Executive Project Management Structure and the Challenges Facing its Adoption in the Nigerian Construction Industry

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Abstract: Project management (PM) is a globally recognized discipline and has been widely adopted within the construction industry. Despite advancements in the PM discipline, the ineffective traditional management system, typical of the non-executive PM structure, is still widely used in the Nigerian construction industry. The aim of this paper is thus to explore the challenges facing the adoption of the executive PM structure in Nigeria. The paper first assesses the level of growth of PM in Nigeria using UK best practices as a benchmark and identifies the key PM characteristics in the two countries. Focus group interviews were used to collect the primary data for the study and content analysis was used to present the results in a thematic format. The study revealed the key barriers to the adoption of an executive PM structure in Nigeria as a lack of proper awareness, unfavorable policies, skill shortages, the traditional culture of stakeholders and the absence of a regulatory body. It is recommended that the government, as a major player/client in the Nigerian construction industry, should lead the campaign to change the traditional industry approach to project management. This is necessary if construction stakeholders in Nigeria are to be educated and encouraged towards adopting and putting into practice effective PM.

Keywords: Executive project management structure, Nigeria, non-executive project management structure, traditional management system, UK

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1 INTRODUCTION

Project management (PM) has been identified as an independent and an efficient way to achieve project goals and objectives (Cleland 2004; Walker 2007). It is a widely recognized discipline, particularly in the western world (Morris and Hough 1987; Madter et al. 2012), and its application dates back to the early 1950s (Morris 1994). It is the discipline of planning, organizing, securing, managing, leading, and controlling resources to achieve specific goals. A project manager, in the construction industry, is someone responsible for managing a construction project to achieve all of the project objectives including cost, time, quality, scope, change and stakeholder management (Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer 2000; Winch 2002). Indeed, there are different ways of procuring construction projects, from the traditional method to design and build, to management contracting, to public-private partnerships (Bower 2003; Murdoch and Hughes 2008; Kanoglu and Gulen 2013; Opoku 2013), but PM is a management discipline that can be applied to all of them (Georg and Tryggestad 2009).

When PM is deployed on a project in the UK, it is now common practice and a prerequisite to appoint an independent, specialized professional or firm
to carry out management duties (APC 1995; Walker 2007). This approach to management is typical of the executive PM structure (Waterhouse 1992). Despite the advancements in the PM discipline, the traditional management system where the project coordinator performs the managerial functions in addition to their core or technical duties, is still the norm in Nigeria (Bamisile 2003; Sobotie 2004). This approach to management is typical of the non-executive PM structure (Waterhouse 1992). The research carried out by various proponents in this field has shown that the non-executive PM structure widely adopted in Nigeria is not effective (Onwusonye 2005; Odusami and Ameh 2006; Okereke 2008). In addition, most of the problems in the Nigerian construction industry have been attributed to the traditional management approach (Andawei and King 2001; Odusami et al. 2003). Yet, the industry has not considered the alternative, an executive PM approach (Okereke 2007; Ogunsemi et al. 2008).

This paper aims to investigate the challenges facing the adoption of an executive PM structure in the Nigerian construction industry. Whilst there have been numerous studies on PM theories (Soderlund 2004; Padar et al. 2011), principles and processes (PMI 2008; Browning 2010), and the various schools of thought (Soderlund 2011), this paper focuses on the executive PM approach. Firstly, PM practice in the UK was used as a benchmark for evaluating the growth and development of the practice in Nigeria. The choice of PM practice in the UK was informed by three major reasons: (i) the level of maturity of the practice in the UK where the executive structure has been used for over five decades, with an established professional body that regulates the practice (ii) the tie between UK and Nigeria - Nigeria was colonized by the British and many of her policies and programmes follow the UK model, and (iii) the need for a developing country to learn the course of development from a developed country. Construction stakeholders in Nigeria were surveyed through interviews and the analysis of this primary data revealed the barriers to the adoption of an executive PM structure in Nigeria.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section provides an overview of PM structure. The subsequent section is an account of PM practice in the UK, followed by the rhetoric and realities of PM practice in Nigeria, and then the research methods used. Thereafter follows the analysis of the primary data collected through interviews. The paper ends with conclusions which include recommendations and limitations of the study.

