

Project Management – The Profession – as a Catalyst for Economic Growth in African Economies

A Position Paper

Eng. Tororiro Isaac Chaza, B. Sc. Eng., MBA, MIET, C. Eng., MZwIE, PMP
Project Management Zimbabwe (PMZ)

ABSTRACT

This paper advocates for accelerated talent development in the area of Project Management, *inter alia*, as a prerequisite for economic growth support. Contemporary research has shown that there is significant correlation between innovation index and the number of certified project managers (PMs) in a given economy. The countries with the highest innovation index also have the highest level of PM certifications, firstly in response to the high demand for trained and experienced PMs, and secondly in proactive anticipation of the need to sustain global leadership in innovation, and hence economic growth. The governments of the developed industries have gone to the extent of mandating enabling policies geared towards the acceleration of PM talent development in the public and private sectors in order to spur economic growth support. International Development agencies are also called to undertake extensive injection of PM talent in order to improve project implementation success especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Finally the paper proffers advocacy for both the public and private sectors in Zimbabwe and other African countries to be prudent and pursue similar policies for the acceleration of talent development of PMs.

Introduction

The shadow title of this paper is 'Economic Growth as a Catalyst for Growth of the Project Management Profession.' The proposition is that, despite the seeming paradox both the actual title and the shadow title are correct as they depict a retrocausal or reverse-causal correlation, in which A causes B and B causes A, or a situation in which the effect occurs before the cause. The simple explanation of this proposition is that economic growth is often accompanied by a massive growth in capital and infrastructure projects thereby spurring the demand for project management professionals. On the other hand, the availability and capability or lack thereof of project management professionals to support and spearhead the implementation of capital projects positively or negatively impacts the performance of the economic growth.

This paper puts forward a discourse for the need to increase the number of trained/skilled/certified project management professionals in order for Zimbabwe to compete on the global landscape. The paper calls to action business leaders and policy makers to recognize the need to accelerate the training of project management skills both as a cause of, and effect of economic growth. Zimbabwe here is used as a representative of and proxy for other Southern African countries as the country situations are appreciably comparable. Six areas are explored covering:

1. The link between innovation and the quantum of certified project managers within an entity,
2. The case for an enabling Government policy for the growth of the PM profession within the Public Sector
3. The case for Enhancement of the Project Management Practice in the Private sector
4. The case for Adoption of the Project Management Practice for International Development (ID) Projects and Programs
5. The case for regional collaboration in enhancing the project management profession at both Public sector and Private sector level
6. Conclusion

The Link between innovation and the quantum of certified project managers within an entity

A project is commonly defined as ‘an individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned to achieve a particular aim,¹’ –The *PMBOK®* defines a project as ‘a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result².’ In layman terms a project manager is a person who then manages and brings to fruition the ‘particular aim’ or the ‘unique product, service, or result.’ Hidden in these definitions is the fact that a ‘particular aim,’ a ‘unique product, service, or result’ can vary from a school science project to develop a paper mache volcano to a NASA project to launch in 2016, the Cyclone Global Navigation Satellite System (CYGNSS) whose ‘particular aim’ is to probe the inner core of hurricanes in greater detail – nasa.gov/cygnss. A project therefore can be very simple, or large and very complex. For the purposes of this paper, a project will be considered as ranging from small scale within a business unit, to very large and complex endeavors at national level. In an article on ‘Disruptive Technologies’ the Mckinsey Global Institute (MGI) researchers assert:-

Technology is moving so quickly and in so many directions that it becomes challenging to even pay attention – we are victims of the “next new thing” fatigue. Yet technology advancements continue to drive economic growth and in some cases, unleash disruptive change.....Business leaders and policy makers need to identify potentially disruptive technologies, and carefully consider their potential, before these technologies begin to exert their disruptive powers in the economy and society.³

The MGI research singles out a number of disruptive technologies as major game changers with enormous potential to impact global economies. The disruptive technologies include, among others, Mobile Internet, the Internet of Things, Cloud technologies, advanced robotics, energy storage, 3D printing, renewable energy, advanced materials, and next generation genomics. Some of the technologies I understand, and some I do not understand.

¹ oxforddictionaries.com

² *The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK®) 5ed 2013*

³ *Mckinsey Global Institute (MGI), May 2013, Disruptive Technologies: Advances that will transform life, business, and the global economy,’*

These technologies will be highly disruptive to the point that those economies that do not make an effort to study, plan, adapt and develop will find themselves as digital 'dodos,' that is, extinct.

