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Stakeholder engagement and participation in monitoring and evaluation of construction projects in Ghana.

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Abstract

Globally, the construction industry is acknowledged to be complex in its activities and processes. The need for transparency in monitoring and evaluation to promote both external and internal accountability in construction project delivery cannot be overemphasized, hence stakeholders engagement and participation. This paper reports on the level of stakeholder engagement in project delivery and participation in monitoring and evaluation of public construction projects in Ghana. Both structured interview guide and questionnaire schedule were used to collect relevant data for the study. A desk review of journal articles, conference proceedings, published and unpublished thesis work from the institutions' database and internet sources relevant the study was adopted to underpin the study. Project implementation minutes and meeting attendance were also perused. Data was descriptively analyzed. Six key stakeholders were identified in local government project delivery in Ghana. It was evident from the study that there was a high level of stakeholder engagement in project delivery while participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation of public projects at the local government level was very poor. This was attributed to lack of knowledge, understanding, involvement and time devoted for monitoring and evaluation of projects by stakeholders. In conclusion, the poor participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation of local government project delivery contributed to the many challenges faced in local government project delivery in Ghana. These challenges included procurement lapses which resulted in poor payment schedules, non-conformity to project specification, delayed project delivery, lack of health and safety compliance, client's dissatisfaction, and corrupt practices in the construction industry. The study advocates for participatory monitoring and evaluation in construction project delivery in Ghana's the local government level. This can be achieved through community based development project

(CBDP) delivery. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation and its implication in local government project delivery in Ghana.

Keywords: Stakeholders participation, local government, monitoring and evaluation, construction projects, Ghana

1. Introduction

The construction industry globally is seen as very complex, dynamic and non-linear phenomenon (Bertelsen, S. 2003; Mills., A. A. 2001; Vrijhoef, R. and Koskela, L. 1999) and the need to deliver successful projects have also become a globally issues in the construction industry (Bal, M., Bryde, D., Fearon, D. and Ochieng, E. 2013). While many studies have revealed indicators of project success, others have espoused measure to achieve project performance and project success (Koelmans, R. G. 2004). A comprehensive understanding of a successful project is one that has been completed within budget, on schedule, within pre specified scope, user expectation, quality requisites, technical specification, client and project managers satisfaction, environmental friendliness and health and safety (Satankar and Jain 2015; PMI, 2013).

In achieving these project success indicators in the construction industry, measures such as stakeholder management and involvement in projects (Eyiah-Botwe, E. Aigbavboa, C.O and Thwala W.D. 2016; Ofori, D. F., 2013) as well as monitoring and evaluation (Otieno, 2000; Igbokwe 2012; Ika Diallo and Thuillier, 2012; Hwang and Lim, 2013) have been professed, however no study has yet considered the participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation to achieve project success in the Ghanaian construction industry with focus on local government project, hence the study seeking to report on the level of stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation of local government construction projects in Ghana. A major contribution for project managers in planning for monitoring and evaluation to achieve project success.

2. Understanding Stakeholder Participation

Whereas there are several varying definitions for stakeholder, the project management institute (PMI, 2013a) postulates that stakeholder(s) is "An individual, group, or organization who may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity, or

outcome of a project, program, or portfolio". In 2015, Eyiah-Botwe Aigbavboa, and Thwala also defined Project stakeholders as individuals, groups or entities who may possess the power to be a threat or opportunity to a project. Bourne in 2010 also asserted that stakeholders are as individuals or group of people who will be impacted by or can influence the success or failure of an organizational activity. The study therefore acknowledges stakeholders as people or groups who have vested interest in the outcome of a project. These individuals are brought together to interact and relate to execute the project to achieve set standards and thus have a common interest of project success. As alluded to earlier, project stakeholder are unique to specific industry based on the aims and objectives of the project, while in some cases the selection of stakeholders for a project is influenced by nature, complexity, and procurement method adopted (Eyiah-Botwe, et. al, 2015) as well as the source of funding or the funding agency. Project stakeholders are regarded primary or secondary based on the extent of their engagement on the project, thus formal or contractual agreement on the project (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2006). Maylor (2003), also categorized stakeholders as internal (project team) or external (outside the project team).

In the Ghanaian construction industry, the broad categories of stakeholders have been identified by Gyadu-Asiedu (2009) and Agyekum, (2012) as clients, contractors, and professional consultants. Enshassi, A. Mohamed, S. and Abushaban, S. (2009) also identified three key group of projects participants as owners, consultants and contractors as respondents to his study. However due to the fragmented nature and linkage of the construction industry to other industries such as manufacturing, material suppliers can be regarded as construction stakeholders. Clients, contractors, professional consultants and material suppliers are reported by this study as the internal project stakeholders involved in local government construction projects delivery in Ghana. The external group of stakeholders are identified as the local authorities (service providers) and the beneficiary community who are mostly represented on projects by an elected assembly man or woman. The identified six (6) stakeholders are engaged at different stages of the project implementation depending on their expertise (**See Fig 2**). Stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation is essential since it keeps the projects on track and often ensures early detected of problem which reduces the likelihood of having major cost overruns or time delays and non-conformity to project specification (UNDP, 2009; Crawford & Bryce, 2003).

3. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

While monitoring and evaluation have been acknowledged in project management as a single management function, understanding and defining of the concept in literature show a dual approach. Tache, (2011) reports that whereas the modern view regards monitoring and evaluation as intimately related activities, the classical or traditional view suggest that monitoring and evaluation are two distinct activities. Monitoring has been defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2009) as a continuous process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress made concerning achieving their goals and objectives while evaluation is reported as a rigorous and independent appraisal of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives to influence decision-making. Monitoring and evaluation are, therefore, a continuous process. It involves the setting up of goals and project success indicators for planning, undertaking continuous and systematic collection of data regarding the set goals and project success indicators (monitoring), assessing the efficacy, relevance, impact, and sustainability of the project (evaluation).

Bourne, (2010) reported that the conventional monitoring and evaluation was undertaken by external experts through the use of questionnaires survey to measure inputs and outputs against predetermined indicators to ensure accountability which is mostly to satisfy donor or funding agencies. There is, however, a gradual paradigm shift from the conventional to a modern approach which involves participation by all stakeholders of the project. Participatory monitoring and evaluation are done by identifying internal stakeholder and sometimes involving outside facilitators undertake pre-project, implementation and post-project monitoring and evaluation. Guijt, Arevalo, and Saladores, (1998) identifies with participatory monitoring and evaluation as being cost-effective, empowering, more accurate and more relevant. The world bank outlines core principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) to include the active participation of primary stakeholders, an opportunity to build capacities. Unlike the conventional M&E approach, PME creates an opportunity for joint learning by project stakeholders which promote commitment for taking corrective action.

Participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation reinforces the rationale for participatory monitoring and evaluation. The study, therefore, advocates for Participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation considering the influence in achieving project performance and project success.

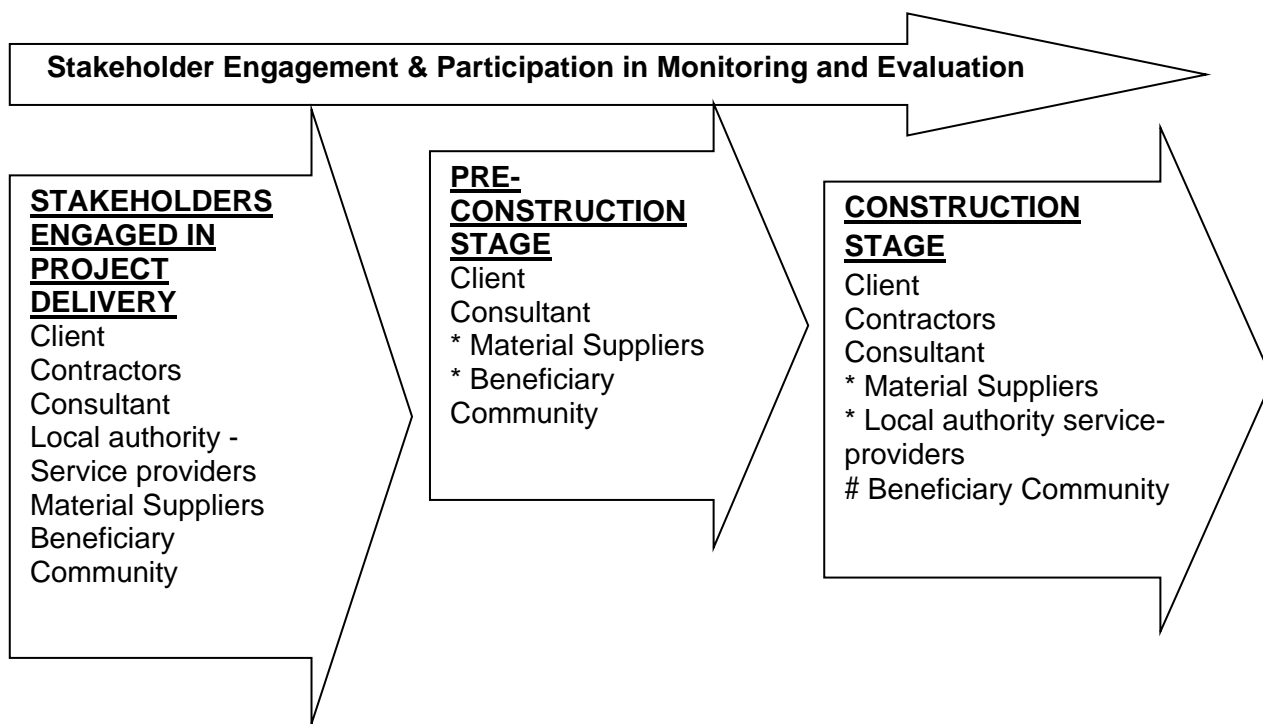


Fig 2. Stage participation of Stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation, * Not a critical participant at that stage, # Provided labour for the project

