

Examining the Challenges of Procurement Professionals in a Public Institution: The Case of WA Polytechnic, in the Upper West Region of Ghana

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Abstract

The research work was titled “Examining the Challenges of Procurement Professionals in a Public institution, “WA Polytechnic, in the Upper West Region of Ghana was chosen as a case of study. The research work was organized into five coherent chapters. Chapter one was basically the introductory part of the research work. An extensive literature on the research work was piled up at chapter two. Methodology such as the use of questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data for the research. Interesting findings such as problems faced by procurement professionals in public institutions were discovered from the research. Some of these problems included long and cumbersome procurement procedure, low threshold, inadequate funds from Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) to complete Getfund projects, no representation of procurement managers to serve on entity tender committees in public institutions, Inadequate funds to support projects, Political interference from government and many others. Benefits that accrued from procuring of goods, works and services at WA polytechnic were also revealed from the research. The research was concluded with the statement that even though the work of procurement professionals come with a lot of challenges, their presence is necessary in every business entity since they help in ensuring better utilization of funds and many others. The research finally ended with recommendations that, The Government of Ghana should endeavor to review the Public procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663) to limit the number of steps in the procurement process so as to reduce the level of bureaucracy in the system. Moreover, government subventions allocated to WA polytechnic should be paid on time and the actual budget amount or funds needed to support projects should be given much consideration by government in order to undertake and support projects successfully.

Keywords: Procurement Professionals, Challenges, Public Institution, Ghana Education Fund (GETFUND)

1.0 Background of the Study

In developed or developing countries all over the world, procurement professionals have and will always face many challenges. Each country has its own economic, social, cultural and political environment, and each country's procurement professionals face different types of challenges, or the same type of challenges but at different levels from their counterparts in other countries.

A procurement professional is responsible for the purchasing activity of a business or organization. The primary role of procurement professionals is to purchase goods and services for the best possible combination of quality, service and price.

There are different levels of procurement professionals: buyers, procurement officers and managers etc.

In order to become procurement professional, individual must have a combination of education and work experience in procurement.

A buyer is an entry-level procurement professional. He or she is responsible for executing purchasing contracts, issuing purchase orders under a specific dollar value and reviewing change requests.

A procurement officer is the most common type of procurement professional. He or she manages bidding, auctions, tenders and complex procurement transactions. Some procurement officers are responsible for contract negotiation, vendor management and issuing of large purchase orders.

The procurement managers level of responsibility is quite high, because this is often considered an executive position. He or she manages overall direction, coordination, evaluation of procurement and implement procurement strategies to maintain security of supply.

Procurement professionals are responsible for the purchasing activity of a business or organization. In the 1990s, and even into the early 2000s, the role that procurement professionals played in the context of a business was relatively simple. Procurement professionals were responsible for finding the parts the business requires, at the lowest possible cost, of course taking into account factors like product quality and other important metrics. In other words, the procurement department was siloed as separate from other areas of the business.

But as world trade matured and became increasingly globalized, with companies constructing supply chains that extended across the many continents of the world, the role of procurement professionals increased in complexity. Procurement professional's decisions began to enter into the realm of strategy, and thus the executive suite now wanted a say in procurement decisions that had previously been strictly for procurement professionals. This combination of procurement with broader company strategy has continued, to the point that today's procurement professionals frequently work with company executives at the level of defining and implementing company strategy. Today's procurement departments are far more flexible and prepared to deal with supply chains that are global and very strategically created. Two enormous changes have revolutionized the face of procurement professionals over the last twenty years.

Firstly, procurement professionals have become deeply intertwined with business strategy rather than simply functioning as a standalone business unit. Procurement managers and directors are now coordinating their purchases with senior executives to ensure that the company strategy is implemented across the board. The second change in procurement that has entirely changed the character of procurement professionals is the rise of the internet, and thus the rise in electronic procurement.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The work of the procurement professional is often characterized with a lot of difficulties and challenges ranging from logistics, financial and legal impediments. In view of these, most procurement professionals are often accused of bribery, corruption and a lot of financial malfeasance. They are often accused of collecting 10% from any contract they award to prospective suppliers. To debunk this notion and assertion there is the need to explore holistically the challenges that procurement professionals face in their work and then outline measures that can be adopted to make their work very easy.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research was to examine the challenges of procurement professionals in a public institution. The specific objectives were to;

1. Examine some of the difficulties faced by procurement professionals at WA Polytechnic.
2. Enumerate on some of the role or importance played by procurement professionals at WA Polytechnic.
3. Outline some of the duties performed by procurement professionals at WA Polytechnic.

1.4 Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the researchers attempt to solve these questions;

1. What are some of the difficulties faced by procurement professionals at WA Polytechnic?
2. What are some of the role or importance played by procurement professionals at WA Polytechnic?
3. What are some of the duties performed by procurement professionals at WA Polytechnic?

1.5 Significance of the study

The essence of this research is as follows;

The government will be abreast with some of the challenges faced by procurement professionals and put measures in place to curb such occurrences.

Depending on the outcome of the research, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders will have an enlightened knowledge about the concept of procurement professionals, their duties and their value to an organization. They will therefore be able to know what type of procurement professionals to employ in their businesses.

The society will also be aware of the role or importance of procurement professionals and their contribution towards increasing savings and maximizing profitability in an organization. The research will also serve as a guide for members in the society who intend to do future research in the area of the research topic under study.

The research work seeks to also broaden and enlightened the knowledge base of the researchers. In this way the researchers will be able to provide some consultancy services to business entities in relating to the problems of procurement professionals. They will also be able to contribute meaningfully to any debate or discussion centered on the role of procurement professionals in an organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Definition of procurement professionals

There are many definitions of procurement professionals by different sources.

First of all, www.wisegeek.com as assessed on 16th April 2013 indicated that a procurement professional is a person in a business or organization who is responsible for the purchasing of goods and services for the best possible combination of quality, service and price.

From www.pathmotion.com/career as assessed on 15th May 2013, the supply chain analyst's role is to analyze the movement of goods through the supply pipeline, monitor current processes, identify and analyze gaps and develop process improvements. Supply chain analysts are expected to use their skills in database management and spread sheet analysis to help the organization increase its cash flow, inventory turnover, customer satisfaction and employee productivity.

<http://www.onetonline.org> as assessed on 15th May 2013, also says that supply chain managers are persons who direct or coordinates production, purchasing, warehousing, distribution, or financial forecasting services or activities to limit costs and improve accuracy, customer service, or safety. They also examine existing procedures or opportunities for streamlining activities to meet product distribution needs. They direct the movement, storage, or processing of inventory.

Finally, http://www.ehow.com/facts_job-description-procurement-specialist as assessed on 15th May 2013, explained procurement specialist as a person who is responsible for finding manufacturers for a particular product to ensure order fulfillment with vendors and negotiate pricing and delivery schedules. They also conduct audits and prepare financial analysis of companies that contracts are established with. In essence, the levels of procurement professionals tend to be broader and more proactive, with focus on strategic matters as compared with the typical implementation of the procurement concepts.

2.2 Duties of Procurement professionals

Procurement professionals have been utilized as an important tool for achieving economic, social and other objectives (Smith, 1998).

They undertake and coordinate all detailed procurement activities within the organization. From www.commerce-edge.com as assessed on 21st May 2013, working as a procurement professional comes with several duties that are integral to the organization's success. The following are some of the duties of procurement professionals.

2.2.1 Procurement Planning

Department for international development (2011) have shown that Advance planning and preparation are essential to achieve procurement objectives in an effective, economical and timely manner. Procurement planning and preparation include such steps as;

- Defining the goods and services to be procured and using the appropriate approach for specific types of goods/services as highlighted in the procurement strategy.
- Formulating a specific procurement plan and schedule of key steps in the process and choosing the right method of procurement.
- Selecting appropriate specification and evaluation requirements.
- Performing market research to ascertain the availability of goods and services to be procured and the terms and prices or rates under which they have been procured in the past, and are normally procured in the commercial market.
- Conducting or obtaining preparatory or baseline studies.

