

Impact of the Nigerian Procurement Reform on Planning Practices of Construction Practitioners

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Abstract

Adoption of proficient planning practices is central to efficiency, viability, and sustainability of construction projects and therefore integral to attainment of a resilient and sustainable built environment. Lack of adequate planning practices by construction practitioners can result in colossal loss of investment capital and waste of hard earned tax payers' money in public projects. The Nigeria's Public Procurement Act 2007 was enacted to promote effective resource management and curtail practices that led to rampant projects failure. A decade after its enactment, it became essential to examine its impact on planning practices of practitioners. Thus, this study aimed at determining the reform's impact on planning practices of public construction practitioners in Nigeria. The quantitative survey research methodology was adopted, with structured questionnaires administered to Contractors, Consultants and Construction professionals in Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Abuja, Nigeria. ANOVA and Tukey's Honest tests were employed in the analysis. Findings showed significant difference in the mean responses with regards to the reform's impact on planning practices of practitioners. The study concluded that the reform has not been a wasted effort, but more is desired in implementation to impact on transparency in bid openings, timelier contract documents development, greater maintenance planning, better budgeting and cash flow management, and ICT usages. It recommended further initiatives to demonstrate government's commitment to promoting transparency in project planning such as mandatory publications of procurement proceedings, independent ratings of public projects, tying of donor funding to mainstreaming of transparency and synergising to promote Building Information Modelling (BIM) in project planning.

Keywords: Planning Practices, Practitioners, Procurement-Reform, Public Construction Projects

INTRODUCTION

Project planning is the first set of activities in the project management process is usually crucial to the success of the project. It can add to best procurement value as it greatly impacts on the management of resources by construction professionals and practitioners. Project planning provides a clear vision of the project outcome, the interaction of roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and creates a pathway to follow for successful project execution. Inadequate project plan could cause public clients great loss of capital investment as it is the basis of non-projects delivery, and where the project is finally delivered, it would be at a very high price (Serrador, 2013). Therefore, early investment in the planning stage of projects, mainly designs, cost schedules and programming can help to deliver expected project benefits and avoid unnecessary costs and delays (Zuofa and Ochieng, 2012).

Project planning is generally regarded as the corner stone to effective service delivery in any sector of the Nigerian economy. Therefore, if any improvement is desired in the procurement

and performance of public construction projects, it is essential that the planning practices of public construction practitioners are examined with the view to identifying the critical areas for improvement. Before the procurement reform era, Nigeria's developmental plans were constantly eroded by poor planning practices and inefficient infrastructural delivery (Akanmu, 2008). Public building projects in particular were never completed within the country's developmental time frames (Shwarka, 2014).

The practices of non-competitive tendering procedures, the selection of inappropriate procurement strategies, including frequent non-transparent / unethical professional practices were some of the problems at the pre-construction planning stages of projects. In addition, there was the lack of adequate project documentation, the non-availability of uniform / standard project planning documents resulting in unfair procurement evaluation. These created difficulty in the classification of several cost items during bid evaluations. Other problems which affected planning practices of practitioners were inadequate project briefs by clients, lack of feasibility studies for projects, poor risk management and ineffective resource scheduling problems were some of the problems that needed to be addressed (Zuofa and Ochieng, 2012; Shwarka, 2014 and Okoye, Ngwu, and Ugochukwu, 2015). These problems resulted in real cost consequences to all project parties, often alongside with claims and litigations. More so, it caused wastage of scarce resources and slow national developmental growth by the frequent abandonment of uncompleted projects, (Shwarka, 2014 and Gbahabon and Ajuwon, 2017).

Since one of the core objectives of the public procurement reform was to enhance project efficiency in projects delivery, it was thus expected that the reform initiative would lead to more adequate project planning in terms of better projects definition, setting of realistic budget estimates, effective scope control and transparent tendering process and contract awards. It was also expected that the reform initiative would provide environment for stakeholders and clients / project sponsors to fully understand the details of works to be executed and also foster understanding of the common and individual benefits of projects. Besides, all stakeholders will know when the project should be completed, how much it will cost, who does the work and how. It was anticipated that when these basic planning details are taken care of before project commencement and the sourcing of projects requirements, the clients' expectations in terms of budget, deadline and product quality would be better and more effectively met.

