Conceptualising Project Management:
A Caribbean Perspective on Planning, Execution and Externalities

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Abstract The current project management system in the Caribbean Region is constrained by identified institutional and policy issues which restrict project management performance and effective accountability of task. It has resulted not only in rapid and dramatic deterioration of project successes but it has also reduced the attractiveness for launching developmental projects in the Region. This, in combination with inept human resources and scarce financial resources, has constrained the Caribbean Regions’ social and economic progress in relation to maximising on the benefits to be derived from various projects. Based on survey data obtained from thirty project managers in the region, this research paper highlights the features of a project and key concepts in project management that need to be adapted by Regional project managers to enhance the chances of project success. A summary write-up of the findings and lessons learnt from project managers in the Region is also documented in the research.

Keywords: Project management, project planning, project execution and institutional strengthening

1. Introduction

Ever thought about mastering the art of juggling? Throwing and catching many objects into the air in quick succession. Not too difficult? How about walking on a tight rope at the same time, just to up the ante. This puts in perspective the task faced by project managers around the world on a daily basis.

Due to expansion and volume of project portfolios, around the Region, the role of the project manager has been identified not just by how good they can juggle tasks, but also as the key to the successful completion and delivery of any given project. The project manager is responsible for the successful overall planning, initiation and execution of these major capital projects and effective communication with executives and key stakeholders. While the ways projects are being used within units change, the practices of project management itself are evolving as well. The key skills of a project manager have changed in recent years, in that projects themselves have become much more complex and filled with disastrous turning points and critical areas that need to be properly managed to achieve the ultimate goal of success.

It is therefore foreseeable to some extent that some projects will not make it to the finish line. The reasons why projects fail are many, and the reasons for success are a few. Successful projects are still an elusive goal at many companies and government institutions. The project may be complete but it may be late, over budget, or fail to satisfy their original goals 100%. Project management expertise is the bridge to this phenomenon. A successful Project Manager understands that there is a correlation between planning, execution and the external factors of the environment.

The objective of this research is to identify areas where institutional capacity needs strengthening so as to improve the programming and management of the Regional development projects and to improve donor coordination, particularly in relation to the planning, execution and monitoring. The insights for the development of this research stem around the premise that in order for a project to be successful, project planning, execution and externalities have to be in alignment and synergize to maximise on
benefits. It is therefore under the criterion: planning, execution and externalities that the author approaches the issue to formulate a remedy and analyse the hypothesis.

The paper will focus on improved monitoring and coordination and identification of more efficient ways and/or best practices to be adapted within Regional projects. Finally, the recommendations will offer appropriate acquisition and systems implementation methodologies, which can be applied during the various phases of the project management.

2. Project Definition and Features
A project is an undertaking that encompasses an entire set of activities having a definable starting point and well-defined set of objectives, the delivery of which will signal the completion or termination of the project. Projects are usually required to be accomplished within limited resources. According to PMI (2004), projects are defined as having a means of organising activities that cannot be addressed within the organisations’ normal operational limits.

All projects share some common features. They have a clear and agreed upon scope and set of objectives, a defined cycle or life span, and they have specific requirements as they relate to cost, time and quality. Each of these features will be defined so as to quantify the viewpoint for the research.

2.1 Project cost
Gido and Clements (2006) state that cost planning starts with the proposal for the budget. It is during the development of the proposal by the project manager and the project team that costs are estimated. The cost for the project is generally recognised as necessary for the performance of the project. It must be reasonable and realistic as it is allocated to the project task at hand. A specific project may only be charged that portion of the cost which represents the direct benefit to that project, and the cost must be treated consistently with other similar costs incurred in like circumstances in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Since costs are estimated before the work actually begins, completion of the budget gives team members a chance to ask themselves whether they really want to do this project, given the cost (Luecke 2004). The management of project cost is quite key to the successful completion of a project. According to the PMI (2004) project management cost includes the processes involved in planning, estimating, budgeting, and controlling costs so that the project can be completed within the approved budget.

2.2 Project time
The key to quantifying time in project management is to allocate it towards particular task as identified in the activities in the project breakdown. The project manager must estimate the effort required for the completion of each task. Gido and Clements (2006) stipulate that good project managers manage their time well. Projects require a lot of energy because they involve many concurrent activities and unexpected events. To make optimal use of the time available, project managers have to have self-discipline, be able to prioritise, and show willingness to delegate. The more practice in this area the more accurate estimates become. Once all the estimates for the task have been documented, a summation is done to finalise the total time required for final delivery.

