PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRILOGY
CHALLENGES IN AFRICA
WHERE TO FROM HERE?

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‘Between the idea .....And the reality......Between the conception....And the creation...Falls the Shadow’

Winch (2010)

†† One of the principal ways in which modern societies generate new value is through projects which create physical assets & services that can then be exploited to achieve social and economic ends

– factories, offices, hospitals, tunnels, services, etc.

(fixed capital formation & ‘services’)
MODERN SOCIETIES GENERATE NEW VALUE

Gloomy faces, complaints, professional arrogance, innovation voices, ostriches

Plethora of Messes
PM AS A PROFESSION & A DISCIPLINE
– IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY!
SICK PROJECTS ARE FAMILIAR – UMBRELLA DIMENSIONS

Unsuccessful business/development strategy – not achieving commercial success/developmental

Inefficient projects – failing to meet budget, quality, utility and schedule expectations

Weak impact on stakeholders – unable to meet technical specs, to address stakeholders needs

Unsustainable potential – unable to contribute towards improving the standard of living
COMMON PROJECT CHALLENGES - SYMPTOMS (1)

- Clients’/Stakeholders’ dissatisfaction with final products or services – ultimate intended users unhappy with what has finally been delivered

- Most project missions have been archaic – majority of projects are completed without initial clarity of project goals & general direction

- Most projects do not have appropriate schedules and plans - bar charts as dominant planning models!

- Most PBO have no well defined system of consulting stakeholders – what do they know syndrome?

SYMPTOMS – OPPOSITE TO PROJECT CRITICAL FACTORS
COMMON PROJECT CHALLENGES - SYMPTOMS (2)

- Most PBOs have poor project personnel recruitment & selection systems – PMs and core team members (poor selection & training)
- Most PBOs have poor project monitoring & feedback systems – majority of projects face late provision of comprehensive control of information at each phase of the project
- Most PBOs have poor communication systems – a good number of projects suffer from non provision of appropriate network & necessary data

SYMPTOMS – OPPOSITE TO PROJECT CRITICAL FACTORS
COMMON PROJECT CHALLENGES - SYMPTOMS (3)

✓ Most PBOs do not have appropriate troubleshooting strategies – most projects suffer from inabilities to handle unexpected crises & deviations from project plans

✓ Dominance of incompetent PMs – a significant number of people who assume positions of PMs are technical experts & incompetent administratively, interpersonally, and technically (project specific)

✓ Excessive power & politics – it is common to find high degrees of political activities within organisations & perceptions of projects furthering self-interests of organisation members

SYMPTOMS – OPPOSITE TO PROJECT CRITICAL FACTORS
COMMON PROJECT CHALLENGES - SYMPTOMS (4)

- Negative impact from environmental events – it is common to find external organisational factors (especially within public sector) affecting operations of project teams negatively.

- Urgency is an elusive word (especially in public sector organisations) – fundamental fact of a temporary social coalition seem far away and the consequences on project parameters are enormous.

SYMPTOMS – OPPOSITE TO PROJECT CRITICAL FACTORS
8 out of 10 project managers are accidental or have inadequate PM knowledge base

Public & private sector organizations which are fundamentally project based, are PBO by default – characterized by archaic & fragmented systems

Project management training is characterized by curricula falling short a significant number of project management fundamentals

PROJECT MANAGEMENT POSTURING SEEMS TO DOMINATE
Individuals are appointed as PMs because they have qualifications in the same field as the project’s core business.

Player and referee roles – a conflict recipe.

Perpetual competence challenges.

Understanding the social coalition dynamics (Overflowing IQ or Overflowing EQ or Balance IQ/EQ?)

THE GROWING SYNDROME WITH ENTRENCHED DYNAMICS
DEFAULT PROJECT ORIENTED ORGANIZATIONS

- Project unlinked to coherent strategies
- Upper managers are unaware of the total number & scope of projects being undertaken
- Lip service to learning from projects (audits & close-out reports out of the equation)
- Window dressing project management information systems
- The core-team is very weak and chaotic

PROJECT ORIENTED ORGS. BY DEFAULT AS A NORM
The argument for postgraduate training in PM (generic or sector/industry specific) still mixed-up

Training designers seem to believe in BoK regimes religiously

Technical issues are considered above social-cultural aspects

A TECHNICAL INCLINED TRAINING REGIME
WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- Ability in technical expertise is not an overriding indicator of the effectiveness of a PM – temporary leadership potential a requirement for a PM

- Balanced training: technical & socio-cultural – proposed curriculum

- ‘Grenade on the wall’ approach – negating the principles of a core team & matching strategy with projects

STRATEGIC PM IN PROJECT ORIENTED ORGANIZATIONS – CENTRAL FOCUS
“THERE IS NOTHING PERMANENT EXCEPT CHANGE”
HERACLITUS OF GREECE – 513 B.C