4. Methodology

The study involved a total of ninety (90) randomly selected stakeholders from the three (3) Northern regions of Ghana. A structure questionnaire guide was distributed to respondents which included thirty (30) selected contractors, fifteen (15) material suppliers and nine (9) consultants involved in construction project delivery at the Wa and Bolgatanga Municipality and the Tamale Metropolis. Five (5) MMDA staff each from the Wa, Bolgatanga, and Tamale works department represented the implementing agency as well as five (5) assembly members each from the three MMDAs represented the beneficiary community. Finally, the local authority service providers, thus; the electricity and water companies of Ghana in each MMDA responded to the questionnaire. (Table. 1 shows the distribution of respondents). Data from respondents were analyzed descriptively. The fact that the study could not cover all district, municipal and metropolitan assembly in the three northern regions of the country is a major limitation to the study.

Table. 1 shows the distribution of respondents

| Category of respondents | Wa Municipal Assembly | Bolgatanga Municipal Assembly | Tamale Metropolitan Assembly | Total |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|--------------|
| <i>Contractors</i> | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| <i>Consultants</i> | 3 | 4 | 2 | 9 |
| <i>MMDA Staff (Client)</i> | 5 | 5 | 5 | 15 |
| <i>Material Suppliers</i> | 5 | 5 | 5 | 15 |
| <i>Assembly Men/Women</i> | 5 | 5 | 5 | 15 |
| <i>Local Authority service providers (Electricity and Water company)</i> | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Total | 30 | 31 | 29 | 90 |

5. Findings

The paper sought to report on the level of stakeholder engagement in project delivery and participation in monitoring and evaluation of public construction projects in Ghana Major internal stakeholders; thus clients, contractors, and professional consultants acknowledged their full engagement at all stages of project delivery at the local government level in Ghana. The tripartite engagement was seen as inevitable and contractual due to the interest they individually and collectively have in the project. The client as the financiers was interested in how much had been spent and its corresponding progress whereas the contractor and the professional consultants were integral to the project implementation and the success or failure of the project depended on their performance. It was revealed that, though the material suppliers were critical stakeholders, their engagement were based on the availability of what material they had in stock and what materials were needed to be incorporated into the construction process. It is however important to note that they were engaged at the early stages of the project when estimates were being prepared by the project consultants. Similarly, engagement of the beneficiary community was seen during the early stages of the project when project sites are being handed over to the contractor to commence work (community entry). In most cases, at the local government level project delivery, beneficiary community contributed the labour force for the project except for special skilled labour which may be imported if not available in the community. The local authority

service providers, thus electricity and water companies were involved or engaged when their services were need mostly at the latter stages of the project.

Contrary to the active engagement of all stakeholders in project delivery at the local government level, there were limitations when it came to their participation in monitoring and evaluation. Clients, contractors and professional consultants were the major parties in the monitoring and evaluation at the construction stage of projects at the local government level. This was evident from the attendance sheets of project implementation meetings and also correspondence regarding the project. Material suppliers, local authority service providers and the beneficiary communities were left out during the decision making process. However, they were not bothered given reasons that they had little or no knowledge and understanding of construction. They also claimed they had no time to devote for monitoring and evaluation since they were engaged full time in their respective professions. They suggested that the presence of the professional consultant was enough to ensure accountability of project delivery. This assertion is however contrary to literature which greatly supports participation of stakeholders at all stages of project implementation to guarantee accountability and project success.

6. Conclusion and recommendation

The study identifies six (6) main stakeholders, thus; Client (MMDA), contractor, consultant, material suppliers, local authority service providers and beneficiary community engaged in local government project delivery in Ghana. However, only three (3) thus; client, contractor and consultant participated in the monitoring and evaluation of the project. There is therefore a high engagement level but a poor level of participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation. In conclusion, the poor participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation of local government project delivery contributed to the many challenges faced in local government project delivery in Ghana. These challenges included procurement lapses which resulted in poor payment schedules, non-conformity to project specification, delayed project delivery, lack of health and safety compliance, client's dissatisfaction, and corrupt practices in the construction industry. The study advocates for participatory monitoring and evaluation in construction project delivery in Ghana's the local government level. This can be achieved through community based development project (CBDP) delivery. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation and its implication in local government project delivery in Ghana.

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