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## The Imperative of Teamwork in Achieving Value for Money in Construction Projects

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### ABSTRACT

Construction Industry is highly vulnerable to be benefited from teams as the construction products are delivered by a collection of diverse professionals. Therefore, the paper aimed at establishing the influences of teamwork in achieving value for money in the construction projects. The theoretical research approach was adopted by appraised the previous research on the teamwork in the construction industry and value for money. The findings show the benefits derived from the teamwork in achieving the value for money are: high Productivity, high quality decision making, assurance of good quality performance, conflict resolution, information and knowledge are properly shared, assurance of job satisfaction, improved working relationships and reduce rivalry among the professionals etc. Therefore, the paper suggests that there should be an advocacy by the professional bodies like QSRBN, CORBON, and COREN to sanitize their members on the needs to establish effective teamwork in any construction projects in order to achieve the value for money. In addition, the professionals and other stakeholders in the construction organizations should always work as a team in order to reduce conflicts and achieve quality project delivery within the predetermine sum at the time frame.

**Keyword:** Team, Teamwork, Value, Project Delivery, Construction Industry

### INTRODUCTION

Construction Industry is a project based sector where each project is unique and emerge with a number of stakeholders who team with each other at various stages during the project Lifecycle. Cornick and Mather (1999) emphasize that each construction project can be considered as a multi-disciplinary organization that may or may not

continue to work together once the project is completed. This temporary nature of construction projects and its heavy fragmentation makes construction works a considerably complex process. The nature of the construction industry is fragmented and diversified with different professionals and stakeholders working collectively

to accomplish the project goals in order to attain the value for money. Forgues & Koskela, (2009) indicated that part of the reason for poor performance of project delivery in the construction industry is due to the inability of project participants to work collaboratively. However, Baiden and Price (2011) expressed that the construction industry is composed of several types of organizations and groups of individuals with different characteristics, different cultures and style of management with complementary skills and expertise required for the project delivery. Rahman and Kumaraswamy (2008) added that a typical construction project involves the collaboration of a number of organizations, which are brought together for the duration of the project to form the 'project team'. The nature of the competitive environment within the construction industry has led to the increasing need for the collaboration of all key players in any construction project in a multi-disciplinary team at both project management and implementation (Cicmil and Marshall 2005). Therefore, teamwork in the construction projects implies mobilization of collaborative efforts from project team members and continuity of their harmonious relationships to

eliminate any friction between them during project execution to ensure value for money and improved project delivery (Katzenbach and Smith 1993). The teamwork is no longer a group of people working in the same area, using the same equipment, dealing with the same clients within the same location. Nowadays, a team is comprised of people from different organizations, located around the globe with a high degree of interdependence geared toward the accomplishment of mutual goals, especially now with technology advancement. Moses and Stahelski (1999) further asserted that teams are prevalent in organizations and stipulate imperative contributions to organizational productivity.

Moreover, the construction industry is knowledge intensive organizations where stakeholders share knowledge, skills and experiences across various stages of the project life cycle. The construction industry comprises of the professionals with different background of the knowledge and has to work jointly to accomplish the client's satisfaction. Therefore, the effective knowledge sharing among the professionals through teamwork has been a very difficult task for the construction industry and thereby resulted in poor

efficiency of the overall construction process. The Nigeria construction organisations have been under considerable pressure to improve the efficiency of the construction process to avoid the delays and unnecessary variation that causes time and cost overrun in the construction projects. In this context, effective teamwork has been viewed as a strategy to promote the exchange of skills, talents, experiences and knowledge among the professionals and other stakeholders to attain the value for money in the construction projects. The view has been expressed by Rahman; Kumaraswamy and Ling (2007) that Projects' performance can be improved when employees communicate by sharing and utilizing, best practices, lesson learnt, experiences, insights, as well as create new valuable knowledge. Therefore, the paper aimed at establishing the significance, impact of teamwork in achieving value for money.

