

Project Management and Evaluation: An Approach for National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to x-ray some of the tools in project management and evaluation and to determine the best suitable ways by which project management and evaluation can be achieved to bring about a continuous developmental change. The problem of project management therefore is not about conceptualizing policies, but rather, it is all about effective management of project monitoring, evaluation and implementation which has been observed to have been less than satisfactory. The methods adopted for the collection of data for this paper was secondary sources. The findings indicate a high rate of abandonment as soon as the contractors and the officials make sufficient money out of a project, or as soon as phase of a project is completed and in some cases, when mobilization fee is paid. In addition, some managers do not undertake detailed evaluation of a project either after it has been completed or at appropriate point during the implementation process. In conclusion, project managers should take the project cycle as an important framework and tools which can applied at each stage of the project cycle. Hence from our findings above, for a manager to effectively monitor and evaluate a project towards achieving its desired objectives, the following major recommendations subsist. That monitoring and evaluation of projects calls for training of staff regularly on the art of project management; second, management should take monitoring and evaluation exercises as a continuous exercises for that is the only way the course of project implementation can be determined and third, staff engaged in project monitoring should be paid extra moneys to motivate them and to reduce the incidence of corruption.

Keywords: Evaluation, Monitoring and Implementation, National Development and Project Management.

Introduction

The problem in Nigeria is not about conceptualizing policies, plan, programmes and projects. Neither is it about putting down development plans. As a matter of fact, there are still lamentations on the state of the socio-economic development and welfare of the people. Government programmes and projects, are designed towards addressing such negative conditions which are not difficult to spot. For example, the rate and incidence of disease, morbidity and mortality, and infrastructural decay are all on the increase. There are series of policy initiatives by both the Non-governmental organization (NGOs) and the government itself, but suffice it to say that these initiated programs and projects are not only unclear but the target beneficiaries are difficult to identify. Thus, the impact by these programme and projects has been less than satisfactory. In other cases, some components of the projects are compromised, thus leading to project disorder and failures (Okoli, 2006; Onah, 2006).

Based on the above assumptions, common with programmes and projects in Nigeria, we are challenged to articulate a wide spectrum of ideas on the critical aspects of programme management.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Management

Under this concept, one cannot undermine the importance of a manager. It is important to state that management involves the pursuit of goal of an organization. Nwachukwu (1988) cited in Oyidi, Ebiloma and Matthew (2017, p118), defined management as “getting things done through others.” Further clarification of management is the coordination of all the resources of an organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives.

Taylor (1971) views management as an act of knowing exactly what to do, or what people should do in the best cheapest way. Therefore, project management is the practice of initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing the work of a team to achieve specific goals and meet specific success criteria at the specified time. According to UNDP (2013), the primary challenge of project management is to achieve all the project goals within the given constraint. This information is usually described in project documentation, created at the beginning of the development process. The primary constraints are scope, time, quality and budget. The secondary – and more ambitious- challenge is to optimize the allocation of necessary inputs and apply them to meet pre-defined objectives (UNDP, 2013).

The objective of project management is to produce a complete project which complies with the client’s objectives. In many cases the objective of project management is also to shape or reform the client’s brief to feasibly address the client’s objectives. Once the client’s objectives are clearly established they should influence all decisions made by other people involved in the project – for example project managers, designers, contractors and sub-contractors. Ill-defined or too tightly prescribed project management objectives are detrimental to decision-making (Joseph, 2003). A project is a temporary endeavor designed to produce a unique product, service or result with a defined beginning and end (usually time-constrained, and often constrained by funding (Dennis, 2007). Onah (2006) states that managers combine resources to attain organization goals by carrying out four basic managerial functions or activities, i.e. planning, and decision-making, organizing, leading and controlling, directed at the organization’s goals in an efficient and effective manner.

The temporary nature of projects stands in contrast with business as usual (or operations) which are repetitive permanent or semi-permanent functional activities to produce products or services. In practice, the management of such distinct production approaches requires the development of distinct technical skills and management strategies. (Young-Hook, 2005).

