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PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The paper researched the implementation of the project management (PM) practice in public sector in Kurdistan province. The PM Lifecycles, tools and techniques were displayed. Ninety two copies of questionnaire were administered to 92 public organizations in Kurdistan to create primary data. The illustrative analysis techniques using percentages and table presentations linked with coefficient of correlation were used for data analysis. The study showed that implementation of PM tools and techniques area necessary management approach that care for obtain indicated purposes within limited time and budget limits through maximum use of resources. Additionally the study important that there is lack of in-depth knowledge of PM tools and techniques in public sector organizations sampled, also high cost of implementation was also studied by the defendants. The study suggested among others that PM tools and techniques should be practical progressively limiteding government organizations where resistance to change is noticed to be high.

KEYWORDS

Project Management, Public sector, Practice, Kurdistan province.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the fact that project is a multidisciplinary word that has different meaning from different outlook and guidance., Architects, Managers, Engineers and so on, have their definitions according to their experiences as far as their professions are interested. Pinto (2007) quoted that Project is a nonpermanent worker activity or make an effort to achieve a goal guaranteed deliberately to create a unique output (product or service) within budget, time and standards. Turner and Muller (2003) determined project as an organization of human materials and financial resources in a strange way, to guarantee a unique range of work, of given limitation, within restrictions of cost and time, determined by quantitative and qualitative purposes so as to achieve a favorable change. The uniqueness of project is indicating to its real nature that there may not be a pre-existent of architectural copy drawing on white paper and the text in blue for the project's accomplishment and there may not be a need to repeat the project once completed. Its goal characteristics may be well perceive as achieving stated purposes or solve a particular problem, while its nonpermanent nature represents a discontinuous, explainable start and conclusion. Abbasi and Al-Mharmah (2000) define Project management as the art and science of planning, designing and managing work throughout all the stages of the project life cycle. It is also concerned as a system or procedure of planning, designing, scheduling, managing and controlling mutually connected project activities in order to obtain limited purposes or goal within a limited time, budget and standards (Lewis, 2007). Project Management is an inventive management practice that care for obtain stated or indicated purposes within limited time and budget limited through maximum use of resources (Stuckenbruck & Zomorrodian, 1987). It helps organization in authorizing their limited resources in the best way possible in order to obtain repeating success and meeting the anticipations of stakeholders. Government and organizations generally undertake different projects with the purpose of producing new service or improving the practical productivity of the existent ones. All these projects require suitable skills and techniques that exceed technical proficiencies only, but surround good and sound skills to manage limited budgets, and observe shrinking schedules and unexpected results, while at the same time dealing with people and organizational issues (Abbasi & Al-Mharmah, 2000). The implementation of project management practice in public sector has been recognized as an effective approach which would help in improving management abilities and allow public sector to effectively complete projects and achieve developmental purposes (Arnaboldiet al, 2004). It is also recognized as a key enabler with whom public sector organizations acceptance business improvement methodologies such as Lean Management and TQM, improve their productivity and competitiveness. Studies have confirmed that implementation of modern project management methods and techniques have a great effect on public organizations. Arnaboldiet al (2004) studied that implementation of project management strategy in public sector was as a result of compression on governments to reject bureaucratic organization in favor of poor, structures. White & Fortune (2002) examined the project management practice in public sector in UK by collecting data from 236 project managers in some public organizations. The result of the study showed that 41% of the reported projects were judged to be completely successful though some difficulty was reported. Similarly, Abbasi & Al-Mharmah (2000) investigated the project management tools and techniques used by the public sector in Jordan by surveying 50 industrial public firms. The study found out that the use of project management tools and techniques among the public sector companies was considerably low, but when practiced effectively would result in tangible benefit in all aspects of planning, scheduling and observing the time, cost and limitations of projects. In Kurdistan province, the implementation of modern project management tools, methods and techniques is still not well established in public sector, these results into non-performance of public organizations and their contractors in performing their duties about the budget, limitations and deadlines of the projects awarded. Studies have recognized social and political systems, cultural blocks and lack of financial support as obstacles to successful project planning and accomplishment in Kurdistan providence public sector (Idoro & Patunola-Ajayi, 2009). Therefore this paper purposes at investigating the project management tools and techniques being used in Kurdistan providence public sector, their benefits, obstacles and difficulty with a view of recommending suitable actions.