2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

PM is a rapidly expanding subfield of management and organisation studies with its origins in diverse areas such as engineering, operations research and organisation theory (Johnson 1997; Browning 2010). According to Soderlund (2011), PM has been caught in the pluralism trap and it is often explored and/or exploited in different ways, models, processes, practices and structures. The challenge for PM is highlighted by an observation by Knudsen (2003) that “fields with too little pluralism run the risk of being caught in a specialization trap, while fields with too much pluralism run the risk of being caught in a fragmentation trap”. Rodney (1999) stressed the importance of researching the PM structure and concluded that it is an important area of enquiry in any discipline where PM is deployed. While attempts have been made to address this and classify PM theories into different schools of thought (Soderlund 2011), this study focuses on the PM structure adopted in construction.

Waterhouse (1992) established two basic types of the PM structure, executive and non-executive. In the executive PM structure, the client would normally appoint an independent PM firm or professional to make decisions on their behalf and to manage the day-to-day running of the project to achieve specific goals (Walker 2007). The PM firm acts as a single point of contact for the client and coordinates the design and construction aspects of the project (White and Fortune 2002). The firm is neither involved in the actual design nor in the actual construction work, but it provides the managerial expertise needed to achieve success (Carter 1992; Waterhouse 1992). On the other hand, the non-executive PM structure involves the appointment of a project coordinator (or their firm) to carry out the management duties in addition to their primary role (Andawei and King 2001; Odusami et al. 2003). The appointed project coordinator is usually an architect for building projects or a civil engineer for civil works (Ogunsemi et al. 2008). Coupled with the bias inherent in the non-executive PM structure, the project coordinator often has less influence on the project team (Zack Jr. 2004). The non-executive PM structure is further explored in a later section.

The acceptance of an executive PM and the evolution of the role has been driven by the increasing complexity of today’s clients’ demands, the high-paced environment in which the industry operates, the rising costs, and the multifaceted nature of projects. The role is key to more effective planning, scheduling and controlling to achieve project goals and objectives (Morris 1994; Winch 2002). Many studies have shown that, in order to achieve managerial effectiveness, the executive PM structure should be adopted on construction projects as opposed to the traditional management system or the non-executive PM approach (Waterhouse 1992; Muller and Turner 2007; Walker 2007; Georg and Tryggestad 2009).

Furthermore, in order for PM to be taken seriously and used effectively in practice, it must be seen as the investiture of an independent person or firm
with the responsibility for the success or failure of a project (Morris 1994; APC 1995; Winch 2002; Cleland 2004). To this end, PM, like any other discipline or professional role, has to be institutionalized; certification is a prerequisite and an important step in becoming a project manager (CIOB 1988; Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer 2000; Walker 2007; Madler et al. 2012). This concept is supported in Fayol (1917) and Urwick (1943) who both devised a similar list of general principles for managerial effectiveness. A common denominator in their lists is the division of work, given that specialization encourages continuous improvement, both in terms of skills and methods. They both stressed the importance of regulatory standards and procedures as a basis for effective management. Fayol is often described as the “father” of modern management. Urwick wrote about the ideas of scientific management and those of classical organisation theory. So, both their views are relevant and fundamental to PM.

Follett and Likert are the originators of the human relations approach, emphasizing the need to view management and project leadership more holistically with a focus on process (Follett 1918; Pugh 1989). The best-known quote from Follett’s inventive work in this field is “management is the art of getting things done through other people”. This neatly sums up her idea of management as an art. It should perhaps be reiterated that the general theories of management and the contrasting approaches are indeed not the focus of this study, given that other studies have explored these aspects. However, what these pioneers, together with various authors identified above, generally acknowledge, is that management is more effective if seen as a specialization and as an art which facilitates the integration of people to achieve specified objectives. Waterhouse (1992) focused on specialization as part of the executive PM approach, while the “art” of PM in construction is what Kupakuwana and van der Berg (2005) summarize as:

“... an orchestra (construction project) where a conductor (an independent, certified project manager or a PM firm) directs every participant (construction professional) to play his or her tune (deliverable) as expected of him or her, to the satisfaction and delight of the audience (external stakeholders) and all involved (internal stakeholders).”