Therefore, several years after institutionalizing of the reform, it became essential to examine its impact on the project planning practices of construction practitioners' in the Nigerian construction industry. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the impact of the public procurement reform on the planning practices for public construction practitioners in Nigeria. It is hoped that this work would contribute value in public construction projects delivery by enhancing the planning practices of public construction clients, contractors and professionals engaged on public construction projects and proffer innovative solutions that aid the overall cost effectiveness of projects. It is hoped that this study would contribute to the general knowledge of construction management by identifying the key planning practices that enhance efficiency and economy. It is also hoped that it would contribute to the practice of construction management by filling the knowledge gap on how the procurement reform has impacted on planning practices in public construction projects delivery and pointed areas for improvement for procurement policy makers.

The research question that guided the study is: How has the Nigerian public procurement reform impacted on the planning practices of construction practitioners of public construction projects? The research hypothesis tested was stated thus:

H₀: There is no statistically significant impact of the public procurement reform on the planning practices of construction practitioners of public construction projects in Nigeria.

H₁: To reject null hypothesis

Possible Impact of Public Procurement Reform on Planning Practices of Public Construction Projects Practitioners

The enactment of the Public Procurement Act (PPA) 2007 demonstrated government's effort to bring about a revival to achieve maximum economic efficiency in construction procurement in Nigeria. The objectives of the procurement reform included harmonization of government policies and practices on public procurement in order to ensure probity, accountability and transparency in the contract award process and efficient project implementation. It also included the promotion of fair and competitive practices to ensure that all eligible and desirous parties in public bidding are given an equal opportunity. In addition, the reform sought to establish pricing standards and benchmark to ensure best value for money in terms of price, quality and timely delivery. Also, there was the need to simplify the procurement process not only to promote efficiency but also to ensure developments that meet national needs. Furthermore, there was the need to put in place a monitoring system in relation to budget appropriation for projects (Certificate of no objection to contract award), as well as a monitoring system in the selection of successful bidders and award of contracts (Public Procurement Act, 2007).

Thus it was expected that the key possible impact of the reform on the planning practices of public practitioners would include better need assessment for projects, better planning for resources which included the project teams and labour, better planning for materials, plant and equipment, and better financing arrangements and cash availability for project execution (Shwarka, 2014). In addition, since procurement plans were to be drawn up every quarter to determine the requirement of funds for various MDA's during the fiscal year, it was expected that project funds will be released on the basis of realistic, approved and updated procurement plans. More so, it was expected that the new procurement guidelines would enhance accuracy in bid evaluation, reduce tender splitting and contract variations and delayed payments during project execution (Shwarka, 2014 and Adebayo 2015). Furthermore, increasing ICT usage was expected to result in wider publicity and competitiveness of tenders, selection of more competent contractor/consultants, more appropriate procurement strategy selection, and greater professional competencies in all aspects of pre-construction and construction stage planning which included better project briefs and design development, better preparation of quality and safety management plans, better project risk analysis and management and more efficient programing and scheduling practices (Shwarka, 2014; Nwogwugwu and Omoiedia, 2016 and International Organization for Migration, 2018).

Public Procurement Reforms in Some Developing Economies

Literature on the impact of procurement reforms in developing countries is still in its embryonic state. Extant literature gives more of the qualitative impact of the reform than quantitative benefits of the reforms. Much needs to be documented before convincing general

lessons emerge. The present qualitative literature is at best suggestive of the benefits of procurement reforms and would not pass serious scrutiny to convince sceptics of the benefits of reform initiatives (Evennett and Sanfilippo, 2018). It is pertinent to draw upon the experiences of a few developing countries on how their procurement reforms resulted in more efficient procurement decisions.

Procurement policies may speak volumes about the numerous national priorities, practices and concerns as it is difficult to achieve substantial improvements in the wellbeing of its citizens without effective public procurement policies. This recognition accounts in part for the growing interest in public procurement laws and practices and impact of procurement reforms. Effective and efficient procurement policies are important in assessing the performance of governments and may condition access to foreign markets, whether bilateral, regional or multilateral trades (McCruden, 2015 and Hunja, 2016). There is available information on procurement practices in developing countries, but no sufficient evidence by which successful public procurement reform can be measured. This has made it difficult to formulate and defend proposals for new multilateral rules in this area (Evennett and Sanfilippo, 2018).