2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT STAGES

Project management stages differently known as project lifecycle refers to the stages in a project's development. Project lifecycle is important because it presents the logic that controls a project. It also helps in developing plans for accomplish the project. Pinto, (2007) recognized four distinct project life cycle stages which are: Conceptualization, Planning, Accomplishment, and finalizing. Conceptualization according to Pinto (2007) refers to the development of the initial goal and technical limitation for a project. The range of work is determined, necessary resources (people, money, material & machine) recognized, and important organizational contributions or stakeholders signed on. Also, probability study is guided at this stage to investigate whether the project can be continued or not. Planning is the stage in which detailed limitations, diagrammatic, schedules and other plans are developed. It is also a stage where the project solution is in addition developed in as much detail as possible and steps necessary to meet the project's purposes are put in place. At this stage the individual segments of the project called work bundles are shattered, individual tasks made, and the procedure for finalizing clearly described. Project schedule, the

substantial work and the estimated cost of finalizing are also recognized. Anything that might raise a threat to the successful finalizing of the project is also recognized at this stage. Finally all the project stakeholders must be recognized at this stage of the project so as to establish a communication plan that describes information needed and the delivery method to be used to keep stakeholders informed (Patel, 2008). Accomplishment stage deals with substantial performance of the work of the project. Development is continuously observed and suitable adjustments are made and variances registered so as to support the original project plan. During project accomplishment, project tasks are performed and development information is being reported through regular team meetings. The project manager uses this information to support control over the guidance of the project by measuring the performance of the project activities comparing the results with the project plan and takes corrective actions as needed (Westland, 2006). Finalizing occurs when the completed project is transferred to the customer, project documentation is handed over to the business, and suppliers' contracts concluded, project resources released and the project closing communicated to all stakeholders. The final step is to conduct lesson learned studies; to examine what went well and what didn't. Through this type of analysis, the knowledge of experience is transferred back to the project organization which will help future management teams.

3. PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Different tools and techniques are used in managing projects for a worthwhile result. Some of these tools and techniques are Work Breakdown Structure, Gantt Charts, Project Networks (Critical Path Method and Programmed Evaluation and Review Techniques), Cost Benefit Analysis, Graphical Evaluation and Review Technique (GERT), and Project Software. Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) deals with breaking down of the projects into controllable individual ingredients in a hierarchical structure. Such a structure explains tasks that can be completed freely of other tasks, promoting resource allocation, task of responsibilities and measurement and control of project. Wysocki (2009) also studied that it is an actual tool for defining work bundles and developing and following the cost and schedule for the project. WBS provides an ordinary framework for the natural development in general planning and control of a project and is the foundation for dividing work into explainable increases from which the declaration of Work can be developed and technical, schedule cost, and labor hour reporting can be recognized. Gantt chart is a useful tool for planning and scheduling projects. It shows graphical representation of the duration of tasks against the development of time. It was developed by Henry Gantt in 1915 purposely for observing projects development and following. Gantt charts have become an ordinary technique for representing the stages and activities of project Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) so they can be understood by wide viewers all over the world (Wysocki, 2009). Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) is one of the most widely accepted and practical methods for project appraisal for large scale substructure in the public and private sector. CBA is a prescriptive method that provides guidance on the criteria to take account in decision making, ensuring that the net accumulate, benefits to society outweigh net accumulate, costs (Patel, 2008). Graphical Evaluation and Review Technique (GERT) is a network analysis technique used in project management that allows probabilistic relation of both network logic and activity duration estimates. It is a useful management tool for planning, coordinating, and controlling complex projects (Westland, 2006). The key objective of GERT is to appraise on the foundation of the network logic and estimated duration of the activity and extract inference about some activities that may not be performed (Olateju, et al 2011). GERT can be used with a complimentary network analysis evaluation techniques used in project management such as CPM and PERT. Critical Path Method is also a project network analysis technique used to determine which succession of activities (path) has the least amount of scheduling flexibility and therefore will most likely determine when the project can be completed. Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) is an event-and-probability based network analysis system generally used in projects where activities and their durations are difficult to define. PERT is often used in large programmed where the project involves numerous organizations at widely different locations.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research project management practice by the public organizations in Kurdistan province, was adopted to analyze; because of its advantages of distinguishing characteristics of a large population from a group of individuals, the economy of the design and the quick approach in data collection (Luthans & Davis, 1982). In order to analyze the practice of project management by the public organizations in Kurdistan province, survey research approach was adopted. This was used because of its advantages of distinguishing characteristics of a large population from a group of individuals, the economy of the design and the quick approach in data collection (Luthans & Davis, 1982). The sample selected for this study included of 92 which was randomly selected from public organizations of Kurdistan province. Questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection with the purpose of collecting information about project management practices in the public sector, the reasons behind using Project management tools, benefits, problems and obstacles. Relevant statistical analysis was guided on the collected data to investigate different problems within an organization or company of this research. The questionnaire was completed by interviewing the person in charge of the each agency's project planning and management. This method improved the data precision and gravity. The questionnaire was planned from review of related literature to the study. It was pre-tested with five managers from the sample size in order to check and ensure that not unconnected questions were present.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 show 77.17% of the defendants male while 22.83% are females and as well as defendants with bachelor's degree rank highest with 51.08% followed by Masters' degree holders with 31.5% while the remaining 17.4% have professional qualifications. As observed, all the defendants are educated therefore this provides a strong base for understanding, better employment and implementation of project management techniques and tools. In addition observation of the table showed that majority of the defendants have worked more than three years in the organizations under study, this shows that they are experienced in the organization and can give exact information as far as the subject matter is interested. Table 2 shows tools and techniques of project management being employed in the sampled public agencies in Kurdistan province. The defendants were displayed with 9 alternatives and were asked to indicate which had been used in their agency's project. The alternatives included in the list were those found in standard textbooks on project management. Defendants were also encouraged to include any tools or techniques not mentioned, if necessary. Table 2 shows percentage of frequency of use and confidence interval. The analysis of the table shows that Gantt chart is the most frequently used tools with 66%, Cost Benefit Analysis 59%, declaration of Work 29%, Work Breakdown Structure 24%, project management software (15%), and other decision making techniques 16%. PERT and CPM, GERT are some of the rarely used or not employed tools by the agencies. This really shows that project management tools and techniques are still not well carried out in most of the public agencies studied. In Table 3, the obstacles facing the implementation of project management tools and techniques in public agencies were analyzed. As shown, the very important obstacle is lack of project management knowledge (84%) – most of the defendants are not well trained in the art of project management – therefore to implement PM tools and techniques in all PM life cycle become serious problems. Other obstacles expressed verbally or in writing by the defendants are; change of authority, lack of leadership obligation, bribery and corruption, low level of professional training in PM, and inflexible organizational structure. Table 4, tested the benefits of utilizing project management tools and techniques. All the defendants believed that if PM tools and techniques are well practical, it would lead to reduction in cost and time exceeds and more project success. As showed by Table 4, 76% believed that it would provide the opportunity of following the project development, 69% believed that it would improve better communication, while 65% noticed that PM tools would lead to good management of resources. Other benefits expressed verbally or in writing by the defendants are; better work organization, better time employment and better quality. This is being an integral part of a successive sequence of operations with the study of Abbasi and Al-Mharmah (2000) that find that among other benefits, knowing work development and having better work organization are highly noticed benefits of PM tools and techniques implementation. Table 5 showed that high cost is the major disadvantage studied in implementation of PM tools and techniques. Other difficulties studied by the defendants are; lack of proficiencies, poor coordinate with customers and difficult to model real world. Table 6 shows the outlook of the defendants on how to improve the implementation of PM tools and techniques in public sector. Condition of suitable training in PM to all the person in charge of project, recruitment of project management specialist, higher obligation from the government, foundation of Project Management Office (PMO) in each of the agency are some of the suggested solutions by the defendants. Correlation coefficients among different factors that could affect the level of implementation of PM tools and techniques, the obstacles, and the noticed benefits were analyzed and shown in Table 7. Some of the factors considered are; cost of implementation, age of the agency, employee experience,

government obligation and total number of employees. The result pointed out that age of the agency and government obligations have negative correlations with implementing PM tools, obstacles and noticed benefits. Therefore, it can be concluded that government organizations are still resisting the implementation of PM tools and techniques; also the government is not doing enough in establishing a strong defensive position of the tools and techniques of PM in most of its organizations.

6. CONCLUSION

Implementing PM tools and techniques in public organizations has become an important issue in many developing countries, due to its successful implementation in private organizations and its verified effectiveness and flexibility in achieving project goals and purposes. Due to its nature Kurdistan province is witnessing unparalleled capital projects in Kurdistan organization of school renovation, development and mobilization which require better implementation and utilization of effective and effective management tools and techniques. Studying the implementation of PM tools and techniques in public sector in Kurdistan province would serve as enlightening experience to the government and other decision maker to better plan their effort toward effective implementation of PM tools and techniques. If properly practical, PM tools and techniques would result intangible benefits in every way of project planning, scheduling and controlling the cost, time and quality. Educational qualification of the defendants showed that good majority of the sampled population are well educated which provide a reliable base for better employment and implementation of PM tools and techniques. Gantt charts, WBS and CBA are some of the practical PM tools and techniques by the defendant because of their simple and understanding nature, however, lack of complete knowledge of these tools and techniques still form a very important obstacle facing implementation. In connection with noticed benefits, the general agreement is that implementing PM tools effectively will help in project following, better communication, better resource employment and better quality among others. The difficulty in form of high cost, lack of proficiencies in PM and difficulty in real world modeling are mentioned by the defendants. To tackle the difficulty, the defendants believed that sufficient training should be given to the employee in art of PM, professionals in PM should be employed and Project management Offices should be recognized across the government organizations. In views of the findings of this research, the authors suggested the following actions, for proper implementation of PM tools and techniques in Kurdistan province in general;

