Roots of Project Failure and Abandonment in Developing Countries

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Abstract

detail prior studies on this issue. Various reasons have been identified for causes of project failure in developing countries. For example, an investigation into causes for time and cost overrun on groundwater construction projects in Ghana revealed 26 reasons for such failure. It found that, whereas some of these causes were controllable, others were uncontrollable. In relation to schedule delays in road construction projects identified financial processes and difficulties on the part of contractors and clients, contract modification, economic problems, materials' procurement, changes in drawings, staffing problems, equipment unavailability, poor supervision, construction mistakes, poor coordination on site, and changes in specifications as the main causes of such delays. An analysis of cost and schedule performance of international developmental projects revealed an extraordinary cost and schedule variance.

Keywords: Project Failure, Project Abandonment, Project Management Practices

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The research, which used China, Thailand, Bangladesh and India as the case study, shows that cost and schedule variances (cost and schedule overrun) exist in such projects (Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010). However, the results also show an extraordinary pattern of variance. Studies over the years (Kaming et al., 1997; Flyvjerg et al., 2003; Matta & Ashkenas, 2003; Odek, 2004) show that projects that experience schedule overruns have corresponding cost overruns but the result from Ahsan and Gunawan's study shows that the International Development (ID) projects from the four Asian countries experienced schedule overrun and yet had cost underrun. This extraordinary result is attributable to: depreciation or devaluation of local currency lower than estimated bid price, international competitive bidding – international companies are allowed to bid for the project, hence, making the operational cost less expensive, less use of contingency fund – this emergency fund is made available for projects, but it is not always used with ID projects because host countries try to overestimate it to avoid running out of funds when an emergency happens, the project's scope is cut, design change, local tax, and interest policy changes.

In relation to Critical Success factors (CSFs), Kwak (2002) identified a number of CSFs of ID projects, which included: political, legal, cultural, technical, managerial, economic, environmental, social, and corruption. Palmer (1986) attributes project failure in developing countries to lack of routine maintenance. The use of turnkey project management practices in developing countries has also seen failures (Alsakini et al., 2004). In Africa, a poor relationship among stakeholders is one of the main reasons for government project failure (Rwelamila et al., 1999). Botswana's government projects have experienced a lack of 'ubuntu' (African group solidarity) among the various stakeholders in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) public building sector project.

These studies indicate that there are a lot of different reasons for project failure in different contexts. Moreover, research shows that the causes of project failure in developing countries are not much different from those in developed countries, except for the failure caused by the adoption of Western project management models, methodologies, and project management practices (otherwise known as socio-cultural factors). The next sub-section, 2.5.1, discusses these reasons in detail.

2.0 SOCIO-CULTURE AND PROJECT FAILURE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The fundamental reason often cited as a cause of project failure in developing countries is the adoption of foreign project management practices and models which do not fit into local socio-cultural

systems (Saad et al., 2002; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Alsakini et al., 2004; Heeks, 2002, 2006; Maube et al., 2008; Amid et al., 2012). Miscommunication in industrial turnkey projects in developing countries which causes such projects to fail can be blamed on cultural differences that exist on sites (Alsakini et al., 2004).

The Iranian industries' attempt to incorporate Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP) into their operations has witnessed some degree of failure due to this very problem (Amid et al., 2012). Iran's unique country system is the main reason why the adoption of ERP has not been successful (Amid et al., 2012). Although other reasons such as poor project management, lack of a full-time and balanced project team, and poor human resource management – over emphasis on technical and financial issues at the expense of the people involved – have been cited as hindrances to ERP implementation, the most dominant and fundamental reason has been Iran's unique system (Amid et al., 2012). Iran's unique system makes it extremely difficult to adopt foreign ERP models and practices because the country's organisational and cultural mind-set makes them incompatible.

The study concluded that ERP keeps on failing due to the Iranian system, which is incompatible with foreign ERP being adopted. The Iranian organisational structure is hierarchical, with a high degree of bureaucracy and formalisation; hence, it is difficult to incorporate ERP into management practices. Further, achieving short-term goals and objectives is more important to managers than long-term goals due to the structure and nature of the organisational issues. Because there is a high rate of management substitution and replacement in organisations, managers are compelled to achieve short-term goals in order to be considered to be successful, and this is in contrast to ERP philosophy (Amid et al., 2012). Due to the uniqueness of the Iranian systems, regulations and procedures, especially financial process, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to implement an international system in the country. This implies that foreign vendors have to customise these technologies to suit the Iranian system. This often creates a 'design-actuality gap' (Heeks, 2002, 2005, 2006).

Heeks' (2002) case study into Information System (IS) project failure in developing countries shows that there is an actuality gap between industrialised IS designs and the applicability of such designs in developing countries, and that a belief in foreign or imported products from the developed world accounts for the IS project failure in developing countries. Using IS as a case study; IS models are designed by foreigners who are normally from Western countries. They therefore design them in the context of Western culture and practices, and then implement them in developing countries (Heeks, 2002). The mind-set of the designer(s) is based on their experience in the industrialised countries, and therefore what they design does not support local socio-cultural settings of users in the developing countries, hence, project failure. Thus, there is a gap between the design and the reality of usage at the local level (developing countries), and this therefore causes such projects to fail. Figure 4 below illustrates this further.
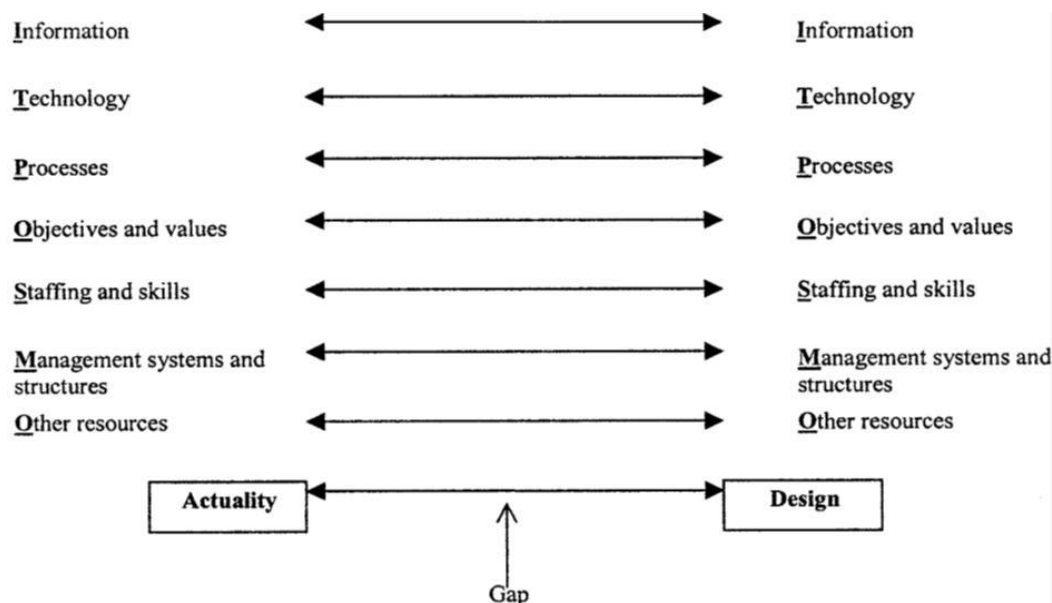
Figure 4: Cause of Project Failure