#### **TEAMWORK IN THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS**

The construction industry is a project-based industry where each project needs different people in accordance with their professionalism, knowledge, and experience, and requires them to work and coordinate with others

from different companies. The construction industry has always dealt with the relationship between the team, task, individual, and leadership (El-Gohary and El-Diraby 2010). It is sufficient to conclude that teamwork is dominant in construction's cultural tradition and at the foundation of successful construction projects. Teamwork in construction projects have been impacted by diverse and exceptional features in the construction industry, as in the way it goes about its business. This can be seen more in the application of integrated project delivery method, where teams start to work as one unit, creating faster delivery times, minimizing costs, and creating an enjoyable working relationship for the entire project team. Baiden; Price and Dainty (2006) stated that an overpowering need today for construction organisations is to embrace teamwork in a broader sense than just individual work teams, due to the complexity of the construction business. As indicated by Alshawi and Faraj (2002), a typical construction project is a collaborative scheme that involves a number of different organizations brought together to form "the construction project team. This team is responsible for the design and construction of the

project. Any parties involved in a construction project team, such as the project manager, site supervisor, and crews understand the importance of having effective teamwork. The project manager can be considered as the most important person for the success or failure of a project (Jorgensen and Emmitt 2009). Project managers for the client frequently work collaboratively with other parties, such as the architects and contractors, with each in charge of design and construction processes. Selecting a competent project manager has much at stake, since the project manager is assumed responsibilities at various stages of the project, regardless of the types of contractual agreements for implementing the project. Teamwork is the act of working effectively with others to achieve a common goal. It needs to be built on trust, which can only be achieved through honesty, openness, consistency, and respect.

- **Honesty** means that team members tell one another the truth, not just what each wants to hear. They feel comfortable disclosing problems so that other members can join in the problem-solving process and help overcome obstacles.

- **Openness** means that team members are not afraid to say what is on their minds; they do not fear repercussions for communicating their thoughts. They share information because they are confident that people won't make fun of their ideas.
- **Consistency** means that each team member works, and interacts, in a consistent manner. This allows members of the team to know what to expect from one another. Progress toward a goal can suffer when team members are inconsistent with their work, meeting attendance, communication.
- **Respect** means that team members see one another as vital parts of the team. They speak and behave respectfully toward one another. They listen to everyone's ideas without judgement, and offer constructive criticism.

### **The Elements of Effective Teamwork in the Construction Industry**

In the construction industry, some teams work extremely well together, while others seem to fall

apart or actually hinder progress. The elements of effective teamwork facilitate the building and maintenance of high-performance teams in the organisation. The following elements of effective teamwork's are team goals, focus and responsibilities, and involvement and trust.

**Team Goals:** One of the first steps in building an effective team is to define the goals of the project. In construction, this can involve a preconstruction meeting or a kick-off meeting. Everyone should agree on the objectives of the project before the implementation level.

**Focus and Responsibilities:** When working as a team, each member has different duties and responsibilities. To function and focus effectively, team members must understand these, as well as the duties and responsibilities of the other team members. At the beginning of the project, coordinate responsibilities among team members. Understanding their own roles as well as their teammate's lowers the risk of confusion, injury, and lost time.

**Involvement and Trust:** The key to effective teamwork's for the team members to respect and trust each other. In construction, people from different professions, such as contractors and Architecture, QS

and Engineers, need to understand each other responsibility and establish trust among them.

### **Attributes of Effective Teamwork in the Construction Industry**

Chan; Ho and Tam (2001) described teamwork as a cooperative process that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results. Salas; Priest; and Bruke (2005) added that teamwork is a situation where very members has a common goal or purpose where they can develop effective, mutual relationships to achieve project goals. Teamwork depends upon individual working together in a cooperative environment to achieve target goals through sharing knowledge and skills. In addition, successful teamwork relies upon synergism existing between all team members, creating an environment where they are all willing to contribute and participate in order to promote and nurture a positive, effective team environment. All Team members must be flexible enough to adapt to cooperative working environments where goals are achieved through collaboration and social interdependence rather than individualist, competitive goals (Salas; Stagl and Burke 2004).