Project Management types

Project management methods can be applied to any project. According to Young-Hook (2005), project management is often tailored to a specific type of project based on project size, nature and industry. For example, the construction industry, which focuses on the delivery of buildings, road, and bridges, has developed its own specialized form of project management that it refers to as construction project management and in which project manager can become trained and certified. The information technology industry has also evolved to develop its own form of project management that is referred to as IT project management and which specializes in the delivery of technical assets and service that are required to pass through various lifecycle phases such as planning, design, development, testing and deployment. Biotechnology project management focus on the intricacies of biotechnology research and development. Localization project management includes many standard project management practices even though many consider this type of management to be a very different discipline. It focuses on three important

goals: time, quality and budget. Successful projects are completed on schedule, within budget, and according to previously agreed quality standards (Martin, 2002).

We discussed project management as concepts because, development is a goal which management of project planning and implementation intends to achieve in any public organization, while management as a concept, enable us locate the extent at which effective project management and evaluation can be achieved in organization.

The Concept of Evaluation

Evaluation is designed to reveal the extent to which plan objectives have been achieved (Onah, 2006). The purpose of evaluating is to determine the effectiveness of a job. The information collected in the evaluation process should enable the organization to improve on the programme for future growth. Nwachukwu (1988) contends that the most objective way of evaluating a programme is to: (i) obtain the honest and unbiased assessment from the trainees (ii) determine if in fact learning occurred by administering test – oral or written; (iii) determine if the organization has benefited by it through reduction in costs, better morale, increased productivity, reduced absenteeism rate or reduced rate of staff turnover. Although, this assessment or evaluation bothers on evaluating a training programme, however, evaluation takes the same process and its objectives are the same with project monitoring and evaluation. Evaluation intends to reveal those things that are likely going to affect the attainment of a designed project's objective.

According to Onah (2006), there are two stages in life of any project. These two key stages are project monitoring and evaluation. While a plan or project is being implemented, it is necessary to monitor progress in order to ensure that activities are being undertaken according to plan and identify any problem which may be occurring. Monitoring should ideally be a continuous process which is built into the implementation of a project, and it is therefore, necessary to consider what sort of monitoring is required and how it will be performed during the earlier stage of planning the implementation process (Onah, 2006).

While monitoring progresses during implementation of a project, it is often necessary to undertake detailed evaluation of a project either after it has been completed or at appropriate points during the implementation process. Evaluation is designed to reveal the extent to which plan objectives have been achieved, any anticipated effects it may have had, so that lessons can be learned for future planning (David, 2006).

Conyers and Hills (1984) succinctly states that an evaluation requires the collection of data, some of which are specifically related to the particular project and some are of a more general nature, and these data may also help the planner to identify new problems or issues which should become the focus of planning activity of the future. Onah (2006) observed that despite the apparent needs for monitoring and evaluation of projects, the trend observable indicates a high rate of abandonment as soon as the contractors and the officials make sufficient money out of a project, or as soon as a phase of project is completed. The observation above shows the characteristics of Nigerian project managers, and in some other cases, projects are abandoned when a contractor collects a mobilization fee in connivance with some officials of the organization. This shows lack of commitment and interest of the organization. There could be other reasons, but without adequate monitoring and evaluation, projects are cut short of their life cycle and they therefore stand the chance of not meeting their objectives or even "death" (Onah, 2006). UNDP 2013) stresses that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is used to assess the performance of projects, institutions and programmes set up by governments, international organizations and NGOs. Its goal is to improve current and future management of outputs, outcomes and impact. Monitoring is a continuous assessment of programmes based on early detailed information and the progress or delay of the ongoing assessed activities. 'An

evaluation is an examination concerning the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in the light of specified objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation processes can be managed by the donors financing the assessed activities, by an independent branch of the implementing organization, by the project manager or implementing team themselves and/or by a private company. The credibility and objectivity of monitoring and evaluation reports depend very much on the independence of the evaluators. Their expertise and independence is of major importance for the process to be successful (UNDP, 2013).