Fig. 1. Stanney project organisation (Adopted from Holt 1989)
3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN THE UK

PM is a well-established discipline in the UK. The executive PM structure is widely supported by industry stakeholders and often deployed in procuring public and private sector projects (Morris and Hough 1987; Waterhouse 1992; Madter et al. 2012). It has been argued in a few studies that PM is a procurement system in itself (Al-Sedairy 1985; Sommerville and Campbell 2001). However, several other proponents in this field describe PM as a management discipline that can be applied to any procurement system (CIOB 1988; Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer 2000; Bower 2003; Fewings 2005).

Earlier, Nahapet and Nahapiet (1985) stressed that, although PM is not a procurement system in itself, the executive PM structure is often applied to procurement systems in the UK to deliver complex construction projects. A study published by the CIOB examined the management of construction projects using case studies from the UK and the USA. Similarly, Holt (1989) conducted a practical case study to examine the typical management structure used in the UK construction industry. The author later used the Shell Stanney case as a typical example of project management excellence (see Figure 1). This case involves the appointment of an independent project manager in a management contract procurement route. The appointed project manager had the overall management responsibility for the success (or otherwise) of the project and serves as a single point of contact for the client as indicated in Figure 1. Based on his findings, the author commended the positive attitudes and behavior of construction clients in the UK towards PM practice.

Bresnen and Haslam (1991) reported that the attitude of UK construction clients, particularly public sector clients, has enabled the successful implementation, and widespread adoption, of an executive PM structure in practice. This is evident, for example, in the development of PRINCE2 (PRojects IN Controlled Environments) by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), an independent office of the UK HM Treasury and a major construction client. PRINCE2 is a method which covers the control, management and organisation of a project and is a de facto standard for PM in the UK. This method supports the executive PM approach in public sector procurement (Fewings 2005). Consequently, there has been widespread adoption of this management technique and approach in the private sector as a supplier to the public sector (Sage et al. 2010).

Most designers and constructors in the UK prefer working in a contractual arrangement under an executive PM structure, especially when dealing with complex projects (Abdullah and Vickridge 2000). This is in recognition of the complexity of the construction industry (Opoku 2013) and projects which require an independent firm of experts to facilitate the integration of the people and processes involved (Winch 2002; Madter et al. 2012). Thus, in the UK, a certified PM firm is often appointed to this position (Catt 1992), as shown in Figure 1. Some of the recognized PM certifications include those provided by the Association for Project Management (APM) and other international certification bodies such as the International Project Management Association (IPMA) and the Project Management Institute (PMI) (APC 1995). APM is an independent organisation in the UK which develops and promotes project management as an executive discipline (APC 1995).

Similarly, professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) have made equally significant contributions to the development of executive PM in the UK (CIOB 1988; Carter 1992; APC 1995). These independent organizations promote PM as an independent discipline (which requires separate skill sets) to their members through different mediums. These include providing relevant training courses, workshops, CPD events and short courses. Executive PM practice in the UK construction industry has its roots in the CIOB (CIOB 2010). After the Second World War, the CIOB was quick to recognize and explore the need for better management structures, as opposed to the traditional management system, in order to meet the urgent social and industrial building demands and to address the complexities of the modern, dynamic market place. During the 1980s, the CIOB was central to PM being firmly established as an independent management discipline and the institute’s first publication of the Code of Practice for Project Management in 1992 is often referred to as the premier guide for project management in construction (CIOB 2010). Since then, the CIOB has been responsible for training many construction project managers and for promoting an executive PM structure in construction.

To successfully assume the role of a project manager under the executive PM structure, PM firms in the UK have had to attach great importance to their personnel developing essential, soft skills. These include leadership, communication, negotiation and problem-solving skills in addition to basic and core competencies such as integration, time, cost, procurement, quality, risk, scope, stakeholder and human resource management (Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer 2000; PMI 2008). Many UK universities teaching construction-related skills offer construction project management courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. However, Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer (2000) raised a concern that most of the managerial knowledge and soft skills required in executive PM transcend the technical academic training and the requirements for certification set out by the accreditation bodies. In response to this concern, PM firms in the UK often complement the technical skills of their personnel with further orga-
izational training, relevant short courses/CPD events and practical experience to achieve professional competence. In summary, the attitude of different stakeholders has indeed been fundamental to the recognition, development and maturation of PM skills and executive PM structure in the UK (Holt 1989; Walker 2007).