2.2.2 Contract management

Contract management is concerned with ensuring that a contract is performed to the required standard, meeting the specification, terms and conditions agreed between the buyer and the supplier (Amoako, 2013).

Aspects of contract management include;

- Managing all aspects of the relationship between the supplier and the buyer's customer (i.e. the internal customers in the buyer's organization).
- Ensuring delivery of the goods or service from the supplier on the agreed terms and to the agreed standard.
- Encouraging the supplier to seek improvements in performance throughout the duration of the contract.
- Considering future purchasing requirements, and also exploring developments in the supply market so as to achieve improved performance with future purchases.

The required skills of the contract manager are knowledge of the products or services purchased an understanding of contracts and contractual terms, an ability to write contract specifications and good interpersonal skills. A contract manager must be able to communicate, negotiate, persuade, and listen to the supplier.

The benefits of contract management are;

- Better control by the buyer over the execution of a contract.
- Maintaining communication with the supplier during the course of the contract, and helping to achieve better performance of the contract by the supplier.
- Possibly, improvements in cost and quantity, thereby adding value.
- The ability to anticipate and foresee problems early, and deal with them before they become serious.
- Ensuring that the buyer carries out its undertakings properly, so that unnecessary difficulties with the supplier are avoided.

Effective contract management is perhaps most valuable with large and complex contracts, or lengthy contracts, where problems can arise. The effective contract manager will seek to resolve potential disputes or difficulties between him and the supplier and in doing so strengthen the relationship between them.

Therefore effective contract management can be achieved through; managing the supplier relationship, managing risk, contract monitoring and effective administration.

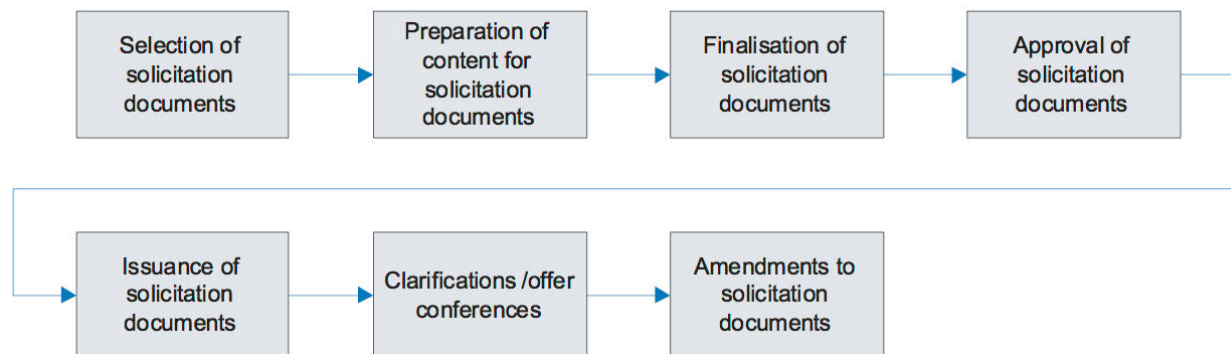
2.2.3 Preparation and issuance of solicitation documents, notices and shortlist

From www.ungm.org as assessed on 2nd June 2013, Solicitation documents are the documents used to request potential suppliers to offer a quotation, bid or proposal to provide the required goods, services or works.

Preparation of solicitation documents covers the process of assembling and formalizing the information and documents necessary for potential suppliers to prepare responsive and easily comparable offers, consistent with the requirement and procurement strategy.

➤ Process

The flowchart below shows each of the stages in the preparation and issuance of solicitation documents process.



Each stage in the process includes review and decisions intended to guarantee the effectiveness of the specific procurement process. On the basis of the selection of the procurement method, this phase starts with review of standard documents and past experience from similar cases in this field of procurement.

➤ Selection of solicitation document

Organizations have different standard documents. It is good practice to have at least separate standard solicitation documents for each procurement method i.e. RFQ, RFP and ITB. In some organizations the choice of standard solicitation document automatically implies a choice of general conditions, contractual terms, etc. It is important to ensure that all parts of the standard document fit the requirement (e.g. appropriate general terms and conditions).

➤ Preparation of content for the solicitation documents

The content of solicitation documents varies from one organization to another and according to the procurement method and complexity of the requirement. The document structure, however, generally includes some or all of the following items:

- Letter of invitation.
- Instruction to suppliers.
- Schedule of requirements.
- Technical description (specifications, TOR, SOW including design/drawings/BoQ and technical specifications for works).
- General terms and conditions.
- Special terms and conditions.
- Sample contract and other forms.

➤ Letter of invitation/instruction to suppliers

The letter of invitation provides key information to enable potential suppliers to decide whether they might be interested in participating. The instruction to suppliers should be drafted to reflect the specific requirement of the solicitation. As shown in the table below, the letter or invitation/instruction to suppliers should convey all relevant guidelines to govern the preparation, submission and evaluation of responsive offers, in accordance with the requirements of the organization. It should indicate all documents required to constitute a complete submission, and the warning that submissions may be rejected unless substantially responsive.

➤ Method of evaluation and evaluation criteria

The purpose of establishing correct evaluation criteria is to:

- Compare the merits of offers that can vary widely in form and substance, in other words develop the ability to compare “apples with apples”.
- Minimize the organizations risk that the selected supplier will not be able to perform the contract satisfactorily.
- Identify the best match to the requirement.

➤ Offer submission form

The supplier’s offer must be signed by a duly authorized signatory, in order for the offer to be legally binding. Solicitation documents should contain a standard offer submission form to be signed and returned with the

supplier's offer.

➤ **Finalization of solicitation documents**

Solicitation documents should be finalized by crosschecking the draft components for consistency and completeness, confirming that sufficient time has been allowed to suppliers, and preparing the final solicitation package to facilitate supplier submission and offer evaluation.

➤ **Approval of solicitation documents**

The solicitation documents must be approved by the appropriate authority.

➤ **Issuance/distribution of solicitation documents**

The solicitation documents should be issued and distributed simultaneously to all suppliers, either by mail, courier, fax, or email, or be made available electronically on the Internet, in case of open tender.

➤ **Clarifications/offer conference**

The period between the issuance of solicitation documents and the deadline for submitting offers is referred to as the solicitation period when a formal method of solicitation is used. During the solicitation period, no communication regarding the contents of the solicitation documents or the offers should take place between the recipients of the solicitation documents and the organization.

➤ **Amendments to solicitation documents**

Any time before the deadline for submission of offers, the organization may, for any at reason, whether on its own initiative or following a request for clarification by a supplier, modify the solicitation document. An example of a modification would be the extension of the closing date. Amendments to solicitation documents should be made in good time before the deadline for submission of offers in order for suppliers to address changes in their offers. In certain cases amendments will justify an extension of the submission deadline. This should be assessed on a case by case basis.

2.2.4 Procuring products and services

According to <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/duties-procurement-officer> as assessed on 7th June 2013, a procurement officer is responsible for the purchase of products and services in the organization. He is to approve the best products or services that have low prices after reviewing and analyzing all options. Quality is also an important factor for the procurement manager to consider when approving a purchase. It is his duty to ensure that the products or services are of high quality, regardless of the price. The procurement policies of the organization are often the guiding principle in the approval of such purchases.

2.2.5 Data handling

<http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/duties-procurement-officer> as assessed on 7th June 2013 indicated that the task of maintaining accurate records of purchases and pricing falls squarely on the shoulders of a purchasing manager. It entails managing the inventories of the products or services in the organization. The procurement officer needs to have all the relevant information concerning the organization's suppliers. It is the responsibility of the procurement officer to ensure that the department has important details, such as the suppliers' qualifications, delivery times, potential development and products.

