Factors Affecting Completion of Government Funded Projects, a Survey of Projects in the Ministry of Water and Environment

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Abstract

One of the major problems faced by projects is on timely task completion which is the ultimate goal in any project. The purpose of this study was to investigate factors affecting completion of government projects in the Ministry of Water and Environment. The study sought to identify the effects of timeliness of payments of contracts; skills of project manager; political intervention and project planning process on completion of projects in the Ministry of Water and environment. The research design employed in this study was the survey method where the top management in the Ministry of Water and environment were targeted. A sample size of 30 respondents was selected – 15 respondents from Ministry and 15 Contractors who have been engaged in the Ministry's projects before. The researcher used primary data (questionnaires and interviews) to carry out the study. The questionnaires included structured (close-ended) and unstructured (open-ended) questions. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistical tools helped the researcher to describe the data and the features of data that were of interest. The mode (most commonly attained measurement or value) was used more so to analyse the responses in the questionnaires. This was used as the response/measurement that appears most in a particular question/variable among a sample of subjects. From the findings the researcher concluded that, the success of any projects is dependent on a number of factors which include timeliness of payment which affects completion to a great extent (mean of 3.7), Skills of the project manager moderately influences completion (mean of 3.4), political interferences on the other hand influences completion to a great extent (mean of 3.6) and project planning which influences completion to a moderate extent (mean 3.1). The researcher recommends that though teamwork management is employed to a great extent among the building professionals in Kenya, completion of government projects courses should be incorporated in the training of professional to enhance their skills to higher levels, payment procedures should be simple and well laid down, those involved in projects should be familiarize themselves with dispute resolution procedures, there should be a culture change in our political group and goals should be communicated at commencement of a project.

1.0   Introduction

1.1   Background of the Study

A project can be defined as a temporary endeavour undertaken by people who work cooperatively together to create a unique product or service within an established period and within an established budget to produce identifiable deliverables, (Project Management Institute, 2010). For over 50 years, project success has been defined by the criteria of time, budget and deliverables (Flaman et al, 2001). Antill, (1974), had earlier identified the above as being the basic factors, which when fully satisfied, qualifies a project as successful. According to Boyce and Haddad (2001), projects poses certain characteristics, one of which is that projects are temporary. This means that, any project will have a start date and end date, although this has nothing to do with duration. Project completion, therefore, requires genuine commitment to both the donor and the recipient country. This is often lacking, ultimately leaving most of the already started projects to tarry from implementation. Governments are increasingly recognising the limits of projects, and are seeking to enhance impact by supporting sector-wide approaches, especially in the social sectors. This involves budgetary funding, improved coordination among the funders, ideally led by national governments and increased trust between partners. For the last several decades, Kenya has been in partnership with some governments, who have been in the frontline in ensuring that the country attains its development goals by the year 2030. In this regard, these governments have been funding projects and operating implementation. However, there has been poor relationship between Kenyan Government funded projects and these donors in implementing these projects. Donor harmonisation refers to the extent, to which there are common donor policies, procedures, and practices, through collaboration and joint programming. This may be carried out independently of Government's own policies, procedures and practices. The common trend in previous studies on project completion has been a careful omission of the quality factors that contribute to project failure. The current study departs from this trend. Instead, it focused on the effect of cost, time and

quality factors on project completion.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

On time task completion is the ultimate goal in any project. Along with the aspiration of the government, most government funded projects are not delivered on time (Chan, 2004). In his study, Alajoutsijarvi (2006), focused on the time and cost overruns in the power projects in Kenya. He attributed project failure to factors ranging from delayed payments to contractors, clients delay in disbursement of funds by financiers to approval of the project by the technical people. Arrowsmith, (1998) in analyzing project failure factors for Kenya railways projects, identified poor communication, little experience of the project manager late procurement of equipment, lack of training of project managers and slow project selection methods as being the major causes of project failure.

In order to respond to both internal and external variables in a project environment that have influenced the success of project delay, it is necessary to investigate, identify and understand these variables and establish to what extent they individually or collectively contribute to project failure. This study therefore seeks to establish to the extent to which payment of contracts, skills of project managers, political intervention and project planning affects project completion. A survey was conducted in the Ministry of Water and Environment to establish what factors collectively and significantly contribute to project delay in this country.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate factors affecting completion of government funded projects. This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

    i. To identify the effect of timeliness of payments of contracts on completion of project in the Ministry of Water and Environment;

    ii. To find out the effect of skills of project manager on project completion in the Ministry of Water and Environment;

    iii. To determine the effects of political intervention on completion rate of projects in the Ministry of Water and Environment;

    iv. To find out the effect of project planning process on completion of the project in the Ministry of Water and Environment.

