

Zimbabwe slowly embracing necessity of Project Management Training and Certification

Tororiro Isaac Chaza, PMP

Tawanda Kurasa (real name) from Harare Zimbabwe is on cloud 19 having recently certified as a project management professional (PMP). Like many other thousands of professionals worldwide Tawanda has been practicing both locally and abroad for the past 10 years as an Engineer, he has worked in parastatals, private companies and listed companies such as Liquid Telecommunications as a Project Manager, delivering projects worth millions of dollars. In terms of best practice in the field of project management, despite possessing a Bachelor's degree in Engineering and an MBA qualification, Tawanda was not recognized as a project manager before certification. This is the predicament of thousands of professionals out there not only in Zimbabwe but all over the world.

As the immediate past President of PMZ Mr Henry Mkhwananzi (PMP) puts it, "It is high risk for sponsors in the public and private sector, to entrust large scale projects worth millions of dollars into the leadership hands of uncertified project managers". PMZ research has shown that the local public sector is fraught with 'accidental' project managers as many people are called to undertake project management responsibilities with little or no preparation. These 'accidental' project managers are selected for their managerial/technical expertise but lack competency to deliver projects.

In Zimbabwe and, as in most Sub-Saharan African countries the level of project management training and certification is nascent, albeit ominously low, given that these countries undertake massive infrastructural development projects. Hence projects fail due to incompetency in project management and the lack of appropriate project governance thereof, giving rise to opportunistic corruption.

Governments of a number of developed and emerging economies have gone to the extent of mandating enabling policies geared towards the acceleration of project management talent development in the public and private sectors in order to spur economic growth support. A case in point 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 thus, "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," (Prime Minister's Mandate on Major Projects – Gov.uk, 2011). Similar developments have been attested in countries, such as Canada, USA, most EU bloc countries, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc. where governments have pronounced the setting up of capacity development policies to enhance project management capabilities and attendant governance. Governments are prompting project management implementation to spearhead infrastructure development and innovation for sustained global competitiveness.

Project Management Zimbabwe (PMZ) is the Zimbabwe's largest association of project managers, among its various mandates, the institute provides guidelines for certification of project managers. There are about 850 000 PMPs worldwide to date, and 50% of this number are in the USA and EU region, while Zimbabwe has less than 100 known PMPs to date. While the PMP certification is the world's most popular project management credential, there are other equally good qualifications popular in Zimbabwe such as the PGDPM (Post Graduate Diploma in Project Management), CAPM (Certified Associate in Project Management), CPM/DPM (Certificate & Diploma in Project Management) including the PRINCE2.

In support of Zimbabwe's national development plan, the ZIMASSET Program, PMZ has been advocating for accelerated talent development in the area of Project Management and Project Governance, inter alia, as a prerequisite for economic growth support and mitigation of project failure and the consequent corruption. Continued use of non-certified and untrained, 'accidental' project managers will have a detrimental effect of monolithic project failure and corruption in the public and private sector, and International Development project endeavours.

It is recommended that Zimbabwe parastatals and public organisations implementing key national development programmes and projects such as ZESA, ZINARA, CAAZ, Zimdef, ZINWA to name but a few must set up Project Management Offices (PMOs) resourced by qualified and certified project managers. The Office of the President (OPC) is the ideal authority to set up, monitor and evaluate PMBOK-based Government portfolio and program management governance structures.

About the Author



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Eng. 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-time project management trainer and consultant.

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