2.2.6 Supplier selection

Also, <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/duties-procurement-officer> as assessed on 7th June 2013 indicated that in order to do this they need to undertake research on considerable number of potential suppliers. They will be reviewing criteria such as terms, reliability, availability of the required goods, their delivery times and support structures. The Procurement officer's Job description will ensure that they have a considerable amount of responsibility with regard to the profits that could be lost if inappropriate purchasing contracts are entered into. In order to find these suppliers, the Procurement officers will attend a considerable number of meetings with eager suppliers and read even more catalogues and marketing brochures. They might decide to attend conferences and trade shows to find more suppliers or undertake internet research if their needs are particularly complex.

2.3 Importance of procurement professionals

The sheer magnitude of procurement outlays has a great impact on the economy and needs to be well managed. Indeed, in all countries in the world, estimates of the financial activities of procurement managers are believed to be in the order of 10% – 30 % of GNP (Callendar & Mathews, 2000). From www.eHow.com as assessed on 15th May 2013, the services of procurement professionals have the following importance to an organization.

2.3.1 Better utilization of funds

Effective supply chain management depends on material availability, purchase volume, product cost and types of materials. Materials subject to shortages and price instability present more problems to procurement professionals. Even small reductions in material costs in a company's total operating budget can impact the organization by increasing its profit margins. Purchasing and supply chain personnel must negotiate effectively to obtain materials of the highest quality at the lowest cost.

2.3.2 Effective contract management

Purchasing professionals buy goods and services for resale, or purchase them to consume in the business or

transform into products or services. Direct buying typically involves establishing a long-term contract between the buyer and supplier. Indirect buying involves transactions associated with repetitive purchases used in running the business. By defining the requirements for materials, analyzing the value and arranging the logistics and distribution, supply chain professionals ensure the long-term success of the entire business operation.

2.3.3 Maintaining productive supplier relationships

Supporting a company's operations typically means providing a continuous flow of materials and services required for production. By buying competitively from diverse suppliers, procurement professionals obtain the right amount of quality goods and services at the best price. Negotiating persuasively helps maximize the investment and establish lucrative working relationships with suppliers. By analyzing usage, procurement professionals work with their suppliers to avoid duplication, errors and waste. Evaluating and certifying suppliers ensures that all purchases meet the established criteria on an ongoing basis.

2.3.4 Negotiating and administering the best deals

Buyers in purchasing and supply management departments perform the critically important role of negotiating the best deals. Effective procurement professionals must know what they are buying, how it will be used and the factors that affect quality, cost and delivery. Service and support needs must also be analyzed and discussed. By conducting thorough research and communicating effectively, procurement professionals secure contracts that are mutually beneficial to both companies. These contribute to long-term, productive partnerships that are important to both entities.

2.4 Challenges of Procurement professionals

The outlays of procurement professionals is designed to benefit all but efficiently handling this size of procurement outlays has been a policy and management concern as well as a challenge for procurement professionals. According to Thai (2001), procurement practitioners have always faced challenges imposed upon by a variety of factors which includes the following.

- **Market environment**

Market conditions have a great influence on procurement practitioners' effort to maximize competition. Moreover, the market determines whether or not socio-economic objectives of procurement are accomplished, whether or not a governmental entity can fulfill its needs, the timeliness of fulfillment and the quality and costs of purchased goods, services and capital assets. As there are different levels of economic growth among countries in the world, market conditions are very favorable in industrialized countries, while they may be unfavorable in developing countries.

Even under a perfectly competitive condition like that in the United States, some supplies and services are required only by the government (particularly for weapons systems) and are available in the market. This is a captive market, which is limited in scope and competition.

Also as markets become more and more globalized through regional and international trade agreements and treaties, procurement practitioners face a greater challenge. In addition to compliance with their governments' procurement laws and policies and international trade requirements, they face additional challenges including communication, currency exchange rates and payment, customs regulations, lead-time, transportation, foreign government regulations, trade agreements, and transportation. Thus, "before embarking on a foreign purchasing program, procurement practitioners must carefully assess the total cost implications and compare them to domestic costs. Procurement practitioners are torn between free trade agreements and their countries' economic development/stabilization policies when they face a hard choice between selecting domestic or foreign firms.

- **Legal environment**

Apart from procurement regulations and rules, the legal environment refers to a broad legal framework that governs all business activities including research and development (regulations dealing with safety and health of new products), manufacturing (safety and health regulations at workplace and pollution control), finance (regulations dealing with disclosure of information), marketing (regulations dealing with deceptive advertising, disclosure of product characteristics), personnel (regulations dealing with equal opportunity for women and minorities), and contracts. Indeed, most aspects of contracts--public or private-- such as contract requirements, disputes, and breach of contract are governed under the same contract law. In developing and particularly transitional countries, where legal systems are not comprehensive, government contracts may need detailed provisions.

- **Political environment**

In a democracy many individuals, groups, and organizations in the private sector including trade associations, professional associations, and business firms or companies (commonly known as interest groups) are actively involved in all aspects of the public procurement system. Having various interests, objectives and beliefs, interest groups are involved in the public procurement system in several ways such as lobbying legislative bodies to pass or alter procurement statutes, influencing implementation of these statutes, and influencing budget authorization and appropriations processes. Normally, a government program that is eventually adopted is a compromise among different views of interest groups, policy makers and management. In this democratic

environment, there are cases of a strong coalition of policy makers, bureaucrats and interest groups in their effort to get their programs adopted. This coalition has led to the concept of the 'iron triangle,' which is very popular in the area of defense procurement.

- **Cumbersome Procurement regulations, rules and guidance**

As many countries have moved to a regional and or global economy, procurement practitioners face another challenge that is, how to comply with their government's procurement regulations and social and economic procurement goals without violating regional and/or international trade agreements. For example, how to comply with national economic policies (in nurturing domestic firms), without dealing unfairly with foreign firms as provided in regional trade agreements and/or the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements is not easy, which requires a careful study of trade agreements in order to take advantages of special provisions. The WTO Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA) Article XVI provides: "Entities shall not, in the qualification and selection of suppliers, products or services, or in the evaluation of tenders and award of contracts, impose, seek or consider offsets." Without careful examination of GPA provisions, procurement practitioners in developing countries may not use an exception.

However, GPA expressly allows for the use of offsets by developing countries. Properly using 'offsets' is a major challenge for procurement practitioners. Similarly, the World Trade Organization's general rule requiring that contracts be advertised for a period of no less than 40 days from the date of publication of the notice to the tender submission deadline. The 40-day requirement would hinder a speedy procurement.

In developed as well as developing countries, disregarding their economic, social, and Political environment, a sound procurement system has accomplished two sets of requirements: management requirements and policy requirements. The procurement management requirements normally include quality, timeliness, cost (more than just the price), minimizing business, financial and technical risks, maximizing competition, and maintaining integrity. The procurement policy requirements normally include economic goals (preferring domestic or local firms), environment protection or green procurement (promoting the use of recycled goods), social goals (assisting minority and woman-owned business concerns), and international trade agreements. It is very difficult for policy makers and procurement practitioners to make an optimal decision, as there are always tradeoffs among these goals.

- **The public procurement system is also influenced by culture and technology.**

In a culture where giving gifts is a common public relation practice, it is difficult to distinguish between gifts and bribes. Moreover, rapidly advanced technology has forced public procurement to adopt new procurement methods, such as the use of e-signature and purchase cards and be knowledgeable in many aspects and considerations of how to procure information technology.

- **Inaccurate Planning**

The decision made while planning for the purchase and delivery is very important particularly these may affect the overall schedule and total cost of the operations. Inaccurate planning may result in material shortages or surpluses, cash flow problem and unnecessary delays. Planning procurement which includes operation and arrangement depends on the skill level of the procurement staff. The use of prototype planning models in facilitating pre-tender and procurement processes have found out to be accurate planning which is very important for a successful and expeditious procurement process.

- **Excessive documentation**

For a new buy, a minimum of seven different document (requisition, enquiry, quotation, order acknowledgment, advice note, goods receive note as well as invoice) are involved and in some cases, some of documents have to be copied and given to the other departments which in effect slows procurement process. Excessive documentation in public procurement is a disturbing problem that slows down the procurement process and leads to delays and boredom.