4 RHETORIC AND REALITIES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

This section reviews the structure and the current practice of PM in Nigeria. More research specific to the construction sector is needed in Nigeria (Dada and Akpadiaha 2012), especially with the current rate of urbanization - Lagos will have a projected 3.5 million more people by 2020 (UN Habitat 2010) - as well as the high failure rates of construction projects and the need for effective PM.

Odusami and Iyagba (2001) argued that for a complex project costing millions of Naira (Nigerian currency) it is more appropriate to adopt the executive PM structure instead of the traditional management approach. In a similar study by Andawei and King (2001), findings show that the executive PM structure has not been adopted in Nigeria despite the failings of the widely adopted traditional management system (Adetola 2004; Ogunsemi et al. 2008; Okeke 2008). In the traditional system (see Figure 2), the project coordinator, usually an architect or an engineer, performs the role of a project manager but in a limited capacity, and using a traditional procurement method. Quantity surveyors and builders have argued the case for their role as project coordinator (Odusami and Iyagba 2001); the debate continues in Nigeria as to which profession is most suitable to be project coordinator or team leader (Ogunsemi et al. 2008).

Under the traditional procurement system, whoever is appointed by the client as the project coordinator has to assume a managerial role in addition to their primary or technical duties (Andawei and King 2001). As a result, the project coordinator plays a less dominant role and acts in parallel with the other project participants as illustrated in Figure 2 (Odusami et al. 2003). There is little authority for decision making by the project coordinator who is more concerned with communication and coordination of just the construction aspects of the project. The overall responsibility and management still rest with the client (Odusami et al. 2003). Under this arrangement, other project success determinants and objectives that are typical of the executive PM structure, such as meeting the client’s business needs and managing stakeholders’ expectations, are not part of the project coordinator’s responsibilities (Andawei and King 2001).

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) regulates the requirements for PM practice in Nigeria (Ogunsemi et al. 2008). A project manager has to be trained in one of the listed construction-related disciplines and qualify with either a degree or diploma (or both) from a recognized institution of learning. The recognized construction-related disciplines include architecture, quantity surveying, building and civil engineering. The FGN approves the following professional bodies and any of their corporate members, to render management services in the Nigerian construction industry: the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA); the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS); the Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB), and the Nigerian Institution of Civil Engineers (NICE) (Odusami and Iyagba 2001). These professional bodies appear not to be overly dissatisfied with the traditional management style as they have not been involved in championing or promoting PM as an independent discipline or specialization requiring separate skill sets.

Odusami and Amech (2006) added that there is a lack of educational institutions promoting PM as an independent discipline in Nigeria. Similarly, Ogunsemi et al. (2008) reported that there are currently no colleges or educational institutions in Nigeria that offer construction project management courses at undergraduate level. Only one university (the University of Lagos (UNILAG)) currently offers construction project management at postgraduate level, and only

![Fig. 2. Project management structure in Nigeria (Adapted from Odusami et al. 2003)](image-url)
since 2002 (Odusami and Ameh 2006). As revealed by (Sobotic 2004), there is also no independent organisation or certification body responsible for setting an industry standard for PM in Nigeria. Controversy persists among industry professionals and the on-going debate about the best-suited professional to provide project management is partly due to the lack of an independent organisation regulating PM discipline in Nigeria (Ogunsemi et al. 2008). The appointment of a project coordinator under the non-executive PM structure can often have a negative impact on the other project professionals (Odusami et al. 2003). As a result, and due to a lack of commitment by project participants, construction projects procured through this management system are often problematical (Odusami and Iyagba 2001; Zack Jr. 2004; Onwusonye 2005).

In brief, the reality of most construction projects in Nigeria is a succession of routine project failures, adversarial relationships between project participants, and the on-going debate about the most suitable professional to be a project coordinator. Many studies have recommended that, for managerial effectiveness, the executive PM structure be used instead of the current traditional management approach. However, there is little evidence to suggest that this structure has been accepted, or even considered (Bamisile 2003; Okereke 2007; Ogunsemi et al. 2008). The barriers to the adoption of an executive PM structure in Nigeria were thus investigated through primary data collection and analysis, as existing research has not explored this aspect of PM practice in Nigeria.