There is no convincing evidence based case in the World Trade Organization (WTO) for incorporation of further binding disciplines on public procurement practices for developing countries (International Law Institute (ILI) (2011)). This is due to lack of analysis and information on the return on investment on procurement reforms. There is therefore need for research to shed light on the success or otherwise of public procurement reforms in a range of developing countries, as well as provide a case evidence and national experience that will inform reform strategies and international rule making. There have also been very few attempts of cross country comparison of experiences and quantification of the costs, benefits and effects of existing procurement reform proposals.

Usually, it is the Country Procurement Assessment Reports (CPAR) that provides diagnostic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of procurement systems in individual developing countries and recommends financing action plans to modernize or reform existing procurement system in a number of countries. However, the World Bank (2014) observed that the impact of CPAR's work on the performance of national public procurement system has not been well documented, in the sense that the CPAR's tend to focus primarily on legal compliance (whether laws and required implementation procedures), with little focus on quantifying performance on having applied the processes aimed at enhancing competition, transparency, and combating corruption. Much tends to be claimed for the benefits of the reforms, but there is little analysis whether these benefits were actually realized after the reform initiatives occurred (World Bank, 2014 and Evennett and Sanfilippo, 2018).

Comparisons of Procurement Reforms in the Selected Developing Economies

In addition to the review of the Nigerian Procurement reform, a review was made of procurement reforms in Kenya, China and Hong Kong, Philippines, Jamaica and Bangladesh. It was found that the common similarity of procurement reforms in the selected countries is that procurement reforms are viewed as mechanism to enhance good governance (Transparency International, 2009; Elegbe, 2012; African Bank Group, 2012; US-China Business Council, 2012; Government of Jamaica (GOJ) 2014; World Bank, 2014 and Njoroge, & Ngugi, 2016). There however, seems to be limited literature on how public procurement differs across the different public sector industries and also insufficient information that enables comparison performance of procurement reforms across the different

developing countries. Key differences in reform implementation arise in terms of funding arrangements and market practices are due to different institutional arrangements and legislative frameworks (World Bank, 2014). There is lack of information on effective and replicable strategies that developing countries can adopt to improve their public procurement systems (Evennett and Sanfilippo, 2018). This necessitates the need for research and information exchange on procurement reform implementation and impact in order to add to the knowledge base on public procurement reforms in developing countries, and to identify critical areas where further binding multilateral disciplines may be beneficial.

All the countries reviewed in this paper indicated that the reforms are driven by the home government which fulfils the requirement for donor funding. However; not all countries enjoy public support from development partners like China and Jamaica. In addition, a constraining strategy that runs in these countries for both foreign and domestic procurement is the employment of competitive bidding practices. Common reform goals emerged in Kenya, the Philippines and Bangladesh which centres on transparency, while Nigeria, Jamaica, China and Hong Kong have as the key pillar as efficiency and cost effectiveness (ADB/OECD, 2009; Sinclair, 2010; Mahmood, 2010; OECD/DAC, 2011 Mokaya, 2013; Njoroge, & Ngugi, 2016 and Hong Kong Government, 2019). These goals are however, not dissimilar in the sense that what each country seeks to have as the ultimate end is best procuring value.

Procurement decisions in these countries are all influenced by the United Nations International Trade and Model Law. This is a sign that these countries are striving to attain a transparent procurement regime that effectively minimize corruption through the implementation of good laws. The major difference however arises from the manner of oversight and enforcement as there appears only a poor reality on the impact of these regulations (Public Procurement Oversight Authority (PPOA), 2010; Mcintosh, 2012; Government of Jamaica, 2014). One instance where the procurement reform appears successful is the case of China and Hong Kong where cost effective service delivery is being achieved alongside innovations and advanced level construction technologies (Gorski, 2016). Innovation and professionalism are important aspects of procurement that require a strategic shift in all national procurement approaches.