There are perennial factors that impinge on national development. Despite efforts being put in place through the process of monitoring and evaluation of public projects or programmes, there are incidences of high level of corruption during the implementation process. Corruption itself is as old as formation of the society. With corruption there can be no sustainable development. Corruption invariably strangles the system of social organization.

However, since our focus is on project management and evaluation, we shall discuss other variables or activities that encourage an organization to achieve its desired goal through project monitoring and evaluation process. These variables are: Information management; management of project activities; management of manpower; management of materials; and management of community relations.

Concept of Development

The core aim of any management of public organization is how to achieve the desired goal. The purpose of goal attainment is nothing less than how best the management can utilize the resources in order to achieve the intended goal for the development of the organization (Onah, 2006). Conyers and Hills (1984) opined that in order to understand the various interpretations of the term 'development' and 'underdevelopment' it is necessary to consider the meaning of the word 'develop' from which both stem. Development itself connotes a gradual stage of changes toward a better life.

Dictionary definitions of the verb 'to develop' suggests that it means to change towards some sort of state of expansion, improvement, or completeness or a state in which the subjects true identity is revealed. The verb 'to develop' can be transitive or intransitive (Onah, 2006). This means that, when we use the word with reference to countries, it is possible for a country either to develop itself or to be developed by some outside agency, for example the Non-governmental Organization (NGOs). It should be pointed that the application of the word 'develop' – and the related words 'developed' and 'development' – to countries was rapidly followed by the introduction of the terms 'underdeveloped' and 'underdevelopment' to describe a lack of development (Okoli and Onah, 2006).

It is important to note that the terms 'development' and 'underdevelopment' may be used in two related but significantly different ways. On one hand they may be used to refer to a state of being. Thus 'development' is used to mean the state of being developed. While 'underdevelopment' refers to a state of being underdeveloped or not developed or may be refer to the actual act or process of changing (Onah, 2006)

The word developing or becoming developed, is an act which may occur as a result of the subject's own actions or as a result of some sort of outside force – and 'underdevelopment' used to refer to the process of becoming underdeveloped or less developed. The assumption here is that the term 'develop' is an attempt to be developed. While the verb development signifies some changes that have taken place in the process of developing. In all, underdeveloped and underdevelopment are signs which indicates that development has not taken place.

According to Todaro (2011,p.14) looking at development from the economic perspective, “development means achieving sustained rates of growth of income per capita to enable a nation to expand its output at a rate faster than the growth rate of its population.” He argue that the levels and rates of GNI per capita minus the rate of inflation are then used to measure the overall economic well-being of a population – how much of real goods and services is available to the average citizen for consumption and investment (Tadoro, 2011).

However, a country may have all that it takes to be developed, but the onus lies with the proper utilization of all the resources through effective management to achieve the developmental objectives. Therefore, it is important to stress here that effective management of projects to some extent is determined by proper monitoring and evaluation in order to achieve the objective of the organization. It then means that a public organization can only achieve its desired goal by ensuring that projects are well planned, monitored and evaluated to determine whether its implementation in accordance with the specifications and to find out where there are problems arising for future corrections. Rodney (2005) sees ‘development’ from the level of the individual which implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being. Development to him is increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship.

According to Oyidi, Ebiloma and Mathew (2017: p58) ‘development cannot take place unless human aspects is put into consideration. This requires talent, experience and interest in developing an organization. The ultimate goal of role analysis should be to ensure integration of goals of management, employee and the organization. Therefore, the life of ‘development’ hinges on the expertise of the management, employee and the organization. Organization development is premised on the environment it finds itself. There may be some internal or external factors that might affect the performance of an organization, such as the tradition, religion, economics, and politics and as well as security factors are likely situations that may be considered for integration if organizational objectives are to be achieved. Environmental factors can be either positive or negative since every environment has its relative peculiarities, it then behooves that its impact may be felt by human resource manager (Oyidi *et al*, 2017). This postulations above is in line with the ideas of Nwachukwu (1988), that the systems approach to management encourages managers to perceive the internal and external environmental factors as an integrated whole.