2.5 Competences of procurement professionals

In the supply chain, procurement professionals have been lacking clarity on what roles should be played. This means that accurate competencies are too often not identified to select and grow individuals (Hudson, 2008). Creating a stronger point of reference for the job in the supply chain functions especially for procurement professionals and mapping the required competency will unquestionably make their job to be efficiently performed with no failure of negotiation, premature contract management among other processes of procurement function.

According to Hudson (2008) the profile of a successful procurement officer contains certain rare combinations of competences and personality traits. Such a combination, coupled with a more visible accountability track for procurement professionals, will create a cycle whereby reduction and value cost for money for all stakeholders in the procurement process is realized.

Rantanen and Haho (2006) asserted that competences of procurement officers can be classified in two different ways: by process phase and by criticality. Procurement process is further defined widely to cover the planning phases preceding the actual procurement as well as the contract period following the procurement. The four

phases of the procurement process are planning and selection of procurement method, competition phase, decision-making phase and contract period.

The PPDA Act (2003) states that employees shall not use their authority or office for personal gain and shall seek to uphold and enhance the reputation of the government at home and abroad by fostering the highest possible standards of competence. The PPDA recognizes that officer's competencies are necessary in achieving procurement tasks in the public domain. Some of the general competences identified by the PPDA (2003) include the following.

2.5.1 Self efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs about their capability to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy involves mobilization and motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over events. Contains three dimensions of self-efficacy as identified: magnitude, strength and generality. Magnitude refers to the level of task difficulty a person believes he or she can attain; Strength refers to the degree of conviction that a given level of task performance is attainable and generality refers to the extent to which a given self-efficacy judgment applies across different situations. There are three key sources of self-efficacy. The most powerful determinant of self-efficacy is enactive self-mastery, followed by role-modeling, and then verbal persuasion. However it introduces physiological state (subjective personal influences) as another source, which influences judgment of self-efficacy, where by individuals feel fearful, anxious, or tense, and they judge themselves less capable to accomplish a given task. This mostly affects the procurement officer in the supply chain as they may perceive to be lowly empowered to produce desired results.

2.5.2 Accountability

Accountability is broadly conceived of as a relational issue – being answerable to and held responsible by others, or as an identity issue, being answerable to ideals or missions and one's own sense of responsibility. Accountability is concerned with giving explanations through a credible story of what happened, and a calculation and balancing of competing obligations, including moral ones. Accountability is thus, not only a formal order, but also a moral order; a system of reciprocal rights and obligations. Others have seen accountability as a relationship involving the giving and demanding of reasons for conduct. Thus, the term "accountability" mainly reflects a blend of ethical responsibility, either moral or professional. The dimensions of accountability in Public service include conflict of interest, loyalty and neglect. Accountability relates to the social norm where the accountable, the accountees, the stakeholders expect the former to behave accountably. This implies that the procurement officer in charge must promote the accountees' interest, to fully disclose their personal interest, to be responsible for wrongdoings. Loyalty is another way in which stakeholders can hold institutions and individuals accountable. Loyalty is seen as a source for guidance that gives protection from socially destructive self-interest and self-assertion. Loyalty may imply sacrifice basically associated with job stability, positional power, and organizational convenience and gains are in terms of autonomy, personal growth, and economic rewards. Although loyalty is seen as proper dimension for accountability, demands for personal loyalty tend to eschew employee accountability in public agencies by forcing upon them neither unnatural relationship which the organization neither requires nor needs. This therefore calls for measuring loyalty using its types such as personal loyalty, institutional loyalty, and integrated loyalty. Concerning neglect it can be viewed in terms of statutory neglect and emotional neglect. Statutory neglect relates to reckless handling of statutes put in place to guide activities, it relates to manipulation of clauses, by creating loopholes to promote personal interest. Emotional neglect occurs when a superiors deliberately or ignorantly overlooks the signs that an employees need attention, this include withholding task support, rejecting employee's ideas and ignoring their emotional needs. It relates with dissatisfaction perceived by major stakeholders that service provision is inadequate. Increased dissatisfaction of employees may cause exit: willingness of the party concerned to find alternative source of supply which may lead to corruption. Procuring entities and their procurement officer must be accountable for the effectiveness, efficiency, legal and ethical manner in which they conduct procurement.

2.5.3 Perceived service quality

Quality is defined using five different approaches namely; the transcendent approach; the product-based approach; the user-based approach; the manufacturing based approach; and the value-based approach. The transcendent approach equates quality with Innate excellence: The product-based approach defines quality as a sum or weighted sum of the amounts of the desired attributes in a product: The user-based approach identifies a high quality item as one that best satisfies consumer needs or wants: The manufacturing-based approach equates quality with conformance to specifications: And the value-based approach defines Quality as a measure of not only the product's conformance to specifications or performance at an intended level but also conformance at an acceptable cost or price. Service quality is defined as a measure of how well the service level delivered meets customer expectations. A common definition of service quality is that service should correspond to the customers, owners and the employee's expectations and satisfy their needs and requirements. Despite rigorous academic debate and attention to issues related to understanding service quality from an external customer's

perspective, research on the internal service domain is relatively new. Service organizations should not only focus on the external customer, but also monitor the exchange of services within the organization that is, service provided by an employee in a department or section to an employee in another area of the firm. The importance of internal functions has been recognized and most researchers agree that internal organizational support activities and the quality of internal service operations are key links to external customer satisfaction and an overall service quality strategy.

This implies that both user-based approach and transcendent approach are likely used by

Procurement professionals depicting the user department as their major source of existence. They are the first clients to consider before going out of the organization. Service quality can be described in terms of seven perceived criteria which include professionalism and skills, attitudes and behavior, accessibility and flexibility, reliability and trustworthiness, service recovery and reputation credibility.

However, there are five dimensions that can be used as measurement for perceived service quality which include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Communication and flexibility is relevant to complete the scale for measuring perceived internal service quality.

2.5.4 Procurement competences and Accountability

Procurement requires a mix of skills ranging from the ability to negotiate on price, interpreting market intelligence and an ability to negotiate terms and conditions, to competences in electronic procurement and contract management. It is therefore important that staff assigned to the procurement function has the professional skills and experiences to carry out the functions efficiently. The systematic application of management policies, procedures, and practices to manage risk in the procurement area is important in order to provide reasonable account regarding procurement objectives. Failure to apply risk management in the procurement area may result in noncompetitive prices, reduced standards of received goods and services and dissatisfied stakeholders. For public agencies to survive labor must be systematically divided and work assignments must be given to employees as official duties. Work assignments institutionalize accountability by establishing a steady and measurable level of employee loyalty.

To enhance accountability, regular review of the competences of the procurement function is important as it enables the department to identify opportunities to increase value for money and to identify malpractice and areas of poor services. Failure to regularly review the roles will result in increased risk of the procurement function malfunctioning. Competence building is predicted to have positively resulted to accountability through enhancement of loyalty and consideration of conflict of interest. This is evident in public procurement in which competences failures has led to low implementation of rules, procedures on the process of acquiring goods, works and services of public sector entities. Most officers have resulted into neglect of their duties.