Further, this gap can be split into two – hard gap and soft gap (hard–soft gap) (Heeks, 2002). The hard gap is the physical materials being used, and the soft gap has to do with the knowledge, values, etc. This confirms the ideas of earlier researchers who argued that culture plays a crucial role in the success of projects and, as such, applying same project management practices might not be feasible in some cultural contexts (Hogberg & Adamsson, 1983). In order to correct this situation (project failure), Heeks (2002) suggests two ways in which locals could improvise to divert failures – actuality-supporting applications and nature of design. One, developing countries should have designs that are ceteris paribus, actuality supporting application[s]. However, according to Akrich (1992, as cited by Heeks 2002), such designs would be difficult to achieve because of a design–imposing approach. Thus, a situation is created, whereby these designs are created by developed countries' designers for developing countries and, as a result, this actuality-supporting application even increases failure risk. Two, the nature of design improvisation can be affected by the balance between explicit and implicit components in the design. The explicit components, which include total cost or the type of computer to be used, are relatively easy to alter to meet user actuality, but it is difficult to alter the implicit components of the nature of design such as designer assumptions about the values or knowledge of local users.

Again, local ability to be able to manoeuvre to avoid the actuality gap is contingent upon design divisibility, but this divisibility is lacking in the developing countries' IS projects, partly due to the short 'donor timescale and attention span' of funders. Moreover, if there is a local capacity for technology, improvisation could be possible, but this is also lacking in developing countries. That is to say, if there is local technology that can combine both imported content and local content (hybrid), then there could be room for manoeuvre (improvisation) to reduce the risk of failure, but this is non-existent in local communities (developing countries). In addition, improvisation-supporting approaches and techniques could be used, but such an approach is only workable in industrialised countries and as such inapplicable in developing countries. This approach is the use of participative techniques, where group working and end-user involvement are used. This is rarely workable in developing countries due to their cultural mind-set. This is echoed by Klein et al. (2015), who asset that, due to the uniqueness of projects, there is a need for improvisation during project management.

Most African projects fail because they do not have their own project management models (Maube et al., 2008). Failure of projects in Africa is attributable to human and technological factors, and management concepts being applied, but this can be traced to the use of Western project management concepts, which are not workable in Africa due to the cultural differences that exist between the Western world and African countries (Heeks, 2002; Saad et al., 2002; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Alsakini et al., 2004; Maube et al., 2008). For instance, efforts made by the Algerian government to move into industrialisation in the 1960s and 1990s failed because of this same problem (Saad et al., 2002): projects were implemented but failed due to cultural differences that existed between the adopted model and the Algerian environment. E-government projects in Africa have failed because African governments have been adopting models that are based on the industrialised countries' models, which do not fit into the cultural environment of Africa (Maube et al., 2008).

The quest by Muriithi and Crawford (2003) to find causes of project failure in Africa, found that all the causes were due to the fact that project management concepts, models, and practices being adopted in Africa were Western, and these models and practices were incompatible with Africa's culture and social life. The study concluded that African cultures are collectivist, have high power distance, moderate uncertainty avoidance, and are masculine. The collectivist culture, characterised by poverty, declining real wages, and weak political institutions, means that managers feel and work towards what will please the family, clan, ethnic group will rather than being neutral – which is a formal requirement of management. Africans have a deep-rooted moral obligation to their poorer relations and this puts pressure on their personal income and project resources. Power distance, implies that, patronage and tall structures in organisational management. Top management in these African states are inward-looking – they do not want to delegate due to risk aversion; managers tend to avoid risk due to the unstable nature of the socio-

political environment in Africa. Foreign employees earn more than their local counterparts doing similar work, which brings about ill-feeling. The extent to which a project team or management regard these values determine a project's success or failure (Muriithi & Crawford, 2003).

During Algeria's quest for development between 1965 and 1990, the country's government adopted Technology Transfer (TT) projects to facilitate this development (Saad et al., 2002). These projects failed to some degree, mainly due to the fact that the technology being transferred was incompatible with the local environment (technical, organisational, market, social, political, cultural). Failure was due to the restricted availability of indigenous knowledge and information, among other factors such as poor preparation procedures before negotiations, lack of proactive search for projects and partners, selection of projects and partners not based on national realities, significant dependency on learning by doing and codified knowledge, ignoring the dynamic dimension of the process of technology transfer and the consolidation stage (Saad et al., 2002).

3.0 STAKEHOLDERS OF GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT PROJECTS

In the case of Ghanaian government projects, the stakeholders are numerous; however, for the purpose of this research, only key stakeholders are identified and used. In doing so, Freeman (1984) and Mitchel et al.'s (1997) theories will be used as the basis for identifying the stakeholders. This offers a wider approach for identification of stakeholders and their attributes, which can help group the various stakeholders, in order to know which, set(s) of stakeholders are key in Ghanaian government projects.