Basic Elements in Management and Evaluation

i) Information Management

The successful implementation of a project requires flexibility and continual feasibility studies to generate alternatives. Continuous data collection system should be established by the project manager to provide baseline and current data on the project (climate, soil, hydrology, natural resources, pollution, erosion, labour. marketing etc.) The hallmark of all these is for the project to have a data bank which must be updated continuously, with the findings of the monitoring/data collection system. Regular project reviews should be undertaken to assess and identify potential trouble spots and seek solutions to problems which arise.

ii. Management of Project Activities

Project activities are in different dimensions. According to Onah (2006), project objectives are fulfilled through execution of series of activities. These activities cannot be undermined, hence manager should take these activities as important and account for them. He should know the follow:-

- What is the activity?
- When should the activity be executed?

- How long should the activity take?
- What is the impact of the activity on the environment?
- Who is responsible for the activity?
- What resources are needed for the execution of the activity?

These series of activities requires organizational control and measures using tools as network analysis, scheduling and responsibility charts to ensure timely execution of the activities of project objectives.

iii). **Management of Manpower**

Management of manpower planning and recruitment are sensitive issues. Training needs must be assessed in advance and training capacity expanded to ensure that skilled manpower will be available when needed. It has been argued that project staff must be made environmentally aware with the aid of training programmes and campaigns that highlight sensitive areas and key problems. Hence, environmental training is essential for all projects, and must be monitored and controlled by project planners and managers. Continuous feedback is needed to adapt the project to changing needs (Oyidi *et al*, 2017).

Some of the effects on the local community where project workers and their families may live, and as a result of the higher income earned by skilled workers which may lead to increase in demand for goods are likely disruption of the local economy and social harmony. This may at time be detrimental to the local population. However, since all project management is tailored towards development, any side effect is merely temporal (Onah, 2006)

iv. **Management of Materials**

It is not an exaggeration to say that the place of human resource in project management is very important tool if the objective of an organization has to be achieved. The effective use of materials reduces cost, wastage and pollution. This can only be achieved, only if skilled manpower will be available when needed. Therefore, the quality of materials used on the project may lead to environmental impacts. Quality standards must be set and clearly stated when ordering for suppliers. An inspection plan must be drawn up to indicate where, how and by whom, incoming materials and equipment are to be inspected for sub-standard or inconsistent quality. Quality control should be preventive (i.e before use), otherwise faults can get built-in and then become very difficult and expensive to rectify later (Onah, 2006).

v). **Management of Community Relations**

Community relations must be planned, managed and controlled. It is usually more cost effective to prevent conflicts with the community, than to resolve conflicts after they arise. The community can include agencies, external contractors, sub-contractors, internal departments, clients, special interest groups, land and the community at large. As earlier stated, there is need therefore for information flow within and between the community sub-groupings. The local community should be involved in the design, planning and implementation stages of the project, and must:-

- Agree on common objectives and to plan jointly within the existing legal framework.
- Exchange information at all stages of the project. For this, the media should be involved and the implementation process should be fully explained.

It is therefore, the responsibility of the project manager to work hard to ensure that the project objectives are achieved in order to meet the needs of the community satisfactorily, though not all that easy (Onah, 2006).

Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation

Project monitoring provides an opportunity for the provision of information to enable management to assess progress of implementation and take timely decision to ensure that progress is maintained according to schedule (Gasley and Lury, 1981), cited in Onah, 2006) As mentioned earlier, monitoring and evaluation are two key stages in the life of any project. While a plan or project is being implemented, it is necessary to monitor progress in order to that activities are being undertaken according to plan and to identify any problems that may occur. Monitoring should ideally be a continuous process which is built into the implementation of a project and it is therefore, necessary to consider what sort of monitoring is required and how it will be performed during the earlier stage of planning and implementation process. While monitoring and evaluation are two stages in the life of a project, the importance of the two processes cannot be overemphasized. Evaluation which is often undertaken either at an interval (often at the end of phases or stages), during implementation when the project has been operational for some time. The later activity is often called “ex-post-facto evaluation or impact assessment). Both the monitoring and evaluation of project assist the management in checking the social, economic, health, physical, etc. impact of the project on the beneficiaries and the project area.

