

AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACTS OF PROJECT DYNAMISM ON THE SUCCESS OF CHILD BASED PROJECTS

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Abstract: Using Descriptive method and Analysis this Study sought to establish the impact of different aspects of a project and how they determine the success of child based projects. Factors highlighted include the theoretical basis and evaluation approaches as well as the ramifications of a project team on the success of child based projects. Some of the key findings include but not limited to the fact that reflection and praxes are unavoidable. They are intrinsically complementary premises upon which any project must be constructed. It is also clear from the study that human resource is a very poignant component of a project, without which any project cannot serve its purpose. Consequently project management calls for careful but steady dealings with project team members for the good of children in child based projects.

Keywords: Project, Theory, Project team, Project success, Child-based project.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Back ground to the study

The utmost well recognized definition of project success is the “iron triangle” that considers project time, cost and quality as key parameters (Atkinson, 2000). Ikal (2009) argues that although the definition of quality is potentially very broad in relation to the iron triangle, it is often restricted to meeting the scope. He also states that any child based project that satisfies the above stated dimensions may probably be considered performing well, though a child based project that meets the stated criteria may be considered successful. Every project discipline has generic and project-specific best practices that are critical to successfully completing a project (Barasa, 2014). Even generic processes such as project management and risk management have discipline- and domain-specific best practices. Determination of success at this level considers the appropriateness of the processes used together with the alignment of the project's purpose, their integration and effectiveness in contributing to the project outcomes. As with the other levels, analysis here provides feedback to the project team and organization for learning and improvement for subsequent projects.

Project time is the unconditional time that is calculated scientifically in terms of number of days, weeks, months or years from start to completion of the project. Completion of the project within the time line is another dimension that is used to measure project success (Chan, 2001). The project monitoring and evaluation team may contribute to the completion of the project within the expected time using Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) and Critical Path Method (CPM) techniques. Most projects often run out of time and thus cost overruns during the execution. Hence a need for a proactive methodology for monitoring child based project so that time detection of potential completion is adhered to Baker et al (2008).

Time aspect is about defining the criteria by which the process of delivering the project is successful. Essentially this addresses the classic questions, "are we on time, budget, on scope, quality?" Quality services by child based projects are also another aspect of measuring project success. The quality of services given by a child based project and project client

satisfaction has a substantial influence on the child based project success (Raymond & Bergeron, 2008). It is vital that project quality services be respected in terms of remaining loyal to the intended standards; Child based Project Quality services cannot be compromised in any way. Several authors suggest that meeting time, client satisfaction and offering quality services are good indicators and milestones to project success. These aspects are relevant criteria for high performance; for example project teams' competence and operative nature of functioning are also important to quality standards. Time dimension of assessing project success is the most common aspect recommended by many. Pretorius et al (2012) say that project team organisations with mature time management practices produces more successful projects than project management organizations with less mature time management practices.

Target objectives are another aspect for project success (Baker, 2005). A project that is in the line of analysis that leads to target fulfillment of the intended objectives would be expected to be successful. Evaluating the performance of project is beneficial to achievement of stated project objectives (Ogolla, 2003). Meeting project objectives are vital to the project team by enabling them to appraise the services offered and to project managers by helping them to improve their services as well as to beneficiaries by enabling them to appreciate the services received (Kurgat, 2016). In a snap shot project success can be assessed on the basis of completion within the expected time, completion within expected quality standards of services delivery and achievement of project objectives.

1.2. Statement of Problem

Establishing a project requires a deliberate effort of planning and understanding the nature of a project. The anatomy of a project is like that of a complex organism, for it to be nurtured well it requires a concerted examination before its inception during its life span and post analysis. Child based projects are even more sensitive because they are subject to close monitoring from external stake holders and the wider society. It is however regrettable that in third world countries, especially in Africa. Some child based projects are started without due considerations to their dynamic anatomy but for the simple purpose of milking cash from donors. They are a means to a financial benefits and not an end to themselves. It is because of the afore stated loopholes that this article aims at exploring the dynamic nature of a project as a premise upon which the success of any child based project is based.

1.3. Objectives

- i. To investigate the theoretical basis and evaluation approaches of a project as primordial ingredients for the success of child based projects
- ii. To examine the ramifications of a project team on the success of child based projects

1.4. Research Methods

Descriptive method

Descriptive method has largely been used in this research to collect facts regarding different aspects of project management with special interest in child based projects.