Using the stakeholder identification methods described above, the following stakeholders have been identified as key stakeholders of Ghanaian government projects: the government, general public, contractors, donors, consultants, local businesses, and financial institutions. In government or public projects, the emphasis is more often than not placed on the general population, be it at the national or local level. The aim is often to create goods and/or services in the form of 'physical or soft' products for the enhancement of their livelihood. In the case of development projects, Ngacho and Das (2014) specifically argue that they are able to create both economic wealth and social services in such countries as well as having negative impacts and these are on the general populace. In fact, in some projects such as urban development projects, some authors equate stakeholders to the community or the public (Yang, 2014). Moreover, the citizens can influence the type of project to be implemented.

In Ghana, many projects have been implemented as a result of citizens' demands, agitations and demonstrations. A typical example is the Eastern Corridor Road Project, which commenced in 2014 as a result of the ultimatum given to the government by the chiefs and opinion leaders of the Volta Region (Ghanaweb, 2014; Daily Guide, 2014). Therefore, the citizenry becomes one of the main or key stakeholders, in that the deliverables of the project impact their life. In addition, in most cases, especially developed countries, such projects are financed by tax-payers' money and, as such, the tax-payers become key stakeholders. The public, therefore, are only interested in the impact the project will have on them (Diallo & Thuillier, 2004).

Secondly, the government and the party in power: based on the above explanation, it can be argued that the government is a key stakeholder in Ghanaian government projects as the government serves as an agency executing projects on behalf of the citizens. In addition, development projects play a key role in the growth of the economy in developing countries by contributing to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and through employment generation – these are regarded as the responsibility of the government to foster through the implementation of projects (Ngacho & Das, 2014). Therefore, the sitting government and its political party becomes a key stakeholder in the implementation of such projects. This is echoed in the work of Amponsah (2013), which argues that the performance of the Ghanaian government as a whole is partly influenced by its ability to execute projects successfully and that is the reason why, when elections are near, the government cuts 'sods' and commissions a lot of projects.

Thirdly, the contractors – contractors are the direct executors of Ghanaian government projects. Fourthly, donor agencies and countries are those who provide funding in the form of cash and in kind. Moreover, consultants provide the technical advice and monitoring services to executors of these projects and therefore could influence the government's project performance; as such, failure will affect them and vice versa. In addition, the local community including their businesses are also key stakeholders which could be affected by these projects. They could be impacted by the execution of these projects. Lastly,

financial institutions – they provide financial support to these projects. In fact, in Ghana and many developing countries, financial institutions would have to raise certificates of payment and other payment on behalf of the government.

4.0 RESULT DISCUSSION

The study found that there are 32 possible causes of Ghanaian government project failure, as indicated in Table 11, in chapter 5. These are: monitoring, corruption, political interference, change in government, bureaucracy, fluctuation of prices, lack of continuity, planning, delays in payment, release of funds, change in project leadership, management practices, procurement processes, project funding, commitment to project, selection of project managers, project team formation, project management techniques, feasibility studies, communication, supervision, scope change, capacity, task definition, definition of specification, requirement, regulations, culture and belief systems, user involvement, labour, pressure groups (media, NGOs, political activities, etc.), and natural disaster.

Nevertheless, the study's participants (Contractors, PMP and General Public) agreed that their degree of importance (influence) differs. Even though the interview analysis clearly showed that some of these causes were mentioned more times than others, as indicated in the interview analysis in the previous chapter, it was not possible to establish which ones were more important. In order to do this, the causes were ranked, as indicated in Table 12 in the previous chapter. Despite differences in the rankings given the three categories of participants, a hypothetical testing of the degree of agreement in their ranking indicated that there is a high degree of agreement among them.

In all, the respondents agreed that the top 10 most influential factors that cause Ghanaian government projects to fail, in descending order, are: lack of monitoring, corruption, political interference, change in government, bureaucracy, lack of continuity, fluctuation of prices, inadequate planning, delays in payment, and slow release of funds.

These factors are discussed in detail in the next sub-sections, in descending order.

1. Monitoring

It was revealed that, in Ghana, public workers and executioners of public projects are not as committed to the work as their private counterparts, and they therefore fail to monitor government projects accordingly. Many reasons were cited for this lack of monitoring; for instance, as indicated in the interview analysis in the previous chapter, it was revealed that there are unauthorised middlemen who liaise with the government officials and contractors. This leads to payment of 10% of the contract sum to the officials and the middlemen, and therefore, consultants; who are government officials are unable to monitor the contractors accordingly. Further, the findings indicated that monitoring was directly linked to political leadership rather than to the technocrats who execute the projects. The interviewees perceived that the lack of monitoring was not only as a result of corruption but also due to a lack of 'political will' (political leadership) to monitor projects; this is because projects are being executed by party patrons who are sometimes not qualified contractors. This finding can be directly linked to the definition of corruption by Transparency International (TI) (2008) and the World Bank (2013): the abuse of public office for private gain.

However, for monitoring to be the number one most influential factor might be surprising to many researchers, although this should not be the case as this study focuses only on the government sector. There is also a cultural dimension to the reasons why public sector projects suffer from monitoring in the country. This attitude was inherited from the colonial period, where the public sector was perceived to be the white person's work (white masters) and, because it was the white person's work, it could be carried out haphazardly (Amponsah, 2010). This also confirms a common statement in Ghana which is interpreted as "*we hold government's work, we don't carry it on our head*", which literally means do not give your 100 per cent to the government's work, after all, it not your property (Amponsah, 2010). This perception has been in existence since the colonial period, where the public sector was perceived as '*belonging*' to white people, and therefore there is a belief that there is no need to be committed to such work (Amponsah, 2010).

The cultural dimension of this finding is supported by earlier studies which concluded that management is perpetually affected by socio-cultural settings (Hofstede, 1983; Hogberg & Adamsson, 1983); hence, Ghanaian government project management is no exception. Earlier studies in project management also confirm this finding (Heeks, 2002; Saad et al., 2002; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Alsakini et al., 2004; Maube et al., 2008; Amid et al., 2012). Nonetheless, these prior studies' cultural findings have been discussed in the light of project management models, practices and frameworks, whilst this study's cultural focus takes a different dimension: attitude towards government work in the country as a result of colonial rule.

