CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

Atul AUTI¹ and Martin SKITMORE²

School of Urban Development, Queensland University of Technology, Gardens Point, Brisbane Q4001, Australia.
¹ Email: auti_junior@hotmail.com
² Email: rm.skitmore@qut.edu.au

Abstract
The Indian construction industry is known to be inefficient and highly resistant to change. Even with a changing market and increasing competition, there are no obvious signs of commensurate changes in methods and approach. Project management, on the other hand, seems to offer what is needed in terms of tools and techniques to raise industry standards. Little is known of the extent to which project management as a discipline exists in India. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to investigate the current level of application of project management and the obstacles that have prevented its introduction in the Indian construction industry.

A small questionnaire survey was conducted in early 2007. Following a pilot study, the main survey instrument was emailed to more than 150 participants and organisations. This produced a sample of 51 respondents from four different construction industry disciplines i.e. architecture (21), engineering (19), project personnel (9) and building surveying (2).

The responses and suggestions provided by the returns are studied and reviewed. These indicate that the Indian construction industry is growing and most of its consultants know of the existence of project management. Barriers for the application of project management knowledge do exist, with 45% of the respondents indicating a high level of obstacles. A particular issue is the lack of encouragement from construction organisations. A major difference was also observed between the public and private sectors with many of the respondents claiming that project management is possible on a large scale in the private sector but not in the public sector. The reasons for this difference are government policies such as excessive bureaucracy, poor execution of projects, compromises on quality and standards, personal interests, low transparency and corruption. In addition, a large majority of respondents agreed that the construction industry lacks a structure or pattern; that tools such as project management can provide the structure needed; and with the help of this structure, the industry should be able to overcome the problems involved in increased modernisation and transparency and be better prepared for future challenges.

Keywords
Construction industry, India, obstacles, Project management, practice, public and private sectors, structure

INTRODUCTION

With new research and developments, the field of project management continues to grow in terms of knowledge and practice (Clarke 1999:139). Project management has been accepted by many industries and, with on-going globalisation, international projects and markets, is practised almost the world over. In India, however, the construction industry has been and still is very labour intensive (Koehn and Ganapathiraju 1996:PRD31). Over a long period of time, the Indian construction industry has experienced very few changes in terms of new technologies and advanced methods (Koehn and Jagushte 2005:IN31). This is understandable to some extent, as current practice utilises the labour force available and aims to provide...