Kavanagh and Naughton, 2009 compared the Project Management Index with the Innovation Index and found a 'remarkable result' exhibiting high correlation between the two indices. The researchers concluded:-

If we accept that national competitiveness depends on improvements in productivity, and that innovation is a key component of productivity, then our understanding and response to the key role played by project management has to change fundamentally.

A nation's ability to build and sustain its innovation capacity depends on developing and maintaining project management skills at world class levels, on high-quality education (not just painting by numbers) and on the best professional accreditation in the discipline.⁴

It is near alarming that in the *Kavanagh and Naughton, 2009* research Africa is conspicuous by its absence. This may be attributed to the fact that the metrics used for Innovation index register non to negligible outcomes when applied to African economies. Furthermore the metrics used for the Project Management index measuring the number of certified project managers within a given economy/population would register insignificant numbers as there are very few certified project managers on the African continent given the population. For example in 2009 Ireland had 875 certified project managers per million population.

Zimbabwe in 2009 would have probably registered <1 in one million. In 2015 the figure may have improved to an estimated and still insignificant 5 certifications in one million. The point being emphasized here is the massive gap in certifications between developed nations and developing nations, portraying the massive gap in innovation and productivity. Whilst one may argue that the size of the economy determines the demand for project management certifications, I will also put forward a retrocausal argument that the number of project management certifications determine the level of innovation and productivity, mine being a case for advocacy for the acceleration of project management training and hence the number of certifications in Zimbabwe and its Sub-Saharan African neighbors.

The case for an enabling Government policy for the growth of the PM profession within the Public Sector

Governments worldwide undertake some of the largest projects and hence the need for robust project management governance in order to increase the probability of success and hence save millions/billions in taxpayers money. In the developed countries governments take an active role in project management advocacy. A worthy case is the UK Government which innovated by setting up a central Major Projects Authority (MPA) in 2011, by way of a Prime Ministerial Mandate. The reasons for setting up the MPA were cited as:-

⁴ *Dr. Donncha Kavanagh and Ed Naughton, (2009) Innovation and Project Management – Exploring the Links - PM World Today – April 2009 (Vol XI, Issue IV)*

There is currently no cross-governmental understanding of the size and cost of Government's Major Projects portfolio, nor of the cost and viability of the projects within it. This failure will hinder our ability to prioritize and manage these huge costly projects.⁵

The Prime Minister's mandate goes on to list a litany of failures caused by the lack of project management coordination, including:

- Unrealistically tight timescales
- Lack of Business Case to establish absolute goals
- Scope not finalized before project start
- Incomplete specifications before procurement commences
- Absence of, or limited, option analysis
- No agreed budget or contingency planning
- No implementation or strategic risk management plan
- Weak commercial and contract management capability.

On its web site the MPA quotes 'we assure, support and report on the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP), which covers around 200 major projects with a total whole life cost approaching GBP 500 billion.' In order to assure improvement in project delivery, MPA's priority number 1 is to build the capability of strong, effective leadership. This objective birthed the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA), a partnership between the MPA, Oxford Said Business School, and Deloitte⁶. The UK government took it upon itself to create enabling policy framework for the improvement in execution of government projects.

Another case is the Government of Canada, which made a policy directive to set up the Major Projects Management Office (MPMO) in 2007, the stated objective being 'to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the regulatory system for major resource projects.' The MPMO reports to the Minister of Natural Resources⁷.

The PMI sponsored the National Academy of Public Administrators (NAPA) of the United States to prepare a white paper on project and program management, the objective being 'to spotlight high-level challenges and opportunities to enhance and institutionalize this discipline in the federal sector.' NAPA recognized that program management was well embraced and practiced within the private sector but not so within the public sector with the exception of a few federal government entities such as Department of Defense and some civilian agencies, such as NASA and the Department of Energy. In the white paper the panelists assert the following: -

⁵ *Prime Minister's Mandate on Major Projects – Gov.uk, 2011*

⁶ *University of Oxford (2012-2015) Major Projects Leadership Academy MPLA Handbook*

⁷ *Cabinet Directive on Improving the Performance of the Regulatory System for Major Resource Projects, Government of Canada MPMO, (2007) – www.mpmo.gc.ca*