However, there are many attributes to effective teamwork in the construction industry which are as follows:

- ✓ **Commitment of team members:** All team members must be committed to the success of the team by willing to exchange their knowledge, experiences, skills and talent. Successful teams are motivated, engaged and aim to achieve at the highest level.
- ✓ **Interdependence:** All team members need to create an environment where they togetherness can contribute far more than as individuals. A positive interdependent teamwork brings out the best in each person (Sheard and Kakabadse 2002).
- ✓ **Interpersonal Skills:** This involves ability to discuss issues openly with team members as a result of honest, trustworthy, supportive, respect and commitment of individuals.
- ✓ **Open Communication and positive feedback:** Team leader should develop ability to actively listen to the concerns and needs of team members and valuing their contributions during

the course of construction projects. In addition, in principle of teamwork every member will be willing to give and receive constructive criticism and provide authentic feedback.

- ✓ **Appropriate team composition:** This is essential in the creation of a successful team, where every team member needs to be fully aware of their specific role and understand what is expected of them in terms of their contribution to the project.
- ✓ **Commitment to team processes, leadership & accountability:** team members need to be accountable for their contribution to the project. They also need to be aware of processes, best practice and talent expected from them to accomplish the set target. Quality leadership is the key to the successful teamwork in the construction industry by sharing knowledge, skills, experiences, decision making and problem solving.

## **BARRIERS TO CREATING EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK**

Fostering productive teamwork among the employees facilitates the construction organisations to succeed. Effective teamwork can benefit construction organisations in the areas of improved communication, broader collaboration and a greater sense of accountability to the group. But there are barriers that effective teamwork which the project managers need to be able to identify and eliminate. These include poor communication, unclear goals, lack of manager involvement, and big egos. Bacon and Blyton (2000) further added that there are several barriers to teamwork in construction projects, such as disrespect and mistrust among various project participants and professional rivalry that must be overcome towards developing and maintaining teamwork throughout the entire project's process to accomplish the value for money. However, some of the barriers were explaining below.

**Poor Communication:** Good communication, foster teamwork, poor communication is a barrier to developing a productive work atmosphere. Staff members who will not communicate, or are unaware of the proper communication channels to use within the team, can create

breakdowns that prevent team development. Project Managers need to be aware of the double-edged sword of team communication, and be able to identify when poor communication is hampering the group's success.

**Unclear goals:** A work team is created to achieve goals within the workplace. Those goals can be for a specific project, or they can be the ongoing goals that define the department's responsibilities. When those goals are not presented clearly by management, or the individual responsibilities of each team member in achieving those goals are unclear, then the team cannot work effectively.

**Lack of Project manager involvement:** Project Managers create teams of qualified staff members in order to complete projects within the predetermined sum with good quality at the stipulated time. But when the project manager cannot find the time to be involved in the team's execution of its duties, the ability to create an atmosphere of effective teamwork is threatened.

**Big Egos:** Teams that contain members who are not working for the general benefit of the group will have a difficult time developing into an effective unit. Individual staff members are assigned roles within a team, but if

the members feel that they cannot interfere with the work of their teammates, then the group dynamic is threatened. Team members need to keep their egos in check and work on their assigned tasks to help develop an effective team.