2. Corruption

The study revealed that the high level of paperwork and the bureaucratic procedures in Ghana's procurement process means that there is the potential for contractors to engage in corrupt practices to get their contracts through. Thus, there are a lot of bureaucratic processes that performing organisations and/or contractors need to go through before, during and after project implementation, and therefore, in most cases, they have to 'pay their way through'. Further, the use of unofficial middlemen, as indicated in the previous chapter, shows that paying of unauthorised money or payment in kind amounts to corruption. The finding further revealed that an unofficial payment of 10% of project funds to government officials has become an acceptable norm in the awarding of Ghanaian government projects. Many interviewees suggested that winning a Ghanaian government project contract bid on merits is rare, especially in relation to locally funded projects.

In addition, the ranking showed that corruption is the second overall most influential factor for Ghanaian government project failure, as shown in Table 12 in the previous chapter. It was ranked as 3, 2, and 2 by contractors, project management and general public respectively. In fact, corruption has become a hot topic in Ghana in recent years (OccupyGhana, 2014; Imani, 2015; Bawumia, 2015; Addo, 2015); therefore, this research result confirms the public opinion about it. This is also congruent with the Transparency International and other media reports about the corruption index in Ghana (TI, 2008; Ghanaian Chronicle, 2012). The previous literature on corruption in the country has pre-dominantly been reports, lectures and media reports (TI, 2008; Ghanaian Chronicle, 2012, OccupyGhana, 2014; Imani, 2015; Bawumia, 2015; Addo, 2015), and therefore this finding adds an academic dimension to the literature.

3. Political Interference

Political interference was ranked by contractors, project management practitioners and general public as 1, 2 and 3 respectively, as shown in Table 12 in Chapter five. The study found that almost everything in the public sector is now political – particularly in relation to partisan politics. Further, it revealed that this is a major problem in the country and that securing of Ghanaian government projects on merit is rare, especially if the project is a relatively small and/or local level one. Participants perceived that political leaders involved in project designation believe that awarding a contract to contractors without being sure of the party to which they belong, implies that they are virtually strengthening the opposition party. This perception is premised on the assumption that these contractors finance their political party and as such, by giving them such contracts, the profits earned would be used to fund their respective parties, and therefore it is politically wise to give contracts to party patrons. It was further found that there is an assumption that contracts are given to contractors as a 'reward' for their hard work in helping the party to come to power. Ghanaian government projects are initiated and executed by the government, even though they may be funded by other donor agencies (Ghana Budget, 2012, 2015; Bawumia, 2015); however, it was revealed that politicians do not allow the technocrats to execute such projects. In fact, the findings indicated that the leaders of Ghanaian government projects and most of the so-clled technocrats executing such projects are political appointees. In Ghana, the constitution allows the president to appoint over a quarter of public sector workers, including all local government heads and directors (Ghana Constitution, 1992).

The study found that sometimes companies are specifically set up by political parties and their allies to execute specific government projects. Accordingly, the project executors might not necessarily possess the requisite technical experience and/or knowledge to carry out such projects, and therefore

they are unable to execute them to the right standards. This suggests that, once the projects are awarded based on political patronage, political interference becomes eminent.

This result confirms the Annual Auditor General reports (AGR, 2014, 2015) that sometimes some of the companies have stopped trading, and therefore it is very difficult to track them down to retrieve the monies that the country might have lost through fraud or the inability to execute the paid-for projects. Thus, some of the companies cease to exist after executing government projects. The reports, together with the Public Account Committee (PAC), have stressed that some of these companies are highly political and therefore it is extremely difficult for the government to have the 'political will to retrieve the monies or prosecute the culprits (PAC, 2015). The reluctance of the government to make public the World Cup 2014 commission's report supports this claim on how political the country has become (Dzamefe, 2014).

This result further confirms speculations in the country that projects are awarded on political party patronage. In fact, it has become a norm in media programmes that the incumbent party in government always defends every government project even if it is a total failure, as Heeks (2002, 2005, 2006) put it, while the opposition do otherwise (e.g. Asempa FM, 2015; Oman FM, 2015). Further, approval for major government projects in the country has always had a political dimension (e.g. NHIS, 2003; Kwame Nkrumah Interchange, 2014). Opposition parties have always opposed such projects, whilst the incumbent government supports them, and therefore parliamentarians are not acting independently in the implementation process of Ghanaian government projects. This provides a unique contribution to the subject area, as previous literature relates to industry reports and therefore there is no academic literature, and therefore this study provides a contribution in the Ghanaian context.

4. Change in Government

The result indicated that a change in government in Ghana leads to halting and/or abandoning projects. In the interviews, all of the interviewees agreed with this, and it was stated to be because such projects will not be credited to the party that assumes power. It was revealed that governments over the years have been more interested in winning the next general election rather than serving the interests of the nation, and therefore each government intends to support its 'own' projects. As a result, participants perceived that this accounted for why a lot of commissioning and 'cutting of sod' for government projects takes place in election years.

In addition, the study found that citizens in the country judge the government's performance based on its ability to successfully complete projects. This has compelled successive governments over the years to embark on their 'own' projects after coming into power. Moreover, it was found that projects are often halted because politicians want to terminate the existing contracts and re-award them to party members as soon as they come into power. This is often a difficult process, as it involves a lot of legal procedures. The interview findings suggest that sometimes the contractor whose contract is being terminated feels cheated because s/he does not 'belong' to the party in power. The aggrieved person often sues the government, and the court outcomes have resulted in what is popularly known as 'gargantuan' (huge) government debt payments (Bawumia, 2014). This is a unique finding to the project management literature, as previous literature has not been devoted to the subject. Again, this finding provides a country-specific context for the finding. In addition, there is currently no academic literature to support it.