The governments in all the countries reviewed partner with various development agencies such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Institutional Development Fund (IDF). As such, most of the reform efforts in these countries enjoy Official Development Assistance (ODA) and have a strong investment portfolio from various development banks in terms of assistance in form of grants to develop the institutional capacity needed to enhance public procurement processes and other technical support, especially at initiation stages where these counties received assistance for the Country Procurement Assessment Reports and International Legal Consultants assisting the governments and other related activities (Elmers, 2011 and World Bank, 2014).

There is need to improve the public procurement systems in several areas in the countries reviewed to address the identified deficiencies and the potential opportunities for corruption and substandard practices. Most of the countries still desire improvements in transparency, competition, and communication of available opportunities (Transparency International, 2009; Bureau of Public Procurement, 2010; US-China Business Council, 2012; Mokaya,

2013 and Navarro and Tanghal, 2017). It is expected that these countries will make a revision of existing procurement laws or draft new procurement byelaws that would tackle identified indicators of inefficiency. It is important for developing countries to rely on their own institutions and systems to lower costs and enhance ownership of the reform process as this would go a long way to ensure the sustainability of the reforms (World Bank, 2014).

There is need also for developing economies to embrace a system-wide management approach to public procurement in order to enhance their negotiating positions and trade strategies. New regional trade opportunities must be sought, in addition to promoting the growth of small domestic contractors. European Commission (2017) noted that the public procurement market should increasingly focus or advocate for open market access and restrictions to support local development and how well a country understands the issues in this area will help determine the effectiveness of their international trade strategy.

METHODOLOGY

The data for the study were identified in the light of the laid down principles of the Public Procurement Act 2007. This is done bearing in mind that core objective of the reform is to enhance proper project planning and budgeting; and to inspire the confidence and willingness of qualified contractors to compete which will help to enhance efficiency and cost effectiveness, thus yielding value for money in public projects delivery.

Study Area

The Federal Capital Territory Abuja was selected as the area of study due to the significant volume of public construction projects. Also, according to the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and United Nations Development Programme (2005), implementation of the procurement reform started in the FCT right from its inception so it is expected that any impact of the reform will first be noticeable in Abuja. Furthermore, Abuja is one of the major developmental targets of Nigerian government and abounds with all categories of construction contractors.

Study Population

The target population consisted of three population groups which make up the public construction practitioners namely contractors, consultants and construction professionals of Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA's) that are directly involved in public building projects delivery. A sampling frame obtained from the official records of the National Bureau of Statistics (2011) showed 43 Federal MDAs' with a population of 5039 procuring construction projects in the FCT. It was not possible to study all these agencies. Therefore, the Krejcie and Morgan Table was utilized (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970) and through stratified random sampling technique, a proportional sample of contractors, consultants and construction professionals was obtained and the sample size of 226 contractors, 76 consultants and 278 construction professionals was obtained.

Research Instruments

The research instrument used were structured questionnaires developed by the researcher as a non-self-reporting inventory based on the 5 point Likert type scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It contained twenty items designed to measure the impact of the reform on the planning practices of construction practitioners. The questionnaire was content validated through the opinion of experts to ensure it represents the information being measured in all chosen areas (Kelinger, 1986 and Gay & Airasian, 2003). The reliability

coefficients (Rho) were computed using the Cronbach Alpha and found to be above 0.80 for all items meaning that there is internal consistency on all items surveyed; as such the instrument was reliable (Salkind, 2012 and Heale and Twycross, 2015). The structured questionnaires were administered through the face to face method of collecting data with the help of a research assistant who did not require any special kind of training other than simple explanations on persons that make up the study population and the number of respondents required from each MDA.

Method of Data Analysis

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Tukey's Honest Significant Difference Multiple Comparisons were employed to test if there is a significant impact of the public procurement reform on the planning practices of the practitioners. The ANOVA was chosen because it is an appropriate tool in comparing three or more population means and is a useful technique in modern statistical methods which enables the total variation in a set of data to be reduced to components associated with possible sources of variability whose relative impact needs to be assessed (Ostertagová and Ostertag, 2013).