- (i) Government should step up its obligation in implementing PM tools and techniques in its entire project. The bureaucracy that has established itself in all government businesses should be controlled as far as all government projects are interested, so as not to become ineffective and unproductive.
- (ii) Proper implementation of PM tools and techniques can serve as an instrument for change. It can establish a wonderful training ground for future managers and skilled workers, and be an effective means of bringing about administrative reform in public organizations.
- (iii) Appropriate organizational design should be chosen so as to make the implementation of PM tools and techniques firm with culture and political environment of the government organizations.
- (iv) Suitable PM training should be given to employee in charge of projects; this would increase the knowledge of employees about different PM tools and techniques available for suitable choice. Also PM professionals should be employed for proper and suitable implementation of PM tools and techniques.
- (v) As suggested by the defendants, Project Management Offices should be established across all the government organizations with purpose of managing, observing and controlling the projects embarked by their institution. This will improve efficient and effective implementation of PM tools and techniques.
- (vi) Lastly, PM tools and techniques should be practical progressively specifically in government organizations where resistance to change noticed to be high. Serious implementation should be avoided so as not to lead to disturbing changes such as power struggles, loss of job management confusion (Struckenbruck & Zomorrodian, 1987).

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TABLES

TABLE 1: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sex of the Respondents	No	%
Male	71	77.17
Female	21	22.83
Highest Qualification		
B.sc/HND	47	51.08
Master's degree	29	31.5
Professional qualification	16	17.4
Working Experience (years/		
1-5	08	8.7
6-10	28	30.5
11-15	44	47.8
16-20	12	13.0
Above 20 years		

TABLE 2: PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED

Technique/tools	%	95 %Confidence
Work Breakdown Structure	24	6.8 -35.8
Declaration of Work	29	14.9- 45.9
Critical Path Method	3	0.0- 8.8
Gantt chart	66	55.3-86.8
Cost Benefit Analysis	59	37.8-73.5
Program Evaluation and Review Technique	-	-
Graphical Evaluation and Review Technique		
Project Management Software	15	3.9-28.2
Other decision making techniques	16	4.8-22.9

TABLE 3: OBSTACLES FACING PM IMPLEMENTATION

Obstacles	%	95 %Confidence
Lack of professional training	45	22.7-57.7
Bribery and corruption	53	23.8-57.7
Lack of PM knowledge	84	57.8-89.6
Lack of managementobligation	24	19.9-41.3
Inflexible organizational structure	33	15.8- 49.7

TABLE 4: NOTICED BENEFIT OFIMPLEMENTING PM TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

noticed benefits	%	95 %Confidence
Better communication	69	58.5-86.9
Good management of resources	65	56.8-85.4
Known work development	76	53.5-89.8
Better Quality	60	35.4-76.3
Better work organization	54	32.3-67.9
Better Time employment	62	43.8-78.6

TABLE 5: DISADVANTAGE AFFECTINGIMPLEMENTATION OF PM TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Disadvantage	%	95 %Confidence
Lack of expertise	68	50.2-76.6
Poor coordinate with customers	43	23.4-58.9
High cost of implementation	85	58.5-80.5
Difficulty in modeling real world	54	33.1-70.8

TABLE 6: SUGGESTION FOR IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION OF PM TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Suggestions	%	95 %Confidence
Recruitment of PM specialist	73	52.4-84.9
Higher obligation from government	55	31.1-69.6
Establishment of PMO	51	26.7-62.4
Condition ofsuitable PM training	69	58.4-88.9

TABLE 7: CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

	Useable PM tools and techniques	Obstacles	Noticed benefits
Cost of implementation	0.438	0.366	0.262
Age of the firm	-0.456	-0.431	-0.366
Employee experience	0.624	0.588	0.237
Government obligation	-0.535	-0.491	0.384
Total number of employee	0.527	0.433	0.391

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