5 RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a focus group, made up of experts and major construction stakeholders in Nigeria, to collect primary data. Interviews were conducted with these experts to validate an earlier literature review and to explore the challenges facing the adoption of an executive PM structure in the Nigerian construction industry. The review of extant literature informed the formulation of questions used for the interviews. A checklist was then prepared for the interview to ensure consistency in the set of questions for the different group of interviewees. The checklist was prepared based on the information in Table 1 and covered a variety of factors related to PM practice and the barriers to the adoption of executive PM structure in Nigeria (including PM recognition, development and maturation).

The focus group comprised twelve experts registered with their respective professional bodies: two architects, two quantity surveyors, two civil engineers, two builders, two academics (construction programme leaders), and two construction clients representing both public and private sectors. These represent the major stakeholders in the Nigerian construction industry (Odusami and Iyagba 2001; Adetola 2004). Respondents with over twenty years of industry experience were selected; all had been involved in projects where the non-executive PM structure was used. The respondents’ details were obtained from professional bodies, whose members are certified to carry out PM-related duties in the Nigerian construction industry. The composition and size of the population studied is considered appropriate due to the qualitative nature of this research, the data sought and the level of expertise of the interviewees. The sample size is acceptable, based on the assertion that a smaller number of respondents with adequate understanding of the subject matter is more appropriate than a large sample with little comprehension (Silverman 2005; Fellows and Liu 2008). The interviews conducted with the selected experts helped to achieve greater depth and scope.

Wolcott (2011) indicated that, in a qualitative enquiry of this nature, open-ended questions should be used so that participants can share their views. To this end, in-depth interviews were conducted using a prepared checklist but no interview script. The data collected were analyzed using text and image analysis and interpreted using themes and pattern interpretation. Nvivo software was used for the collation and analysis of the interview data as described. To generate textual data, the interviews were first recorded using a tape recorder and later transcribed. The transcripts were then imported into the Nvivo environment for analysis, and a content analysis of the transcribed data was undertaken. Content analysis is a common approach to the qualitative analysis of data in a thematic manner (Yin 1994). It involves searching-out underlying themes in the qualitative data and making critical evaluation of the extracted themes (Bryman 2008).

6 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS AND RESULTS

6.1 Project Management Practice in the Nigerian Construction Industry

The interviewees were asked to provide their views on the adoption of an executive PM structure in the Nigerian construction industry. All twelve interviewees indicated that an executive PM structure has not yet been adopted in the industry despite the growing demand for it and the ineffectiveness of the traditional management system. They stated that when management capabilities are required by the clients, it is usual to deploy the non-executive PM structure. All the interviewees expressed their concern about this management approach for reasons described below. As one interviewee put it, “the notion of appointing an inde-
dependent professional or firm to carry out PM duties is not yet the in thing, as the industry still relies on the traditional management structure”. Another interviewee confirmed this, recognizing that PM is still in its infancy in Nigeria.

The interviewees explained that the traditional management structure, whereby the project coordinator/administrator carries out the managerial role in addition to their primary duties, is widely adopted despite its inherent deficiencies and the resultant project failures. One interviewee equates the project coordinator’s role in the traditional management structure to being a judge and a jury in one’s own case. He acknowledged that there is a significant possibility of a conflict of interest in this arrangement which negates the intent of project management. Six of the interviewees stated that in their current projects, the project coordinator acts in parallel with other project participants and has less managerial responsibilities. Making reference to their construction industry experience both in the public and private sectors (over two decades), all twelve interviewees acknowledged that they have not yet witnessed a construction project where the executive PM structure had been adopted.

6.2 Challenges Facing the Adoption of an Executive PM Structure in Nigeria

There was a similarity of opinions among the interviewees when asked about the barriers to the adoption of an executive PM structure in the Nigerian construction industry. The interviewees believed that the identified barriers directly and/or indirectly stifle the adoption of an executive PM structure in Nigeria, despite the increasing need for its adoption. The barriers identified by the interviewees are discussed below.

