum of N17m. A N9m contract for the construction of low cost "shelter" housing in Rivers state awarded to a Lagos-based company in 1980 was rewarded to the same company in 1983 for N40m with no work done in the interim, even though a mobilization fee of 10 percent was paid (Agagu, 2008).

The Group Head, Enterprise Programme Management of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Oluwatoyin Jokosenumi, has said that more than half of projects in Nigeria suffer failure and setback largely because of lack of cost management framework. According to him, more than half of the projects in the country failed for various reasons one of which is lack of cost management framework, which involves estimating appropriately what needs to be done on a project and providing the relevant budget, which is the money to do it (The Sun Newspaper, July 10, 2011).

Project management experts in the country say policy instability, weak operating infrastructure, and poor legal and political framework are high on the list of reasons why many projects have failed in Nigeria. At the Project Management Summit, Adedoyin Odunfa, chief executive officer of information value chain consultants, Digital Jewels, reviewed the Nigeria's project management scorecard in a presentation titled: A Holistic View of our National project Management Track-record. She stated that, "Nigeria has no

comprehensive view, data, or statistics of national project management track record. What exits indicates an abundance of projects that failed to meet stakeholder expectations on one, some or all of the triple constraints where attaining project scope within the tripod of timeliness, cost, and quality expectation" (ThisDay Newspaper, November 8, 2011).

As a result, many projects in the country have suffered to meet scope and expectation. It is against this backdrop that the African Development Bank (ADB) cancelled 80 percent of its projects in Nigeria, attributing the failure of the projects to the "Nigerian factor". Project management in Nigeria is weak, "so fraught with loopholes easily exploited by contractors whose overriding objective is to enrich themselves without limit. This is made worse by inadequate checks-and -balances, and ignorance of modern project management practice. In the public sector, there is this misconception about due process being project management, choosing the right contractor is not all of the story. While Mary Fasheitan, principal consultant at Lagos-based TIA Consultancy, argue that although public sector officials and company executives were a bit ignorant of the concept. Bad communication between relevant parties, lack of planning of schedule, resource and activities, poor quality control, and escalating cost are some of the major causes of project failure.

A monumental economic loss is incurred in terms of heavy cost overruns, periodic waste of resources, Wastage of resources overtime, and projects that metamorphose into bottomless pits gulping scare resources with no concrete completion time in sight. The Ajaokuta Steel Project intended to be the bedrock of the metal goods and engineering industries; the Delta (Aladja) Steel Complex and its dependent steel rolling mills in Jos, Katsina and Oshogbo; the liquefied Natural Gas project with ever shifting starts and completion dates; the National paper Manufacturing Company in the production of pulp for both export and domestic consumption; the Lagos Metro line project expected to ease traffic congestion in Lagos. Several Federal Housing projects initiated at different periods, Health facilities especially primary health projects and divisional hospitals across the length and breadth of this country, these and more are eloquent testimonies of project abandonment and /or failure. This phenomenon would have been avoided or drastically reduced if judicious applications of project management principles were accepted and applied (Nwachukwu, et al, 2010). Various reasons were given for the abandonment of the projects. They include: escalation of project cost due to inflation, difficulty in payment to contractors due to government bureaucracy, contractors performing below expectation, frequent changes in government, inability of sub contractors such as those in charge of electrification in project, to adhere to schedule, increase in the scope of project, change in pre-contract consultants such as architects, poor or ineffective projects finance arrangement, change in the original design, indiscriminate award of contracts without reference to funds availability, appropriate location, etc. projects and contracts determined on political considerations, projects completed but technically unsound and unable to function, materials scarcity, poor planning or shoddy work by architects, consultants, etc specification of costly imported materials, increase in contract sums, poor project definition in terms of project requirements for materials, equipment, personnel, finance and other resources, correlates of effective project management, insufficient working capital, the ailing economy and General inflation.

The public sector in Nigeria has suffered setbacks which are largely attributed to ineffective and inefficient project management. There is a general opinion that most of the public enterprises have failed to deliver on the purposes for which they were established. Management ineffectiveness and inefficiency have been advanced by practitioners and researchers of public enterprises as the bane of the Nigerian public sector (Tokunboh, 1990). The former president of Nigeria, Obasanjo (2003) observes that: "Nigerians have too long been feeling short-changed by the quality of public service. Our public offices have too long been showcases for combined evils of inefficiency and corruption, whilst being impediments for effective implementation of government policies. Nigerians deserve better. And will ensure they get what is better". Agagu (2008: 243) asserts that "the public service which was seen as the custodian of rules and regulations and the engine of the development had lost its prestige and confidence. It was found generally that most project beneficiaries and managers lacked the understanding of project management, that is, the procedure for its initiation, costing and execution. It is for this reason that we found it expedient to give some explanation on the term 'project' and the procedure for its management.