The decentralization of procurement responsibility to procurement agents, the hallmark of modern procurement systems, brings with it a commensurate need for accountability. As in all spheres of government action, there is a danger of conflict of interest. It is presumed that procurement competences will also seek to reduce instances of potential conflict in the context of procurement and will generally impose provisions with regard to impartiality and confidentiality. In some cases, procurement tasks, duties and rules will require participants in the procurement process (notably those connected to the evaluation process) to sign declarations guaranteeing their impartiality. Sometimes, these declarations will also refer to the absence of bribes or participation in collusive practices. Provisions used to ensure that no conflicts of interest arise include the prohibition on procurement officers from participating in contract award procedures where they have any connection (family, social or financial) with any of the tenderer's; the requirement for such officers to declare themselves ineligible; the requirement for such officers to sign declarations to that effect; or the prohibition on the engagement of any government employee as part of any tender. The ability of the procurement officer to act in his own interest is very eminent. His argument is based on the fact that he holds information which is not available to the principal. There is, in economic terms, an informational asymmetry. For example it is the agent that specifies his requirement through the technical specifications or standards. He is the one who selects the process or procedure to be used. He is the one that invites the tenderers and receives their tenders. He is the one that evaluates those tenders and makes the decision to award the contract. The ability of the agent to benefit from the procurement process arises essentially because he has more information over all of these aspects of the procurement than his principal. It is the exploitation of this position which would enable him to enrich himself at the expense of the government and, therefore, user departments. Technical competences relating to qualification of bidders and the setting of specifications may sound a difficult role for the Principal, since he cannot supervise each procedure. The agent/procurement officer therefore must, in some way, be held directly accountable for such actions. This is done by way of ensuring that the considerations is taken into account and which have been made transparent are also objectively verifiable. The basis is to make the officer to be fully in charge, however if the principal completely ignores some of such major activities tendencies of neglect set in which hinders the capacity of procurement officer in making decisions. Neglect differently as taking away the decision-making responsibility of the agent. For example, subjecting critical decisions like the choice of procurement procedure to prior

authorization, takes the responsibility for that decision away from the agent and places it with a third party who may not be accountable for that decision and more often such party may not be answerable to the procurement review bodies.

In the case of technical specifications, procurement regulations and competences will often set out in relatively strict terms of what may be acceptable. Such an approach is necessary to promote loyalty, because it is all too easy for an agent to define the requirements and/or technical specifications in such a way as to favor particular tenderers. Whether this is the result of technical incompetence, industry lobbying or deliberate favoritism has little effect on the end result which is to deprive the ultimate beneficiaries of the user departments and taxpayers of what they really need and often to increase the cost to the public purse. Building or developing real procurement capacity and competences require training in the art of the practical aspects of key personal competences like tactical team building, networking, communication and need identification. Such competences, if well understood will build responsibility for decisions taken and prepare procurement officers to be accountable for those decisions. This implies that the agent will promote the principals interest, enhance loyalty and reduce on employee neglect. These findings are further supported by those who contend that the profile of a successful procurement professional contains certain rare combinations of competencies and personality traits. Procurement professionals need to possess both strong intelligence quotient and emotional quotient which represents key personal competencies. These competencies are seen as to demonstrate sensitive and attuned awareness of officers' impact on others, effective and balanced negotiation skills and a high level of interpersonal sensitivity. Despite this, procurement officers will be perfectly capable of making non-emotional decisions. Getting the balance right with strong sense and self-awareness that improves loyalty and promotion of organization interest.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology can be defined, as the branch of philosophy that analyses the principles and procedures of enquiry in a particular discipline (Word Net, 2005).

The research methodology covered data collection, sample survey and the methods of analysis. The study also involved the use of both primary and secondary data.

This part of the research also outlined the various tools, methods and procedures that were used together data for the study. The study also adopted both qualitative and quantitative research approaches such as empirical and statistical data. This approach was deemed more effective as each approach complemented the other, rendering the study accurate and authentic.

3.1. Research Design.

Giddens (2005) asserts that research design involves “how the research materials are to be collected”. The researchers used social survey. Odum and Jocher as cited in Kumekpor, “Social survey may be said to be an objective quantitative approach to the study of social processes within a well-defined area at a given time through one or more institutions, by means of a schedule, or a questionnaire and the data thus obtained relates statistically” (Kumekpor, 2002). The design helped the researchers to unitized and placed under appropriate categories ideas and opinions and then arrived at the desired quantitative description.

3.2. Source of Data Collection

In order to achieve the objectives of the research, both primary and secondary sources of data were employed.

3.2.1. Primary Source of Data

Primary data is original research data in its raw form, without any analysis or processing. This data provides a wealth of information for the researchers. In this research, the researchers used questionnaires as a form of primary data.

3.2.2. Secondary Source of Data.

Secondary data means data that is already available. They refer to the data which have already been collected and analyzed by someone else. This enhanced the interpretation of the results because according to Batsa (2008) data collected from secondary sources significantly compliment primary data and enhance the interpretation. For purposes of this research, the researchers used the following sources of secondary data: text books, journals and the internet.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques.

The researcher used interview and questionnaires as the major tools for data collection.

3.3.1. Interview

As cited by Saunders and others in *Research Methods for Business Students*, Fourth Edition, the interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people (Kahn and Cannel, 1957). The Macmillan Dictionary defines interview as a meeting in which someone asks series of questions and see if they are suitable for a particular job or for a course of study or as part of a research project. The types of interviews are; Structured and Unstructured Interviews, Individual and Group Interviews, Personal and Non-personal Interviews, Unique and Panel Interviews. The type of interview that is used in this research by the researchers is Personal Interview. Personal

interviews are conducted in a face-to-face situation, which helps to obtain relevant information. For instance, the researchers interviewed the Procurement Officer of Wa Polytechnic in order to cross check the validity of responses to some of the questions asked and also to gain other relevant information.

3.3.2. Questionnaire.

The questionnaire is a data collection technique in which each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a pre-determined order (DeVaus, 2002). A questionnaire can therefore be a written list of questions which are answered by a number of people in order to provide information for a report or survey. The type of questions usually used in questionnaires is; Primary, Secondary, Direct and Indirect, Leading questions Open-Ended and Closed-Ended questions. For the purpose of the research the researchers used open and closed ended questions. The questions included primary (those elicit information directly related to the research topic) and secondary (those which are helpful for checking consistency of the respondent's opinion as well as suggestive ones). All these multi-choice and different types of questions are to enable easy analysis to be made.

3.4. Population.

Bowerman and O'Connell, 2007 defined population as a set of units under consideration and can be people, objects or events.

The target population of this research comprises mainly the staff and workers of Wa Polytechnic, mainly those working at the Procurement department, Stores and Finance Departments. For the purpose of this research, a total number of 80 people will constitute the target population.

3.5. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sampling can be described as the process by which sufficient number of elements is selected from the population so that a study of the sample and understanding of its properties would make it possible to generalize such properties to the population elements. Again, it is a process of taking any portion of a population as a representative of that population. It gives the researcher the opportunity to study relatively smaller number of units in place of the target population and to obtain data that are representative of the whole target population.

The portion or unit that is the representative of the population is known as the sample. Out of a total population of 80, a sample size of 50 was chosen for the study. The sample size covers the staff and workers within the procurement department, stores and finance departments of Wa Polytechnic.

The researchers selected this sample size because the researchers felt that these people have a greater knowledge about the research topic and can help contribute relevant information relating to the research topic.

The sampling techniques that were adopted by the researchers for the research are purposive and random sampling. With the purposive sampling, it is whereby the researchers try to get information from a target group who are ready to provide information in certain criteria designed by the researchers. The researchers would purposely choose respondents who in their opinion would be relevant to the research topic. The type of purposive sampling that would be used by the researchers is judgmental sampling, since it involves the selection of individuals with expertise on the research topic and they can give the most information needed for the research.

Also with the random sampling, the simple random would be used, which refers to the situation whereby all the samples of the same size have an equal chance of being selected from the population. This technique is effectively used in the selection of the respondents for the completion of the questionnaires in order to avoid bias and unfairness.

3.6 Data Management.

The raw data obtained from a research is useless unless it is transformed into information for the purpose of decision making (Emery and Couper, 2003). The data analysis involved reducing the raw data into a manageable size, developing summaries and applying statistical inferences. Consequently, the following steps were taken to analyze the data for the study. The data were edited to detect and correct possible errors and omissions that are likely to occur, to ensure consistency across respondents. After this was done, the researchers used statistical package for social science (SPSS) to construct the frequency and percentage tables for the study. Excel the 2010 version was also used to draw the tables, graphs, histograms and all diagrams related to the research work. Quantitative and qualitative methods of analyzing statistical data were employed in the analysis of the data. The results were subsequently computed into percentages. Percentage values, which are not round figures, were approximated to the nearest whole numbers

The other questions that are open-ended were analysed by listing all the vital response given by the respondents. They were then considered based on their relevance to the research question. This gives the general idea about the problem under study.