Lack of Proper Awareness of the PM Profession

The interviewees generally expressed their concern about the lack of awareness of the PM profession. They all saw project management as a globally recognized, independent management profession that is not valued in the Nigerian construction industry. One interviewee observed that PM is yet to be recognized as a specialization or profession that should be practiced independently. Another interviewee identified that a large proportion of construction stakeholders in Nigeria are still generally unaware of the PM discipline.

The interviewees stated that a lack of awareness is the root cause of the other challenges facing the adoption of an executive PM structure in Nigeria and is a major barrier. Two interviewees criticized the lack of proper awareness of the PM profession in Nigeria, despite the progress made in other countries in the continent, including, for example, in South Africa. According to nine interviewees, the industry is actually aware of the need for management but are ill-informed of how it should be practiced, which is why the traditional management system is still often used. Most of the interviewees admitted that this is not only typical of the construction industry but that a similar situation exists in other sectors.

Table 1. Project management practice: Comparison of the UK and the Nigerian construction industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PM Characteristics</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PM practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Executive PM</td>
<td>Non-executive PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>Applied as a management system to any procurement method</td>
<td>Used in traditional procurement method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Appointment of an independent and certified PM firm, strictly to carry out management functions</td>
<td>Appointment of an architect, quantity surveyor, builder or civil engineer to perform limited managerial duties in addition to their primary assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designation</td>
<td>Project manager</td>
<td>Project coordinator/administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service requirement</td>
<td>ISO, CIOB and/or RICS certified project management firm</td>
<td>Corporate member of any of the listed professional bodies; NIA, NIQS, NIOB and NICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PM recognition, development and maturation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Most universities that offer construction-related courses offer project management at both undergraduate and postgraduate level</td>
<td>Only one university in Nigeria (UNILAG) offers construction project management at postgraduate level, and this only since 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulator</td>
<td>Independent organizations/professional bodies such as CIOB, RICS and APM</td>
<td>The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) - a major player in the Nigerian construction industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>Independent organizations/professional bodies such as CIOB, RICS, APM</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders’ attitude</td>
<td>Supportive of executive PM structure</td>
<td>Marked by controversies in non-executive PM structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Traditional Culture of Stakeholders

All the interviewees admitted the existence of a culture issue which should not be underestimated. Eight interviewees further discussed their views on the traditional culture inherent in the construction industry in Nigeria, highlighting that the traditional method of procurement is still the norm, irrespective of project scope and peculiarities. Hence, the industry is used to the traditional management structure whereby the project coordinator/administrator performs the managerial duties in addition to their primary assignment.

Nine of the twelve interviewees identified the industry as being reluctant to change, although they believed this is also a common problem in other countries, including in the developed world. As a passing comment, three of the interviewees further noted that the traditional culture in Nigeria is evident, not only in the way construction projects are managed, but also in the adoption of renewable technologies/sustainable construction materials and modern methods of procurement. Most of the interviewees stressed that the culture issue has, to some extent, hindered the recognition, development and maturation of PM skills and effective PM practice in Nigeria.

Lack of Demand

The interviewees explained that some professionals in the Nigerian construction industry are aware of the benefits of executive PM adoption but there is a lack of demand by the clients. Ten of the interviewees described the lack of demand for an executive PM structure as being one of the major barriers to its adoption. The tradition of using a project coordinator means that construction clients in Nigeria do not see PM as an independent management profession. Even in the public sector, which is Nigeria’s major construction client, the inappropriateness of government policies and contract conditions is a factor causing the lack of demand for an executive PM structure. Some of these interviewees attributed the lack of demand to the traditional clients’ approach to project procurement and/or greed in the case of enlightened clients. Others attributed it to the clients’ absolute ignorance of the executive PM practice. However, one interviewee was reluctant to blame the clients for the lack of demand. Instead, he believes that more has to be done by the industry as a whole to spread the awareness of effective PM practice and the promise of its adoption.

