

Improving relationship management in South African construction project performance from the concept of 'Ubuntu'

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of masters of Science in Construction Project Management to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other University.

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(Signature of Candidate)

..... day of,

(Day)

(Month)

(Year)

Abstract

Construction projects often suffer from poor performance in terms of time delays, cost overruns and quality defects. The causes of poor performance in the industry have been widely examined. However, few studies have addressed the influence of supply chain relationships on project performance in construction, especially within the African context. In an attempt to minimize this gap, a study is carried out in the South African construction industry. The study seeks to explore the specific characteristics of relationships in construction and to assess their impact on project performance. The study draws upon earlier studies that have focused on the concept of 'relationship management' as well as the concept of 'Ubuntu' as a management tool that is applicable to the South African context. From the notion of relationship management, ten key indicators are drawn upon which are then interpreted within the context of 'Ubuntu'. The findings from the study indicate that the supply chain relationship indicators which the industry practitioners and professionals identified with were mutual objectives, gain and pain sharing, trust, no-blame culture, joint working, communication, performance measurement and continuous improvement. It can be deduced that the deterioration of the supply chain relationships may have a negative effect on project performance as it may result in poor performance, however, improving some of the aspects of the relationship may reduce poor performance. The concept of 'Ubuntu' was found to be unfamiliar to some of the industry's stakeholders and there was a degree of skepticism towards its implementation as a management approach. However, a general consensus exists that project performance is also affected by how parties in a project relate to one another.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Figures	vii
1. Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background.....	1
1.2. Problem Statement.....	6
1.3. Purpose of the Study.....	6
1.4. Outline of Chapters.....	7
2. Chapter 2: Literature Review	10
2.1.1. Mutual Objectives	10
2.1.2. Trust	11
2.1.3. No-blame culture	12
3. Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	21
3.1. Collection of data	21
3.2. Method and Approach.....	23
3.3. Analyzing the Data.....	26
4. Chapter 4: Improving relationship management from the concept of ‘ubuntu’	28
4.1. Theoretical impact of ‘ubuntu’ on relationship indicators.....	28
4.2. Values of ubuntu.....	28

4.3. Guidelines for implementing ubuntu in organizations.....	32
5. Chapter 5: Analysis of Results	36
6. Chapter 6: Discussion	58
7. Chapter 7: Conclusion	61
References	64
Appendices	70

List of Figures

Figure 4.1 Collective finger's theory model as adopted from Mbigi and Maree (1995, pg 111)

Figure 4.2 Theoretical model depicting the relationship between the relationship indicators, cultural diversity, values of 'ubuntu' and project performance