

On The Role Of Communication In Construction Projects In Nigeria

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Abstract: Communication is one of the greatest tools necessary for project success in Nigerian construction industry. For example, information in the form of drawings, specifications and construction methods must be communicated from one expert to another throughout all the stages of construction. Therefore, all construction project execution required effective communication between construction professionals in all project delivery. This paper examines the role of communication in construction projects. In addition, effects of communication on project construction such as site meetings, annual report, performance evaluation scheme and work breakdown structure are identified and discussed. It is hoped that these findings will help to eradicate or minimize the problems of communication in the Nigeria's construction industry.

Keywords: communication, construction industry, project delivery, construction professionals, communication channels.

1. INTRODUCTION

Construction is defined as the physical act of carrying out design created by Engineers and Architects [1]. It provides building and offices for business owners, homes for people to live, schools for children to attend e.t.c. In Nigeria, the construction professionals who are regularly engaged in the industry are Architects, Quantity Surveyors, Geodetic Engineers, Structural Engineers, Electrical Engineers and Service Engineers [2]. Nigeria contractors can be categorised into two namely national (indigenous) and multi-national firm [3]. The operations of indigenous firms are limited to Nigeria while the multi-national firms operate both in Nigeria and other foreign countries. The construction industry plays a crucial role in socioeconomic development of any nation. According to Mogbo [4], it is being used to control the economies of nations. It is always strongly related to politics, economics, sociology and the legal framework [5]. Political contribution in construction planning is obligatory in the current world democracies [6]. In developing countries like Nigeria, the growth of construction industry is hampered due to their weak and docile economy, social distress and political instability [7]. Like other third world countries such as Saudi Arabia, Libya and Malaysia, Nigerian construction industry has suffered many setbacks in terms of project completion [4]. According to the author, many construction projects suffer from delay which may be largely due to cash flow problems, insufficient communication, mistrust and arbitration. Other factors are termination of contract, weather condition, design errors, shortage of skilled labour and improper planning and scheduling. Various researchers have conducted numerous studies on the causes of delays in the construction industry like Ghana [8], Egypt [9], Malaysia [10], Indonesia [11], Vietnam [12], Thailand [13] and Iran [14]. All these papers have identified diverse and varying factors among which are shortages or inadequacies in infrastructure,

incompetence of contractors, extra cost and time elongation.

2. Communication in construction industry

Communication is very essential in project execution. It plays a vital role in all stages of construction such as design production, organization and management [15]. Statistics have shown that over 50% of projects in Nigeria are unsuccessful due to inappropriate communication method [3]. Various professionals in the construction industry must communicate effectively for any given project to be successful. During the course of project execution, information in the form of drawings, specifications and construction methods must be fully disseminated [16]. Some professionals may not be able to understand some aspects of a project if little information are available thus leading into project failure. Ineffective communication system leads to de-motivated workforce, design errors, slowdown in the entire job and failure in production [1]. Construction professionals should communicate throughout all construction stages. There is need for professionals within the construction industry to appropriately communicate with each other for the successful delivery of performance goals within the organization. Scope of work and details of construction are communicated by means of drawings, contract documents, addenda and specifications [15].

3. Communication Channels

According to Mehra [15], communication will always involve more than one person. As a project unfolds, communication can occur in various directions. There is upward communication to management from one organization and the customers organization. Lateral communication takes place with customers and within project teams. Ineffective communication will have adverse effects on construction project. Some effects of communication in project delivery are discussed in the next session.

4. Effects of Communication in Construction Industry

- **Inexperience interpretation of working drawings**
Wrong interpretation of work drawing can lead to failure in building projects. This renders all efforts by

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professionals useless. The huge loss in terms of project cost is enormous.

- **Poor and distorted information**

This could have an adverse effect on the level of work done on site. It would slow down project completion and lead to extra cost.

- **Unclear channels of information**

If there is inappropriate communication management system, work done on project site would be slow culminating in delay in construction project.

- **Site meeting**

Regular site meeting between the consultants and contractor is very essential. The lack of it could impede progress on site work and may lead to project failure.

- **Late dissemination of instruction**

When instructions on project plans and strategies are not received on time, it would certainly affect work output on project site negatively.

- **Regular review and adjustment of communication plans**

Regular review and adjustment of communication plans is necessary for project success. This is because the global world technology is fast advancing with evolving new technologies each day and this renders old method obsolete. The use of e-mails and cell phones could be adopted to remove communication barriers and improve project delivery [16].

- **Appropriate communication media for specific purposes**

This is necessary to ensure that specific information are passed to targetted audience among the project team.

- **Project annual report**

This should be given yearly to motivate site workers and improve project success.

- **Work breakdown structure**

Information on work breakdown structure is necessary for division of labour which would in turn increase the performance level of project team members

5. Conclusion

Considering the Nigerian construction industry, there is a strong need for improvement in project communication management for the enhancement of project delivery. Studies have established that lack of proper communication between the consultants and contractors has a significant contribution on project success in Nigeria. In this regard, all stakeholders in the industry in Nigeria must put machineries in place to ensure that project communication must always be on the agenda of site workers and management before the commencement of every project. In conclusion, the application of information technology in the management of construction project is recommended between professionals in all stages of construction in Nigeria construction industry. This will increase performance levels and improve project success.

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