Limitation of the Study

It is acknowledged that this study is limited by the assumption that the reform implementation process had been carried out as planned, since the study was focused on actual outcomes and impact rather than how the MDA's carried out their procedures or other organizational activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study was designed to examine the impact of the Nigerian public procurement reform on the planning practices of public construction practitioners. The questionnaire response rate was computed by dividing the number of those who responded to the questionnaire by the number in the sample and multiplying by 100%. This response rate is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Respondents	Number in Sample	Number of Usable Responses	Response Rate
Staff of M.D.A.s'	278	223	80.2%
Contractors	226	176	77.9%
Consultants	76	54	71.1%
Total	580	453	78.1%

The overall response rate for the study was 78.1%. The response rate from the MDA professionals was higher being 80.2%, while that of contractors was 77.9%. The least response rate was that of the consultants which 71.1% was.

Planning Practices of Construction Practitioners

When respondents were required to tick the most appropriate response in their opinion on how the procurement reform has positively impacted on some planning practices of public construction practitioners, with responses ranging from 1 to 5, representing the respondents' opinions as SD is Strongly Disagree = 1, D is Disagree = 2, U is uncertain = 3, A is Agree = 4 and SA is Strongly Agree = 5. The mean responses of the findings obtained are presented in Table 2.

The mean responses in Table 2 show that the impact of the public procurement reform on the planning practices of construction practitioners for public building projects was most noticeable on the attainment of uniformity of bidding documents and procuring standards by the MDAs', the development of more competitive bids by contractors/consultants, and the development of better project briefs/designs, and on wider publicity of tenders. While the least impact was on the attainment of transparent bid openings, timelier development of contract documents, development of maintenance plans and cash flow arrangements for projects.

To test if the impact of the reform on the planning practices of construction practitioners is significant, the analyses of variance test was employed and further confirmed using the Tukey's Honest Significant Difference Multiple Comparison test. The results obtained are shown on Table 3 and Table 4 respectively.

Table 2: Ranking of Reform's Impact on Planning Practices for Projects

S/N	Planning Practices	Combined Mean Response	Rank
1	Greater uniformity in bidding documents/ procuring standards	4.01	1 st
2	Development of more competitive bids	3.88	2 nd
3	Better Project briefs/designs development	3.86	3 rd
4	Wider publicity of tenders	3.79	4 th
5	Better Contractors/ Consultants Selection.	3.73	5 th
6	Better planning for materials, plant/equipment	3.56	6 th
7	Planning for more effective projects teams	3.54	7 th
8	Better planning for labour/personnel	3.52	8 th
9	Better financing arrangements	3.50	9 th
10	Better programming and scheduling	3.48	10 th
11	Better QMP/H&S plans preparation	3.47	11 th
12	Better Projects Management	3.47	11 th
13	Better need assessment	3.44	13 th
14	Better project risks assessments	3.39	14 th
15	Better procurement strategy selection	3.39	14 th
16	Greater ICT Usages	3.37	16 th
17	Better cash flow arrangements	3.29	17 th
18	Better maintenance planning for projects	3.25	18 th
19	Timelier Development of Contract documents	3.22	19 th
20	More transparent bid opening sessions.	3.16	20 th

The summary of the analysis presented in Table 3 shows the p value is 0.08 which is greater than the significance level α 0.05; and the calculated $F_{\text{-ratio}}$ 4.855 is greater than the F_{critical} value of 3. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted that there is statistically significant difference in the mean responses of construction practitioners at 95% confidence interval with regards to the reform's impact on planning practices for practitioners of public building projects. This however, does not mean that all the means are statistically significant from each other. Therefore, to ascertain which of the means has a statistically significant difference from the others, the Tukey HSD test of multiple comparisons was employed and the analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance on Planning Practices of Construction Practitioners

Responses	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.467	2	.769	4.855	.08
Within Groups	6922.978	9003	3.733		
Total	6930.445	9006			

The Tukey HSD test in Table 4 shows there is significant difference in the mean opinion of consultants with contractors and also with construction professionals in MDAs'. There is also a significant difference in the opinion of the contractors with the MDAs' professionals implying there are significant differences in the mean opinion of all the three categories of respondents.