The Panel believes that institutionalizing the discipline of program management across the federal government should be a top priority. There is no guarantee of success in large-scale, complex change initiatives. However if program management is undertaken by well- trained, experienced professionals within a supportive infrastructure, based upon proven standards and practices, we believe that success will be more consistently achieved.⁸

The PMI issued a press release commending the European Union (EU) Council for adopting the Common Provisions Regulation for EU Cohesion and Structural Funds for 2014-2020. Embedded in the provisions are specific recommendations regarding project management, thus:-

Article 30, 3a of the document makes provisions for building the capacity of organisations in EU member states to develop and implement operations, including fostering their project/programme management capabilities and reinforcing the administrative capacity of the authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes. National managing authorities are obligated to make sure that local action groups oversee this requirement and account for it in their community-led local development strategies. It is the first time that project management has ever been codified in EU legislation around cohesion policy.⁹

Darell, Buccanini and Love, 2015 submitted that the public sector is fraught with accidental project managers as many people are called to undertake project management responsibilities with little or no preparation. These people are selected for their managerial/technical expertise but lack competency to deliver projects¹⁰. The few cases cited above show the effort by governments to do away with accidental project managers and embrace project management practices in government led projects. The result of these moves is the demand for certified/qualified project management personnel and hence the need for academies/colleges/training entities to gear up for increased demand.

Successful implementation of government initiatives in improvement of Project Management practices was reported in Pakistan, where the Chief Minister's Project Management Initiative (CMPMI) mandated the creation of the Project Management Unit (PMU) to oversee government projects. The article attests:-

The idea to redo the entire public development mindset has been a momentous endeavor. In its three years of existence, the CMPMI has matured from a proof-of-concept to a mainstream government function, following the recent decision to incorporate project management as a core function of the central Planning & Development Department in the form of the Directorate of Monitoring & Evaluation. The CMPMI forms a very useful change management experience in the public sector

⁸ *A White Paper by a Panel of the NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION sponsored by the Project Management Institute, (July 2015) 'Improving Program Management in the Federal Government*

⁹ *PMI Press Release - New Legislation: EU Member States to Develop Project Management Capabilities – (26 February 2014) – www.pmi.org*

¹⁰ *Vanessa Darrell, Davis Bacanini, Peter E.D. Love, (2005) Demystifying the Folklore of the Accidental Project manager in Public sector. Project Management Journal, Vol. 41, No. 5, 56-63*

in this region – one that has resulted in the accumulation of a significant body of lessons learned in public sector intervention, as well as valuable insight on the process of initiating and sustaining change¹¹.

On the African continent, *Rwelamila, 2007*, studied large infrastructural departments in South Africa and found out that there are many public sector project-oriented organisations (POO) who were performing poorly in terms of project delivery mainly due to employment of untrained 'accidental' project managers. The study recommended the adoption of project management as a core competence, which entails overhaul of the POO management structures and cultures, and establishing project manager's development programme¹².

A spirited search for evidence of the same enthusiasm for development of the project management practice in African governments yielded very little results, leading one to conclude, perhaps prematurely, perhaps fittingly, that there is very little effort to adopt project management practice in African public sector. Hence a multitude of projects will be left in the hands of untrained and uncertified accidental project managers, a highly detrimental consequence for the competitive growth of African economies. The PMI.org site states:-

PMI is committed to supporting project management application within governments worldwide. We opened our government relations office in Washington, DC in 2005 to support and encourage domestic and foreign agencies, ministries and parliamentary bodies to embrace the profession of project management. Our government relations team is now present in the Americas, Australasia, India, China, European Union, United Kingdom and the Middle East.¹³

Alarmingly absent from the list of continents or regions that are being supported by the PMI's government relations team is Sub-Saharan Africa. This paper makes a clarion call for African governments to solicit the support and assistance of organisations such as the PMI through collaboration with local chapters to immediately start putting in place policies which enable the adoption of project management practices, extensive training of government personnel on the same, including the setting up of Major Projects Authorities or similar. Hesitancy or failure to do this will mean that government capital projects will continue to fail and Africa will lag behind in adaptation of innovations and hence fail on the intensively competitive global economy.