5. Bureaucracy

As indicated in the previous chapter, under interview analysis, the study revealed that Ghanaian government project procurement processes and activities follow a lot of bureaucratic processes. A lot of stages are required before contracts can be awarded. Interviewees perceived that bureaucracy accounts for almost all project delays and partly for most corrupt practices. They were of the view that the bureaucratic process of getting projects executed was meant to bring about fair and corrupt-free procedures; however, in reality, this has tended to be the opposite. To backup this opinion, all the participants revealed that bureaucratic procedures in government project implementation 'forces the hand' of contractors to pay bribes or use unofficial middlemen to seek what they want. In their view, Ghanaian government projects go through a lot of steps and stages, even before their actual

commencement; and, during the execution stages, each stage also has to go through a lot of inspections, and officials need to sign documents, which are normally hardcopies. In some situations; the absence of an official means that the project in question has to come to a halt. Nevertheless, the respondents attributed this to politics – politics in the sense that if a project was awarded by the previous government, the current government officials would want to stifle it, so they would use delays and non-completion as an excuse to re-award it to their party members.

Furthermore, it was revealed that, even in this day and age, parliament still requires hardcopies of project documents rather than electronic ones. This often leads to corruption as contractors try to get their paperwork through as quickly as possible. In an attempt to do so, they are compelled to pay bribes and are engaged in other corrupt practices. Nevertheless, respondents did not state why the Ghanaian government still uses hardcopies of project documentation instead of electronic ones. In addition, the study revealed that consultants who have to certify projects would have to go through a lot of processes to do so, and this leads to delays in the completion of projects, hence, cost escalation.

This finding supports the earlier work of Killick (2008) about the Ghanaian political-economic system. Killick (2008) argues that the Ghanaian institutional system is full of institutional bottlenecks. Similarly, Amoako and Lyon (2014) concluded in their research on Small and Medium Entrepreneur (SMEs) in Ghana that an institutional bottleneck hinders small- and medium-scale enterprises' exporting activities. Even though these prior studies have espoused bureaucracy as a major problem in the country, it has not been discussed in the context of project management, and therefore this is a unique finding which contributes to the project management literature within the local context.

6. Lack of Continuity

Closely related to change in government is lack of continuity. The study revealed that most government projects are halted halfway through their completion due to funding, price fluctuation, change in government, or the project no longer being needed. It was found that sometimes change in project leadership leads to project abandonment. Thus, because Ghanaian government project leadership is often based on political appointments, as discussed above under *political interference*, any change in leadership as a result of a change in government implies that it is difficult to maintain the continuity of a project. Although prior studies have discussed this leadership issue, it was leadership in relation to management, but this study looks at leadership in relation to political leadership. For example, Hwang and Ng (2013) have asserted in their study that project leadership is crucial in the successful implementation of project management, but they discussed this in relation to management leadership.

7. Fluctuation of Prices

The study revealed that most of the products used in the execution of Ghanaian government projects are imported from other countries, which implies that, if the dollar to cedi exchange rates increases, the prices of materials will also increase. This implies that economic success that will lead to stabilisation of the local currency is crucial to the implementation of any Ghanaian government projects. However, more often, the cedi is not stable due to the economic uncertainty in the country, as revealed in Chapter one (World Bank, 2015). Nonetheless, the Ghanaian economy has not been stable over the years and this affects the prices of products. In 2011, the economy was growing at a rate of 13% (Economic Watch, 2011, World Bank, 2012) but this had reduced to 3.8% in the 2015 budget (Ghana budget, 2015). In fact, in 2014 alone, the exchange rate, and thus the Ghana cedi to dollar, was raised from $1 to $2.8 – 3.8 (Bank of Ghana, 2015). It was the most depreciated currency in the world (Bawomia, 2015). This finding suggests that price fluctuation is a major problem that causes Ghanaian government projects to fail. It also suggests that estimating project spending in the country is very difficult.

8. Planning

It was found that planning of Ghanaian government projects is poor. As revealed by earlier researchers (Odeh & Battaineh, 2002; Assaf & AL-Hejji, 2006), Ghanaian government projects are not well

planned, and this eventually leads to project failure. As indicated in section 5.3.1, the interviewees perceived that there is poor planning on the part of government–appointed leaders who co-ordinate government projects. They specifically traced poor planning to all parts or stages of the project life cycle. However, some perceived that, in some cases, the technical competence to plan properly is there but there is no money to effect such planning, due to inadequate planning on the part of the leadership (political/government officials). The major factor linked to poor planning is allocation of funds to various government projects – that is, the government starts to implement projects without properly planning how the country is going to distribute funds among them.

This agrees with the research on Nigeria's construction project failure (Odeyinka & Yusif, 1997), which indicated that ineffective planning accounts for most project failure. Similarly, this finding agrees with a study conducted in 2011 on the Iranian construction industry (Pourrastam & Ismail, 2011), which found that planning is a major reason for Iranian construction project failure. This finding also confirms a study conducted by Pinto (2013) which specifically traces the root cause of project failure to the poor initial planning phases of such projects. However, this poor planning is not in relation to the executors (technocrats) of projects or the performing organisations, as espoused by Odeyinka and Yusif (1997), Odeh and Battaineh (2002), Assaf and AL–Hejji (2006), Pourrastam and Ismail (2011) and Pinto (2013); it relates to poor planning on behalf of the government. Thus, the government and/or government officials often fail to plan projects accordingly.

This is because most of the projects are politically motivated, and therefore proper planning of how the project is going to be executed from start till finish is not carried out before project commencement. In fact, all interviewees perceived that Ghanaian government projects are not well planned in advance due to the political nature of the projects and the fact that most of the leaders and executors of such projects are political appointments rather than being made on the basis of having technical know–how. In this case, people with relatively low skills knowledge about projects are given the job of planning the projects. The study further revealed that sometime these leaders barely have the slightest knowledge about project management and, in particular, planning – sometimes, they are in an entirely different sector and/or industry altogether.

Prior studies were conducted within specific industries (Odeyinka & Yusif, 1997; Pourrastam & Ismail, 2011; Pinto, 2013), whilst this study centres on government projects in general. In addition, these prior studies were conducted using technocrats as the only participants but this study also has solicited the views of the general public as well. This provides a different dimension to the project management literature.