The project activities need to be specifically arranged as some have dependencies and others need to be prioritised in some cases tasks are set out in a form to be documented in a project schedule. Based on these interactions between the tasks and activities, the length of the overall project can be confined. According to PMI (2004), the processes concerning the timely completion of a project need to be properly managed. These processes stress activity definition, activity sequencing, resource estimating, duration estimates, schedule development and controls.

2.3 Project quality
The project quality should be defined and written down as part of the objectives of the project proposal to provide the project team with easy access to quality requirements. A series of activities are identified as key to determining what is intended to deliver a finished project while focusing on achieving project deliverables. These activities are defined on the basis of the quality standards set by the organisation delivering the project, however they are based on the agreed project proposal’s objectives. The PMI (2004) describes project quality management as the process involved in assuring that the project will satisfy the objectives for which it was undertaken.

2.4 Project Management
Stuckenbruck and Zomorrodi (1987) state that
project management is a relatively new practice that attempts to achieve planned objectives within specific time and cost limits through optimum use of resources, using integrated planning and control system with a single point of responsibility and accountability. Further to this definition, the Project Management Institute defines project management as the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements. Therefore, it entails finding a balance between the above three features, and it is finding this right equilibrium that project management processes focus on. In other words, a common project management conundrum is how to achieve an optimum balance between the flexibility that the project demands and the efficiencies within which the project has to be delivered. Navigating this tight rope is a core function and the sole reason for the project manager.

3. Essential Concepts and Techniques
Comprehensive project management is defined in the literature based on cost, time and quality. The development process as adopted by the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMI, 2004), as well as by most modern methodologists, is best described in terms of history. Early academics noted two major causes of project failure. The first was that too many design flaws were being discovered during execution where it is difficult, expensive, and sometimes impossible to remedy. The second problem was that the scope of many projects seemed to expand uncontrollably as the project proceeded.

Hussain and Wearne (2005) state that organisation, time and resources together with project definition, cost, contracts and change are the topics given the most attention in leading journals and textbooks as revealed by Cleland (1994), Meridith and Mantel (2000), Morris (1994) and Turner (1999); and they correspond with the factors defined as the main threats to successful project management, Clarke (1999), Munns and Bjermi (1996), Pinto (1998) and Yeo (2002).

3.1 Planning
Cost analysis capabilities can provide a valuable input to major decisions such as those involved in acquiring new systems for the project. A thorough analysis of the cost-of ownership vs lease arrangements, made up of acquisition costs, through to variable costs such as maintenance and operational costs, potential system upgrades or refits, and the costs of system retirement and disposal, is clearly essential if we are to assess the cost-effectiveness of new or existing systems within which the project is to encompass. This approach will identify dollar-based costs. Decision-making on options for future project management decisions will need to relate these dollar costs to the non-dollar value capabilities which are associated with each activity; each decision is a cost/benefit decision, and this will focus attention on the development of improved decision-making aids.

All reviews and evaluations should be based on a tailored approach, which considers: project-specific attributes; review/decision objectives; and project size, cost and complexity. These reviews and evaluations form a valuable body of knowledge for future projects and therefore should form the documented foundation for lessons learned reports. The lessons learned process provides useful information that can be employed to inform and train current and future project teams. Lessons learned can be derived from prior experience, evaluation activities, directed action items, issues, concerns, accidents, incidents, and corrective actions.

The acquisition strategy should be tailor made based on the size, risk, and associated complexity of the project. Tailoring may involve consolidated decisions, altering approved documents or substituting documents to match project objectives. In most cases, tailoring does not give the project manager the right to change things as he sees fit; nor does it imply the omission of essential elements in the acquisition process, such as risk and alternative analysis, critical decisions, cost ranges and variances, contract types, competition and major milestones, which are necessary for all projects.

An important component of any project is budget expectations, i.e. the preparation of a detailed budget and budget narrative, which links the funding being requested with specific activities or elements of the proposed project. It is of paramount importance that the project manager uses his best judgment when estimating project expenses. In establishing cost and budget expectations the project manager must be consistent and realistic, and where necessary, seek cost advice early in the process as the proposed budget will be reviewed and negotiated by sponsors to ensure that it meets the goals and objectives of the proposed project and that it is consistent with the policies of the governing bodies.