Clients’ Behavior and Lack of Motivation

Five of the interviewees pointed out that construction clients in favor of executive PM adoption are nevertheless unsupportive because of the costs involved. One interviewee stated that clients are not prepared to pay for the appointment of an independent project manager even when this is thought to be essential. According to one interviewee, this is because clients can get this service (though to a limited extent) at no additional cost under the traditional procurement system widely adopted in Nigeria. Another interviewee lamented that, apparently to save costs, clients would rather entrust the managerial duties on their projects to the project coordinator when management capabilities are required. The five interviewees remarked that the clients lack motivation to appoint an independent professional or firm to carry out management duties since the “so-called” project coordinator is responsible for performing activities that can be broadly related to the generic PM role of planning and controlling. However, they expressed their dissatisfaction with this attitude, particularly when the benefits of adopting an executive PM structure on a complex project are clear-cut.

Lack of Understanding of PM as a Specialization

All the interviewees were aware of the controversy that persists among construction professionals in Nigeria concerning who is most competent to be a project coordinator. All twelve interviewees identified this debate as a clear misinterpretation of the PM discipline and is indicative of a lack of understanding of PM as a specialization. Eight of the twelve interviewees suggested that the latter is one of the greatest barriers to executive PM adoption as it is not yet seen as an independent discipline.

However, they all condemned the traditional management structure for a number of reasons. Firstly, it often results in a lack of support for the appointed project coordinator in an endeavor to prove that he or she is not capable. Secondly, the interviewees identified the obvious conflict of interest as a direct consequence of this approach. Lastly, they emphasized that this management structure very often leads to troubled projects, coupled with the fact that the appointed project coordinator has less time to carry out his/her primary assignment.

Shortage of PM Expertise

Nine of the interviewees identified a shortage of PM expertise as one of the major barriers to the adoption of executive PM structure in Nigeria. When probed further on this, the interviewees stated that the shortage of trained and professionally-qualified project managers and certified PM firms are barriers that cannot be underestimated. The interviewees believed that the industry will always utilize the available resources at its disposal and these include both natural resources and human skills. Further, they stressed that if PM experts and firms are in large supply, they can help to raise awareness and to promote the uptake of executive PM. One of the interviewees blamed the lack of demand for executive PM by clients (identified above) on the lack of supply of publicly listed (i.e. registered)
PM firms, essentially caused by skill shortages.

Two interviewees attributed the skill shortage to the lack of construction project management (CPM) programmes in Nigerian higher education although they acknowledged that one university currently offers CPM at postgraduate level. One interviewee supported this point, recognizing that the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) is doing little, if anything, to promote the PM discipline. The NUC is a government body and the federal umbrella organisation responsible for the development and management of university education in Nigeria. Most of the interviewees acknowledged that the government has a key role to play in the recognition, development and maturation of PM skills which will lead to effective PM practice in the Nigerian construction industry.

Lack of a Regulatory Body or Assessing Organisation

The interviewees identified, as a barrier, the lack of a professional body or an independent organisation that regulates and promotes the PM profession in Nigeria. They stressed that this has to be addressed in order to make any meaningful progress. According to one interviewee, the lack of an assessing organisation simply means that there is no structure, model, formal standard and/or procedure to follow in management practice. In other words, the absence of a certification body regulating PM practice in Nigeria has resulted in a lack of regulatory standards and procedures. Another interviewee stated that it was therefore “no wonder project management is in crisis in the Nigerian construction industry”. Three interviewees argued that all other barriers are offshoots of the lack of an independent professional body promoting and regulating PM practice in Nigeria. According to the interviewees, the CIOB has been promoting the PM discipline globally but limited progress has been made in Africa, with the exception of South Africa. They concluded that, currently, the CIOB has no established presence and influence in Nigeria.

Unfavorable Framework and Policies

Five interviewees representing both public and private sectors stated that the political, social and economic policies of the government are not supportive of an executive PM structure and practice. Also, one interviewee remarked that the contract forms and conditions used in both public and private sector procurement are not supportive of the executive PM structure and approach. Another interviewee reiterated that the common forms of contract conditions widely used in the industry do not, in any way, favor the adoption of executive PM. The absence of relevant infrastructure and an enabling environment to support an effective PM process was a major barrier identified by many of the interviewees. It was acknowledged that this is where the government should intervene as it is a major player in the Nigerian construction industry. According to one interviewee, unethical practices are rife in Nigeria; these create barriers that are difficult to untangle but also dangerous to ignore, in terms of the efficacy of project management.