In all six main processes were involved in the research. The processes include

- a) Pre-editing: this looked at examination of the responses received for completeness, relevance, appropriateness and its importance to the study.
- (b) Coding of Rough Data: this involved grouping of the data into the various categories and subjects for easy analysis.

- (c) First write up: this was the stage where all the information was written to form one continuous piece.
- (d) Data Entry: In this modern technique was employed to typeset the data.
- (e) Data Modification: at this stage the researcher sent the drafts for editing and for expert advice after corrections have been made to give it an appreciable form.

Finishing: at this stage the entire project was put together and final corrections made. Printing and binding were done to give the research its completeness.

3.7 Profile of the study area

WA Polytechnic was officially established in legislation by the Government of Ghana (GoG) in 1999. Programming and construction of the school site began in 2003. The Polytechnic is located in the capital city of the Upper West Region of Ghana. It is situated in a small, serene community called Kpongou about two kilometers south of the WA Technical Institute. WA polytechnic currently has 600 students and other part-time students. Its prime mandate is to support rural development and poverty reduction in one of the most deprived regions of Ghana. WA polytechnic is currently accredited to run tertiary programs in Agricultural Engineering, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Building Technology, Estate Management Studies, Information and Communication Technology, Accountancy and Secretaryship, Business and Management Studies. The Establishing the WA Polytechnic assists the Polytechnic in its effort to distinguish itself from other polytechnics in Ghana. In order to ensure its relevance to the surrounding community, WA Polytechnic has placed emphasis on demand-driven informal and outreach training. Mission WA polytechnic is a government institution with a mission to prove quality tertiary education through offering 3 years higher national diploma, degree and non-formal short term programs and courses.

Vision: WA Polytechnic is a young institution with a strategic vision of becoming a world class center for applied technology and career focused education for rural poverty reduction and national development

Source: www.wapoly.edu.gh

ANALYSIS OF DATA, DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This part of the research involves a presentation and analysis of data obtained from the field survey. The data was presented in frequency tables and charts to enhance clearer understanding of the analysis.

A total number of fifty (50) respondents were selected for the study. Out of fifty (50) questionnaires that were administered at WA Polytechnic, Forty (40) were answered and retrieved successfully. This represents 80 percent (80%) of the questionnaires distributed and this also consisted of sixty percent (60%) male and twenty percent (20%) female. This was backed with personal interviews in order to cross check the validity to some of the responses from the questionnaires.

4.1 Analysis and Discussion of Data

The researchers intend to analyze some of the challenges, importance and duties associated with the work of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic.

4.1.1 Gender of Respondents.

Table 4.1 Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	24	60
Female	16	40
Total	40	100

Source: Researchers Field Survey (2013)

This data was obtained from forty (40) staff from Wa Polytechnic, which comprised of staff from the Procurement department, stores and some administrative staff. It was made up of twenty-four (24) males and sixteen (16) females. In percentage terms the males were 60% whilst females were 40%.

4.1.2 Educational Background

The responses obtained from table 4.2 shows the educational background of the respondents as indicated on the table below.

Table 4.2 Shows the Educational Background.

Levels of education	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Basic Education	-	-
Tertiary Education	33	82.5
Secondary Education	7	17.5
Total	40	100

Source: Researchers Field Survey (2013)

From the table 4.2 above, thirty-three (33) out of the total number of respondents had tertiary education

representing 82.5% whilst seven (7) of them had secondary education representing 17.5%. This means that majority of the respondents had educated themselves up to the tertiary level.

4.1.3 Age Group of Respondents

Table 4.3 below shows the ages of respondents ranging from below 20years, 21 – 40, 41-60, and then above 61 years.

Table 4.3: A frequency table showing the age of the respondent

Ages	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 20 years	-	-
21-40years	5	12.5
41-60 years	31	77.5
61years and above	4	10
Total	40	100.0

Source: Researchers Field Survey, (2013)

Similarly, the average age was (mean 13.33, standard deviation 15.31), thus indicating that, the age was within 21 years to 60 years. This implies that respondents are matured enough and have good knowledge towards this study. Also the high standard deviation shows that there is a variation between the ages below 20 years and 61 years and above.

4.1.4: Challenges of Procurement Professionals in a Public Institution.

Table 4.4: Challenges of Procurement Professionals at WA Polytechnic.

Challenges of procurement professionals	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Long and cumbersome procurement procedure	9	22.5
Low threshold	5	12.5
Inadequate funds from Getfund to complete getfund project	3	7.5
No representation of procurement managers to serve on entity tender committees in public institution	4	10
Inadequate funds to support projects	3	7.5
Political interference from government	5	12.5
Pressure from suppliers to induce procurement managers	2	5
Unplanned procurement activities	2	5
Inadequate procurement professionals in public institutions	3	7.5
No clear cut policies on procurement in public institutions	4	10
Total	40	100

Source: Researchers Field work June, 2014

From Table 1 above, out of the forty respondents, nine (9) respondents representing (22.5%) claimed that long and cumbersome procurement procedure is one of the challenges associated with the work of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic. The view of these respondents is that, there is some sort of bureaucracy in the procurement process which makes it cumbersome. The cumbersome process delays evaluation of the contract awards and when evaluation is delayed, then procurement activities are delayed, thus storing cost increases and distorts the procurement price of goods, services or works which are needed for the management of WA polytechnic.

Again, five (5) respondents representing (12.5%) asserted that there is low threshold as stipulated by the Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663) which makes it very difficult to procure goods, services or works that exceeds the threshold value. As a result, procurements are distributed into smaller components to avoid exceeding the threshold value.

Also, three (3) respondents representing (7.5%) agreed that there are always inadequate funds from Getfund to complete Getfund projects. This is because funds allocated by Getfund to WA polytechnic for the completion of Getfund projects are relatively smaller combined with supplier's unwillingness to give credits. Hence, Gtfund projects are always not completed on time.

Moreover, (4, 10%) really accepted that the problem they face at WA polytechnic is that there is no representation of procurement managers on the tender committee. As a result they are unable to identify suppliers who can offer the best price understanding the composition of that price so that there are clear criteria for assessment and knowing how the relationship between quality, price and payment can be varied to obtain the best final price.

Furthermore, (3, 7.5%) were of the view that the main problem that affects the work of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic is inadequate funds to support projects. The view of the respondents is that there is always a delay in government subventions allocated to the institution and the actual budget amount or funds needed to support projects are not approved by government and even when it arrives, the funds are always not adequate to undertake and support projects successfully.

Additionally, 12.5% representing five (5) of the respondents agreed that the key problem that affects the work of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic is political interference from government. The view of these respondents is that procurement professionals take on the role of agent for elected representatives. Senior officials and political leaders use public office for private gain and this has weakened the motivation to remain honest. Ministers and political parties receive clandestine payments in government procurement. This ultimately interferes with the procurement process and constrains compliance. They recognize that one of the major obstacles to the procurement system is ministerial interference with the tendering process where ministers intervene and influence tender awards. As a result the threat of being suspended or fired intimidates procurement officers into obeying illegal ministerial directives leading to non-compliance with the Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663) which interrupts the procurement processes and deters transparency.

Besides, two (2) respondents representing (5%) accepted that there is always pressure from suppliers to induce procurement managers. The view of the respondents is that in a culture where giving gifts is a common public relation practice, it is difficult for them to distinguish between gifts and bribes. This always put pressure on them when awarding contracts; especially where these suppliers who normally give these gifts to the procurement managers are involved.

