



TOWARDS THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Project management is the key success factor of today's public and private sector companies. This paper focuses on the traditional practice of project management practices in public sector organizations especially in less developed countries. A case study was discussed in Pakistani public sector organizations. It focuses on the rise of project management and provides a summary of useful concepts, different project types, supportive organizational structures, effective technologies and points out future project management directions. Public sector organizations still need systems of managing projects efficiently but it is likely that they will be very different to those found suitable in the past. Some tentative suggestions are made as to the type of changes that are needed, but it is also necessary for empirical studies to be undertaken to codify and conceptualize what is already happening in practice. The identification of gaps and lag before practice is incorporated into theory has created a major opportunity for future researchers in project management practices.

Key Words: PMP, Project Management, DDSC, PDWP

1.0. Introduction

Project is defined as a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service; temporary means that the project has a definite ending point and unique means that the product or service differs in some distinguishing way from all similar products or services (Committee & Committee, 1996). Project management is defined as an application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to produce activities to meet project requirements. This is accomplished through the application and integration of the project management processes of initiation, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing phases (Bolles & Fahrenkrog, 2004). Mintzberg (1983) cited in Soderlund (2004b) states that most of the emergent industries since World-war II are project intensive (Söderlund, 2004).

Public sector organizations are differentiated in comparison with their commercial counterparts in the private sector. There is no profit maximizing focus, little potential for income generation and generally speaking, no bottom line against which performance can be measured (Boland & Fowler, 2000). The vast majority of public sector organizations still generate most of their income from the State (Ibid). However, the capability of the public sector is pivotal to the growth of the economy (Rwelamila, 2007). Furthermore, the need for project management expertise in public sector organizations has become fundamental in order to deal with the enormous responsibility of managing number of projects (ibid). In less developed countries, the implementation of project management tools and techniques is still in its early phases of development. It is a relatively modern practice that attempts to achieve planned objectives within specific time and cost limits through optimum use of resources by using an integrated planning and control system (Abbasi & Al-Mharmah, 2000). For the purpose of this research, Pakistan is selected as the context of the study. The public sector has a pivotal role in growth of the economy; therefore, public sector project management practice is selected as the boundary of research in Pakistan. Project Management Institute's best practice is taken as a reference for comparison due to its reputation as a de facto international standard and also because of the implementation of these standards in public sector projects in Pakistan.

1.1. Background

The public sector organizations in Pakistan are divided into two broad categories of Federal and Provincial level organizations. The Federal level organizations are entrusted with task of managing and providing services throughout the country whereas the Provincial level organizations are confined in providing services to their respective provinces. Public sector organizations are also divided into three different sectors namely planning sector, service sector, and contractor and consultant sector. The planning sector organizations are mainly responsible for approval of project and providing funds. Service sector organizations are the ones that initiate the project and the consultant and contractor are the one that facilitate the project execution and completion.

1.1.1. Initiation phase and planning phase

Project management process in Pakistani public sector organizations starts with the identification of the project. The first phase is to formulate the project in the form of a project proposal by the executing department or service sector organization. This proposal is referred to as PC-I (Planning commission-I). The PC-I form includes the name and location of project, specification of responsible authorities, cost estimates, justification, implementation schedule and proposed benefits of the project.

The next stage is to carry out feasibility studies if the project is a mega project. A report has to be submitted in the form of PC-II as a feasibility study to planning sector organization. It includes the name of project along with administrative authorities, feasibility of the project and the expected results of the project. A consulting firm is hired most of the time to prepare this report. This happens due to a lack of qualified manpower in the department. This is a practice that usually takes an additional 3-6 months in the project. The next phase is the approval of the project. This is based on the value of the project. The projects which are up US \$ 1 million are approved by the Departmental Development Sub-Committee (DDSC). This committee is headed by the Chief Executive of the department. If the project exceeds US \$ 1 Million but is under US