9. Delays in Payment

Payment delays have to do with the local level – that is, between the government agencies and the contractors who execute the projects. It was revealed that delays in the distribution of the funds and how they are distributed among the various projects' contractors is a big problem in Ghana, as this can take several weeks, months and sometimes years. This, according to the participants, is due to many bureaucratic procedures that have to be followed. Paperwork and the layers of personnel who have to sign before the funds are paid are cumbersome. In some cases, there is no money for contractors due to the starting of too many projects at a time. This finding is similar to the studies of Frimpong et al. (2003) and Fugar and Agyakwah- Baah (2010) – although theirs are more important than this study. Delays in payment being part of the first 10 factors is not surprising as prior studies have identified a similar problem in the country, as indicated in Frimpong et al. (2003) and Fugar and Agyakwah- Baah (2010). Nevertheless, being ninth in the ranking is somewhat surprising as these previous studies have ranked delays in payment among the first five factors. The discrepancy could be linked to the differences in the sectors where the studies were carried out. Earlier studies have conducted research into a specific industry – all in the construction industry – whilst this study is looking at the government sector in general. Further, this suggests that other factors are more important than delays in payments in causing failure in Ghanaian government projects.

Moreover, even though prior studies such as Frimpong et al. (2003) and Fugar and Agyakwah- Baah (2010) have identified delays in payment as one of the most important factors for causing projects to fail in Ghana, their studies were conducted in one industry, construction, whilst this study is conducted

within the government sector. Moreover, their studies did not identify the reasons behind these delays. This study has found that one of the fundamental reasons for such delays is starting more projects than the country can actually fund. This adds a unique dimension to the literature.

10. Release of Funds

The tenth one, which is release of funds, relates to funds that come directly from the funding agency and/or donor countries. The study found that, in most cases, donor agencies and partner countries is reluctant to release the money to the Ghanaian government or the various government agencies responsible for the implementation of a project. Like Sambasian and Soon's (2007) research, this study identified that getting funds released from donor partners and agencies is very difficult. It was revealed that, in Ghana and many other developing countries, donor agencies expect the government to meet certain conditions before funds are released, hence, delays are caused, and inflation and price fluctuations set in, which push up the costs.

Another revelation was that the problem of donors and foreign countries' unwillingness to release funds was due to three issues – counterpart funding, commitment fees, and failure of previous projects. Counterpart funding means that the government would have to contribute part of the funding money and, until this money is available, these agencies will not release their part of the funding money. Commitment fee, on the other hand, is money that the government needs to commit to a project before the donor agencies release their part. This is to commit the government to the project. The fundamental cause of this is that the Ghanaian government is unable to provide its part of the funds for the project because it often starts more projects than the country can actually fund. Lastly, donor agencies are sometimes unwilling to release money for a project because earlier projects might have failed or the on-going projects are not achieving their agreed-on targets, and therefore they may not release the rest of the funds until the project has reached its expected target.

Over-reliance on funding (which is a resource) is in agreement with Pfeffer and Salackcik's (1978) Resource Dependency Theory, as cited in Hillman et al. (2009), which argues that external resources provided to an organisation affects the organisation's behaviour and, as such, the activities of the organisation are influenced by external environmental forces. In addition, this finding is supported by prior studies that concluded that resources are crucial for project implementation and as such without any resources or without adequate resources; projects are bound to fail (Krigsman, 2006; Perkins, 2006; Ruuska & Teigland, 2009). This finding is also in agreement with research conducted by Fabian and Amir (2011), which concluded that the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline project was abandoned due to the World Bank's withdrawal of the project's funding.

In developing countries such as Ghana, over-reliance on external sources of resources (especially funding) for developmental projects is very high (see Fabian & Amir, 2011; World Bank, 2012, Ghana Budget, 2015). The implication is that the need for governments and government agencies and/or performing organisations to develop skills necessary to win support from external donors is crucial for project management. Nevertheless, being tenth in the ranking is somewhat surprising as reports have shown that most of the Ghanaian government projects depend on foreign funding. The difference could be, perhaps, the context in which the studies were conducted. Prior studies were conducted within specific projects (cases) (Krigsman, 2006; Ruuska & Teigland, 2009; Fabian & Amir, 2011), whilst this study is more generic within the government sector projects.

4.1 Group Rankings

In addition to the individual factor rankings, the 32 factors identified as possible causes of Ghanaian government project failure were classified into four groups, namely: leadership, management and administration practices, resources, and external forces. These themes were arrived at through the interview analysis, as indicated in Chapter five, Table 13. The index of each of the four groups was calculated as the average mean of the individual causes within the group. In the group ranking analysis, contractors, PMP and the general public unanimously agreed that poor leadership is the biggest cause of Ghanaian government project failure; this is followed by management and administration practices,

resources, and external forces respectively; as shown in Table 13 in Chapter five. The next sub-sections discuss these groups.

1. Leadership

The findings indicate that leadership is more important (influential) than management and administrative practices, resources, and external forces in Ghanaian government project failure. This is also in line with the individual rankings as the first 10 of them included three of the leadership factors. In the main, as indicated in the previous chapter under both interview and questionnaire data analysis, 10 out of the 32 factors was classified under leadership. Specifically, the following were classified under leadership: change in project leadership, commitment to project, requirement, definition of specification, scope change, feasibility studies, release of funds, lack of continuity, political interference and change in government.

The study revealed that change in project leadership in the form of government appointees as a result of a change in government or in the top hierarchy of the local government leads to project delays and sometimes project cancellation (total abandonment). Interestingly, interviewees were of the view that, in most cases, the project leadership is not totally committed to certain projects, especially projects from which they will not gain any money directly. Project requirements and definition of a project in the form of the product (deliverables) are often changed halfway through a project, and this sometimes causes project failure. Further, scope change was cited by interviewees as a major factor that causes Ghanaian government project failure. They are of the view that sometimes the scope of a project changes before, during and after its implementation. Interviewees were also of the view that politicians often fail to conduct appropriate feasibility studies into the need for projects within a local area. Release of funds, lack of continuity, political interference and change in government were all part of the leadership factor, and these have been discussed in detail in the preceding sub-sections.

These individual findings are not surprising as most project management research that has studied causes of project failure has identified most of them (see. Assaf & AL-Hejji, 2006; Kaliba et al., 2009; Ahonen & Savolianen, 2010; Liu et al., 2011; Pourrastam & Ismail, 2011; Pinto, 2013; Zhang, 2013). Moreover, this finding is echoed in the work of Hwang and Ng (2013), which argued that a competent project manager is vital to project success, and therefore having a good project leader is vital to a project's performance. However, these leadership problems are in relation to political and/or government official leadership rather than technocrats who executes the actual projects as contractors or project management practitioners, as espoused by Hwang and Ng (2013) in their study.