1.4 Research Questions

    i. What is the effect of timeliness of payments of contracts on completion of project in the Ministry of Water and Environment?

    ii. To find out the extent to which skills of project manager affect project completion in the Ministry of Water and Environment?

    iii. What is the effect of political intervention on completion rate of projects in the Ministry of Water and Environment?

    iv. What is the effect of project planning process on completion of the project in the Ministry of Water and Environment?

1.5 Justification of the Study

Ineffective project delay is perhaps the most costly item in government expenditure. This study will help us come up with factor affecting completion of government funded project. When such factors are identified, critical factors will then be formulated to curb the situation.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was limited to the government funded projects particularly in the Ministry of Water and Environment that are based in Kiambu County.

2.0 Literature Review

On time project completion is essential (Rosario, 2010). First, scope should be established (Rosario, 2010; Holland *et al*., 2009) and controlled (Rosario, 2010). The scope must be clearly defined and be limited. This includes the amount of the systems implemented and amount of projects process reengineering needed. Any proposed changes should be evaluated against projects benefits and, as far as possible, implemented at a later

phase (Sumner, 2009; Wee, 2010). Additionally, scope expansion requests need to be assessed in terms of the additional time and cost of proposed changes (Sumner, 2009).

2.1   Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the following theories:

2.1.1   Behavioural Theories

Behavioural theories of leadership are classified as such because they focus on the study of specific behaviours of a leader. For behavioural theorists, a leader behaviour is the best predictor of his leadership influences and as a result, is the best determinant of his or her leadership success (Behavioral Theories: Leadership-Central, 2015). Behavioural theories of leadership do not seek inborn traits or capabilities. Rather, they look at what leaders actually do. If success can be defined in terms of describable actions, then it should be relatively easy for other people to act in the same way. This is easier to teach and learn then to adopt the more ephemeral 'traits' or 'capabilities'. Behavioural theories describe how leaders conduct themselves.

2.1.2   Contingency Theories

In a general sense, contingency theories are a class of behavioural theory that contend that there is no one best way of organizing / leading and that an organizational / leadership style that is effective in some situations may not be successful in others (Fiedler, 1964). In other words: The optimal organization / leadership style is contingent upon various internal and external constraints. In the Contingency Theory of leadership, the success of the leader is a function of various factors in the form of subordinate, task, and/or group variables. The effectiveness of a given pattern of leader behaviour is contingent upon the demands imposed by the situation. These theories stress using different styles of leadership appropriate to the needs created by different organizational situation.

2.1.3   Power and Influence Theories

As discussed by John Kotter (1985, p.86) "power is the ability to influence others to get things done, while authority is the formal rights that come to a person who occupies a particular position, since power does not necessarily accompany a position." Problems always arise when power is imposed without the backing of authority, which almost invariably is opposed. Using legitimate power, a project manager demands compliance from subordinates because she has the title of project manager. By using rewards such as bonuses or other compensation, project managers encourage performance.

2.3   Factors Affecting Completion of Government Funded Projects

2.3.1   Timeliness of payment of contracts

Most government funded projects are hurdled by the financial constraints during the time of their implementation. Since most budgets are based on operating departments, it is important to superimpose key non-dollar factors that would signal whether the strategic programs are proceeding on schedule. The concern for financial measurement accuracy in the budgets seems to have jeopardized the concern for relevance in some companies' budgets (Holland *et al*., 2009). The various program alternatives need to be economically evaluated in two respects. First, there are different ways to achieve a particular strategic implementation action and these alternatives should be compared. A cost/benefit analysis is needed, but unfortunately is done too often on narrow grounds. By only looking at the financial costs and benefits without taking a strategic risk-assessment into account one might easily pursue the less favourable project or fail to search for less risky alternatives (Porter 1985). The choice of plan alternative should put major emphasis on maintaining strategic flexibility. Unfortunately, a too narrow financial analysis typically seems to take place which does not pay proper attention to maintaining strategic flexibility. The second aspect of the economic evaluation of the response strategizing activities relates to the aggregation of strategic programs into an overall "package" for the division. Many businesses do not take existing programs into account when choosing the overall "package" of strategic programs; thus, the continued relevance of existing strategic programs is not examined (Graham and Englund, 1997).