\$ 10 million then the project is approved by the committee named as the Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP). This committee is headed by the Chief Minister of the respective province. The chairman of the provincial planning and development department and chairmen of other provincial level organizations are members of this committee. Projects which are above US \$ 10 million go to the Federal government and have to be approved by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) headed by the Chairman of the Planning Commission. All the chief executives of the national level organizations are members of this committee. The highest approval body is the executive committee of the National Economic Council (NEC) which is headed by the Prime Minister of the country. This committee comprises of ministers from various disciplines and the chairman of the planning commission. The mega projects with substantial loan components are approved by this committee. The approval at higher level requires prior approval at the preceding level – so if the project is to receive approval from CDWP then it has to be approved by the PDWP and the DDSC first. The time for these approvals ranges from 3-4 weeks for the DDCS to 4-6 months for the CDWP. The projects having a substantial loan component go to the NEC and the NEC can take a one year for approval. These projects are usually funded by donor agencies. If the project exceeds the budget requested in PC-I, then a request has to be prepared in the form of project revision (Revised PC-I). In this process, the service sector organization has to amend the proposal as per instructions of the planning sector organization. This is a process usually takes 4-5 months for large development processes. The project proposal becomes the project charter after approval and is sent to the executing department which formally accepts the approved project. The project then moves into execution phase.

1.1.2. Executing phase and Controlling and Monitoring phase

Once the project is in the execution phase, the departments are required to send another type of document referred to as PC-III. This report includes information about the progress of project on monthly/quarterly basis. In addition to this, it also includes information on the funds allocated and utilized. Furthermore, any major milestones achieved by the project are also mentioned in this report. Usually, the funds are released by the finance department of the organization on a quarterly basis to the service sector organizations. Funds released by the finance department during the fiscal year have to be used by the projects in that year or surrendered back to the finance department. Funds allocated for subsequent years are based on the project's fund utilization history. If a project was unable to utilize more than 50 per cent of its allocated fund for that year, it is unlikely to get more than that requested for the next year unless it clearly shows that the factors that contributed to the low utilization have been satisfactorily addressed.

1.1.3. Closing phase

A close out report is required from the executing departments at the end of project and this is called as PC-IV. This report includes name of the project, the implementation period (actual and planned), capital cost (actual and planned), quantifiable benefits of the project, financial/economic results based on actual cost, impact of the project on the target group, lessons learned from the project and any suggestions for similar future projects. For the next five years, a document referred to as PC-V is prepared annually that would list the benefits proposed to be obtained by the stakeholders from project.

The above process is a general phenomenon for all public sector projects undertaken in Pakistan. This paper will highlight constraints that the public sector planning organization faced during the project management life cycle in Pakistan.

1.2. Literature review

According to Hofstede's (1984) findings, Pakistan is classified in eastern culture. It is predominantly a Muslim country and has many commonalities with the neighboring Muslim countries. It is ranked 14 for individualism orientation. Based on this score, Pakistan has a collectivist culture. In collectivist societies, private life is invaded by group's interests; whereas in an individualistic society, identity is based on individuals (Hofstede, 1984). Triandis (1982) suggested that collectivism may have its antecedents in resource scarcity and the presence of large extended families. Like many collectivist societies, Pakistani society tends to operate on the basis of personal relationships among individuals rather than on the basis of impersonal institutions. Another feature of Pakistani culture is high degree of hierarchical distance. This illustrates that the power in the society is distributed unequally. Therefore, Pakistani society is characterized by highly traditional values such as collectivism and hierarchical distance that favors the status quo and make any transformation extremely difficult. Under such circumstances, the performance is often compromised (Triandis, 1982).

Kiggundu et al. (1983) add two other observations specifically with respect to less developed countries. On the basis of an extensive literature survey, they argue that the utilization of administrative techniques focusing on the technical core of the organization (organizational tasks, technology, administration techniques) is not very problematic in developing countries (Kiggundu, Jørgensen, & Hafsi, 1983). However, western theories that deal with the organization's relationship with its environment (culture, politics) are difficult to implement, necessitating major adjustments to conventional theory. In context of project management in the public sector, the impact of this difference can be seen as an outcome of lack of communication, human resource planning, fair recruitment and selection process and employee involvement (Raiden, Dainty, & Neale, 2004). Abbasi and Al-Mharmah (2000) concludes that the strategy for implementing project management in developing countries must be consistent with the cultural and characteristics of the particular society and configuration of its economic, political and administrative systems (Abbasi & Al-Mharmah, 2000).

