AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF THE BRIEFING PRACTICE IN HONG KONG’S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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Abstract
A comprehensive client brief is essential to achieve the target time, cost and quality for a construction project. Although various attempts have been made to improve the current practice of briefing, it is still considered as inadequate by many researchers. In Hong Kong, very limited research work has been conducted to investigate the briefing process. This paper aims to present the key findings of a research, which analysed the practice and problems of briefing. Literature review, focus group interviews and a questionnaire survey were adopted to conduct the research. The findings implicate that a comprehensive framework for briefing should be established for systematic identification and clarification of client requirements, and precise and explicit representation of these requirements. It is suggested that this framework should include the stages and time frame of briefing, identification and representation of stakeholders to be involved in briefing, a systematic approach for identification, clarification and representation of client requirements, change management of requirements and management tools to be adopted in the briefing process and the format of a comprehensive client brief.

Keywords
Briefing, Construction, Current Practice, Hong Kong

INTRODUCTION

Briefing is the process of gathering, analysing, and synthesizing information needed in the building process in order to inform decision-making and decision implementation (Kelly and Duerk, 2002). The purpose of briefing is to clarify the objectives and requirements of a project (Bowen et al., 1999). A brief is a formal document containing the written instructions and requirements of a client in a construction project. It enables the client to inform all concerned parties of his statement of need and requirement. It has become a difficult task to prepare a comprehensive client brief due to the increase complexity of the organisation and project environment. The consequence of an inadequate client brief may affect the time, cost and quality of project seriously due to re-scoping, re-design or re-work on part or even the whole of a project.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted to investigate the problems of briefing and to improve the process (Newman et al., 1981; O’Reilly, 1987; MacPherson et al., 1992; Latham, 1994; Green, 1996; CIB, 1997; Salisbury, 1998; Barrett and Stanley, 1999; Fisher, 2000; Blyth and Worthington, 2001; Kamara et al., 2002). However, current briefing practice is still considered by many researchers as “inadequate” and has many limitations. As concluded in the Latham Report (1994): “more effort is required to understand clients’ need”. The recent report by Construction Industry Review Committee (2001) has also recommended client to “set out the requirements of their project clearly, systematically and comprehensively”.

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