Table 4: Tukey's Honest Significant Difference Multiple Comparisons

(I)Professionals	(J) Professionals	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Consultants	Contractors	-.09*	0.31	0.007	-.17	-.02
	MDAs'	-.09*	.0.30	.013	-.16	-.01
Contractors	Consultants	.09*	0.31	0.007	.02	.17
	MDAs'	.01*	.0.20	.900	-.04	.06
MDAs'	Consultants	.09*	0.31	0.130	.01	.17
	Contractors	.00*	.0.20	.900	-.06	.04

Based on observed means. The error term is Mean Square (Error) = .769.

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

This finding is in consonant with the findings of Zuofa and Ochieng (2012) and Ibrahim (2014) that Nigerian contractors have peculiar challenges in project planning which emanate from clients MDA and consultants. According to Ibrahim (2014), the most severe challenges for contractors had to do with their technical incompetence, excessive variations arising from both the client and or consultants as a result of inadequate project brief evaluation, project scope definition and project feasibility. Ibrahim (2014) also found that the late honouring of payment certificates was also the most severe factor on the project planning of the contractors. However, the findings of this study is at variance with the findings of Al-Nasseri and Aulin (2015) where the authors found that there was no significant difference in the perception of practitioners as regards the suitability and efficiency of existing planning methods for projects, the scheduling development and performance control in project planning and knowledge-based planning and scheduling concepts of practitioners and stakeholders.

Al-Nasseri and Aulin (2015) established that there is the need for professionalizing project planning and scheduling based on a more proactive and knowledge-based planning approach. The variance in this study findings with that of Al-Nasseri and Aulin (2015) may have been caused by the fact that this study evaluated specifically impact of the Nigerian procurement reform on planning practices of practitioners from the perspective of MDA professionals, consultants and contractors, whereas Al-Nasseri and Aulin (2015) assessed the understanding of stakeholders and practitioners in Sweden on the general planning and scheduling theory

and practice on construction projects. Also there is the tendency that data may have varied with the study locations.

Discussion

The study reveals that the public procurement reform has made a significant impact on the planning practices of construction practitioners of public building projects. All the respondents unanimously ranked enhanced uniformity in bidding documents and in procuring standards as the greatest impact of the procurement reform on planning practices. Table 2 showed that this item had a combined mean score of 4.01. This impact can have significance in the overall evaluation of the public procurement reform. This finding concurs with the findings of Elegbe (2013) on the World Bank's Influence on Procurement reform in Nigeria and South Africa. According to Elegbe (2013), one of the important influences of the CPAR in Nigeria was the design and introduction of standard bidding documents by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), and the development of a uniform system of supplier registration for contracts.

This finding also supports literature by the Bureau of Public Procurement (2010) on successful production of several types of bidding documents which reflected a collective input and contribution of various stakeholders that provided clarity on matters such as uniform forms for bids, advertisement / invitation to bid, instructions to bidders, the bid proposal, contract agreements, general conditions and supplementary conditions for construction works, drawings and other technical specifications, bid securities and their validity periods, financial and other contents of bidding documents. This stride of standardising bid documents and procedures is sure to enhance familiarity with bidding and construction documents and possibly enhance efficiency in project monitoring, in addition to adding value for money in projects performance. The lack of uniformity in bid documentation and adjudication procedures may cause uncertainties and inefficiencies not only on the part of bidders but also within government agencies. It is important that bidding documents are clearly written, setting out the criteria for the evaluation and comparison of bids, the currency to be used, and the rules for currency translation because they are used to inform potential bidders about the requisites and conditions of a given call for bids.

The development of more competitive bids was ranked 2nd by the respondents with a combined mean score of 3.88. This finding is at variance with the opinions of Jibrin, Ejura, and Anyigba (2014) and Elegbe (2015) that competition under the Nigerian Procurement reform was hampered by the process of pre-qualification which excluded contractors not prequalified from the particular procurements, and also that competitive practices were not actually adopted by several procuring entities due to improper application of the procurement rules. However, the variance with this study may have been caused by the fact that both the studies of Jibrin, Ejura, and Anyigba (2014) and Elegbe (2015) focused on implementation challenges of the reform and comparative analysis against international best practices respectively. This study however is focussed on establishing the visible changes in planning practices of construction practitioners before and after the reform initiation. Hence compared to the era before the reform initiative, the study respondents noted visible changes in procurement competitive practices. Certainly, much more may still be desired from the reform's impact; however, that there is a change from what used to be obtained is considered a step in the right direction. The primary objective of an effective procurement policy is to obtain good, works and services at the lowest possible price and the best value for money.