Similarly, Muriithi and Crawford (2003) suggest that western management concepts may be wholly or partially inapplicable and irrelevant to other cultures. This may be because value at work and in social settings are culturally based – therefore when dealing with human behavior (i.e. management) we must recognize the cultural context. They further states that contrary to common belief that the western oriented techniques of project management are just straight forward procedures that anyone can learn and implement, there are considerable cross-cultural problems in using the approach in non-western countries (Muriithi & Crawford, 2003). Abbasi and Al-Mharmah (2000) argues that existence of several social, cultural, political and financial problems leads to poor management performance in less developed countries (Abbasi & Al-Mharmah, 2000). Therefore, the strategy for implementing project management in less developed countries must be consistent with the cultural and characteristics of the particular society and configuration of its economic, political and administrative systems. In recent years, public sector performance measurement and 'public sector project management' (author's emphasis) has attracted much attention in the literature. However, almost all papers that have been published in academic journals focus on the public sector in European, North American countries, Australia or New Zealand (Bakhshi, 1991). There is little literature available about the

project management in the public sector of less developed countries. Few authors have (Abbasi & Al-Mharmah, 2000; Kartam, Al-Daihani, & Al-Bahar, 2000; Sonuga, Aliboh, & Oloke, 2002) identified different barriers which hinder the project success in less developed countries. These are:

- Lengthy approval procedures
- Existing administrative system
- Changing orders
- Lack of ownership
- Lack of authority
- Poor estimation of activity cost etc.

However, all of them have emphasized on further research to investigate the limitations and potential for project management system in different environment. This research is carried out with this rationale.

2.0. Research Methodology

The aim of the research is to explore the project management practices; therefore, the nature of the questions posed are how, why and what. Case studies are the preferred method when how and why questions are posed and they can be exploratory in nature (Yin, 2009). Berg (2004) perceives that many qualitative investigators use the case study approach as a guide to their research. This makes case study research a valuable tool for the exploration of project management practices in a less developed country (Berg, Lune, & Lune, 2004). Judgment sampling is used for the selection of right individuals, objects or event for this research. In judgment sampling, sometimes also refers as purposive sampling, the subject were selected on the bias of their expertise in the object investigated to get meaningful data. Two organizations were selected for the purpose of this research. A separate case study was conducted on these individual organizations. This makes this study a multiple case study research. Primary data for the purpose of research was collected with semi-structured interviews.

The data was collected from project directors, senior executives and project managers of the public sector organizations. All of these participants had an experience of more than ten years of managing the public sector projects and were well versed with processes and issues involved in managing the public sector projects in Pakistan.

3.0. Case study

The planning sector organizations act as regulating bodies for any public sector project that is initiated in Pakistan. Being regulating bodies, they are only involved in the approval and monitoring of the project. The organizations that are selected for the planning sector are the most important organizations in the country.

3.1. Background of organizations

In 1953, a planning board was established to take care of Pakistan's economic and development requirements. This board later became the most pivotal entity of the country in terms of development. The organization A is headed by the Prime Minister of the country and key

ministers are member of its policy board. Each year the organization is involved in reviewing the project proposals from every sector of the economy. These proposals are submitted under the standard format (i.e. PC-I). In a typical year, the organization A is involved in about 2000 projects from all over the country and the budget of these projects is about US \$ 5 Billion. As the organization is acting as a regulating body for the entire public sector project planning in the country; therefore, it is divided into four main sections: economic, technical, administrative and project wings. The responsibility of these wings varies from appraisal of the project proposals to the monitoring of the projects. For the purpose of this research, the participants were selected from organization A's project wing. This was done to understand the processes through which the projects progress in organization A.

The organization B is a provincial level organization. It is located in a province named Punjab. Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan with respect to population which is nearly over 75 Million (Statistics Division, 2009). The annual public sector development portfolio for Punjab is over US \$ 12 Million (Planning and Development Board, 2009). Public sector spending in Punjab has increased consistently in last few years. This increase in spending was pushing the Punjab government capacity to its limits to effectively plan and executes the projects. The provincial level service sector organizations (not in the scope of this study) usually send PC-I (project proposals) to organization B depending upon the estimated value of the project. Organizations B either approve the project by itself or send it to organization A for approval. Due to the increase of projects in the provincial level service organization, the organization B, which is responsible for the development of new project in the province, has established a new division called Project Management Unit (PMU). This case study focuses on this unit in organization B. PMU handles project of extreme political importance. The PMU is also involved in planning, monitoring, evaluating, reporting the progress of the public sector projects at provincial level. In addition to this, the organization is involved in developing standards for the public sector organizations.