In relation to budget expectations, there are key areas that project managers must be cognisant of, and these include: potential problems due to unanticipated costs or under-estimated costs and
Managing optimism may well be a leading contributor of project failure, as a factor of blindness to project risks. Barnes and Warne (1993) state that understanding the nature of risks of major projects is one of the more recent developments in the science of project management. The project manager may find himself managing the impact of positive and negative emotions on project performance and project team resilience, two areas that have varying views on optimism.

In addition, while managing projects, consideration will have to be given to the effects of personal style as it relates to leadership, communication, and conflict on team effectiveness and perceptions. Managing optimism also entails creating an environment for constructive conflict and paving a path for how to accomplish it for the benefit of the project, mainly through team synergy, effective meetings, personal and mutual accountability and moving from compliance to commitment through building confidence and sanguinity. All these can be leveraged through a dynamic, learning organisation filled with enthusiasm.

3.2 Execution

3.2.1 Requirements control

All projects must include a well-defined problem statement with well-defined work plan and technical requirements that assure the project objectives satisfy the overall project scope. Requirements must be thoroughly documented and understood by the project manager and his team. Changes to requirements must be determined to be within the scope and require signed approval by the project sponsor. Requirements must be managed throughout the life of the project.

During execution, the requirements establish and maintain an understanding and agreement of the scope and capabilities of the project. Requirements statements, which will evolve over the life of the project, form the basis for estimating, planning, performing, and tracking the project’s activities and are critical to obtaining acceptance of the deliverables at the end of the project. Control of requirements is directly related to control of the project.

3.2.2 Scheduling and Costing

Schedules are used to plan and depict practical, time-phased, hierarchical activities and events taking place within the project. They contain activities, logical relationships, milestones, duration, resource requirements and constraints. Scheduling is inextricably tied to the project’s timeframe and is essential to developing a cost estimate for all the activities to be performed. Development of schedules is required early in the project formulation and conceptualisation stage.

In most cases it is advisable to set up a preliminary schedule range, which would highlight high-level milestones and any critical points in the project, which may need special attention. Cost estimates are required at various points in a project’s life cycle. Determination of estimating methodology and approach is based on the level and availability of scope definition and documentation, and the resources required for developing the cost estimate.

3.2.3 Human resources allocation

The allocation of human resources to each project is a very important phase of the decision-making problem. Anderson (1992) states that a project manager should clearly define project objectives, document and communicate them to the project team. These practices are implemented through the project manager’s capability to plan and elicit the commitment of the project team toward achieving project objectives.

Therefore, it is clearly understood that performance and quality of projects strongly depend on human resources capabilities. Consequently, one of the key factors for successful projects is how to be excellent in human resources allocation, taking into account their personalities and abilities. Through training and through the reallocation and/or retrenchment of selected staff, the project manager will assist in bringing human resources to their appropriate quantity and quality to perform core functions within the work plan for the project.

3.3 Externalities

Experience has shown that excellent project managers function at a level well beyond the classic functional management. Even though Project Managers must subscribe to the rational and scientific approach to management, they also have to adopt a new mind-set of flexibility, one of expecting goals and means to be resolved simultaneously and interactively given the many constraints. Project managers must therefore be up to date with the many areas of the environment impacting their project.

Further to this, Korton (1980) highlights that
many western management practices were developed to improve already well-developed organisational settings. These individual techniques or practices are often transplanted into less institutionalised environments in developing countries for the purposes of system development.

3.3.1 PEST drivers
Project managers should conduct horizon scanning and identify any assumptions in the current environment, which may have an impact on any of the project stages. This will include identifying PEST (i.e. Political, Economic, Social, and Technological) drivers and uncertainties from other sources that may influence the project and/or the financial system in the jurisdiction in general, and existing assumptions made about the future within the current project parameters.

3.3.2 Cultural issues
Stuckenbruck and Zomorrodian (1987) highlight that the issue of culture is a prime focus in today’s literature and constitutes the ‘bottom line’ in any discussion concerning the transfer of management techniques or models from one country to another, particularly in the case of developing countries, and the Caribbean is of no difference. In planning projects, potential cultural issues should be taken into account at each stage in the project cycle. In the earliest stages of project design, background research should be carried out to determine whether there are cultural issues to be addressed.