Other problems were appointment of persons who were technically ill equipped to manage such projects poor tender documentation, and poor evaluation of the tenders. Procurement and location of projects on political consideration only and the non-committal attitude of government functionaries to the implementation of its own budget plans, unpatriotic attitude of some policy makers who for the purpose of handsome kickbacks encourage over-invoicing and absence of built in planned maintenance affected the project a great deal. The Nigerian preference for imported machinery, equipment and even foreign expertise and the unpatriotic habits of many Nigerians who hold the view that what belongs to the government is nobody's property and therefore deserves no special care led to major failure (Ogege, 2011).

Towards Effective Project Implementation in Nigeria

Effective project success therefore requires a judicious trade-off amongst the four tests or success factors of timeliness, completion within the budget, satisfactory technical performance, and client or customer acceptance.

To enhance project success the following strategies or guidelines are recommended; As much as possible adopt the project management approach, project objectives should be clearly spelt out, clear objectives create the conditions for the attainment of good results, project requirements should be clearly defined in terms of resources, time scale, technical approach and the required technology. The operators should develop an ability to manage change – which is a major objective of the project management approach. Plan soundly, good information flows is necessary, there should be a clear definition of responsibilities, project selection, location and implementation should not be politicized, there must be a clear definition of project scope and knowledge of factors that can affect the project scope and pay critical attention to project financing. The time is ripe for increased application of the project management approach in Nigeria in both the private and public sectors. The application will result in effective project selection and execution.

There is need for development of maintenance culture. There are instances where completed facilities are not in use as a result of poor maintenance programmes. There are cases of dams overflowing their bounds, and of collapsed bridges and public buildings. These collapsed projects cost million of naira to construct. Efforts should therefore be made to follow strictly maintenance programmes for all of our assets and facilities. Also, we should develop the culture of using our resources for project execution so as save costs, ensure right materials are used and jobs completed on schedule.

Government should step up its commitment in applying PM tools and techniques in its entire project. The bureaucracy that has entrenched itself in all government businesses should be controlled as far as all government projects are concerned, so as not to become inefficient and unproductive. Lastly, Project Management Offices should be established across all the government institutions with aim of managing, monitoring and controlling the projects embarked by their institution. This will enhance efficient and effective application of project management tools and techniques.

Summary and Conclusion

Projects are designed to achieve a goal. All projects no matter the size must be planned. To avoid project failure deliberate efforts must be made to ensure that only persons who have the professional expertise and experience are saddled with its planning, costing and execution.

Project management sector is the pivot on which every other activity in the public sector rotates on. Public projects have their origin in government plans and they make great demands on government resources and institutions even though the private sector may be involved in their implementation. They derive their importance from acting as planks for the socio-economic development of the country and are the main targets of aid-flows. Unfortunately projects have not realized their full potentials because of lack of capacity to prepare and analyse them (Oladipo, 2008).

According to Cleland et al (1988), a project is termed successful if it passes four success test criteria i.e, the time criterion – completed on time; the cost or budget criterion – completed within budget; the effectiveness criterion – completed in accordance with the original set performance and quality standards; and client's satisfaction criterion – accepted by the intended users or clients whether the client is internal or from outside the organization. This paper has been one of the few research papers targeting the

contemporary and multi-dimensional issue of project management for successful delivery of goals and objectives of government projects in developing countries. It is recommended that attention must be given while proposing the standardized and internationally recognized project management methodologies and practices to Public sector organizations. The important factors like lack of adequate and appropriate skills within the public sector; larger number of stakeholders with conflicting interests, bureaucratic processes of projects approval and funds release must be considered in advance. Attention must be given to projects progress; timely and accurate identification of delays and reasons thereof; capacity building of project management professionals, and better projects controlling, monitoring and closing.

Project success could be assessed using three assessment criteria based not only on project management techniques but on other external criteria which are important for the successful implementation of projects, from conception through development and use, to the final closedown. Thus, for a project to be successful there must, first, be an improved appreciation of the role of project management within projects, and this role must be placed within the context of a wider project alongside other outside criteria and long-term expectations. Second, the project manager must allow the client to contribute actively in the planning and production phases and at the same time the project team involvement has to be extended into the utilisation phase. This would be accommodated properly in a project evaluation technique that examines not only the implementation processes but also the economic and financial performance.

For effective efficient implementation of projects however, Tipman (2005) identifies procurement as the single most difficult problem for Project Managers to solve. Efficient procurement management has a direct impact on the quality of the nation's budget expenditure. An improvement in the public procurement system will therefore, have a direct and substantial impact on the overall economic situation of the country and result in budgetary savings and efficiency in government expenditures.

One must always bear in mind that successful, project management techniques will contribute to the achievement of projects, but project management will not stop a project from failing to succeed. The right project will succeed almost without the success of project management, but successful project management could enhance its success. Selecting the right project at the outset and screening out potentially unsuccessful projects, will be more important to ensuring total project success.

Further empirical research is also needed to develop a project management framework and/or model for public sector, government projects, and which is based on extensive studies of best-practices from successful government programmes around the world.

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