3.2. Data analysis and results

The data gathered thorough interviews in case study method is analysed by using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is perceived as a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Neuendorf, 2002). Therefore, this research had adopted the technique of content analysis to analyse the case study data. This has been done by:

- Coding the individual transcript data into sentences and themes
- Categorizing data based on these themes
- Summarizing all individual data to present a case study

4.0. Current Project Management Practices and Issues in Organization A

4.0.1. Identification of project

The process of management of projects in the organization A starts when organizations in service sector identify a project and send it in the form of PC-I to organization A for evaluation. After the simplification of the PC-I only fifteen questions are to be answered by the service sector organization in the project proposal. Ten of these questions are pertinent to the scope of the

project and the five questions are about the description of the project. Once the project proposal is received, it is judged in the economic and technical wing of organization A. If the project meets the requirement as prescribed in the PC-I, then it is approved for funds release; otherwise a revised proposal is required from the service sector organization. This issue is discussed in the next section.

4.0.2. Issues in planning process

i. Poorly Prepared Project Proposals

During this process one of the difficulties that organization A faces is poorly prepared proposals from the social and the production sectors. This happens due to the lack of the qualified people in the social and the production sector to properly prepare the project proposal. This places an extra pressure on organization A: the organization A has to check the proposal and then has to provide feedback to the service sector organization. In case of poorly prepared proposals, a revised proposal is required from the service sector organization. This adds extra time for the approval of the proposal. A revised proposal may take up to a year from its first submission to its final approval. The proposals from the infrastructure sector, however, are somewhat appropriate compared to proposals from production and social sector.

ii. Design related issues

The project proposals from the service sector organizations often lack design details or drawings of the project. This frequently happens on small and medium scale projects. In big projects, feasibility studies are done in the form of PC-II so it is not an issue in those projects. This affects in the preparation of cost estimates for activities. At the moment the cost estimation for most of the project proposals submitted by the service sector organizations are based on loose approximations.

iii. Preparation of Cash and Work Plan

Once the proposal is approved, the funds are released. Usually 25 % of the funds are released to the service sector organization after the proposal is approved. The rest of the funds are released on the basis of cash and work plans. In this process the service sector organizations have to correlate the finances requested with the planned activity. The service sector organization has to justify their plan to organization A in order to release funds for the next phase of the project.

The cash and work plans were introduced in the public sector project in the last five years in order to be more transparent. However still it is perceived as a new concept by the service sector organizations and they are facing difficulties in properly preparing the cash and work plans.

Once the funds are released, the project goes into the implementation phase. The organization A has little to do with this phase. The service sector organizations are responsible for the execution and implementation phase of the project . The organization A, then externally monitors the progress of the implementation phase of the project according to the plan provided in the PC-I.

4.0.3. Monitoring of the project

In the monitoring process the organization A has developed in-house monitoring and evaluation software. This software is web based software and the project directors on different projects have the access to this software. It is a requirement for the project directors to input the data in this software every month. The monitoring staff in the organization A then will analyze the project based on this data on a monthly basis. The monitoring staff monitors thirty to forty projects across a year. They can directly contact the project directors. The monitoring staff not only does the desk-based monitoring but also goes in to the field to physically monitor the project and ask questions about the project from the project directors.

In cases where a project is making a slow progress, then organization A relocates the funds from the slow moving projects to the fast moving project but not beyond the sector (i.e. the infrastructure sector, the production sector and the social sector). By doing this, the organization A will ensure that they are not disturbing the overall allocation of Public Sector Development Portfolio (PSDP) for that sector.

After doing the monitoring, the monitoring staff in organization A prepares reports which are presented at the quarterly review meetings chaired by the deputy chairman of the organization A. This meeting is attended by the respective members of those divisions. All the monitoring issues pertaining to those divisions are discussed in these meetings. The next section will discuss the issues faced by the organization A in monitoring the public sector projects.