A project could be achieving its stated objectives but the side effects may be generating other problems of varying magnitude. In essence attempt to solve one social problem may lead to another problem. For example, construction of roads may affect some community who may be asked to relocate to another unwanted area. On the other hand, some constructions may even force some residence to lose their buildings without compensation from the government. In nutshell, some public project may affects some groups of people living along the project site, and at times the impact may be either positive or negative on the part of the affected community.

Strategies for Project Management and Evaluation

Evaluation is a complex task and a great many decisions have to be taken about how it should be organized and the type of methodology to be used. One major strategic issue is that it has to be resolved prior to an evaluation is to be clearly pointed out in time at which it will be carried out, in relation to overall time-scale of the project involved. Experience has shown that most at time, in public projects, it is unrealistic to expect that many on-going evaluations can be undertaken due to resource constraints. Evaluation is probably more likely to take place after implementation has been completed (Onah, 2006).

According to Onah (2006), an evaluation can be undertaken internally or externally, and both have their advantages. Internal evaluation for example has the advantage of being cheaper, and it is carried out by officers with a good working knowledge of the facts and can be fitted into regular planning and budgetary cycles. External evaluation on the other hand may have more objective, contributive and provide new ideas and comparative perspectives, but may also be expensive, slow, and subject to distortion because local officers may not provide evaluators with all the information they need and the evaluators themselves due to their lack of familiarity with the project may misinterpret problems. Curtis and Watson (1983) cited in Onah (2006) suggested four main areas to be incorporated in evaluation work, namely, performance measures, impact indicators, appropriateness assessment and institution evaluation.

Performance Measures

Performance measures are related to the inputs, and outputs of the project. Performance measures, which are often produced routinely and in a quantified form, can be used in three ways:

- (a) To monitor progress and to ensure that activities are being carried out on time and within the cost limit set;
- (b) As efficiency measures (by using the ratio of inputs to outputs);
- (c) As proxy for measuring the impact of a project.

Impact Indicator

This will often cover a wide variety of topics and should deal with both direct and indirect impacts. Some of the impact as mentioned earlier include; Social Impact Assessment (SIA) Health Impact Assessment (HIA); Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) etc. Measures of Impact Involves:- (i) specifying objectives – what were the objectives of the project? (ii) Listening and reviewing potential indicators; (iii) specifying the target groups, why? How many? Where? (iv) collecting and analyzing data.

Appropriateness Assessment

This means looking at the parts of the project from the view point of users and supposed beneficiaries. Unless actual or potential may fall into a number of different groups and they should be classified. The most suitable way of tackling the classification of users is to examine their social characteristics. The user's response is best understood in terms of what he has to gain and lose, and it is useful to conceptualize the problem in terms of a balance sheet.

Institutional Evaluation

This aspect of evaluation should focus on the organizational structure of the agency involved in implementation. Particularly attention should be given to project organization at the local level. The following questions may be asked: (i) what is the organization to do, what does it do? (ii) Does the organization have sufficient power and authority (iii) Are roles and procedures clearly specified? (iv) Is membership valuable for ordinary participants?

Curtis and Watson, (1983) argued that an evaluation is often usefully rounded off by a critical look at project management and asking the following questions: (i) was the project effectively planned? (This entails looking at objectives, project selection, design, appraisal and programming). (ii) What are the reasons for delay? (iii) How well are operation and maintenance arranged? (iv) Were the terms of participation adequate?