The case for Enhancement of the Project Management Practice in the Private sector

The private sector, just as the public sector, is fraught with accidental project managers, albeit with highly competent managerial/technical managers. These are assigned to manage large projects despite the fact that they are barely trained in the project management practice. For some corporates, this is done in sheer ignorance of the need to engage qualified

¹¹ Khalid A. K. (2006) *Project Management Reform Experience in a Public Sector Environment*, Originally published as a part of 2007 PMI Global Congress Proceedings – Hong Kong

¹² *Rwelamila, PMD (2007) Project Management competence in public sector infrastructure organisations*, Construction Management and Economics 25, 55-66

¹³ <http://www.pmi.org/business-solutions/government-involvement.aspx>

and certified project managers. Some corporate organisations cite the lack of funds for not investing in talent development in project management, and perhaps preferring to invest in the orthodox management areas. This is a case of retrocausality as lack of funds is caused, in the first place, by employment of untrained accidental project managers. The consequence is that the private sector projects are failing or are being bailed out by outsourcing project management to consultants at high costs, or putting more financial and other resources to rescue the projects. This paper is a clarion call for African entrepreneurs, board members and executives to understand the role of talent development especially in the area of interpreting and delivering strategic goals, which is the ambit of project management and its inseparable cohorts of program and portfolio management. A PMI report on Talent management points out in the conclusion:-

Executive leadership recognizes the importance of strategy implementation, but, as stated earlier, a majority admit that their companies fall short. This gap demonstrates a lack of understanding among executives that all strategic change happens through projects and programs. While some projects improve an organization's ability to "run the business" and don't rise to the level of a "strategic initiative," all of an organization's strategic initiatives are projects or programs, which inevitably "change the business."¹⁴

Mark the point being made that 'all change happens through projects and programs.' The point being made is that the developed economies are seeing the need for project management maturing and scaling up talent development in order to meet the demand for trained talent, required for innovation and hence economic growth. At most, project management awareness and the resultant training in Sub-Saharan African countries is nascent. There is urgent need to accelerate project management talent development out of nascency into maturity in order to perform at the global level.

Rwelamila et al, (2011) put forward a 'PM trilogy Challenge' evidenced by project failures in both public sector and private sectors in Africa as:

- i. The confusion of equating technical specialisations with project management competences – the emphasis of technical aspects of projects over socio-cultural issues
- ii. Inadequacy of PM training programmes (both on the job and outside the job)
- iii. Lack of strategic management in POOs¹⁵

The conclusion of the PM trilogy Challenge pointed to the need to change the way projects are managed in an organisation and across national establishments responsible for training and procurement policies.

¹⁴ *PMI Thought Leadership Series: Talent Management - Powering Strategic Initiatives in the PMO*
November 2014

¹⁵ *Rwelamila P D M, Purushottam N, (2011) Project Management Trilogy Challenges in Africa – where to from here? Proceedings of the 12th Annual Conference © 2011 IAABD*

The case for Adoption of the Project Management Practice for International Development (ID) Projects and Programs

Extant research (*Ika 2012*) on International Development (ID) in Africa points to phenomenal (50%) failures in delivering intended benefits in economic development and poverty alleviation projects or programs funded by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and multilateral agents (e.g. World Bank, United States Agency for International Aid (USAID), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), European Union, and the United Nations). The reasons for failure of these ID projects include *inter alia* the use of 'accidental' project managers by the aid agencies, the implementing unit, and the aid recipients.¹⁶

This paper advocates for aid agencies to ensure the employment of experienced and certified project managers and in parallel, fund extensive project management training as a prerequisite for funding any ID project. As an example of the advocacy required, the African Development Bank (AfDB) recently released a press statement that its Board of Directors has 'approved loans and grants to the tune of \$428.43 million to finance projects in energy, infrastructure, transport and water and sanitation in eight African countries – The Gambia, Ghana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire' (www.afdb.org, 30/09/2015). It would be prudent for the African PM organisations or local chapters to lobby for portions of such loans and grants to go towards capacity building in the area of project management talent, among others. It would be prudent for such loans and grants to be disbursed on the proviso that the beneficiaries prove that they have the capacity and capability to execute the projects by engaging accredited local African PMs.

The case for regional collaboration in enhancing talent development in the project management profession at both Public sector and Private sector level

The PMI's Project Management Talent Gap Report - 2013, predicts that there will be a significant growth in the project management profession with a global demand of 15.7 million between 2010 and 2020. This growth is fuelled by an anticipated \$18 trillion impact in seven 'project-intensive industries,' such as Manufacturing, Business services, Finance and Insurance, Oil and Gas, Information Services, Construction, and Utilities. China and India will lead the growth¹⁷.