4.0.4. Issues in Monitoring phase

The issues faced by the organization A in monitoring the public sector projects are as follows:

i. Lack of Staff

The main issue with the monitoring staff is that they are overworked. At the time of this case study the organization A has only five people to monitor the large number of projects. So it affects the progress of the monitoring staff.

ii. Misleading Information

The service sector organizations tend to provide misleading information to organization A during the monitoring process. The service sector organizations do this in order to satisfy the organization A criteria to release the funds for the next phase of the project. At the time of the case study the organization A is trying to create an atmosphere to get the right information from service sector organizations however it is facing considerable difficulties in achieving this task.

iii. General Issues

During the case study the participants revealed some interesting issues which although not directly concerns the working of organization A however they do effect the overall performance of project management in public sector organizations.

a. Issue Related With Land Acquisition

Another important issue which is witnessed by organization A in the project management process was the land acquisition issues. Most often the service sector organization starts the project before acquiring the land for the project. So when this occur lot of negotiation was required in the process of acquiring the land. This affects the project in the form of design changes, cost and time over runs. This also results in the revision of the initial plan for the project.

b. Delay in handing over assets after Project Completion

One issue that is being noticed by organization A is that there is a long process of handing over assets to the concerned party once the project is finished. Because of this long process, the opportunity that is created is being lost as the utility is left unutilized for that period.

4.0.5. Project Evaluation

When the project is completed, the evaluation of the project is started to find out whether the project has been able to deliver the benefits and the impact which was being claimed in the project proposal. This evaluation is required from the service sector organizations in the form of a report called PC-V. Although this report is in the system for a while, it has been ignored by the service sector organizations.

4.1. Current Project Management Practices in Organization B

Organization B is a provincial level planning organization responsible for approving provincial level project. Project Management Unit (PMU) comes under organization B therefore organization B decides which projects should be planned, monitored and evaluated by the PMU. The projects which have a public and political importance are awarded to the PMU for planning and monitoring purposes. So once the project is awarded to PMU, the staff starts coordinating with the service sector organization that has initiated the project. The staff of PMU starts helping them in making the project proposal. The project is identified by the provincial level service sector organization and PMU is involved in helping these service sector organizations in making the proposal. A PC-I (Planning Commission-I) is submitted as a project proposal. This PC-I goes to the Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) meeting to receive approval. After the project proposal is approved by the PDWP, the funds are released to the service sector organization.

4.1.1. Development of Project Proposal

After the funds are released the first step is to develop the baseline project plan (because in PC-I no detail plan was provided). For this purpose organization B organize a meeting with the service sector organization. The purpose of this meeting is:

- To identify the scope of the project.
- Development of work breakdown structure,
- Identification and organization of activities,

- Developing a project plan, and
- Establishing and identifying critical path.

The cost estimation carries out by the service sector organization. Once the Critical path has been established and the project plan is finalized the project plan is handed over to the service sector organization for execution.

4.1.2. Issues in Project Planning

i. Unrealistic Project Time

The service sector organizations often project themselves as efficient while from the inside the same old bureaucratic structure is in place. In doing so, they unrealistically claim to complete the project much earlier than the realistic time. As a result the project cannot be completed on time because of these unrealistic claims. For example, a project which will realistically complete in one year will be presented so as to complete in 6 months in order to project them as efficient. In reality it is not possible and when the project cannot be completed, it is considered failed.

ii. Ignoring Important Stakeholders in the Planning Process

In the planning process, the appropriate stakeholder identification and analysis is not done. So when the project reaches a stage where a certain stakeholder needs to be involved, a lot of confusion and mismanagement results. For example, there may be utilities, electricity lines, fiber optic cables etc. that are to be relocated and they belong to another public organization. However during the planning process that organization was not identified as a stakeholder as a result when the project reaches to that stage where the utility has to be relocated a lot of confusion and mismanagement happens.

To relocate the utility from one place to another place cost the project in terms of land acquisition, utility relocation etc. This kind of cost estimation does not happen in the costing of the project which in turns increases the cost of the project.

4.1.3. Monitoring of project

After the planning stage the implementation phase of project starts and the PMU start monitoring the progress of the project based on the baseline plan. The monitoring staff of PMU visits the site on monthly basis. The purpose of these visits is to collect data and check the progress of the deliverables. In the monitoring process the organization B is involved in the time related aspects of project scope. The quality of the project is not the responsibility of the PMU in fact it lies with the service sector organization.

i. Technology Employed in Monitoring Process

PMU uses a sophisticated system for the monitoring of the project progress. Primavera project planner software and Earned Value Management (EVM) technique is used to monitor and forecast the progress of the project. A detailed monitoring report is made on monthly basis which contains the observed delay, the cause for delays, planned value, learned value, forecast for the future direction and risk associated with the project. The responsibility of PMU is to prepare the

monitoring report; however, control action is the responsibility of the related service sector organization.