Finally, evaluation is a process which attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness and impact activities and projects in the light of their objectives. Like monitoring, evaluation is an on-going exercise through the project life or it can be terminal if carried out at the end of the project life. Thus it covers short and long-term failures, suggest improvement in on-going activities and provides guidance in planning new ones. Evaluation information is obtained from project monitoring records, interviews with key personnel, and from the final project report (Onah, 2006).

In the final analysis, it shows summaries of progress report; highlights deviations from the original design and schedules; states the reasons for these deviations, and records any corrective action taken; documents special circumstances or situations which have arisen during the progress of the work; includes final drawings with annotations of changes made to the original plans; specifies environmental issues encountered and methods used to lesson impacts and evaluation of such actions.

Table 1: Showing summary of Management steps, tools, and major Actors in Project Implementation

Management	Management	Major Actors
1. Forming a team to implement the project	Responsibility charts	Project manager, then Implementation Team.
2. Clarify Project Purpose, Targets	Project Design, Logframe objective, Implementation Logframe Environmental Logframe.	Implementation Team Community.
3. Identify Routine and Repeated Procedures	Implementation Subroutines	Implementation Team.
4. Prepare Detailed Project Schedule	Network Analysis Bar Charts	Implementation Team Community
5. Preparedetailed Environmental Plan	EIA; Activity/Problem Matrix. Problem/Response Matrix	Project Manager, Implementation Team
6. Makeclear responsibility Assignments	Bar/Responsibility Charts	Project Manager, Implementation Team.
7. Set Up Project Monitoring Information System.	Monitoring and Reporting Plan Environmental Monitoring Plan	Implementation Team.
8. Anticipated likely Problems and Alternative Solutions	Early Warning and Response Chart	Project Manager/ Community.
9. Use Tools to carry out Activity and Adopt to Changes (Repeat steps 1 – 8 as necessary.	All of above	Implementation Team.

Source; Onah (2006:172-173)

Table 2: Showing the Relationship between Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring	Evaluation
(a) Keeps track of duty activities on continuous basis	Periodically examines project effect/impact view.
(b) Accepts Policies, Rules	Questions Policies, Procedures and Rules
(c) Controls Production of Outputs	Examines progress towards objectives achievement and questions appropriateness/adequacy of objectives.
(d) Focus on transformation of impacts to outputs	Focuses on Transformation of Outputs to objectives.
(e) Concentrates on Planned Project elements	Access Planned elements and looks for unplanned change, searches for causes challenges and assumptions.
(f) Reports on implementation Progress	Checks on progress and seeks to identify lessons learnt

Source: Onah, (2006:173).

Conclusion

The project cycle is an important framework for understanding project (figure 1), Table 1 illustrates some of the management tools which can be applied at each stage of the project cycle. Table 2 shows the relationship between monitoring and evaluation tools so far discussed and how project can be analyzed, evaluated and improved upon.

Recommendations

For manager to effectively monitor and evaluate public projects, the following recommendations are made:

- (i) Public organizations should make proposals for computerizing their operations for effective management information system (MIS) that would guarantee effective storage and retrieval of information for the much needed data utilized for

- monitoring and evaluation. The MIS would contain project profiles and would make analysis much more easier, among other advantages.
- (ii) Monitoring and evaluation of projects calls for training of staff. Staff should be regularly trained on the art of project management.
 - (iii) Monitoring and evaluation are best done by local staff. The advantage of this is that staff are more familiar with the records. Besides, such method would save cost and time.
 - (iv) Specific staff should be designated to keep records of projects. This will ensure swift collection of information on projects – a condition necessary for monitoring and evaluation.
 - (v) Management should take monitoring and evaluation exercise seriously, for that is the only way the course of project implementation can be determined. Local staff engaged in project monitoring and evaluation should be paid extra money to encourage them and to reduce the incidence of corruption.
 - (vi) Any staff in the course of monitoring and evaluation compromises with contractors and allow the plan implementation process to deviates from the original specifications/designs should be identified and punished accordingly as a deterrent to others.

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