Vigorous competition among contractors/consultants through wider advertisements, positive changes in organisational culture and lesser political interference in contract awards might help the MDAs to realize this objective. Enhancement in the development of more competitive bids is expected to reduce inefficiencies and expedite the procurement process, result in cost effective processes and low cost of production, as well as encourage private investment in the public sector.

The development of better project briefs/designs ranked 3rd on the impact on planning practices with a combined mean of 3.86. Good brief development is considered as part of planning because it does not only increase client's satisfaction but if contractors /consultants understand the client's expectations, it can enhance the performance of projects in terms of cost, duration, quality, value and risk reduction. The enhancement in project briefs implies that there is either improvement on design competencies, or that more effective project teams are now being employed.

Though certain aspects of planning for public construction projects have been improved upon, it is pertinent that factors which were ranked lowest by respondents require to be addressed. Transparency in bid opening sessions was ranked 20th out of the 20 items evaluated on planning practices. This finding is in agreement with even the perception of Ademola and Ajibola (2014) and Ahmadu (2019) on the crucial need to strengthen transparency. The constant continues training by BPP to enhance transparency in the procurement process shows they also acknowledge that the public procurement process is still somehow shrouded in secrecy. This finding implies that practitioners still do not have the confidence that public construction project offers are evaluated objectively against the specified requirements. This shows that either the debriefing of unsuccessful bidders is not done or involvement of the public civil society in bid openings is not being implemented.

The timely development of contract documents was ranked 19th out of 20 items. Usually, the contract for the development of design, and other contract documents is awarded as a professional service contract which is separate from the construction contract. Thus improvement on this aspect can be achieved mainly by the client and the specialist consultants. Design process can be commenced early if the MDAs' are able to raise an internal source of payment for the consultants to commence design pending the approval of the project and its appropriation in the budget. This would involve some measure of foresight and risk taking by the MDA after an adequate assessment of the agency's need.

Maintainability planning was ranked 18th out of 20 items. This calls for the ratification and subsequent implementation of the national building code in order to contribute to the development of project maintenance plans and maintenance manuals. This would require the integration of the efforts of all the construction project practitioners.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The public procurement reform has not been a completely wasted effort in the construction industry as it improved some of the planning practices of practitioners. It has greatly enhanced uniformity in bidding documents and procuring standards, and fairly helped in the following aspects; reduced perversion of the requirements of tender adverts, fairly promoted development of competitive bids along the supply chain, fairly enhanced development of better project briefs and designs, and fairly enhanced wider publicity of tenders.

However, a lot more is desired in implementation of the reform for it to enhance transparency in bid opening sessions, enhance timelier development of contract documents, enhance maintenance planning of projects, enhance cash flow management and ICT usages in project planning.

Thus for the procurement reform to have greater impact in the construction industry, there is need for genuine commitment of government to transparency issues, in addition to the need to devote time and resources to improve practitioners planning skills and competencies in ICT usages, contract documentation, budgeting and cash flow management, scheduling and programming of maintenance projects. This is expected to produce greater project planning and management practices, more effective project teams and cost effective public projects.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made: Further initiatives are required to prove the commitment of government in promoting transparency practices of construction practitioners on public projects. These include:

- i. Mandatory publications of procurement proceedings by MDAs.
- ii. The need for Non-Governmental Organizations and Anticorruption Agencies to encourage annual independent assessment or public credit rating of public construction projects.
- iii. Public Project initiators and the Bureau of Public Procurement can tie project funding to the mainstreaming of transparency and accountability, such that donor agencies can withhold fresh funding on projects where accountability procedures have been tampered with.
- iv. All construction professional bodies, anti-corruption agencies and other relevant institution must build synergy in promoting transparency issues in order to curb corrupt practices in public projects.
- v. All relevant construction professional bodies must embrace the use of BIM to enhance efficient project planning practices.

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