4.1.4. Issues in Project Monitoring

Following are the issues that are regularly faced by PMU in project monitoring:

i. Contractor Not Following the Project Plan

PMU faces a significant issue when the project is in the implementation stage. This issue is that the contractors do not follow the approved project plan developed by the PMU in consultation with other related stakeholders. This creates the problem in a sense that the staff at PMU is monitoring the project based on the baseline project agreed by all the parties at the start of the project. So once the monitoring starts and the contractor were following its own plan then it becomes really difficult to monitor the project and to negotiate with the contractor.

ii. Relaxed Attitude of Senior Management to the Problem

Sometimes senior management at higher level of the service sector organizations are required to intervene and make decisions. PMU carries out monitoring on regular basis and then identifies issue with project progress. These issues are communicated to the service sector organizations at various levels. PMU faces this problem routinely that when senior management attention is required on the project their attitude is very relaxed. This lack of attention gives a sort of confidence to the contractor to not improve on his performance.

iii. Adversarial Relationship between Service Sector Organizations and PMU

As PMU is the monitoring authority therefore provincial service sector organizations mostly find it uneasy to work with the PMU. This adversarial relationship results in hiding of important information from PMU. Sometimes misleading information is provided in terms of the false progress of the project.

4.1.5. Project Close Out and Evaluation

PMU has not much role to play in the project close out however, when the project is finished, PMU prepare an evaluation report. The evaluation report is very important as it has the ability to transfer knowledge to the next projects; however realization of this report is missing among the public sector organizations.

5.0. General issues of Project Management

The interview conducted not only brought the above mentioned issues into the light but also revealed various issues which were not related to project management practices of this organization but they were related to project management practices as a whole. These were the issues that this organization was not directly involved but has a good knowledge of these being part of the whole process.

i. Favoritism in Awarding the Contract

The PMU witnessed that favoritism in awarding the contract is very rampant which drastically affects the project implementation. This happens when the contractors are awarded the project without competition mainly because they have contact with someone influential in the department. Usually such contractor lacks the capability to properly do the job which results in project delays.

ii. Contract Awarded in Chunk Creates Coordination Problem

The PMU observed that the provincial service sector organizations do not award a contract to a single general contractor which could then subcontract it to different subcontractors. Instead, they divide the work themselves and award different contracts to various contractors by themselves. While doing so, they get themselves in a trouble of managing and coordinating various contractors. The provincial service sector organizations are not much able to coordinate the contracts properly. This creates a problem in a sense that different contractors are working on different phases, if electricity works have to start after the plumbing and the plumbing contractor has not finished the job then the electricity contractor may have to delay his work. This coordination issue among different contractors on the project makes it difficult to follow the project path.

iii. Issue with Contractor Selection Criteria

The PMU noticed that during contractor selection the provincial service sector organizations overlook a very important criterion which is termed as “Bid Capacity” locally. This is a measure of capacity of a contractor to take up another job in addition to current jobs. In other words, to find out that how many dedicated resources a contractor can employ for the new job for which it is bidding. This criterion although is part of standard operating procedure of contractor selection however it is often ignored.

iv. Overlooking Time Aspect of Project in Contractor Selection

The time aspect of a project is not usually a criterion in contractor selection. The selection is based mainly on lowest cost of the project and quality related aspect of the contractor. The less emphasis on project time / schedule may also lead to some issue in managing the project. A clear explanation of time may ensure that the project is not unnecessarily delayed and the contractor who has a capacity to finish the work on time is selected.

v. Problem related with Land Acquisition

PMU also observed a significant issue of land acquisition once the project goes into the implementation. This happens in the case when the project is started by the service sector organization before the acquisition of land. So once that occurs the project is delayed until the land is acquired. The land acquisition is a long process especially in the public sector project and a lot of paper work is involved in this process. Therefore, to achieve any time line that is associated with the project seems improbable after this delay. Interestingly, this issue happens routinely and no learning seems to have happened.