Analysis

The role of analysis is to break down complex systems into manageable chunks. Analysis also helps in illuminating information. In this research, analysis has been used for interpretative and explanatory purposes

2. PROJECT THEORIES AND EVALUATION APPROACHES AS PRIMORDIAL INGREDIENTS FOR THE SUCCESS OF CHILD BASED PROJECTS

2.1. Theoretical Premises of Project success

A theory is a set of propositions and concepts that seek to explain and/or predict some aspects in the social world (Haugh, 2012). In a project a set of theories are applicable for use, namely Program theory which is based on the theory advanced by Suchman in the 1960's. The program theory has been used to guide evaluation for many years; it shows the capability of the program to fix a problem by addressing the needs in the need assessment. It also gives tools to determine areas of impact in evaluation (Seth, 2012). A program consists of an organizational plan on how to deploy resources and organize activities of the program to ensure that the intended target population receives the intended amount of intervention of significance as well as Change Theory which is part of the program theory that emerged in the 1990s as an

improvement to the evaluation theory. Theory of change also known as the program theory/result chain/program logic model/ attribution logic is a causal logic that links research activities to the desired changes in the actors that a project targets to change. It is therefore a model of how a project is supposed to work. The function of a theory of change is to provide a road map of where the project is heading while monitoring and evaluation tests and refines that road map (Chambers, 2003). Change theory is relevant to M and E approaches in that both are road map towards project success.

Douglas McGregor's theory of management (theory X and theory Y) can be helpful framework highlighting the different concept of management in the process of monitoring and evaluation of child based projects. According to this theory management organizes elements of production (money, materials, equipment's, programs and people for a particular end such as to make profit in business or to achieve result in projects. The theory claims that people need to be directed, motivated and controlled. Moreover people need to change their behaviors to meet the needs of the organization. People must therefore be persuaded, rewarded, punished, controlled and supervised (Mulwa, 2010). For child based projects the project team is critical. Members of the project team need to be organized and motivated or fully supported in order to perform their duties well and bring about success. Beliefs of theory X on human nature states that an average person is by nature lazy and given chance, will work as little as possible, the average person lacks ambition, dislikes responsibilities and prefers to be led, the average person is inherently self-centered, indifferent to organizational goals, the average person is by nature resistant to change (Mulwa, 2010). From theory X the organization is built like the pyramid with the persons at the top controlling the organization hence Bureaucratic Hierarchy. In child based projects the concept of a pyramid is inevitable since the project team members have to organize themselves according to their roles and responsibilities if success is the expected result. Lastly the

Theory Y posits that Management can be organized in such a way that decisions can be shared involving all those people who have the knowledge skills and ability. People are not by nature passive or resistant to organization needs and goals (Mulwa, 2010). They have become the result of their previous experience in their education institutions and other organizations. Project Managers are actually coordinators to arrange best methods and conditions within the project to achieve goals. Therefore, in this theory it is better to believe that the project teams' goals are similar to project goals for performance to be bear fruits of success. Beliefs about theory Y states that the organization is built upon relationships which have similar goals and interests. Hence in child based projects decision making and authority on different issues, rests with different members of the project team because of their interests and skills particularly in the selection and application of project tools (Mulwa, 2010). More often communication is on a horizontal basis rather than top down. This is relevant to child based project Managers who coordinate the work of different groups and help those groups solve their problems by bringing them together. Discussion and sharing of different functions of production are collectively developed workers.

2.2. Evaluation Approaches

Result-oriented evaluation and constructivism are the main evaluation approaches employed in child based projects. Every approach includes principles, methods and tools that can be used for projects that have the ambition to contribute to (system) innovation (Chambers, 2003). But they differ widely in their vision on reality, the on-going processes and their results and how to support, manage or adjust these processes (Ogolla, 2003). Each child based project decides which approach to use or combine them together depending on the need of their project. Result-oriented monitoring and evaluation answers the question to what degree have the original project objectives and subsequent interventions been achieved? Result-oriented approaches are frequently used to provide rapid feedback to the project, whenever the project team and other stakeholders require knowing the progress of the project activities (Ogolla, 2003). Result framework provides the project with relevant methods of success these methods are based on assumptions, expectations of connectedness and goals: for instance it gives those involved with the project capacity to predict the direction the project is moving to. For example, if we do this in the project, then this will happen (Mulwa, 2002).

The constructivist M&E approach assumes that people are the motor behind the development of novelties and societal change processes. They achieve this through interaction and negotiation. Mutual understanding and exchange of experiences support collective learning, improvement and change. Constructivist approach focus heavily on monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the collective learning process (Ogolla, 2003). Constructivist approach highpoints on how successful communal wisdom processes are introduced and continued.

For this approach sharing knowledge from different viewpoints by different project members is critical. Scrutiny of the supreme significant matters made on the basis of individual training, experiences and competence are reconsidered for the good of improving project performance. It gives an opportunity to learn from others as well as to make necessary consultations from those who are experts (Ogolla, 2003). This approach arouses the exchange of perceptions and guarantees a good understanding into how procedures advance. Reflexive methods focus on both a collective learning process (in groups of actors and in networks) as well as on the results in terms of learning and institutional change (Koffi, 2002).

3. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF PROJECT TEAM ON THE SUCCESS OF A CHILD BASED PROJECT

3.1. Overview of a project team

The project team includes the project manager and the group of individuals who act together in performing the work of the project to achieve its objectives (Baker, 2005). Casley (2001) Argues that the project team includes the project manager, project management staff, and other team members who carry out the work but who are not necessarily involved with management of the project. According to this team is comprised of individuals from different groups with specific subject matter knowledge or with a specific skill set to carry out the work of the project. (Anderson, 2005) Is of the opinion that the structure and characteristics of a project team can vary widely, but one constant is the project manager's role as the leader of the team, regardless of what authority the project manager may have over its members.

The composition of project teams varies based on factors such as organizational culture, scope, and location. The relationship between the project manager and the team varies depending on the authority of the project manager. In some cases, a project manager may be the team's line manager, with full authority over its members. In other cases, a project manager may have little or no direct organizational authority over the team members and may have been brought in to lead the project on a part-time basis or under contract.

Provision of support is key to a project team because it enhances performance by motivating the members. A motivated project team usually achieves high performance (Baker, 2005). Thus the more a project team is strengthened, the higher chances of project success. Chan (2001) says this is critical of the monitoring and evaluation teams in project management. Human capital training is an indicator of enhancing performance and opening the gate of success. (Chaplowe, 2008) is that child based project managers should indeed work towards training the project team to achieve success in all the aspects and processes of the project, including trained project team, so as to achieve project success.

Project success is paramount in any project and this includes several project activities, argues (Chaplowe, 2008) According to Chan (2001) in a trained project team, all the team members are assigned to work according to their capacity and are able to deliver the expected results on the project. Stakeholders' participation is key in child based projects. The stakeholders may be collocated different responsibilities to the project. This is the simplest structure for a project ownership, as the lines of authority become clear and stakeholder's members can focus on the project's objectives (Chaplowe, 2008).

3.2. Project Team Influence on Project Success

According to Hope (2001), in their study on training community trainers for social transformation; they emphasize that providing support and strengthening of project team is a sign of good project performance. They argue that it plays a key role in ensuring that the project team adds value to the project operations. (Mulwa, 2010) On his study about the trend analysis on participatory rural appraisal observes that a motivated team usually achieves high performance. He is seconded by (Zaccaro et al, 2002) as they emphasize that the more a team is strengthened, the better the performance and value addition to the project. Accordingly Kamau (2015) on his study on efficacy of monitoring and evaluation function in achieving project success in Kenya' affirms that monitoring and evaluation teams in child based project if well supported by management they are able to bring about project success. Interestingly Pretorius et al (2012) observes that there is significant association between the maturity of quality management practices in child based project management and the results of the projects' team. Nevertheless from her study on Factors affecting the effectiveness of donor funded projects in promoting development in Kibera. She holds the view that child based project managers should indeed aspire to achieve quality in all the aspects and processes, including quality project team, so as to achieve project success.

According to the study done by Kamau on efficacy of monitoring and evaluation function in achieving project success in Kenya. He observes the various aspects which may be used in assessing the strength of monitoring team in child based projects include Financial availability, number of monitoring staff, monitoring staff skills, frequency of monitoring, stakeholders representation, the Power of project team and teamwork among the members. A strong team is a critical factor in achievement of project goals and teamwork is vital at all stages of the project. According to the study done on Monitoring and evaluation factors influencing success of development projects: a case study of Stare he sub-county, Kenya, the execution stage is the most risky stage where the probability of not achieving project success is at its peak due to numerous project activities. The study recommends that it is during this stage that the project team should be most active in monitoring and providing timely feedback (Wachaiyu, 2016). The study confirms that during closing down the monitoring and evaluation just like other management activities is less intensified as compared to the execution stage. Most of the monitoring activities during this stage involves reporting on the project outcome and preparing for future projects. practical examples and exercises, which are useful to monitoring team since they provide the staff with ways of becoming efficient, effective and have impact on the child based projects. The study by Nyabuto on factors influencing implementation of monitoring and evolutions in NGO projects. M&E practical training is important in capacity building of personnel because it helps with the interaction and management of the staff and the children. Nyabuto observes that M&E training starts with the understanding of the M&E theory and ensuring that the team understands the linkages between the project theory of change and the results framework as well as associated indicators.

Taddess (2016) adds that training of monitoring team should therefore be practical focused to ensure the understanding There is need to have an effective M&E human resource capacity in terms of quantity and quality, hence M&E human resource management is required in order to maintain and retain a stable M&E staff (World Bank, 2011).

Baker, 2003) holds the view that; some projects are established as temporary additional work, with the project manager and team members working on the project while remaining in their existing organizations and continuing to carry out their normal functions. Part-time team members may also be assigned to more than one project at a time (Chaplowe, 2008)

4. CONCLUSION

This brief study concerned itself with the essentials of the success of child based projects. The study outlined what it means to have a successful project. Based on different theories such as Program theory, Change theory Mc Gregory's Theories X and Y, and on the role project team the study analytically explored the dynamism of project success. It is indicated herein for a project to achieve its objectives it must conceived from multiple tangents. Epistemological grounds for determining success is as well founded multi dimensional assessment, which then forms new thesis for ameliorated praxis in child based projects.

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