2. Management and administrative practices

Management and administrative practices came second. This area is concerned with the executors of Ghanaian government projects. They are directly involved in the implementation process and therefore their input can determine the project's performance. The study revealed a number of management and administrative issues that cause Ghanaian government projects to fail and they are: planning, monitoring, selection of project managers, project team formation, task definition, user involvement, project management techniques, procurement processes, communication, management practices, supervision, bureaucracy, corruption, regulations, and delays in payment.

These findings are not surprising, in that prior literature has identified them (see Thamhain, 2004; Close, 2006; Raymond & Bergeron, 2008; Weijermars, 2009; Wong et al., 2009; Ahonen & Savolianen, 2010; Wi & Jung, 2010; Pourrastam & Ismail, 2011; Pinto, 2013). Nonetheless, most of these failure factors were linked directly to political leadership. For instance, interviewees traced planning, bureaucracy, corruption, and delays in payments to issues with political leadership. In Ghana, project management knowledge is poor (Moderator's Report, 2007), and therefore this result supports many concerns raised by various stakeholders of Ghanaian government project implementation. For instance, this result is supported by the assertions made by the Ghana Institute of Public Administration (GIMPA) moderator (Moderator's Report, 2007), who asserted that project management knowledge in the country is very low, even among tertiary institutional lecturers.

Similarly, the World Bank Report in 2007 indicated that the Ghana National Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was suffering from administrative lapses because of lack of knowledge on the part of the

administrators (World Bank Press Release, 2007). In fact, project management as a discipline was not known as an academic field in Ghana until recent years, and therefore project management professionals were drawn from other disciplines, which perhaps account for why management and administrative practice causes are dominant in causing Ghanaian government projects to fail. Until 2006, Ghana had no single tertiary institution offering project management as a course of study. The maiden one started in the Ghana Institute of Public Administration (GIMPA), a private institution which introduced an undergraduate degree in Operations and Project Management (Moderator's Report, 2007).

The implication of this finding is that management and administrative practices in relation to project management are poor and therefore, within the country in general, practitioners lack the requisite knowledge to carry out project management. Therefore, given that the study is conducted within the public sector and most of the project managers are political appointees who may not be project managers in reality, as indicated in Chapter five and the preceding sections of this chapter, then this will definitely affect project management performance. This finding also provides a different dimension to the project management literature in the area of management and administrative practices by espousing management and administrative practices beyond executors (management) to political management and administrators. In other words, this study has gone beyond the management perspective to add a political leadership perspective.

3. Resources

The third one is resources – the study revealed that Ghana relies heavily on resources from other donor agencies and countries and this means that it is virtually impossible for the country to execute projects using only tax-payers' money. This result is echoed in various media and government reports on the level of borrowing in the area of projects (GNA, 2012; Daily Guide, 2012; Bawumia, 2015). Nonetheless, although in Ghana a lot of projects are fighting for the same resources, this was not the most important group because, if there are resources and the leadership and management lack the requisite skills and political will to execute the projects, then the projects will not be successful.

This confirms the assertions of Perkins (2006), who attributes the root cause of project failure to 'knowledge': either project managers do not have the requisite knowledge, or they do have it but fail to apply it appropriately. In this sense, no matter the availability of other material resources, the leadership and management skills and knowledge are more important for successful project execution.

Preffer and Salackcik's (1978) Resource Dependency Theory is evidenced here. The Resource Dependency Theory (RDT) holds the view that external resources in an organisation affects the behaviour that organisation and as such its activities are influenced by external environmental forces (Hillman et al., 2009); and, in this case, the Ghanaian government could be equated to an organisation. In addition, this finding is supported by prior studies that concluded that resources are crucial for project implementation and as such without resources or with inadequate ones; projects are bound to fail (Krigsman, 2006; Perkins, 2006; Ruuska & Teigland, 2009). The implication is that the Ghanaian government needs to manage local resources as well as devise strategies to liaise with donor agencies in order to amass enough resources to carry out projects; otherwise, the government projects are bound to fail.

4. External forces

The project managers, general public and contractors all agreed that external forces such as religious beliefs, culture, natural disasters and related issues also influence Ghanaian government project failure. However, this was not highly ranked among the categories of study participants. For example, bad weather conditions are natural events which cannot be controlled by the parties involved in the execution of projects. The finding suggests that these are not very important as compared to other categories; nevertheless, it needs to be considered.

In Ghana, the effect of inclement weather on projects may not be significant but it needs to be taken into account (Fugar & Agyakwah-Baah, 2010). Ghana has two main weather patterns – dry season and wet season (World Factbook, 2015, Ghanaweb, 2015). In the dry season, an unfavourable site condition as a result of heat is a major factor that causes delays (Fugar & Agyakwah-Baah, 2010). During the rainy season, construction work may be disrupted, especially outdoor activities (Fugar & Agyakwah- Baah, 2010). During the rainy season, temperatures range from 21°C to 32°C and the humidity is relatively high

(World Factbook, 2015, Ghanaweb, 2015). The rest of the year is hot and dry with temperatures reaching 38°C. The high temperatures and high humidity, ranging from 25 to 80%, definitely affect the efficiency of project workers, especially in construction and outdoor projects, as a result of the dullness of their senses, poor coordination and discomfort due to body heat. This supports prior studies in the construction sector in Ghana by Frimpong et al. (2003) and Fugar and Agyakwah- Baah (2010).

Cultural and/or belief system was also perceived as being able to cause project failure in the country, especially failure in the form of delay and its subsequent effects. However, the interviewees did not view this as a major problem as compared to other causes such as funding, political interference, corruption, etc., as sacrifices are often made to appease the gods. Although previous literature has identified culture as a factor that causes projects to fail in developing countries (Heeks, 2002; Saad et al., 2002; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Alsakini et al., 2004; Maube et al., 2008; Amid et al., 2012), all these works have discussed culture in relation to management practices, models and frameworks. However, this study has identified a different angle to the debate by espousing culture in them of belief system rather than management.