By inference it must be deduced that there will also be anticipated growth in Sub-Saharan Africa as there is need to keep up with the innovations in the seven 'project-intensive industries.' In the absence of scholarly research it will be considered safe to predict that there will be an accelerated demand fuelled by firstly the need to catch up in talent development in, among other fields, project management, secondly the need to sustain excellence within a rapidly growing profession. It will be imperative for both the public and private sectors to collaborate in the area of talent development. The current training efforts and the resultant number of certified project managers is clearly short of the mark.

¹⁶ Ika L. A. (2012) *Project Management for development in Africa: Why Projects are failing and what can be done about it*. Project Management Journal, Vol. 43, No. 4, 27-41

¹⁷ PMI's Industry Growth Forecast – Project Management between 2010 + 2020, March 2013

A case is made for further collaboration at regional level. There is need to research the current number of African project management organizations such as PMI chapters. These will be found to be small in size. Whilst these chapters may continue to grow they are likely to lack the economies of scale that would greatly benefit the project management profession as a lobby group. If the African PM organizations were to collaborate they would make very big strides using the strategy of:

- Networking – Project management professionals in public and private sector collaborating and networking, across the borders,
- Advocating - having a common voice, a common approach to advocacy for project management talent development and policy development within the individual economies and within the Sub-Saharan African region, and
- Propagating – enjoying economies of scale in researching, talent development, liaison with such bodies as PMI's Government Relations Office and ID agencies, and promoting the PM profession within the individual and regional economies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Continued use of non-certified and untrained, 'accidental' project managers will have a detrimental effect of monolithic project failure in the public and private sector, and ID. There is a high risk of billions of dollars being lost as 'accidental' project managers continue to undertake major projects without requisite expertise. This will set the African countries, their economies and industries backwards as they cannot compete on the global environment. If the advanced countries are seeing the necessity of setting up structures for building project management capacity at national and regional cooperation, then it will be folly for the developing nations not to follow suit. Prudence in accelerated PM talent development is advocated for. Key strategies for Zimbabwe are:

- Government to recognize the need for:
 - transformation of 'accidental' to accredited project managers by acceleration of training of project management skills up to certification level in the Public Sector,
 - setting up a policy framework for managing public sector projects, including the setting up of enabling structures such as Major Project Management Offices and the requisite project management academies, and
 - collaboration at regional Sub-Saharan level (COMESA/SADCC) in policy development for enabling innovation, and for a common approach for support from organisations such as the PMI.
- The private sector to recognize the need for:
 - converting the existing 'accidental' project managers into accredited project management professionals to spearhead the implementation of innovation strategies, and

- collaboration at country level for the strengthening and supporting of affiliated project management institutes such as PMI Local chapters,
- project management policy advocacy.
- Project Management bodies such as the PMZ, to pursue:-
 - advocacy for government policy framework to accelerate talent development and eventually enforce a policy which ensures that all capital projects are run by accredited project management professionals,
 - solicitation of Zimbabwean project managers in the diaspora who are PMP (and other) certified, and
 - collaboration with regional PMI (and other) Local chapters.

Any call to action from a PMP would not be complete if it does not state a timeline. It is proposed that the recommendations above be put into motion with immediate effect with an objective of achieving significant progress within a 12 month setting.

Editor's note: This paper was submitted for publication by Project Management Zimbabwe, the national professional society for project managers and project management professionals in Zimbabwe. For information about PMZ, go to www.pmiz.org.zw/index.html

About the Author



Tororiro Isaac Chaza

Harare, Zimbabwe



Tororiro Chaza is one of the handful of PMPs in Zimbabwe. He has over 30 years of experience on projects in the Telecommunications industry, having worked for General Electric Company in the UK, then for the Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunications Company, and top Cellular Company Econet Wireless. Tororiro was the General Manager of the Project Management Office (PMO) at Econet Zimbabwe for the last 5 years in charge of managing a large portfolio of telecommunications, banking and construction projects of varying complexities. Tororiro is now a full project management consultant and currently reading for his PhD.

Tororiro Chaza can be contacted at tororiro.chaza@torchpmo.com