### **VALUE FOR MONEY**

According to Merna and Lamb (2009) Value for money (VFM) as a means of receiving the full value of what the client spent for the project. VFM stems from the principle that in any commercial transaction, no party to be short-changed by the other party (Moneke, 2013). In addition, Dikko (2013) further expressed that VFM is obtaining a high value at a low cost and where possible obtaining the highest value at the lowest cost, thus reducing cognitive dissonance to the barest minimum. It is also seen as striking the best balance between economy efficiency and effectiveness. VFM is the optimum combination of whole-of-life costs and quality of the good or service to meet the user's requirement. The term whole-of-life is used to refer to the life cycle of the good or service. VFM is not the choice of goods or services based on the lowest cost bid. (Morallos and Amekudzi 2008).The construction organisation must account for the

costs and savings over the lifetime of the project when performing VFM assessments. VFM assessments are processes agencies utilize while comparing procurement of different project delivery methods. VFM assessments are typically a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to determine what delivery method will provide the most value for money for the project. The purpose of Value for Money analysis is to inform governments' decision on whether to implement proposed projects. To that end, VFM analysis typically involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis (Moneke, 2013). The quantitative component includes all project factors that can be valued in monetary terms. Quantitative assessments typically rely on the use of a public sector comparator (PSC) to estimate the expected life cycle costs to the public agency if pursued using the traditional method. The qualitative assessment takes into consideration the aspects of the project that are not quantifiable. However, in the construction industry a product is generally considered to have good value if that product produces an appropriate performance. Value is in degree. The satisfaction, or usefulness or functionality or



quality increase value increases. There is relationship between quality and value such as value = quality = satisfaction = usefulness = functionality of the product concerned. However, it has been established that quality is diminished by the presence of errors in the project (Ayodele,2015). The more the error (e), the less the quality (q). Where the quality is inversely proportional to the error. Mathematically  $e = 1/q$  or  $q = 1/e$ . Therefore, the more the errors in a product the less the value (v): Mathematically  $v = 1/e$  or  $e = 1/v$ .

#### **BENEFITS OF TEAMWORK TO ACHIEVING VALUE FOR MONEY IN THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS**

The philosophy behind every Bill of Quantities prepared for any construction projects by QS anywhere in the world is for the clients to have value for money spent on the project, which has become unavoidable in project costing. However, the maximum benefits obtained by a client during the course of the construction projects, is the payment made by the client to contractors, consultant and others within the stipulated available resources for the services rendered in achieving the success of the project is appropriately called

value for money. Moreover, to accomplish the set target by the client, the professionals and others stakeholder that are both directly and indirectly involves in the construction projects they have teamed up to work jointly. Teamwork during the courses of the construction projects have several advantages for the success of the project to achieve the value for money. In any construction projects with effective teamwork the following benefits are guaranteed:

- ❖ High Productivity
- ❖ High quality decision making
- ❖ Assurance of good quality performance
- ❖ Conflict resolution
- ❖ Information and knowledge are properly shared
- ❖ Assurance of job satisfaction
- ❖ Improved working relationships
- ❖ Reduce rivalry among the professionals
- ❖ Assurance of effective communication among members
- ❖ Enhance creativity

#### **CONCLUSION**

The imperative of teamwork in achieving value for money in construction projects were evaluated. Having considered the

challenges face by construction organisations in Nigeria in the areas of quality workmanships, poor planning and design, time and cost overruns, repetition work as a result of mistakes, disputes and abandonment of projects. These aforementioned problems can be addressed when the professionals and other stakeholders in the construction organisations are teaming up to work collectively. Working collectively as a team facilitate the sharing of knowledge, skills, experiences and lesson learned of the past projects to avoid reinvent of the wheel. Therefore, teamwork in the construction organisations has become paramount based on the benefit outline above to accomplish the value for money. Therefore, the paper suggests that there should be an advocacy by the professional bodies like QSRBN, CORBON, and COREN to sanitize their members on the needs to establish effective teamwork in any construction projects in order to achieve the value for money. The Government should support the professional bodies by encouraging them to display their responsibility in accordance with the rule of the engagement. However, since the current administration is committed to the transparency and accountability in order to achieve

the value for money for construction project, then the professionals should be adequately involved right from the inception, awarding and execution of construction projects. In addition, the professionals and other stakeholders in the construction organisations should always work as a team in order to reduce conflicts and achieve quality project delivery within the stipulated time and estimated cost with good quality.

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