vi. Coordination Problem among Different Public Sector Service Organizations

Another significant problem noticed by the PMU is the lack of coordination among different public sector service organization. This occurs when the project reaches a stage where another public sector organization needs to be involved. In this case the project manager has to request the other public sector organization to carry out that specific task. In this situation the staff of the other organization usually has a casual attitude towards the project activity and is more concerned with their own priorities and normal routine. If that task is critical for the project then it delays the whole project. There is no proper standard operating procedure for this kind of issue in the public sector organizations of Pakistan.

vii. Cutting Down the Scope of Work

PMU also observed that when the project start to face difficulties owing to poor planning and design, and the finish time of the project starts to look impossible to achieve, the normal practice in the service sector organizations is to cut down the scope of the project or to compromise its quality.

viii. Lack of Maintenance of Projects Histories

The lack of maintenance of history of projects is also noticed as an important issue which can affect the future projects by PMU. The database of projects or archives is helpful to identify issues in the planning stage of a similar project. At the moment there is no defined frame work to maintain the project archives. So anything that the project team has learned in the project is lost once the project is finished. There is no such practice to acquire the project teams experience/ lessons learned for others for future projects.

ix. Non Completion of Project Benefit Report (PC-V)

Another noteworthy issue is the lack of realization of benefits achieved after the project. In practice, there is no such practice to present a report after the project completion to list its benefits. Although there is a set of procedure to produce a benefit achieved report for the next five years after the project completion called project benefit achieved report (PC-V). However, this rarely prepared by the service sector organizations.

x. Inflated Cost of Low Priced Items in a Project

PMU highlighted a very interesting issue in bidding process which has gone unnoticed for quite long time. More often than not in bidding process, when tender is opened, the item rates of low priced items are over inflated artificially. This is a form of corruption. The bidding party is then pre-selected informally and is informed of such items which have been priced higher than normal. The bidding party then quotes similar price of such items in their bid. As a result of it, the bidding parties' rates match closely to the bid which helps it to win the bid. Later on the money made through this corruption is shared. This is the practice which has been part of the project for a long time.

6.0. Discussion

The results of the case studies performed in the public sector planning organizations of Pakistan were informative for the wide variety of input it provided in terms of the project management practices itself, the issues that the organizations faced during these practices and the future opportunities to improve these practices.

These case studies help improve the understanding of how the projects were arrived at the planning sector organizations for evaluation and how it's been approved for funding. These case were also helpful to understand the monitoring process of public sector projects in Pakistan. It is notable that role of organization A in these case studies was mostly of a regulating body whereas the role of organization B tends to be more of a consulting body for the service sector organizations.

Generally the participants in both of the organization faces problem with the poorly prepared project proposal from the service sector organizations. The reason behind this is perceived to be the lack of qualified people in the service sector organizations. A significant issue that the participants from both of these organizations highlighted was the ignoring of the important stakeholders during the planning and designing stage of the project. This issue seems to be very important in terms of project success as almost all the respondents strongly emphasized on it. Putuet al. (2007) also highlighted this problem in the public sector organizations in the less developed countries(Alawattage et al., 2007).

In the monitoring process of the project the organization A tends to use in-house monitoring software whereas the organization B used advanced project management software called Primavera project planner (P5). The monitoring process in organization B was comparatively better than organization A mostly because the number of projects that the monitoring staff of organization A has to monitor was quite high in numbers than that of the organization B. The senior management has realized the importance of project management in these organizations and is taking initiatives to improve their project management practices.

7.0. Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed as a result of this research. The recommendations are specific to the sector and also general for the public sector projects.

Planning Sector Recommendations

- Detail Design should be provided in the project proposal (PC-I)
- Proper Cost Estimation should be done in the PC-I
- Activity Duration and estimation should be provided in the PC-I

General Recommendations

- Facilitate the skilled manpower
- Enhance the leadership capability of the project managers by education and training
- Delays because of political pressures should be reduced.
- Pre-defined standard operating procedures should be developed for the acquisition of land and for the coordinating among different government sector organizations.
- Start of a Government Initiative to increase awareness of new project management techniques

7.1. Future Studies

Undertaking this research has opened different avenues for further research initiatives which are presented below:

- This research may have open the doors for researchers to explore the project management practices in the public sector of any other less developing country to validate the research
- Researchers can also investigate the project management practices in the private sector of a less developed country to have an overall picture of the management practices in less developed country.

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