Finally, all the interviewees recommended that the government, as the main construction stakeholder in Nigeria, should lead the campaign to change the traditional industry culture and approach to project management. The interviewees believed that government influence is necessary if participants in the Nigerian construction industry are to be educated and stimulated towards effective PM practice and action. It was also acknowledged that adopting the executive PM structure instead of the ineffective traditional management structure in complex project procurement should help to address many of the inherent industry and management problems causing project failure.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Generally, the interviews revealed that construction stakeholders in Nigeria are dissatisfied with the traditional management structure for a variety of reasons. This attitude is not limited to issues such as conflicts of interest which negate the intent of PM, but includes the lack of support for the appointed project coordinator. It is mainly due to the ineffectiveness of the structure. Various proponents in this field have argued that before PM can be taken seriously and used effectively in practice, it must be seen as the investiture of an independent person or firm with the responsibility for the success or failure of a project. This suggests that an executive PM structure is critical to managerial effectiveness. Perhaps, more importantly, it explains the failure and ineffectiveness of the traditional management structure in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study has showed that adopting an executive PM structure instead can help to address some of the management problems inherent in the Nigerian construction industry, particularly in complex project procurement.

According to the primary data findings, a number of barriers prevent the adoption of an executive PM structure in Nigeria. These include a lack of proper awareness of the PM profession, an unfavorable framework and policies, skill shortages, a lack of understanding of PM as a specialization, the traditional culture of stakeholders, a lack of demand, and clients’ behavior and lack of motivation. Last but not least is the absence of a regulatory body or an assessing organisation that regulates and promotes PM as an independent discipline. Some of these barriers corroborate and/or explain the findings and the likely issues raised in this study’s literature review. For example, the lack of understanding of PM as a specialization, and the absence of an independent organisation regulating the PM discipline in
Nigeria, probably explain the controversy that persists among industry professionals and the on-going debate about the best-suited professional to provide project management. Also, in contrast with the UK situation, the stakeholders’ traditional cultural approach to construction procurement is a fundamental issue causing project failures and which has hindered the recognition, development and maturation of PM skills and practice. In view of the above findings, this paper proposes six key recommendations for the development of PM skills and effective PM practice in Nigeria:

1. Awareness campaigns: it is expedient that awareness campaigns should be organized to educate the industry stakeholders, particularly the construction clients, of the benefits of project management if practiced as an independent profession.

2. Development of a registration policy: the federal government should develop a policy that regulates the registration of firms offering project management in Nigeria to ensure that they are publicly listed. This will also help to create more recognition for the profession.

3. Establishment of an assessing organisation: an independent organisation should be established with suitable legal backing from the government. This organisation should have the responsibility for the certification of project managers and PM firms in Nigeria. It should also be given a mandate to regulate and endorse the requirements for the practice of project management. Only individuals and firms who meet the requirements of the assessing organisation should be given a license to practice project management in Nigeria.

4. Role of professional bodies: the different professional bodies in the Nigerian construction industry have a key role to play in the awareness campaign and in educating their members. These bodies should support their members who wish to specialize in professional project management by providing them with relevant training, workshops and seminars.

5. Role of the NUC: more universities should be encouraged to offer construction project management at postgraduate level and it should also be introduced at undergraduate level.

6. Role of the government: the uptake of an executive PM structure generally requires a concerted effort by all stakeholders involved. In particular, it is recommended that the government, as the major construction stakeholder in Nigeria, should lead the campaign to change the traditional industry approach to project management. This is necessary if participants in the Nigerian construction industry are to be educated and stimulated towards effective PM practice and action.

The above mentioned lessons do not exhaust that which the Nigerian construction industry can learn from the UK. However, in transferring best practices to Nigeria, it will be important to retain an awareness of their inherent limits, the contextual nature of management knowledge and cultural issues. Further research should examine how this can be achieved in practice. Additionally, wider issues should be addressed, such as the management processes in Nigeria, in order to identify the planning aspects most critical to projects’ success.

REFERENCES


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