Natural disasters were not felt to be a major problem in relation to Ghanaian government project implementation. As analysed in the previous chapter, the study's participants perceived that, although natural disasters are bound to happen and project executors cannot do anything about them, they rarely occur, hence, they have a lower negative impact on project implementation.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

A number of factors have been cited in the literature as the causes of projects failure; however, whilst some are peculiar to certain industries and geographical locations (Mukabeta et al., 2008; Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010; Amid et al., 2012), others are generic to all projects (Ruuska & Teigland, 2009; Ochieg & Price, 2010; Fabian & Amir, 2011; Pourrastam & Ismail, 2011). As a result, the second objective of this study was to identify factors that cause Ghanaian government projects in general to fail and their relative importance.

In the main, the study identified 32 factors that account for Ghanaian government project failure. These are: monitoring, corruption, political interference, change in government, bureaucracy, fluctuation of prices, lack of continuity, planning, delays in payment, release of funds, change in project leadership, management practices, procurement processes, project funding, commitment to project, selection of project managers, project team formation, project management techniques, feasibility studies, communication, supervision, scope change, capacity, task definition, definition of specification, requirement, regulations, culture and belief systems, user involvement, labour, pressure groups (media, NGOs, political activities etc.), and natural disaster.

Some of these findings are in agreement with previous literature, whilst others are new and/or have different meanings in the local context. For instance, issues such as price fluctuation, delays in payments, monitoring, resources and commitment are often found in project management literature but corruption, culture and belief system were not supported by previous literature. Moreover, although some of these factors are the same as previous literature, the meanings in the local context are not the same. For instance, monitoring was perceived from a different angle – whereas previous literature looked at it from the execution point of view in relation to culture (Amponsah, 2010); in the case of this research, it goes beyond culture to relate to political and cultural perspectives. Further, release of project funds was looked at from the perspective of the donor agencies rather than the clients as indicated in the previous research (Frimpong et al., 2003; Kaliba et al., 2009; Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010; Fugar & Agyakwah-Baah, 2010; Aziz, 2013). Issues such as counterpart funding and commitment fees were all mentioned as part of the reasons for the delays, and these relate directly to donor agencies and partner countries. Again, capacity meant different things in the local context – to some interviewees, it means human resources but to others, logistics and to others, it means both human resources and material resources.

Previous literature had shown that the causes (factors) do not have the same importance (influence) (Frimpong et al., 2003; Kaliba et al., 2009; Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010; Fugar & Agyakwah-Baah, 2010; Aziz, 2013). Accordingly, all the factors were ranked using Mean Average Ranking, Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficients, and Kruskal–Wallis H test. The statistical testing of the degree of agreement among the three categories of participants indicated that there is a high degree of agreement on the most

important factors (causes) of Ghanaian government project failure. The findings indicate that contractors, project management practitioners and general public agreed that the top 10causes of Ghanaian government project failure in descending order are: (1) monitoring (2) corruption (3) political interference (4) change in government (5) bureaucracy (6) lack of continuity (7) fluctuation of prices (8) planning (9) delays in payment and (10) release of funds.

The position of some of these factors in the rankings was surprising – for example, monitoring being the number one most influential cause of Ghanaian government project failure. Prior literature has ranked delays in payment as the most influential factor (Frimpong et al., 2003; Fugar & Agyakwah-Baah, 2010); however, the variance in findings may be due to the sector where the studies were conducted. These prior studies have been conducted in specific industries whereas this research is conducted in Ghanaian government projects in general. Moreover, interviewees linked monitoring to politics, corruption and cultural orientation towards government projects rather than technocrats as espoused by other authors (Frimpong et al., 2003; Fugar & Agyakwah- Baah, 2010).

Again, corruption has not been featured much in prior literature, especially, academic literature; therefore, this finding makes a contribution to the theory by adding to the previous literature, which has only been in the form of media, industry and commentary reports (TI, 2008; Ghanaian Chronicle, 2012, OccupyGhana, 2014; Imani, 2015; Bawomia, 2015; Addo, 2015). Moreover, although these findings appear surprising as earlier studies have not identified them as important factors, given that the study is conducted in the public sector in a typical developing country, they are not surprising, as these countries have always been among the worst performing countries in corruption-free public sector league tables (see Transparency International (TI), 2008).

Furthermore, the political interference finding provides a unique contribution to the academic literature in the Ghanaian context as previous literature on the subject has been in the form of industry reports and media commentary (see Meet the Press, 2009; Takyi-Boadu, 2011; Ghanaian Chronicle, 2012). Closely related to political interference is management and administrative practices. Prior literature has discussed this factor in relation to the management of the projects (Mochal, 2005; World Bank Report, 2007; Lever, 2008; Ruuska & Teigland, 2009); however, this study has identified another dimension to the project management literature by espousing management and administrative practices linked directly and indirectly to political leadership in project management. This is a unique contribution to the literature.

Additionally, the study has espoused bureaucracy as a major factor that contributes to Ghanaian government project failure – this is country-specific contribution; it can be applied in many countries with similar systems. Prior studies have espoused this problem in the Ghanaian institutional system (Killick, 2008; Amoako & Lyon, 2014); however, it has not been discussed in the context of project management within the Ghanaian local context.

In addition, the 32 factors identified as causes of Ghanaian government project failure were classified into four groups – namely, leadership, management and administration practices, resources, and external forces. These groupings were made based on the themes that were arrived at during the interview analysis phase. In the group ranking, contractors, PMP and the general public unanimously agreed that poor leadership is the most influential cause of Ghanaian government project failure; this is followed by poor management and administrative practices, low resources, and external forces respectively. This shows that leadership and project management and administrative practices are more influential in causing Ghanaian government projects to fail as compared to resources and external forces.

Further, leadership in previous research related to the management and administrative (executors) perspective (Perkins, 2006; Hwang & Ng, 2013), whereas leadership in this study mainly pertains to political leadership and/or government officials' leadership. Even though external forces came last, it must be noted that the managers and leaders of Ghanaian government projects need to pay attention to such forces as they are beyond their control.

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