In cases where cultural issues are likely to be a problem, a cultural specialist should be retained as part of the execution team for the project. By taking cultural issues into account from the beginning, project managers have a better understanding and can hence negate any risk that could have been raised due to cultural differences. As a result project managers are better able to build capacity to manage cultural issues in a sustainable manner and strengthen the base for diversity in the project team.

4. Research Methodology
This section presents a detailed overview of the research methodology adopted in this study, outlining major issues related to the design, instrumentation, sampling and data-collection procedures.

4.1 Design and Instrument
A survey research design was primarily used to capture data from a sample of project managers in the Caribbean in order to address this study’s main research question on how to improve various issues in project monitoring and coordination, and also to identify more efficient ways and/or best practices to be adapted within Regional projects.

Background information on each project was collected through a questionnaire and additional information was sourced by searching each institution’s internet website and by contacting the institution directly. The questionnaire sought to examine respondents’ perceptions of a current project being undertaken or the last project that they managed. A small number of initial contacts were used in a pre-test during the development of the questionnaire and it was subsequently modified for ease of use. The questionnaire covered issues related to the purpose of the project, the cost and benefits, data gathering techniques, funding issues, capacity building and stakeholder analysis.

More importantly, respondents’ perceptions of several major issues in project monitoring and evaluation on particular projects for which they were responsible were obtained, their perceptions of best practices and methods, and recommendations for improvement. The questionnaire also contained several open-ended questions to allow respondents to indicate their views and recommendations so as to permit a qualitative assessment in this research. The data from the returned questionnaires, along with additional notes taken were collected and analysed.

4.2 Sample and Data Collection Procedures
The sample under study in this research was 30 project managers listed as participants in a specialised project management program being sponsored by various governments and private sector institutes. The countries participating in the research include Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Dominica. Overall, thirty respondents responded to the survey instrument. These respondents were chosen because of their experience in project management, evaluation and monitoring. Respondents were responsible for at least one major project in their professional career as a project manager.

5. Results
The section presents the main findings regarding Caribbean project managers’ perceptions concerning several issues of project management, evaluation and monitoring and the practices underlying these issues. Various issues addressed in this research included
the sampling and methodological issues of project evaluation and monitoring, the impact of the project on stakeholders (i.e. stakeholder analysis) and stakeholder issues, and the perceived best practices in project management, evaluation and monitoring. The quantitative data have been presented using frequencies/percentages, and mean scores, and the qualitative data have been summarised using thematic analyses.

Respondents were sampled from various countries in the Caribbean including Barbados, Dominica, Jamaica, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago. Majority of respondent (i.e. 95%) worked for a governmental agencies or Ministries. Approximately 85% reported 5 years or less of project management experience, while only 15% reported over 5 years of project management experience. In total, 70% of respondents currently held a first degree, 26% held a post-graduate degree, and 4% held a Diploma.

5.1 Sampling and Methodological Issues involved in Project Evaluation and Monitoring
Respondents were also asked to indicate whether several methodological issues were considered in the evaluation of (and monitoring of) a project of which they were in charge (i.e. a current project or a more recent one). More than one third (i.e. 36%) indicated that they used ‘other’ (non-probability) sampling techniques, and 26% reported that they used random sampling (see Table 1).

Majority of respondents (i.e. 78%) reported that, during sampling, efforts are made to reach marginalised, or disadvantaged participants (see Table 2). Over half (i.e. 52%) indicated that issues of accessing participants were satisfactorily dealt with in the methodology, and only 9% indicated that certain participants were excluded because of exhibited difficulties. A majority of respondents (i.e. 61%) indicated that the findings were intended to be representative of a typical group of participants. Some 63% of respondents also indicated that participants were sufficiently well-selected for representativeness (see Table 2).

5.2 Stakeholder Issues in Project Evaluation and Monitoring
Respondents reported on several stakeholder issues associated with project evaluation and monitoring. Table 3 shows the results of the data. With respect to dissemination of project results, more than half (52%) reported that stakeholders involved receive short reports on the main findings or other forms of feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Sampling Methodologies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling Methodologies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random sampling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stratified sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Methodological Issues in Project Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodological Issues in Project Evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were efforts made to reach marginalised, or disadvantaged participants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were issues of accessing these participants satisfactorily dealt with in the methodology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were any participants excluded because, for example, they exhibited difficulties with speech and learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the findings intended to be representative or typical of a certain group of participants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the participants in the study been sufficiently well selected to support these claims?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Just over one third (i.e. 35%) reported that the capacities of stakeholders and their preferences for receiving feedback were taken into consideration, however an equal proportion (i.e. 35%) indicated that this did not occur. Majority of the respondents (i.e. 61%) indicated that the research, monitoring or evaluation activity had an impact on stakeholders’ capabilities, on the degree to which their environment was supportive of their participation, and a further majority (i.e. 44%) reported that this impact was planned for in the design stages. Interestingly, 39% of the respondents indicated that stakeholders involved were not realistically prepared for this expected impact.