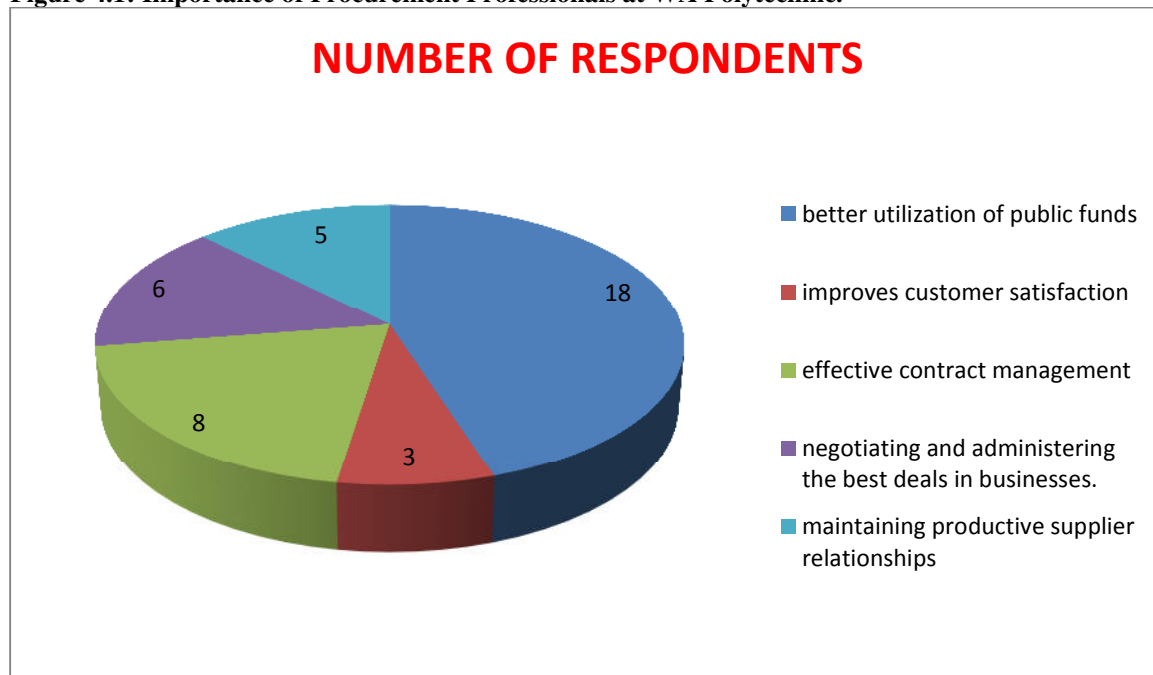
It can also be deduced from the table above that, two (2) respondents representing (5%) were of the view that procurement managers do not plan their activities very well. The view of the respondents is that planning for the purchase and delivery is very important particularly these may affect the overall schedule and total cost of the operations. They recognize that unplanned procurement activities results in material shortages or surpluses, cash flow problem and unnecessary delays.

Nevertheless, three (3) respondents representing (7.5%) asserted that inadequate procurement professionals are also a problem at WA polytechnic. The view of the respondent is that the institution has a limited number of procurement professionals with the requisite knowledge, training and competence in procurement. As a result most of the procurement activities are done by the accounts and finance department who have little knowledge in terms of adhering to procurement procedures.

Finally, the remaining four (4) respondents representing (10%) accepted that there are no clear cut policies on procurement at WA Polytechnic. The view of the respondent is that effective policy making requires information on whether procurement managers are doing things right and whether they achieve the results intended. Strong monitoring and evaluation systems provide the means to compile and integrate this valuable information into the policy cycle, thus providing the basis for sound and accountable procurement policies. The respondents agreed that deviations or non-compliance goes undetected since there is no clear cut policy in the institution. As a result procurement managers have spent millions of Ghana cedis in ways that contravened laws and regulations. The entity has noticed irregular, unauthorized, fruitless and wasteful expenditures that contravene laws and regulations.

According to Khi V. Thai (2001), some of the challenges that public procurement practitioners face are; political environment, cumbersome procurement regulations, rules and guidance, culture, inaccurate planning and many others. Therefore the challenges associated with the work of procurement professionals at WA Polytechnic in table one (1) above seems to be real and therefore conforms to existing literature.

4.1.1: Importance of Procurement Professionals in a Public Institution.
Figure 4.1: Importance of Procurement Professionals at WA Polytechnic.



Source: Researchers Field Work June, 2014

From figure 1(one) above, Eighteen (18) respondents representing (45%) asserted that the paramount importance of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic is that they are able to utilize public funds very well. The view of these respondents is that they negotiate effectively to obtain materials of the highest quality at the lowest cost which reduces material costs in the institution's total operating budget and impacts on the institution by increasing its profit margins.

Three (3) respondents representing (7.5%) also asserted that one of the main importance of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic in terms of procuring goods, works or services is that they improve customer satisfaction. The opinion of these respondents is that, procurement professionals at WA polytechnic procure goods, services or works that exceeds their expectations. They provide them with right materials first and every time; hence their needs are met at all times.

Moreover, Eight (8) respondents who correspond to (20%) also asserted that the best benefit of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic in terms of procuring goods, works or services is that they manage contracts effectively. The opinion of these respondents is that procurement professionals at WA polytechnic ensure that a contract is performed to the required standard, meeting the specification, terms and conditions agreed between the institution and its suppliers. This ensures the long-term success of the entire business operation.

Additionally, 15% representing six(6) of the respondents asserted that the supreme benefit of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic in terms of procuring goods, works or services is that they negotiate and administer best deals for the institution. The opinion of these respondents is that procurement professionals at WA polytechnic know what they are buying, how it will be used and factors that affect quality, cost and delivery. By conducting thorough research and communicating effectively, procurement professionals secure contracts that are mutually beneficial to both the institution and its suppliers.

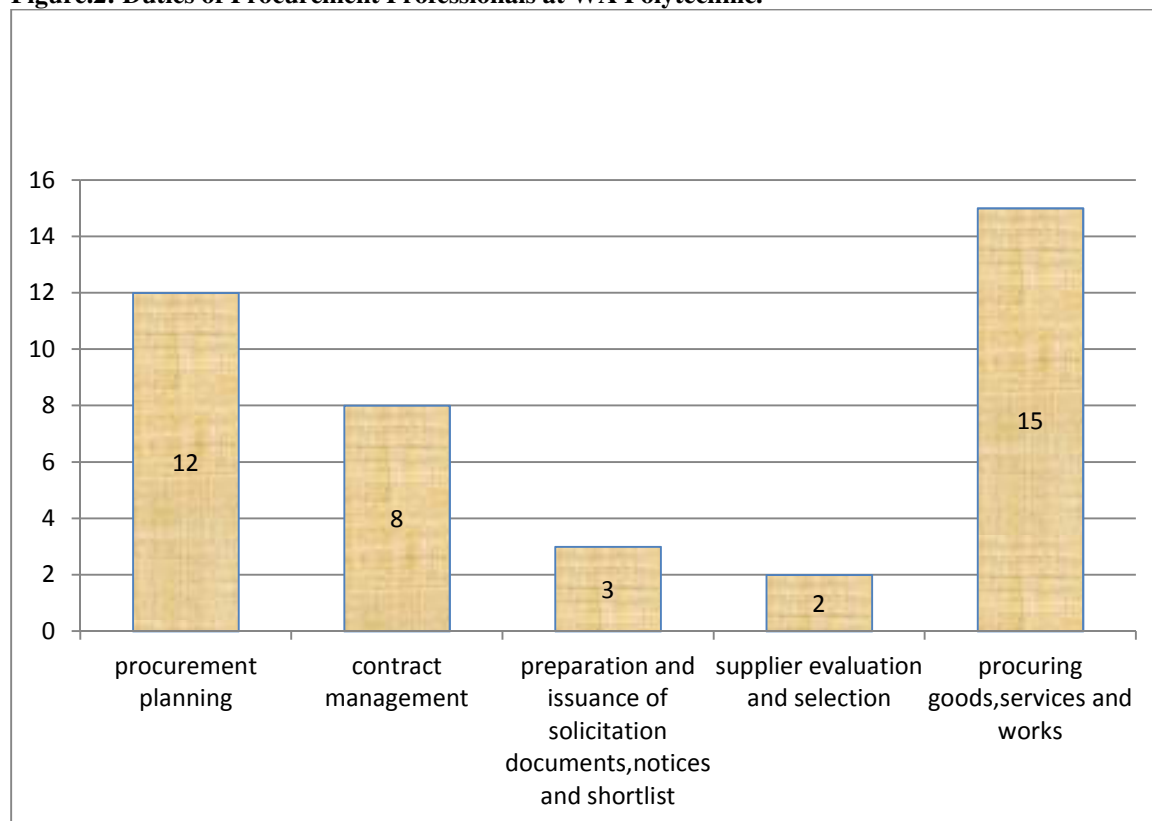
Finally, (5, 12.5%) asserted that the utmost importance of procurement in terms of procuring goods services or works is that they maintain productive supplier relationships. The opinion of these respondents is that procurement professionals at WA polytechnic establish and maintain strong and long lasting relationships with the institution's suppliers with the aim of securing mutual benefit and added value of competitive advantage for both parties. They believe that it helps to focus on future requirement and to explore the developments in the supply market to improve subsequent contracts in order to ensure the delivery of cost effective and reliable goods and services to cost and agreed performance standards.