2.3.2   Skills of Project Manager

There are various skills needed for effective management of a project. In most cases, failure to adopt such skills in whatever phase of the project may cause inefficiency either at that level or to the overall outcome of the project. Proper resource management is essential to ensure that there is no shortage that may disrupt the flow of the project. It is also of significant importance to have a team spirit. This is because there are some issues which cannot be handled by the management but can be handled by the subordinate. This will also ensure that work is

not suspended every time the person supposed to do it is caught up with other commitment of equal importance (Holland *et al*., 2009). There also has to be proper communication skills. Since the project is done in phases, miscommunication to or in any phase will affect the activities in that phase and the others linked to it (Andersen, 1995). Dispute resolution procedures ensure that conflicts in design information is resolved in systematic manner (Lamont, 1999). Enforcing adherence to a rigid framework of programme date established through detailed programming will ensure completion on time. To ensure specification and contractual obligations are met, a system for quality, risk, safety, and more human related management is established by creating procedures to followed by project participants (Al-Meshekeh and Langford, 1999). To avoid unnecessary changes that may prolong the completion date, variation control measures are applied (Hidenori, 1995). Variation controls minimizes overrunning the budget by limiting change in specification that may result to higher cost due to higher specification or prolonged completion date.

2.3.3   Political Interference

According to Markus and Tanis (2010), political interference plays a critical but poorly understood role in determining the success or failure of the processes of project management that dominate efforts to form international regimes or, more generally, institutional arrangements in international society. An examination of the nature of project management serves as a springboard both for pinpointing the role of leadership in regime formation and for differentiating three forms of leadership that regularly come into play in efforts to establish international institutions: structural leadership, entrepreneurial leadership, and intellectual leadership (Holland *et al*., 2009). The real work of regime formation occurs in the interplay of different types of leadership, the study of interactions among individual leaders is a high priority for those seeking to illuminate the processes involved in the creation of political movements. Not only does such a study help to explain the conditions under which regimes form or fail to form, but it also provides an opportunity to bring the individual back in to an important area of international affairs (Migai, 2008)

2.3.4   Project Planning

Project planning comes into play at the shakedown phase in project development. Poor project planning can easily bring down response strategies where they are at the threshold or the completion stage. Achievements should be measured against project goals. The progress of the response strategies should be monitored actively through set milestones and targets. Two criteria may be used; project management based criteria should be used to measure against completion dates, costs and quality. Then operational criteria should be used to measure against the production system. Monitoring and feedback include the exchange of information between the project team members and analysis of user feedback. There should be an early proof of success to manage scepticism. Reporting should be emphasized with custom report development, report generator use and user training in reporting applications (Sumner, 1999).

3.0   Research Methodology

3.1   Research Design

The research design employed in this study was the survey method. This method is preferred because it allows for generalization of the research findings. This required primary data collection on quantitative data for comparison.

3.2   Sampling Design

A sample size of 30 respondents was selected in the study. Fifteen respondents were selected from top management in Ministry of Water and development and fifteen respondents from contractors who have once worked with the Ministry.

3.3   Data Collection and Data Analysis Methods

The researcher used primary data (questionnaires and interviews) to carry out the study. The questionnaires included structured (close-ended) and unstructured (open-ended) questions. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Percentages, tabulations and means were used. The descriptive statistical tools helped the researcher to describe the data and the features of interest in it.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	16	53.3
Female	14	46.7
Total	30	100.0

Pertaining to gender of the respondents, 53% were male while 47% were female as shown in the table above.

Table 2: Work Department

Department	Frequency	Percent
Finance	4	13.3
Project Development	17	56.7
Any other	9	30.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Majority (56.7%) of the respondents were based in the department of project development.

Table 3: Work Experience

Experience	Frequency	Percent
5 years and below	5	16.7
6 – 10	4	13.3
11 – 20	14	46.7
Over 20 Years	7	23.3
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Regarding the work experience, 46.7% had an experience of 11 – 20 years. Only 16.7% had an experience of 5 years and below while 23.3% had an experience of over 20 years.

Table 4: Timeliness of Payment

Factor	Not at All	Low extent	Moderate Extent	Great extent	Very Great extent	Mean
Complex procedures in processing of payments	3.3	6.7	13.3	36.7	40	4.0
Inadequacy of the accounting procedures	0	3.3	43.3	26.7	26.7	3.8
Delayed submission of the project budget to the treasury	3.3	10	16.7	50	20	3.7
Delayed release of funds by the treasury	6.7	30	23.3	26.7	13.3	3.1
Average						3.7

Regarding the timeliness of payment, the mean stood at 3.7 which indicate that it affects completion of

government projects to a great extent. Majority (76.7%) of the employees agreed that complex procedures involved in the processing of payments affects timely completion of the projects to a great extent.