Furthermore, most respondents (i.e. 48%) were unsure as to whether the approach was reflex, in that those involved in data collection and analysis critically discuss their own prejudices. Just about half of the respondents (i.e. 48%) indicated that researchers involved in project evaluation try to balance impartial assessment with respect to participants’ worth and dignity.

5.3 Perceptions of Project Monitoring and Evaluation Best Practices

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which a number of project monitoring and evaluation practices were being utilised at the highest level (i.e. the level of best practices). Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations regarding the monitoring and evaluation practices of these projects. Responses were scored on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (i.e. lowest level) to 7 (i.e. highest level).

It is important to note here that all practices were rated moderately high where mean scores ranged from as low as 4.42 for dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results to as high as 5.10 for selection of indicators. The top three project monitoring and evaluation practices (i.e. those practices that were practised at the highest level) cited were: 1) selection of indicators, 2) data collection methodologies, and 3) developing conceptual framework.

5.4 Perceptions of Project Management Best Practices

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which a number of project management practices were being utilised at the highest level (i.e. the level of best practices). Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations regarding these project management practices. Responses were scored on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (lowest level) to 7 (highest level). It is important to note here that all practices were rated moderately high where mean scores ranged from as low as 4.50 for project planning using the project lifecycle to as high as 5.05 for project quality management. The top three project monitoring and evaluation practices (i.e. those practices that were practised at the highest level) cited were: 1) project quality management, 2) project budgeting, and 3) project cost management.

Table 3. Stakeholder Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Issues in Project Evaluation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the stakeholders involved receive short reports on the main findings or other forms of feedback?</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were the capacities of stakeholders and their preferences for how they receive feedback taken into consideration?</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the research, monitoring or evaluation activity have any impact on stakeholders’ capabilities, on the degree to which their environment was supportive of their participation?</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was this impact (above) planned for in the design?</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were the stakeholders involved realistically prepared for the expected impact, whether small or large?</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the approach reflexive in that those involved in data collection and analysis critically discuss their own prejudices?</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did researchers try to balance impartial assessment with respect for participants’ worth and dignity?</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4. Project Monitoring and Evaluation Best Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Evaluation Best Practices</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing a Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling techniques</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selection of indicators</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.10</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.41</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing of Data Collection Instrument</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection methodologies</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing the data for</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding/Analysis</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis and Interpretation</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Management Information System</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of Monitoring/Evaluation results</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling techniques</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Bold-faced practices indicate the top three best practices in project evaluation and monitoring perceived by respondents. Ranks indicate perceived importance of each practice.

### Table 5. Project Management Best Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Evaluation Best Practices</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project planning using the project lifecycle</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project scope management</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project time management/scheduling</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project costs management</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.95</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.49</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project quality management</td>
<td><strong>5.05</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.21</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project human resource management</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project communication management</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project procurement management</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Budgeting</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.54</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Bold-faced practices indicate the top three best practices in project evaluation and monitoring perceived by respondents. Ranks indicate perceived importance of each practice.

### 6. Summary of Qualitative Findings and Comments

This section presents a summary of the main findings derived from the survey data obtained in this research. It incorporates qualitative data that emerged from the open-ended questions within the survey regarding participants’ review of current project management practice, and recommendations for improvement. These are summarised in Table 6. Categories for strengthening were derived from thematic analyses of the qualitative responses. Specific comments from respondents were also mentioned. Besides, some lessons learnt by project leaders are highlighted as follows:

1. Successful implementation of a project requires strong relationships and commitment between the major project players.
2. The sponsor should give ample support to the project team identified by providing adequate funding support, resources to pursue the project, meet training and capacity building needs for the new institutional framework.
3. Persons of requisite qualifications, experience, aptitude and motivation levels should adequately staff the project team.
4. Adequate training, equipment and knowledge infrastructure building budgets should be provided for the institutions pursuing the projects.
5. Modern project management techniques, organisational structures, policy guidance, regulatory interventions and planning and programming tools should be adopted for project delivery efficiency.
Table 6. Summary of Participants’ Views and Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category for Strengthening</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Planning, budgeting and programming systems</td>
<td>Adopt planning, budgeting and programming systems that have analytical tools that can be used for work plans and scheduling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) International financial management methods</td>
<td>Project Managers need to establish updated accounting and reporting systems which are acceptable by all key stakeholders. There is a further need for Project Managers to implement suitable accounting software packages. Within larger projects, all the accounting and financial systems should be computerised. The system utilised should be compliant with the Regional Accounting Standards and Generally Accepted Accounting Principle (GAAP).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Management Information Systems</td>
<td>Further development and implementation of Management Information Systems to improve documentation and information flow for strategic decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Human Resource Management</td>
<td>Project managers need to develop and implement human resource development strategies and training programs that fit into the organisations overall strategic plan. Institutions involved in more than one project should have training and development policies for its staff recommending that every employee will undergo at least one training program in each calendar year. Institutions that have several project portfolios should have HR management staff that expands current Training &amp; Development Plan with a three to five year perspective. Various training programs could be conducted in-house or in outside institutions for project team employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Partnerships</td>
<td>Update and implement guidelines for private sector and government participation in developmental projects in accordance with other more lucrative working relationships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Strong monitoring and evaluation systems should be adopted to be able to monitor project status and delivery of desired outcomes

7. Conclusions
For a successful project delivery, it is essential first to establish robust definitions and structures for the three criterions: planning, execution and externalities. Mastering the critical areas in the project related to institutional capacity, project management strategies, stakeholders’ analysis, and resources are all vital to the success of the project.

Once the elements of criterion have been realised and are in place with the five categories for strengthening institutional capacity, the result will be a structured working model for successful project delivery. For an effective project delivery, there has to be a continuous review and evaluation of the elements of project, process sets and information systems. Based on these evaluations, work plans should be adopted by project organisations to enhance sustainability.

In the case of the 30 project managers interviewed several categories were observed and analysed. In the area of planning, the project managers appeared to be most comfortable with the task that needs to be performed especially as it related to selection of indicators, data collection methodologies and developing conceptual frameworks.

However, there were some areas that would fall under the planning stage that the project managers appear not to be comfortable with and these included: designing the data collection instrument and preparing the data for coding and analysis, though this was the case, it is not worrisome as a third party could quite easily join the project team to facilitate in these areas without compromising the project. In the area of execution, the project managers were strong in quality management and cost/budgeting techniques, however it was quite noticeable that scheduling/time management was one of the weakest links and was therefore at the heart of most of the project failures.

In the area of externalities, especially as it related to beneficiaries, the project management techniques were weak in the dissemination of results and the use of results for decision-making. This research therefore highlights that Caribbean projects, once analysed based on the three categories of planning,
execution and externalities, are viewed to be out of alignment and therefore do not synergize to maximise on any great potential benefits, hence the projects are categorised as unsuccessful in most cases.

This research therefore sets up an argument for approaching project management in a more comprehensive way which shares the premise that in order for a project to be successful, project planning, execution and externalities have to be in alignment and synergize to maximise on benefits. It has also shown that by identifying needs for continuous review of institutional arrangements and project management processes; organisational capacity building in conformity with the changing environments will create a positive impact on the effectiveness, efficiency and successful performance delivery of a project. Project management can therefore be used in the Caribbean as a tool for reform and change and can be an effective platform for demonstrating the true value of projects to the Caribbean.

In addition, this research highlights that the quality of the project manager is critical to achieving project success, as the project manager is key to implementing the project, however, the parameters for gauging the level of success can only be judged based on the relationship between the project performance and the attributes of the project manager, which is an area not explored in this research.

For individual companies and Government institutions, the research provides a benchmark and a guide for project managers to review their shortcomings and challenges in managing projects. Most of what being identified as issues in Caribbean projects are common in other Regions and therefore need to be anticipated and managed better, for example, risks of extra cost and delays due to changes can all be eliminated. Special attention could be placed on lessons learnt to identify best practices from past projects to handle these issues in a more comprehensive manner.

Finally, this study represents only a descriptive account of the project managers’ views of how to improve current project management practice. The generalisability of these findings is restricted given the relatively small sample size (n = 30). Caution should be used when interpreting and generalising these findings.

References


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