According to www.eHow.com as assessed on 15th May 2013, the importance of procurement professionals include; better utilization of public funds, effective contract management, negotiating and administering the best deals and maintaining productive supplier relationships.

Therefore the importance of procurement professionals with respect to procuring goods, works or services at WA polytechnic as depicted in figure 1 above seems to be real and therefore conforms to existing literature.

4.2: Duties of Procurement Professionals in a Public institution.

Figure.2: Duties of Procurement Professionals at WA Polytechnic.



Source: Researchers Field Work June, 2014

From figure 2 above, Twelve (12) respondents representing (30%) asserted that the utmost important duty of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic is procurement planning. The view of these respondents is that advance planning and preparation are essential to achieve procurement objectives in an effective, economical and timely manner. Therefore procurement professionals plan to achieve value for money spent.

Eight (8) respondents representing (20%) of the total respondents also accepted that contract management is one of the very important duties of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic. The opinion of these respondents is that, ensuring that a contract is performed to the required standard, meeting the specification, terms and conditions agreed between the institution and its supplier is the duty of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic. They believe that this can be achieved through managing the supplier relationship; managing risk, contract monitoring and effective administration.

Moreover, (3, 7.5%) of the total respondents also asserted that the duty of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic is to prepare solicitation documents, notices and shortlist. The respondents were of the view that, procurement professionals at WA polytechnic are responsible for preparation of solicitation documents which covers the process of assembling and formalizing the information and documents necessary for potential suppliers to prepare responsive and easily comparable offers, consistent with the requirement and procurement strategy in order to provide the required goods, services or works for the institution.

Additionally, 5% representing two (2) of the total respondents accepted that one of the duties of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic is to evaluate potential suppliers for selection. The respondents were of the view that they undertake research on considerable number of potential suppliers. Procurement professionals review criteria such as terms, reliability, availability of the required goods, their delivery times and support structures. In order to find these suppliers, Procurement professionals attend a considerable number of meetings with eager suppliers and read even more catalogues and marketing brochures. They might decide to attend conferences and trade shows to find more suppliers or undertake internet research if their needs are particularly complex.

Finally, Fifteen (15) respondents representing (37.5%) of the total respondents asserted that procuring goods, works and services at WA polytechnic is the most important duty of procurement professionals. The view of the respondents is that, procurement professionals at WA polytechnic are responsible for the purchase of goods, services and works in the institution. They approve the best products or services that have low prices after reviewing and analyzing all options. The respondents believe that it is their duty to ensure that the goods,

services are of high quality regardless of its price.

According to Department for international development, duties of procurement professionals include procurement planning. Amoako (2013) indicated that contract management is the duty of a buyer. Again, from www.ungm.org as assessed on 2th June 2013, procurement professionals are responsible for the preparation and issuance of solicitation documents, notices and shortlist.

Finally, <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/duties-procurement-officer> as assessed on 7th June 2013 has shown that a procurement officer is responsible for the purchase of products and services and supplier selection. Therefore the duties of procurement professionals with respect to procuring goods, services and works at WA polytechnic as depicted in figure 2 above seems real and therefore conforms to existing literature.

4.1.5: Test Statistics

Table 4.5 : Test Statistics of Duties of Procurement Professionals

	Duties of Procurement Professionals at Wa Polytechnic
Chi-Square	15.750 ^a
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.003

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 8.0.

Table 4.2 stipulates chi-square test statistics of duties performed by procurement professional at Wa Polytechnic. At a chi-square value of 15.750 and its associate significant value of 0.003, there is association between duties outlined to be performed by procurement professionals in the public institution and having the requisite qualification and experience. This indicates that all the procurement duties performed by the Professionals are essential in uplifting public institution.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This part of the research summarizes the key findings of the study based on objectives of the study and draws a conclusion. Recommendations or suggestions are made with a view to addressing some of the problems identified from the research.

5.1 Summary of findings

- The research revealed a lot of problems faced by procurement professionals in public institutions. Some of the problems include long and cumbersome procurement procedure, low threshold, inadequate funds from Getfund to complete Getfund projects, no representation of procurement managers to serve on entity tender committees in public institutions, Inadequate funds to support projects, Political interference from government, Pressure from suppliers to induce procurement managers, Unplanned procurement activities, Inadequate procurement professionals in public institutions and no clear cut policies on procurement in public institutions.
- It was also realized that the benefits that are accrued from procuring of goods, works and services are attributed to the procurement professionals at WA polytechnic who performed the actual negotiation and contract management to obtain materials of the highest quality at the lowest cost which reduced material costs in the institution's total operating budget and impacts on the institution by increasing its profit margins thereby ensuring better utilization of public funds.
- It was revealed that the most important duty associated with the work of procurement professionals at WA polytechnic was the procuring of goods, works and services. They approve the best goods, services and works that have low prices after reviewing and analyzing all options. Procurement professionals combined the whole life cost, quality and service delivery to meet the institution's requirement. This increased effectiveness by allowing resources to stretch further and for savings gained to reduce the total operating budget of WA polytechnic.

5.2 Conclusion

The researchers would therefore like to conclude by saying that even though the work of procurement professionals comes with a lot of challenges, their presence is necessary in every business entity since they help in ensuring better utilization of funds, improve customer satisfaction, negotiate as well as administer the best deals in businesses and many more. They are however not enough in public institutions hence leaving the work of procurement professionals to be handled by accountants and other unqualified government professionals. Therefore, there is the need to ensure that every Public institution employs a Procurement Professional and that they are also mandated to be responsible for all procurement activities.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made.

It is recommended that, The Government of Ghana should endeavor to review the Public procurement Act, 2003(Act 663) to limit the number of steps in the procurement process so as to reduce the level of bureaucracy in

the system.

It is also recommended that, Procurement professionals at WA polytechnic should be given the opportunity to serve on the institutions tender committees in order to identify suppliers who can offer the best price, understanding the composition of that price so that there are clear criteria for assessment and knowing how the relationship between quality, price and payment can be varied to obtain the best final price.

It was discovered that one major problem that hinders the timely completion of projects at WA polytechnic was inadequate funds to support projects. The researchers therefore suggest that since the institution is being established to provide social services to the public, government subventions allocated to WA polytechnic should be paid on time and the actual budget amount or funds needed to support projects should be given much consideration by government in order to undertake and support projects successfully.

It is recommended that, procurement professionals must state open bidding from pre-qualified suppliers as a principle and make sure bidding documents, procedures, evaluations and awards are publicly and timely available devoid of rules which can be manipulated to one's advantage.

It was discovered that there are inadequate procurement professionals at WA polytechnic. The researchers therefore suggest that WA polytechnic should engage the employment of qualified procurement professionals, training and employment of internship programs, development of an effective monitoring and evaluation tool, creation of incentive programs to motivate good performance.

It is also recommended that Getfund should endeavor to provide adequate funds on time in order for procurement professionals at WA polytechnic to complete getfund projects timely.

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