Table 5: Skills of the Project Manager

Factor	Very Low Extent	Low Extent	Moderate Extent	Great extent	Very Great Extent	Mean
Proper Communication Skills	23.3	26.7	33.3	10	6.7	2.5
Dispute Resolution Procedures	6.7	30	43.3	6.7	13.3	2.9
Existence of Team Spirit	10	13.3	50	20	6.7	3.0
Motivation of the Team Members	0	3.3	43.3	26.7	26.7	3.8
Proper Resource Management	0	3.3	16.7	70	10	3.9
Average						3.4

Regarding the effect of the project manager's Skills, findings indicated that it moderately affects the completion of government projects as indicated by the mean stood at an index of 3.4. In this area, the study revealed that proper resource management by the project manager has the greatest influence (80%) closely followed by motivation (53.4%). From the study, the four variables investigated impact on the time taken to complete any project undertaken by the Ministry of Water and environment. According to Smith and Wilkins, (1996), team leaders should possess all the necessary skills of a project manager, namely leading, planning, organizing and coordinating skills and perform to the greatest extent of their capability.

Table 6: Political Interference

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean
There are political interferences during the execution projects	6.7	10	20	10	53.3	100	3.9
Conflicts of political interests are usually experienced in major projects	10	6.7	13.3	46.7	23.3	100	3.7
Contracts are in many cases secured through a political influence	23.3	6.7	13.3	0	56.7	100	3.6
Delegation of decision making authority is usually influenced Politically	30	3.3	23.3	16.7	26.7	100	3.1
Average							3.6

Concerning the influence of political interference, the study revealed that it affects completion of government projects to a great extent as indicated by the average of 3.6. These interferences usually occur during execution of the projects as alleged by most of the respondents (63.3%). The study also noted that in the Ministry of Water, conflicts of political interests usually experienced in major projects also affects greatly completion of government projects (70%). According to Markus and Tanis (2010), political interventions play a critical but poorly understood role in determining the success or failure of the processes of project management. This mainly happens due to conflicting political interest.

Table 7: Project Planning

Factor	Not at All	Low extent	Moderate Extent	Great extent	Very G/ext	Total	Mean
Clear definition of goals at the commencement of the project.	0	3.3	16.7	70	10	100	3.9
Well informed delegation of duties/responsibilities	3.3	10	16.7	50	20	100	3.7
Selection of the team leader	10	13.3	50	20	6.7	100	3.0
Work quality control procedures set	10	13.3	50	20	6.7	100	3.0
Setting of realistic deadlines and observing them during project execution	23.3	26.7	33.3	10	6.7	100	2.5
Average							3.1

Findings revealed that project planning affects government projects' completion to a moderate extent as indicated by the average of 3.1.On this note; the study revealed that clear definition of goals at the commencement of a project has the greatest effect (80%). This implies that it is important to have clear goals at the beginning of any project. Setting of deadlines and observing them during project execution may not affect the completion of a project to a great extent (16.7%). Sumner (1999) noted that poor project planning can easily bring down response strategies where they are at the threshold of the completion stage. Achievements should be measured against project goals. The progress of the response strategies should be monitored actively through set milestones and targets. Reporting should be emphasized with custom report development, report generator use and user training in reporting applications.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Most government funded projects are hurdled by the financial constraints during the time of their implementation. This is as result of falling to pay the contractors in time as per the contract. Political leaders may stop on-going project because it's conflicting with their political interest. Issues such as corruption and mismanagement of funds, by political leaders also affect completion of government projects. The government should also come up with means to ensure that politicians don't interfere with various projects undertaken. The success of any activity done as a group relies on the leaders of the group. A slight mistake by the leader affects the entire team. Project Managers should know how to handle disputes that may arise in the course of work and ensure proper communication among the team. Before the commencement of any project, there should be proper planning as this will greatly determine its successful completion. Poor project planning can easily bring down response strategies where they are at the threshold or the completion stage.

Recommendations

   i.   Resource management courses should be incorporated in the training of professional to enhance their skills to higher levels.
   ii.   Dispute resolution procedures should be communicated to all levels of management, so that everyone is aware of what to do in case of such an eventuality.
   iii. Culture change should be internalised by our political group, and only intervene projects to safeguard the needy and quality of work.

iv.   Goals, duties/responsibility should be communicated clearly at the initial stages of any project.

v.   Payment procedure should be well laid down, and submission of the project budget to treasury should not be delayed so that payment process can start on time.

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